

# Research Capability and Readiness in Philippine Public Schools: A Systematic Review of Enablers and Barriers

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## ABSTRACT

This systematic review examines the enablers and barriers that influence the development of a research-oriented culture in public schools in the Philippines, with a focus on the research capabilities and readiness of public school teachers. Synthesizing findings from local and international literature, the study identifies key individual and institutional enablers, including teacher motivation, foundational research knowledge, mentoring, collaborative spaces, and institutional support systems. These elements contribute to fostering research engagement and sustaining a culture of inquiry in basic education. However, the study also unveils barriers, including narrow technical writing skills, inadequate research training, overwhelming workloads, and a lack of structural support, which hinder teachers from actively participating in research activities. Based on these findings, the Capability–Support–Burden (CSB) Equilibrium Theory is proposed, positing that a balanced interaction among individual capability, institutional support, and professional burden is essential for achieving meaningful research participation. When capability and support outweigh the burden, research readiness thrives; otherwise, an imbalance leads to disengagement. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers, school leaders, and educators in designing targeted interventions that enhance research capacity and foster a sustainable, empowered research culture in Philippine public schools.

**Keywords:** Barriers, Enablers, Public Schools, Research Culture, Research-Oriented, Systematic Review

## INTRODUCTION

A research-oriented culture within public schools is increasingly recognized as essential for effectively adopting and implementing evidence-based teaching practices. This culture not only promotes ongoing professional development among educators but also leads to significant enhancements in the overall educational system. When teachers actively engage with current academic research, they acquire the skills to analyze and critically reflect on their teaching methodologies. In fact, teacher research engagement consists of two main activities: critically reading and discussing published research, and planning, undertaking, and reflecting on their research projects, according to Xerri (2021). This reflective practice enables them to identify areas for improvement and develop customized solutions to address specific pedagogical challenges they encounter in the classroom.

Educators not only impart knowledge to their students but also actively contribute to the ongoing development of educational theory and practice. By engaging in research, sharing their findings, and participating in professional development, they play a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape through their influence on practices and policies. In fact, engaging in research is widely recognized as a productive form of professional development, leading to improved teaching practices and a deeper understanding of the profession (Borg, 2010; Leat et al., 2015; Xerri, 2021). It promotes innovation in education by allowing educators and institutions to systematically investigate significant problems in the field, while offering pathways for evidence-based solutions and improvements (Amenabar & Pontillas, 2024).

This collaborative effort among teachers fosters a rich sense of community where sharing insights, practical strategies, and innovative teaching methods becomes a common practice. Such an environment encourages open dialogue and collective problem-solving, ultimately benefiting students in various learning contexts. When educators come together to share their experiences and expertise, they enhance not only their teaching

effectiveness but also improve educational outcomes for their students, regardless of the diverse challenges they may face. Teacher educators engaged in research have a distinct potential to share best practices that are essential for fostering student learning (Alfaro-Tanco et al., 2023). This collective commitment to continuous improvement helps create a more dynamic and responsive educational system that meets the needs of all learners.

However, despite a growing recognition of the essence of integrating research into everyday educational practice, the actual infusion of research into basic education remains uneven. Public schools frequently face systemic constraints, including limited funding (Eacott, 2023; Sciffer, 2025), inadequate access to research resources (Giamellaro et al., 2024; Gripton & Noyes, 2024), and varying levels of institutional support (Peurach et al., 2019; Smith & O'day, 1990). These challenges hinder educators' ability to prioritize research engagement and apply innovative strategies in their teaching. Educators often face difficulties in engaging in research due to insufficient skills that limit their ability to conduct high-quality inquiries (Abelardo et al., 2019). As a result, the potential benefits of a research-oriented approach are not fully realized, leaving many educators and students to navigate an educational landscape that lacks the robust support needed for continuous improvement and excellence. Many educators in the Department of Education remain disengaged from research, despite institutional initiatives emphasizing its significance (Tingabngab & Binayao, 2023).

