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Van-Trung Tran[1]

Anh-Chuong Huynh-Lam[2*]

Ngoc-Bich Vu-Thi[3]

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[1]Office of Postgraduate Academic Affair, Thu Dau Mot University, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam.
[2]Faculty of Education, Thu Dau Mot University, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam and Faculty of Science Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
[3]Ngoc-Bich Vu-Thi, Faculty of Management Science, Thu Dau Mot University, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam.

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Van-Trung Tran[1], Anh-Chuong Huynh-Lam[2*], Ngoc-Bich Vu-Thi[3]
[1]Office of Postgraduate Academic Affair, Thu Dau Mot University, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam.
[2]Faculty of Education, Thu Dau Mot University, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam and Faculty of Science Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
[3]Ngoc-Bich Vu-Thi, Faculty of Management Science, Thu Dau Mot University, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam.
*Corresponding Author
Email: trungtv@tdmu.edu.vn, chuonghla@hcmue.edu.vn, vtnbich@tdmu.edu.vn

ABSTRACT
Educational action research has attracted significant attention from teacher-researchers and school administrators in recent years due to the method's effectiveness in teaching practices. Besides, educational action research skills are regarded as one of the essential aspects of doing action research. The present study aims to examine administrators' and teachers' perceptions of their educational action research skills; compare educational action research skills between the trained and the untrained groups and between the group that conducted the research and the group that did not. Quantitative research was used in this research. The study used the 11-item scale to survey 255 respondents (16 administrators and 239 teachers) from eleven high schools in Binh Duong province, Vietnam. The descriptive analysis was used to assess perceptions of high school administrators and teachers on their educational action research skills. Our results indicate that administrators and teachers assess their educational action research skills at very good. The trained group's educational action research skills are higher than the untrained group. Educational action research skills of the group conducted research are higher than the group that did not. The present findings provide more information on educational action research among administrators and teachers in Binh Duong province. Educational action research training programs, workshops, and educational policies should be implemented to reinforce and promote educational action research skills.

Keywords: administrators, educational action research, high school, skills, teachers

INTRODUCTION

Research plays a vital role in enhancing teaching and learning methods among teachers. In education, applying research has been called educational action research, classroom action research and teacher research. Action research is a process that participants systematically examine their educational practices (Ferrance, 2000); a systematic, reflective and collaborative approach for planning, implementing and assessing changes in the classroom and school (Mills, 2000); reflective process that improves the teaching practice and the curriculum (Nelson, 2013); an exemplary paradigm of teacher professional learning for quality instruction (Wei et al., 2009). According to Rawlinson and Little (2004), action research is a model of professional development in which teachers investigate student learning about their teaching. Action research is a teaching, learning, and decision-making process that could be applied in various ways to support students' and teachers' learning processes (Hewitt & Little, 2005). Action research is regarded as a new paradigm that empowers teachers to monitor their teaching and practices more autonomously (Kayaoglu, 2015). Action research is also a method or tool for enhancing teachers' competence to design instruction and school curricula (Hairon, 2017). Action research enhances and improves teachers' professional learning and teaching when they collaborate with researchers as equal partners (Leeman et al., 2018). As a description of Sagor (2000), educational action research can be conducted by a single teacher, a group of colleagues who have an interest in a common problem, or the entire school faculty. Educational action research is described as a method for instructors to improve their teaching and learning practices in collaboration with one another and a facilitator (Hardy et al., 2018).

The benefits of doing educational action research in administrators and teachers have been documented in several studies for a long time. Throughout the action research process, teachers could improve their professional standpoint and teaching and acquire knowledge in research (Vogrinc & Zuljan, 2009); solve problems arising within their classrooms, develop and change the teaching practices and curriculum reform

(Burns, 2009), improve academic performance and promote positive behavior, reflect on their teaching and learning processes (Burns, 2011; Dick, 2006; Taylor & Medina, 2011). Previous studies showed that teachers could understand the instructional practices, evaluate classroom issues and analyze their capabilities (Holly et al., 2005; Yee & Teoh, 2015). Action research has been seen as a basis for professional development, an information base for reflective practice, providing knowledge for classroom practice and filling the gaps between theory and practice (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Edwards-Groves & Kemmis, 2016). Furthermore, action research can be used to solve educational problems like teaching and learning, classroom management, community and school relations, assessment and instructional strategy (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Mertler, 2019; Ulla, 2018). Thus, educational action research is critical for future teachers who want to improve their evidence-based teaching practices.

