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Project SMILE with a HEART: Cultivating Action Researches in the Schools Division Office of Deped Camarines Sur, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Project SMILE with a HEART in Research desires to improve and develop a positive attitude in making and implementing research in SDO Camarines Sur. SMILE, which stands for *Share, Mentor, Initiate, Learn,* and *Excel,* were strategies done by the Division Research and Development CI team, with a positive outlook and insights that a researcher should possess HEART- *Hardworking, Enthusiastic, Authentic, Resourceful,* and *Transformational*. This study aims to determine the impact of the project in the Action Research (AR) competencies and initiatives of personnel. A descriptive-quantitative method was employed in discussing the responses. Quantitative data were derived from the researcher-made questionnaire. Total enumeration of 18 CI Teams of Class III served as respondents. Analyzed data revealed that before the implementation of the project, the competency level of researchers on the AR process is moderately competent, with strengths and challenges encountered in the AR process. The AR project is fairly difficult. The activities and strategies implemented, such as training, mentoring and coaching, visual management, mistake proofing,

and simplified process, were extremely accepted and demonstrated that it was very effective, with 100% approval of researches submitted. Thus, the project implemented improves research competencies of personnel, and it develops a positive attitude towards research undertakings. This was funded under the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF) through the Division/Region Research Committee and PPRD Region V.

Keywords — research programs and services, action research competencies, continuous improvement, descriptive-quantitative, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

If one can't find the cure for cancer, nor end poverty, a teacher can, in his little way, contribute to teacher education and the educational system of the country (Delvenne, Yaliraki, and Barahona, 2010). DepEd has made strides in instituting research and its utilization in policy and program development. DepEd Order No. 13, s 2015, established a systematic policy development process in the Department, promoting evidence-based policy formulation supported by research studies (Weston, Mullan, Rich, Crowther, Bushnell, & McLennan, 2017).

In SDO Camarines Sur, only two basic types of research and seven action researches were approved and funded by the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF) in 2016-2017. Relative to this, the Division Research and Development Team conceptualized implementing a SMILE with a HEART in Research Project. Salm (2014) used SMILE and HEART to represent and symbolize positive outlook and insights about research.

In developing a positive attitude towards research, Project SMILE, which stands for Share, Mentor, Initiate, Learn, and Excel should be done by the team to the customers, with a positive attitude that comprises HEART, which stands for Hardworking, Enthusiastic, Authentic, Resourceful, and Transformational.

The SMILE with a HEART in research project aims to improve and develop a positive attitude in making and implementing research. So, the team hoped that through this undertaking, research awareness and competencies in the division would increase from 9 to 27 approved action researches for BERF. This study aims to determine the impact of the project in the Action Research (AR) competencies and initiatives of personnel (Ávalos, Pérez-Escoda, & Monge, 2019).

FRAMEWORK

The Input of this study consists of the strategies or activities under Project SMILE with a HEART in Research**.**

The Process includes the analysis and statistical treatment of data on the competency level of researchers on AR process; strengths and challenges encountered in the AR preparation process and in conducting AR projects; level of acceptance of the activities & strategies implemented under Project SMILE with a HEART; percentage of approved action researches after the implementation of the project; and effect of the strategies and activities implemented on the competency level of researchers on AR process.

The Output of the evaluative process shall provide the effect of the interventions implemented to attain 100% approval of action research proposals submitted (Swank, & Lambie, 2016).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to (1) identify the competency level of researchers on AR process; (2) assess the strengths and challenges encountered in the AR preparation process and in conducting AR projects; (3) determine the level of acceptance of the activities & strategies implemented under Project SMILE with a HEART; (4) identify the percentage of approved action researches after the implementation of the project; and (5) assess the effect of the strategies and activities implemented on the competency level of researchers on AR process.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This action research employed a descriptive-quantitative method to answer the main problem and sub-problems of the study. Quantitative data were derived from the researcher-made questionnaire used in this study. However, other components of this part are the research participants and other sources of data and information, data gathering method, and data analysis plan per research question.

Participants

Total enumeration of 18 Continuous Improvement (CI) Teams of Class III served as respondents of this study. They were chosen as subjects of this research

because of their attendance in the CI Training last November 21-24, 2017, at Eurotel, Naga City. Likewise, they were proposing action research projects along with the needs of their schools for the improvement of educational outcomes in the Schools Division of Camarines Sur.