Thus, addressing these barriers and cultivating an environment within public schools where research can thrive, guiding pedagogical practices, and enhancing student outcomes is imperative. The research competence of educators, as shown by Manongsong and Panopio (2018), increases gradually and requires sustained practice over time. Moreover, the efficiency of professional development relies on continuous improvement (Culajara, 2021). Engaging in these activities enhances teachers' knowledge and effectiveness, particularly when restructuring and upskilling are incorporated (Aquino et al., 2022).

Over the last twenty years, the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has launched several initiatives to embed research into the fabric of school operations. Key strategies, including the Basic Education Research Agenda and Research Management Guidelines, have been implemented to foster a culture of inquiry and evidence-based practices. The issuance of the DepEd's Research Management Guidelines (RMG) sought to enhance research practices in basic education and integrate findings to school management and policy through research advocacy, dissemination, and application (Llego, 2017). However, significant disparities in research capabilities and readiness persist across different school environments. Numerous studies and institutional reports have pointed to persistent barriers, including a lack of time for educators to engage in research activities, insufficient training opportunities, the absence of mentorship programs, and limited access to both research funding and necessary infrastructure (Newman & Leggett, 2018; Yau et al., 2025). Teachers' workloads usually increase when they engage in research (Ellis & Loughland, 2016), and workload demands significantly contribute to teacher burnout (Jomuad et al., 2021).

Similarly, many instructors demonstrate a high degree of research involvement but face challenges such as increased workload, loss of free time, writing anxiety, and a lack of resources and support from the school (Berondo, 2023). External barriers, including a lack of support from stakeholders, the absence of organized information databases, time constraints, insufficient funds, and a shortage of research mentors, persist in hindering research endeavors in educational institutions (Bosas & Pacadaljen, 2021). Furthermore, there is frequently inadequate dissemination and limited utilization of research findings in academic institutions, which fosters teachers' negative views of research activities (Bosas & Pacadaljen, 2021).

Given the fragmented knowledge landscape on this topic, a systematic review is essential. This review will provide a comprehensive and critical synthesis of research capacity and readiness within public schools, aggregating and analyzing findings from the relevant literature. The aim is to gain insights into the current state of research engagement, identify both enablers and obstacles, and explore potential pathways for cultivating a sustainable research culture within the public basic education sector. Engaging in educational research is essential for professional development, addressing challenges, and improving teachers' self-efficacy, as well as influencing effective school administration (Austin, 2020).

Although national mandates and policy-driven initiatives have been established to foster research in public schools, developing a truly research-oriented culture poses significant challenges. While numerous local and

international studies offer valuable insights into specific facets of this issue, a thorough synthesis of existing knowledge remains notably absent.

With this in mind, the primary objective of this study is to explore and assess the research capabilities and preparedness of public-school teachers utilizing different existing studies. By gaining a deeper understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, the study's findings will serve as a foundation for developing a theory that contributes to the creation of a research-oriented culture in public schools.

## RELATED LITERATURE

The development of a research-oriented culture in public schools has gained increasing attention in both international and Philippine educational literature. Globally, scholars emphasize the importance of leadership, professional learning, and system-level support in embedding research as a core educational practice. Hargreaves and Fullan (2015) argue that leadership must model research engagement and foster collaborative inquiry environments. Complementing this, Campbell and Levin (2016) highlight that structured professional development and access to academic networks significantly enhance teacher research capacity. Their study found that when teachers were empowered through mentorship and communities of practice, their willingness to engage in research increased. However, systemic constraints such as limited time, insufficient digital infrastructure, and bureaucratic overload remain persistent barriers, particularly in public school systems (Mincu, 2018). Bennett et al. (2020) further advocate for strong partnerships between schools and universities, citing that such collaborations lead to sustained research engagement and knowledge mobilization. Furthermore, Zhang and Chapman (2021) emphasize that digital research platforms and online repositories have expanded access for educators in remote and marginalized areas, promoting more equitable engagement in research.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) has taken initial steps toward institutionalizing a research culture through policies, such as DepEd Order No. 16, s—2017, which provides guidelines on the conduct and utilization of school-based research. Delos Santos and Fabella (2018) found that this initiative increased awareness but revealed gaps in actual implementation, particularly concerning teacher training and research incentives. Rivera and Sarmiento (2019) reported that many teachers expressed interest in doing research but struggled due to fear of failure, lack of methodological knowledge, and minimal support from school leadership. Despite these challenges, there are some bright spots. Bayot and Malabanan (2020) discovered that teachers enrolled in graduate programs were more likely to initiate classroom-based inquiries, suggesting that exposure to research-intensive environments fosters readiness.