The steps in conducting action research have been thoroughly studied and well documented for a long time. According to Sagor (2000), there were seven steps in doing action research: selecting a focus, clarifying theories, identifying research questions, collecting data, analyzing data, reporting results, and taking informed action. As a report of Hairon (2017), there were nine essential and specific tasks that teachers should acquire to conduct action research: establishing the research problem (reflect on the current situation); searching and reading relevant literature about the problem; establishing the purpose of the study; crafting the research question; framing the design of the study (research design or approach, collecting data, analyzing data); organizing the findings; summarizing the conclusion of the study; exploring the implications of the study; writing the report of the study and sharing the study findings (suggestion for further investigations). Mertler (2019) showed that conducting an action research study involved nine steps: (1) identifying and limiting the topic, (2) gathering information, (3) reviewing the related literature, (4) developing a research plan, (5) implementing the plan and collecting data, (6) analyzing the data, (7) developing an action plan, (8) sharing and communicating the results, (9) reflecting on the process. Tindowen et al. (2019) study on 60 Philippine teachers showed that data collection, presentation, and publication of results were the most difficult skills.

Several scientific studies have focused on action research among high school teachers (Mirici & Uzel, 2019). Salcedo-Relucio (2019) showed that conducting action research could improve teachers' knowledge, research skills, strategies, social skills, and teaching-learning problems. A study by Burns and Rochsantiningsih (2006) on Indonesian teachers indicated that teachers could feel self-improvement, gain new knowledge, and empower professionally after participating in a six-month action research project. Additionally, teachers showed that conducting action research at school could enhance their knowledge and skills. Besides, they also revealed that they have no knowledge and skills about conducting action research due to a lack of related seminars and training programs. Likewise, in a study involving 52 teachers in National High School, Abelardo et al. (2019) showed that teachers cannot conduct research and report study findings due to a lack of related research training.

In Vietnam, action research has been concerned and applied more in schools. However, only a few studies have been conducted in Vietnam on this topic (Pham et al. 2019, Tran-Chi et al. 2019), particularly for high school administrators, teachers, and other school personnel. In a study involving 30 teachers, Anh (2017) reported that teachers felt confident conducting action research with 74% and 90% of teachers developed the knowledge after participating in an action research course. According to Hien (2009), action research is appropriate for education since it supports teachers to act as researchers to solve their teaching problems. Moreover, teachers could learn and enhance their teaching processes. Van (2020) showed that action research played an essential role in teacher professional development.

The education system's demands have shifted rapidly, leading administrators and teachers to invest in school curriculum development and teaching processes. Education institutions should consider many factors to meet these demands of a rapidly changing world. Conducting action research has been seen as a primary function of administrators and teachers in the twenty-first century. Many previous studies found that knowledge and skills-related educational action research are a significant challenge for administrators and teachers. To our knowledge, few studies have investigated educational action research and required educational action research skills in Vietnam, especially regarding high school administrators and teachers in Binh Duong Province. Our research examines administrators' and teachers' perceptions of their educational action research skills; compares educational action research skills between the trained and the untrained groups and between the group that conducted the research and the group that did not to bridge this gap. The study begins by conducting a literature evaluation on educational action research among high school administrators and teachers. The second portion discusses the research methods. The following parts introduce the research findings and debate. The last section of the report discusses some of the most important views and consequences of the study.

METHODS

Participants

Descriptive quantitative research was used in this research. Participants were recruited from eleven high schools in Binh Duong province, Vietnam. All participants provided informed consent after receiving an explanation of

the purpose of the research. A survey instrument was distributed to 255 respondents, all of which were returned. The sample consisted of 16 administrators and 239 teachers, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: An overview of survey participants (N = 255)