Data Gathering

A researcher-made instrument in the survey-checklist form was used to gather the data in this research project. This comprised of: Part 1 - Competency Level of 18 Continuous Improvement Teams of Class III in Action Research using the following scale: 5 - Highly Competent, 4 - Very Competent, 3 – Competent, 2 - Moderately Competent, and 1 - Not Competent. Part 2 – The Difficulties Encountered by 18 Continuous Improvement Teams of Class III in Action Research the following scale will be used: 1 - Not Difficult, 2 - Fairly Difficult, 3-Moderately Difficult, 4 - Highly Difficult, and 5 - Extremely Difficult. Part 3 – On Acceptance Level of Project SMILE with a HEART, 5 - Extremely Accepted, 4 - Highly Accepted, 3 - Accepted, 2 - Moderately Accepted, and 1 - Not Accepted.

Furthermore, these research instruments are coupled with parameters to assess or measure the competency level of 18 CI teams in action research, the difficulties they encountered in the research process, and the level of acceptance of SMILE with a HEART Project. This tool was validated by the experts in the field of action research, preferably Assistant Schools Division Superintendent, Education Program Supervisor, Senior Education Program Specialist, School Principal or School Head and teachers.

Moreover, prior to the full implementation of action research and administration of research tools, the researcher seeks approval from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent through a formal letter. The researcher also asks the respondents to fill in a consent form to be assured that their responses or statements will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and their interest and integrity are protected in this study. Also, the research instrument was administered in compliance with the ethical research standards within the research management guidelines of the Department of Education.

Data Analysis

The data in this part was organized according to the order of the statement of the problem and presented in tabular form. Furthermore, the identified statistical tools employed for easy analysis and interpretation of data in this investigation

to assess or measure the action research competency level of the CI teams and their difficulties in the research process; and to determine the acceptance level of Project SMILE with a HEART.

Frequency Distribution

The frequency was utilized to count the number of responses of the respondents in the statements specified in the action research competency level of the CI teams, difficulties in the research process, and the acceptance level of Project SMILE with a HEART. A tally sheet is constructed along the variables considered in this research project. And the frequency distribution was used to compute for the weighted mean and in ranking the variables.

Weighted mean was used to gauge the answer of the respondents in the statements given in each part of the questionnaire.

The measuring or rating scales used are as follows:

	Scale / Criterion	*Descriptor/s*
5	Highly Competent	*Extensively possesses the competencies*
4	Very Competent	*Deliberately possesses the competencies*
3	Competent	*Adequately possesses the competencies*
2	Moderately Competent	*Impartially possesses the competencies*
1	Not Competent	*Do not possess any of the competencies*

	Scale / Criterion	*Descriptor/s*
5	Extremely Accepted	*Substantially accept the project*
4	Highly Accepted	*Clearly exceeds the acceptance of the project.*
3	Accepted	*Satisfactorily accept the project.*
2	Moderately Accepted	*Barely accept the project.*
1	Not Accepted	*Does not accept the project.*

Ranking

The ranking was used to describe the order of data obtained. It is typically arranged from highest to lowest or vice versa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before the implementation of the project, the competency level of researchers on the AR process is moderately competent, strengths and challenges encountered in the AR process, and in conducting the AR project is fairly difficult. The activities and strategies implemented, such as training, mentoring and coaching, visual management, mistake proofing, and simplified process, were extremely accepted and demonstrated that it was very effective, with 100% approval of researches submitted. Thus, the project implemented improves research competencies of personnel, and it develops a positive attitude towards research undertakings.

The competency level of the 18 Continuous Improvement Teams of Class III on action research process before the implementation of the Project SMILE with a HEART in Research of SDO Camarines Sur shows that Citing the direct research beneficiaries could be in persons or groups and how they will benefit in the present study. They are competent in writing the background of the study by directly stating valid and reliable reasons for conducting action research. They can apply American Psychological Association (APA) format in citing reference materials or reliable sources and documentation.

On the other hand, (1) in identifying the research design or method appropriate and accurate to the action research topic (wt.m. = 2.15), (2) writing the statement of the problem in question or declarative form (wt.m. = 2.32), and (3) describing the data-gathering instruments to be used and its administration (wt. m. = 2.35). The competency level of CI team researchers on the action research process is moderate (2.44). This is a manifestation that the researchers need to enhance or improve action research writing competencies through the measures and/or interventions such as research training/LAC session, action research mentoring and coaching program, and other activities to order to improve their competency level in the action research process (Durmusçelebi, 2018).