Meanwhile, Tolentino and Abella (2022), in a case study from Region IV-A, identified division-level research conferences and mentoring as key enablers of grassroots research. Still, they acknowledged urban-rural disparities in support and access. Cruz and Del Rosario (2023) later pointed out the disconnect between national policy intentions and local resource allocations, which often limit school heads from supporting teacher-led inquiries.

Overall, the literature suggests that while both global and local efforts have made progress in promoting research engagement in schools, significant gaps remain in capacity building, access, and the sustainable implementation of these efforts. A consistent theme across studies is the need for leadership commitment, structured support systems, equitable access to research resources, and integration of research into teachers' professional identities. In the Philippine context, bridging the divide between policy and practice remains critical, particularly in rural and resource-constrained settings. By synthesizing insights from both international and local perspectives, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the enablers and barriers that influence the development of research-oriented public-school cultures.

This study is anchored on the Organizational Learning Theory by Argyris and Schön (1978) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which collectively explain how individual readiness and institutional culture interact to foster a research-oriented environment in public schools.

Organizational Learning Theory posits that institutions evolve and improve through continuous learning cycles, where reflection and inquiry are integral to the process. In the context of schools, this theory suggests that when

teachers engage in research, they not only enhance individual practices but also contribute to institutional knowledge. A culture of research thus emerges when schools support collective reflection and knowledge sharing, guided by leadership and systemic support.

Meanwhile, the Theory of Planned Behavior emphasizes the role of intention, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms in shaping human behavior. Teachers' engagement in research was influenced by their perceived ability (capability), support from peers and administrators (social norms), and access to resources and training (behavioral control). This theory explains why many teachers express positive attitudes toward research but fail to act due to barriers such as a lack of confidence, time, or institutional support.

These two frameworks offer complementary lenses, one institutional and the other individual, to understand how research cultures develop and sustain themselves in public schools. They guide the systematic review by framing the enablers and barriers around both systemic (organizational) and personal (behavioral) factors.

Despite growing attention to research culture in education, gaps remain in both local and global literature. Most international studies focus on higher education institutions, leaving the research dynamics in basic education largely underexplored. In the Philippines, although the Department of Education has launched initiatives to promote research, few studies have evaluated the actual implementation, teacher experiences, and long-term impacts of these programs at the school level.

Existing local research often centers on isolated case studies or quantitative surveys without providing synthesized, evidence-based frameworks for building sustainable research cultures. Moreover, few studies examine how enablers and barriers differ across various school contexts, such as urban versus rural, and well-resourced versus under-resourced. There is also limited exploration of the interaction between policy-level support and grassroots capability development.

This study addresses these gaps by systematically reviewing both local and international literature from 2015 to 2025 to identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities in building research-oriented cultures in public schools. It contributes to theory and practice by integrating findings through an institutional-behavioral lens, offering practical implications for policymakers, school leaders, and educators.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a systematic review methodology, rigorously adhering to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. This well-established framework facilitates a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable synthesis of the existing scholarly literature related to the chosen topic.