School	Administrators n = 16		Teachers n = 239	
	n	%	n	%
An My High School	3	15.0	17	85.0
Binh An High School	2	9.5	19	90.5
Hung Vuong Gifted High School	0	0.0	21	100.0
Le Loi High School	2	10.0	18	90.0
Long Hoa High School	0	0.0	1	100.0
Minh Hoa High School	4	6.5	58	93.5
Nguyen Dinh Chieu High School	0	0.0	16	100.0
Tan Phuoc Khanh High School	3	7.3	38	92.7
Thuong Tan High School	0	0.0	6	100.0
Trinh Hoai Duc High School	2	7.4	25	92.6
Vo Minh Duc High School	0	0.0	20	100.0

Measurement

The questionnaire was designed to survey eleven high schools in Binh Duong Province, Vietnam. The questionnaire has 11-item and those are equal to 11 educational action research skills. In our sample, Cronbach's alpha was 0.96, indicating that the scale is significant and reliable. The questionnaire is based on a 5-point Likert scale, which was used for all items, ranging from one to five (1 = Very Poor; 2 = Poor; 3 = Fair; 4 = Good; 5 = Very good). Guidance for participants was provided at the top of the form. The present study focused on analyzing three-level (fair to excellent level) administrators' and teachers' perceptions of their educational action research skills. Accordingly, two levels (good-very good) were grouped to good and very good. The intermediate level (fair) was still unchanged.

RESULTS

The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) estimate for this sample was 0.96, a value that is very high. Perceptions of administrators and teachers on their educational action research skills are shown in Table 2. The mean score of the sample on perceptions of administrators and teachers on their educational action research skills (M = 4.48, SD = 0.914).

Table 2: Administrators' and teachers' perceptions of their educational action research skills

Skills	Total Sample					Administrators and teachers were trained for educational action research skills		Administrators and teachers conducted at least one research on educational action research		Administrators	Teachers
	3 (Fair)	4-5 (good-very good)	M	SD	Order	M (Yes)	M (No)	M (Yes)	M (No)	M	M
Identifying the current situation	21.5%	76.8%	4.52	0.884	3	4.62	3.93	4.65	4.10	4.50	4.52
Defining a research problem	19.3%	79.9%	4.59	0.824	1	4.64	4.23	4.68	4.26	4.75	4.58
Choosing a study design	24.4%	73.6%	4.45	0.928	10	4.56	3.83	4.57	4.02	4.75	4.43
Writing a research proposal	23.4%	74.2%	4.46	0.930	8	4.55	3.93	4.62	4.00	4.50	4.46

Collecting the data	24.2%	73.8%	4.46	0.925	9	4.53	4.00	4.59	4.05	4.50	4.45
Analyzing and evaluating the data	20.9%	77.1%	4.52	0.889	2	4.58	4.14	4.63	4.17	4.50	4.52
Proposing solutions based on the current situation	22.3%	74.9%	4.47	0.932	6	4.52	4.07	4.61	4.00	4.50	4.47
Reporting research results	22.3%	74.9%	4.47	0.945	7	4.53	4.12	4.57	4.16	4.63	4.45
Applying study findings to teaching practices	20.6%	76.9%	4.51	0.914	4	4.60	4.02	4.66	4.02	4.88	4.48
Sharing and guiding colleagues to apply their study findings to teaching practices	22.4%	75.6%	4.49	0.907	5	4.57	3.98	4.66	3.92	4.88	4.47
Presenting at seminars and conferences	24.8%	71.5%	4.39	0.979	11	4.47	4.00	4.56	3.94	4.38	4.40
Total	22.4%	75.4%	4.48	0.914		4.16	3.67	4.21	3.69	4.20	4.08

*Note: %: Percentage; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation

Table 2 reveals the 11-item regarding to administrators' and teachers' perceptions of their educational action research skills, indicators with mean score ranging from the highest to the lowest as below: Defining a research problem (M = 4.59, SD = 0.824); Analyzing and evaluating the data (M = 4.52, SD = 0.889); Identifying the current situation (M = 4.52, SD = 0.884); Applying study findings to teaching practices (M = 4.51, SD = 0.914); Sharing and guiding colleagues to apply their study findings to teaching practices (M = 4.49, SD = 0.907); Proposing solutions based on the current situation (M = 4.47, SD = 0.932); Reporting research results (M = 4.47, SD = 0.945); Writing a research proposal (M = 4.46, SD = 0.930); Collecting the data (M = 4.46, SD = 0.925); Choosing a study design (M = 4.45, SD = 0.928); and Presenting at seminars and conferences (M = 4.39, SD = 0.979) with the lowest mean score.