Moreover, strengths and challenges encountered by the members of the 18 Continuous Improvement Teams of Class III in the action research process. The result generated demonstrates that the interpretations in each indicator are high though they still varied by minimal intervals. The top three in the rank were considered as strengths while the bottom three were considered as challenges. In this case, the strengths are, (1) Grammar, mechanics, and punctuations in Bicol, Filipino, and/or English (wt. m. = 3.59, highly difficult), (2) Format of the action research project proposal and accomplishment report (wt. m. = 3.56,

highly difficult), and Finding related studies and writing the literature review (wt. m. = 3.28, moderately difficult). The last three indicators identified as the challenges encountered by the researchers were: 1.) Looking at the value of action research in the teaching, learning, assessment, and administrative processes (wt. m. = 2.27, fairly difficult), 2.) Organizing and writing the findings, conclusions, and recommendations (wt. m. = 2.32, fairly difficult), and 3.) Seeking technical writing assistance from the district/school research coordinator, master teacher, and school head (wt. m. = 2.56, fairly difficult). It is demonstrated that the strengths and challenges encountered by the members of the 18 Continuous Improvement Teams of Class III in the action research process are Moderately Difficult with a weighted mean of 3.20

On the other hand, the strengths and difficulties encountered in Action Research Project are fairly difficult (2.58). The interpretation in each indicator is low though they still vary by minimal intervals. The top three in the rank were considered as difficulties while the bottom three were considered as strengths. In this case, the difficulties were: 1 Retrieving distributed research instrument/s to the respondents. (wt. m. = 3.51, highly difficult) 2.) Seeking approval of the action research project to the DepED authorities (district/division/regional/ national office) with a wt. m. = 2.82, moderately difficult, and 3.) Using computer programs for statistical treatment, encoding, and printing. (wt. m. = 2.63, moderately difficult). The last three indicators identified as the strengths of the researchers were: 1.) Collating and interpreting data collated from the filled-out research instrument/s. endeavor (wt. m. = 2.13, fairly difficult), 2.) Implementing innovative projects and programs relative to the conduct of the study. (wt. m. = 2.35, fairly difficult), and 3.) Preparing the action research accomplishment report. (wt. m. = 2.40, fairly difficult) (Kurbanbekov, Turmambekov, Baizak, Saidakhmetov, Abdraimov, Bekayeva, & Orazbayeva, 2016).

Furthermore, the level of acceptance of the CI teams of the intervention implemented **Project SMILE with a HEART in Research** discloses that all indicators stated were Extremely Accepted (EA) with an average weighted mean of 4.88. Establishing the purpose or objective of the project ranked first among the indicators indicated with a weighted mean of 4.97 – EA. Mobilize support system in the course of the project implementation (wt.m. = 4.94, EA) and Demonstrate accountability, transparency, and responsiveness towards the attainment of the project objective/s (wt.m. = 4.94, EA), ranked second, and Project management and administration in the field (wt. m. = 4.93, EA), ranked as third among the 12 indicators stated. On the other hand, the top 3 with the

lowest ratings among the indicators stated were: 1. Identification of barriers or challenges to the project (wt.m. = 4.71, EA), 2. Allocation of human & materials resource, (wt.m. = 4.75, EA) and 3. The team involved in the project operations (wt.m. = 4.83, EA) and the Impact of the project to the number of approved researches in the SDO of Camarines Sur (wt.m. = 4.83, EA). It implies that the Project SMILE with a Heart in Research implemented in SDO Camarines Sur can be used effectively to help teachers, school heads, and other personnel in the preparation of action research and build the culture of research in SDO Camarines Sur.

To provide directions on research initiatives through the national and local Basic Education Research Agenda, and other identified priority research areas in the division, a Schools Division Research Committee (DRC) was created. They are responsible for evaluating and approving research proposals and other related research initiatives from the schools and community learning centers (CLCs) to be funded under BERF, evaluate and approve research proposals and other related research initiatives within the schools' division to be funded by other fund sources and forge partnerships with academic and research institutions, government agencies, and other DepEd offices on education research initiatives and projects.

The R&D CI team is only expecting 18 action researches from the CI teams. However, because of the intervention implemented – Project SMILE with a HEART in Research by the Division Research and Development CI Team, there were 33 researches submitted by the CI teams and approved by the Division Research Committee. It demonstrates that the intervention implemented was very effective, with 100% approval of action researches submitted.