A comprehensive search strategy was implemented to examine the relevant literature. This will include a wide range of publication types, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, policy papers, and grey literature, encompassing materials not formally published in traditional academic outlets, including government (DepEd Memorandum).

A comprehensive literature search was undertaken, utilizing a range of databases renowned for their vast repositories of academic resources. Specifically, this study will focus on Google Scholar and Philippine E-Journals, as these platforms are particularly relevant for research centered on the Philippine context. By leveraging these sources, the study aimed to gather a diverse array of scholarly articles and publications that reflect the unique socio-cultural landscape of the region, ensuring that the findings are well-informed and contextually appropriate.

The systematic review synthesized the findings from these diverse sources. It critically evaluated the methodologies and contexts of the studies involved, providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on the topic.

This systematic review aimed to explore the enablers and barriers of research capability and readiness in public



schools in the Philippines. The review will focus on literature published between 2015 and 2025, specifically targeting public elementary and secondary education contexts. Only English-language articles that examine aspects of research engagement, capacity building, or institutional readiness will be included. Keywords for the literature search will consist of combinations of terms such as “research capability,” “research readiness,” “public schools,” “teacher research,” “education research culture,” “capacity building,” and “Philippines.” Studies focusing on private schools (unless for comparative purposes), higher education, or those lacking empirical or theoretical insight into research capability or readiness will be excluded. Eligible studies will be analyzed using a data extraction matrix capturing the author(s), year, country, study purpose, methodology, key findings, identified barriers and enablers, and any recommendations or interventions.

Furthermore, thematic synthesis was employed to identify patterns and recurring concepts across the reviewed literature. As this study involves analyzing previously published research and does not involve direct interaction with human participants, ethical clearance for data collection is not required. Nevertheless, proper citation and acknowledgment of all intellectual property will be strictly observed throughout the research process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this systematic review reveal a multidimensional set of enablers and barriers that collectively contribute to and hinder the development of a research-oriented culture in Philippine public schools. These enablers and barriers highlight the interplay between individual motivation and institutional structures, reflecting both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive capability and readiness in research engagement.

### Theme #1: Catalyst for Research Excellence: Enablers of Capacity and Readiness

At the individual level, high motivation, positive attitudes toward research, and a strong foundation in research concepts are critical starting points. These psychological and cognitive enablers suggest that many teachers, particularly young educators, possess the internal drive and baseline competencies necessary for engaging in scholarly inquiry. The presence of prior research experience, whether in pre-service training or actual practice, further strengthens this foundation, instilling confidence and academic rigor in undertaking research projects.

Moreover, mentoring and action planning skills enhance the capacity of more experienced faculty to serve as facilitators and guides within a research community. Schools foster a culture of continuous professional learning and shared expertise when paired with structured mentoring and peer support. Using communities of practice as a learning model also reinforces this collaborative dynamic, encouraging reflective dialogue and co-construction of knowledge among teachers.

Institutional enablers were found to be equally vital. While the availability of infrastructure, publication opportunities, and benefits may be moderate, their presence nonetheless signals a commitment to research promotion. Engagement in real research projects, especially those that are contextually relevant to teaching and learning, further enables teachers to connect theory with practice, thereby contributing to individual growth and school improvement.

Safe, collaborative spaces for professional dialogue emerged as essential for sustaining research momentum. These spaces cultivate psychological safety and intellectual stimulation, conditions necessary for open inquiry. Similarly, transparent fund management and organizational efficiency in research support services foster institutional trust and reduce bureaucratic barriers, enabling teachers to focus more easily on research tasks.

Institutional commitment is further demonstrated through favorable treatment and recognition of researchers, participation in research training, and institutional support through encouragement and resources from school leaders and the Department of Education (DepEd). These factors enhance readiness and validate and establish it as a legitimate and valued professional endeavor.

In sum, the enablers identified in this review point to a fertile ground for cultivating a sustainable research culture in public schools. When both individual dispositions and institutional mechanisms align, schools are better positioned to embed research into the fabric of teaching and school improvement. Therefore, educational leaders

must recognize and strengthen these enablers to realize DepEd's vision of evidence-based and research-driven education.