The overall mean score and mean scores of each educational action research skill were above 4.2, indicating a very good level of administrators' and teachers' educational action research skills. However, analyzing percentages showed that more than 20% of administrators and teachers choose a fair level. Based on these findings, training courses for administrators and teachers should be designed and developed. Specifically, the four worst educational action research skills must be improved: writing a research proposal, collecting the data, choosing a study design and presenting at seminars and conferences.

The trained group (M = 4.16) had significantly higher overall mean score and mean scores of each educational action research skill than the untrained group (M = 3.67). This result revealed that training programs were practical because they helped administrators and teachers enhance their educational action research skills. Therefore, it is vital to organize training courses on educational action research skills for administrators and teachers. Additionally, the group that conducted the research (M = 4.21) had significantly higher overall mean scores and mean scores of each educational action research skill than those that did not (M = 3.69).

DISCUSSION

The aims of the present research: examine administrators' and teachers' perceptions of their educational action research skills, compare educational action research skills between the trained and the untrained group, and compare educational action research skills between the group conducted the research and the group that did not. According to the findings, many administrators and teachers rated their educational action research skills very good. The trained group had higher educational action research skills than the untrained groups. Another finding was those who conducted research had higher action research skills than those who did not.

The overall mean score and mean scores of each educational action research skill were above 4.2, indicating that administrators' and teachers' educational action research skills are at a good level. This result indicates that high school administrators and teachers have already been equipped with essential skills in conducting educational

action research in general. Meanwhile, four educational action skills need to be improved: writing a research proposal; collecting the data; choosing a study design, presenting at seminars and conferences with the lowest mean score. The findings are directly in line with the previous finding that collecting the data and presentation at seminars must be enhanced and improved in teachers (Tindowen et al., 2019). Therefore, seminars and conferences related to educational action research should be developed to enhance action research skills.

Our results demonstrated that the trained group had higher overall mean score and mean scores of each educational action research skill than the untrained group. These findings suggested that training educational action research could help administrators and teachers improve their knowledge and skills. The findings are directly in line with previous findings that participating in action research projects and courses could help them improve their knowledge, research skills and gain new knowledge (Anh, 2017; Burns & Rochsantiningsih, 2006). Another conclusion was reached by (Vogrinc & Zuljan, 2009) showed that a lack of related research training programs led to teachers lacking the capacity to conduct research and report study findings.

Moreover, the group that conducted the research had higher overall mean score and mean scores of each educational action research skill than those that did not. Salcedo-Relucio reached a similar conclusion reported that doing action research could improve teachers' knowledge and research skills, strategies, social skills, and teaching-learning problems. Many studies have been conducted to examine the role of doing educational action research among teachers (Holly et al., 2005; Levin & Rock, 2003; Strickland, 1988; Vogrinc & Zuljan, 2009; Yee & Teoh, 2015).

This study has limitation. The first is the sampling process that the sample was selected randomly in Binh Duong province, which limits the generalizability for the other administrators and teachers. Therefore, the greater number of administrators and teachers should be expanded to other areas in Vietnam for potential study in the future.

CONCLUSION

Educational action research is a reflective process in which participants systematically examine their educational practices and improve teachers' professional learning and practice. The present research makes a substantial contribution on the issue, as follows: (i) it highlights that administrators' and teachers' perceptions of educational action research skills are at good level; (ii) it shows that the trained group had a higher overall mean score and mean scores of each educational action research skill than the untrained group; (iii) it shows that the group that conducted the research had a higher overall mean score and mean scores of each educational action research skill than the group that did not; (iv) it provides implications to Binh Duong' educational practice on educational action research skills among administrators and teachers. School administrators and teachers must be encouraged and supported to conduct educational action research by developing an educational action research policy for them, such as rewards and remunerations. Some required skills in conducting action research should be improved as writing a research proposal, collecting the data, choosing a study design and presenting at seminars and conferences. Thus, it is highly suggested that training programs, workshops on educational action research, and educational policies should be developed to enhance educational action research skills. Future research should consider the potential effects of educational action research training programs and conducting action research on administrators' and teachers' knowledge and skills in educational action research. It is noted that appropriate policies should be considered and developed to enhance conducting action research among teachers.

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