Submitted and Approved CI Researches as of June 2018

Team	Expected No. of Researches to be submitted	No. of Submitted Researches	No. of Approved Researches	% of Approval
Class 3	18	33	33	100%

The competency level of the 18 the Continuous Improvement Teams of Class III on action research process after the implementation of the Project SMILE with a HEART in Research of SDO Camarines Sur. It was disclosed that the competency level of the CI teams is highly competent after the intervention was implemented with a weighted average of 4.9.

Among the 15 indicators cited, the top 3 were: 1.) Citing the direct research beneficiaries could be in persons or groups and how they will benefit in the present study with a weighted mean of 4.97, 2) Format of the report of the research project completed as per DepED Order No. 16, s. 201, with a weighted mean of 4.94. Deciding and developing the title of the study based on the statement of the problem, with a weighted mean of 4.93 and Setting the parameters of the action research project - the research variables included and excluded to the present study with a weighted mean of 4.93.

On the other hand, the last three with also high rating were: (1) writing conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study in the present tense, with a weighted mean of 4.97, (2) organizing the findings of the study according to the order of the statement of the problem using the past tense of the verb, with a weighted mean of 4.94 and (3) describing the data-gathering instruments to be used and its administration, with a weighted mean of 4.85 and presenting, analyzing and interpreting data according to the order of the statement of the problem using tables/graphs/figures/ documents/actual words in case of interview/observation and other qualitative research tools, with a weighted mean of 4.85.

Furthermore, the Competency Level of the members of 18 the CI Teams of Class III on the action research process before and after the implementation of Project SMILE with a HEART in Research. It is very evident that there is an increase of 2.46 after the implementation of Project SMILE with a Heart in Research. The general weighted average before the implementation of the intervention is 2.44 – Moderately Competent, and it becomes 4.9 – Highly Competent, after the implementation of the intervention Project SMILE with a HEART in Research.

Among the indicators stated, the following were the top 3 improved competencies (1) Identifying the research design/method appropriate and accurate to the action research topic, with an increase of 2.79, (2) Writing the statement of the problem in question or declarative form, with an increase of 2.59) and 3.) Describing the data gathering instruments to be used and its administration, with an increase of 2.5.

On the other hand, the three less improved competencies were: (1) Citing the direct research beneficiaries could be in persons or groups and how they will benefit in the present study, with an increase of 1.46, (2) Constructing the background of the study by directly stating valid and reliable reasons for conducting action research, with an increase of 2.1, and 3.) Applying an American

Psychological Association (APA) format in citing reference materials or reliable sources and documentation, with an increase of 2.17.

CONCLUSIONS

In support of the Department's policy development process, research agenda, and policy and program development and implementation, the Department of Education (DepEd) continue to promote and strengthen the culture of research in basic education. DepEd hereby establishes the Research Management Guidelines (RMG) to provide guidance in managing research initiatives in the national, regional, school division, and school levels. The enclosed policy also improves support mechanisms for research, such as funding, partnerships, and capacity building.

Teachers encountered difficulties in writing or preparing action research proposals. Some are engaged in teaching-learning related projects or programs, others would have limited time in research writing due to ancillary services, and few have an adverse impression about the research approval process in the division office.

Based on the gathered data in SDO Camarines Sur, there were only two basic researches, and seven action researches were approved and funded by the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF) in 2016-2017. Relative to this, the Division Research and Development Team conceptualized and implemented a SMILE with a HEART in Research Project. The team used the word SMILE and HEART to represent and symbolize positive outlook and insights about research.

Under the Project SMILE, different sub-projects were implemented, namely: Project SHARE, Project MENTOR, Project INITIATE, Project LEARN, and Project EXCEL. Different activities/strategies were employed, such as training, mentoring and coaching, visual management, mistake proofing, and simplified process. These activities were extremely accepted and demonstrated that it was very effective, with 100% approval of researches submitted. So it is very evident that the project SMILE with a HEART in Research implemented improves research competencies of teaching and non-teaching personnel in the DepED SDO Camarines Sur, and it develops a positive attitude towards research undertakings.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The outcomes of this study may be best translated into a sustainable basis for academic collaboration between internal and external stakeholders within and across the board. This can be linked to DepEd Programs/Projects measurement and evaluation for policy, program development, and utilization.

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