## **Theme #2: Barriers to Effective Research: A Capacity and Readiness Perspective**

While the study identified numerous enablers that support the development of a research-oriented culture in public schools, it also revealed significant and recurring barriers that hinder the full realization of research capability and readiness among teachers. These barriers, often interconnected, highlight systemic, institutional, and individual-level constraints that must be addressed to foster a thriving culture of inquiry.

One of the primary barriers identified was the moderate technical writing capability of teachers in completing research. Despite high levels of interest and motivation, many teachers struggle with articulating their research findings in academically rigorous formats, suggesting a need for more focused training in academic writing, data presentation, and publication standards. This technical gap becomes more pressing when viewed in the context of insufficient training in conducting action research and overall lack of research competence, both of which point to foundational deficits in research education during pre-service and in-service programs.

Compounding these individual limitations are institutional constraints, particularly the overwhelming teaching loads, excessive paperwork, and numerous school activities that burden public school teachers. These demands, often administrative, leave little to no room for teachers to engage meaningfully in research activities. Moreover, ancillary roles and additional responsibilities further fragment teachers' time and attention, making research appear as an optional rather than integral part of their professional duties.

Structural support mechanisms, or the lack thereof, also play a critical role in impeding research capability. The limited accessibility to research committees and the absence of clear systems of support discourage teachers from initiating or sustaining research projects. Without visible and approachable institutional bodies to guide and evaluate their work, many teachers feel isolated or unsupported in their efforts.

Furthermore, the review surfaced a broader issue of a lack of scientific training, particularly in the areas of research methodology and analytical rigor. This gap not only affects the quality of research outputs but also undermines teachers' confidence in pursuing scholarly work. Alongside this is the recurring issue of poor time management, which may stem from both inadequate support systems and the overwhelming workload teachers face daily.

Taken together, these barriers present a complex ecosystem of challenges that must be holistically addressed. The findings suggest that without institutional reforms, such as workload reduction, strategic capacity-building programs, and robust research infrastructure, teachers will continue to face difficulties in integrating research into their professional practice. These barriers underscore the pressing need for policy interventions and school-level innovations that can transform research from a burden into an empowering tool for educational improvement and professional growth.

## **Propositions**

**P1:** Teachers with strong individual capabilities (e.g., motivation, experience, research knowledge) are more likely to engage in research activities if institutional support mechanisms are present.

**P2:** Even when teachers are motivated and skilled, high levels of professional burden significantly reduce their likelihood of participating in research.

**P3:** Institutional support (e.g., mentoring, training, recognition) has a dual role; it directly enhances research engagement and indirectly mitigates the adverse effects of professional burden.

**P4:** The presence of a collaborative research environment (e.g., communities of practice and safe dialogue spaces) amplifies both individual capability and institutional support, fostering readiness for research.

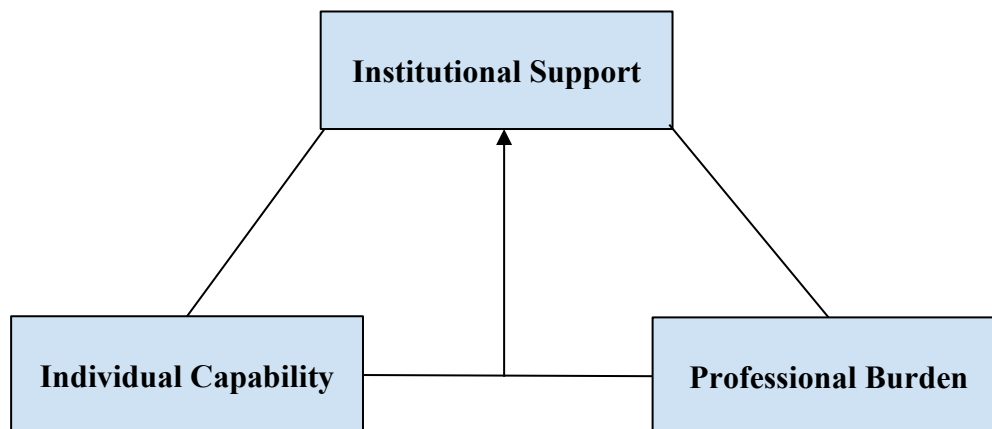
**P5:** Teachers' research engagement will reach optimal levels when capability and support outweigh the

constraints imposed by professional burden, indicating a positive equilibrium.

**P6:** Disruption in the balance (e.g., increased workload without corresponding support) leads to decreased research productivity and readiness.

## Developed Theory

### Proposed Theory: The Capability–Support–Burden Equilibrium Theory (CSB Theory)



The Capability–Support–Burden Equilibrium Theory posits that the research culture in public schools is shaped by the dynamic interaction among three core domains: Individual Capability, Institutional Support, and Professional Burden. A research-oriented culture is most likely to thrive when high capability and strong institutional support are present and professional burdens are minimized or adequately managed.

The proposed theory explains the conditions under which a research-oriented culture can thrive in public schools in the Philippines. This theory posits that research engagement among teachers is determined by the dynamic interplay of three core elements: individual capability, institutional support, and professional burden. Individual capability refers to teachers' motivation, foundational research knowledge, technical skills, prior research experience, and positive attitudes toward scholarly inquiry. However, capability alone is insufficient if not reinforced by institutional support, which includes access to training, mentoring, publication opportunities, research funding, collaborative spaces, and recognition systems. These support structures not only enhance capability but also help teachers navigate and overcome barriers. The third element, professional burden, manifested through overwhelming teaching loads, administrative tasks, and time constraints, acts as a significant deterrent to research engagement. The theory suggests that when institutional support is substantial and professional burdens are managed or reduced, individual capability is activated and sustained, leading to higher levels of research readiness and participation. Conversely, when support is lacking and burdens are excessive, even motivated and capable teachers struggle to make meaningful contributions to the research culture. Thus, a balanced equilibrium among these three domains is essential. The CSB Theory offers a valuable lens for schools and policymakers to design interventions that not only build research capacity but also establish a sustainable and empowering research environment in public basic education.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review reveals that fostering a research-oriented culture in Philippine public schools requires a strategic alignment of individual capability, institutional support, and the management of professional burden. The findings underscore that while many teachers possess the motivation, foundational knowledge, and willingness to engage in research, these internal enablers must be reinforced by strong external support systems. Besides, structured mentoring, research training, accessible research infrastructure, and institutional recognition serve as vital mechanisms that empower teachers to participate in research activities.

In contrast, persistent barriers such as technical writing gaps, poor methodological competence, absurd workload, and scarcity of structural support impede research engagement. These challenges highlight systemic

issues within the public education system that undermine the potential of even the most capable and motivated educators. Therefore, capability alone does not guarantee research participation unless complemented by robust support and manageable workloads.

The proposed Capability–Support–Burden Equilibrium Theory (CSB Theory), crafted by the researchers, articulates a dynamic interplay among these three domains, asserting that a thriving research culture is contingent upon maintaining equilibrium. Research readiness and engagement peak when teachers' capabilities are matched with adequate institutional support and when professional burdens are reduced. Conversely, imbalances, such as increased workload without supportive structures, lead to disengagement and diminished research output.

In conclusion, this research suggests that transforming public schools into environments that foster research requires interventions at both the policy and school levels. A comprehensive approach that encourages individual talents, establishes supportive practices, and addresses structural obstacles is crucial for achieving DepEd's goal of a research-oriented and evidence-based education system. The CSB Theory provides a conceptual framework to guide these reforms, offering a path for educational leaders to foster sustainable and empowered research cultures within basic education.

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