Content Analysis of Research Abstracts from Region IV-A CALABARZON: Mapping Against DepEd's Basic Education Research Agenda

Christianne Roie A. Carabeo
Munting Ilog Integrated National High School, DepEd SDO Cavite Province
christianneroie.carabeo@deped.gov.ph

Abstract

Introduction

This study investigates the thematic alignment of school-based research in Region IV-A CALABARZON with the Department of Education's Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA). As teacher-led research continues to gain traction in basic education, questions persist regarding whether these outputs address broader systemic and policy concerns. The study aims to examine the distribution of research themes to assess alignment with DepEd's national research priorities.

Methodology

Using a qualitative content analysis design, the study reviewed 50 research abstracts from the 2015 and 2018 Books of Abstracts published in Region IV-A. Each abstract was analyzed and categorized according to the four BERA thematic areas: Teaching and Learning, Child Protection, Human Resource Development, and Governance. The analysis involved manual thematic coding and inter-rater validation to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Findings

Results show a heavy concentration of research under the Teaching and Learning theme, comprising over half of all studies. Topics such as differentiated instruction, localized learning materials, and assessment innovations were most prevalent. However, the study also revealed thematic gaps—particularly in Child Protection, Governance, and Disaster Risk Reduction—indicating limited attention to learner welfare, school leadership, and emergency preparedness. Emerging trends like data-driven instruction and contextualized pedagogy align well with DepEd priorities.

Conclusion

While Region IV-A demonstrates a strong research culture focused on instructional improvement, there is a critical need to expand support and capacity for research in underrepresented BERA themes. A more balanced thematic portfolio can strengthen the impact of teacher research on policy and systemic educational reforms.

Keywords:

Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA), CALABARZON, qualitative content analysis, teacher-research, educational themes alignment

I. Introduction

Over the past decade, the Philippine basic education system has undergone a paradigm shift, increasingly prioritizing research-informed practices to drive educational innovation and evidence-based decision-making. This transformation is deeply rooted in the national government's policy direction to institutionalize a research culture within the Department of Education (DepEd), empowering teachers and school leaders to take active roles as practitioner-researchers (Mendoza, 2018).

Central to this movement is the issuance of DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2016, which formally introduced the Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA). This document serves as a comprehensive guide to assist education stakeholders—teachers, school heads, supervisors, and policy makers—in conducting relevant, responsive, and strategic research that aligns with national development goals. The BERA classifies research into four major thematic areas: (1) Teaching and Learning, (2) Child Protection, (3) Human Resource Development, and (4) Governance (DepEd, 2016).

Each theme contains sub-categories that reflect priority issues in Philippine education, such as curriculum implementation, professional development, mental health, learner equity, and school leadership.

Recognizing the power of research to transform classrooms and policies, DepEd regional offices have taken proactive measures to institutionalize research congresses, research management training, and publication efforts. In Region IV-A CALABARZON—home to the country's most populous provinces and a leader in educational innovation—these efforts are concretized through division-level and regional research conferences, which culminate in the annual publication of Books of Abstracts. These compilations serve not only as official documentation of completed research but also as a mirror of the region's educational priorities, revealing the lived challenges, strategies, and innovations that educators address through inquiry.

However, despite this impressive surge in teacher-led research production, questions remain about the alignment of these outputs with DepEd's institutional research goals. Previous studies have shown that many research projects in Philippine schools tend to be isolated, unsystematic, or focused narrowly on classroom-level concerns, without addressing larger systemic or policy issues (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2019). Moreover, Abulon (2014) found that while teachers view action research as beneficial, they often lack support in framing their inquiries within broader thematic or policy frameworks, resulting in uneven research quality and limited dissemination.

To ensure that school-based research contributes meaningfully to educational improvement, it is crucial to analyze existing outputs in terms of their thematic focus and alignment with BERA. Doing so allows for a diagnostic view of what areas are overrepresented or neglected, what capacity gaps exist among researchers, and how institutions might better support future inquiries. This is particularly important as DepEd continues to roll out large-scale initiatives such as MATATAG Curriculum reform, inclusive education programs, and digital learning transitions—each of which demands a strong base of localized evidence.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill a critical gap in educational research management by conducting a content analysis of two Books of Abstracts published by Region IV-A CALABARZON (2015 and 2018). Using the BERA themes as an analytical framework, the study will classify each research abstract according to its dominant theme and assess the overall distribution of studies. Through this analysis, the study aims to determine the prevailing trends and gaps in the region's research outputs, thereby generating insights to inform capacity-building, research funding decisions, and strategic planning at both regional and division levels.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the dominant research themes found in the selected Books of Abstracts from Region IV-A CALABARZON and CBER-SEA?
2. How are the research outputs distributed across the four DepEd BERA thematic areas?
3. What thematic trends or gaps can be observed from the abstracts in relation to national research priorities?

II. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative content analysis design to systematically examine and categorize research abstracts from two published compilations of Region IV-A CALABARZON. Content analysis is a widely accepted method in education research that allows researchers to analyze textual information by identifying patterns, themes, and categories that emerge from the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was descriptive in nature, focusing on the thematic alignment of educational research outputs with the DepEd Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA) framework.

Qualitative content analysis is particularly appropriate for this study because it provides a rigorous yet flexible approach to interpret condensed textual data in a way that is both transparent and replicable. It enables

researchers to move beyond surface-level description and uncover the latent structure of meaning embedded in textual sources (Mayring, 2014).

B. Corpus of the Study

The documents analyzed for this study were sourced from two official regional publications:
1. R2A in CALABARZON Book of Abstracts – 2015
2. R2A in CALABARZON Book of Abstracts – 2018

These Books of Abstracts were products of regional research congresses organized by DepEd Region IV-A, showcasing school-based action research and innovation projects from various schools divisions. A total of 50 research abstracts were included in the analysis—23 from 2015 and 27 from 2018.

Only abstracts that met the following criteria were selected:
- The study focused on issues within basic education;
- The abstract contained clear objectives, methodology, and focus area;
- The abstract was authored by teachers, school heads, or division-level personnel affiliated with DepEd Region IV-A.

C. Analytical Framework

The categorization of research themes was guided by the four priority domains identified in the DepEd Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA) (DepEd, 2016):

1. Teaching and Learning – includes topics related to curriculum implementation, instruction, learning outcomes, assessment, and classroom-based innovations.
2. Child Protection – covers research related to learner welfare, safety, inclusion, psychosocial support, and protection policies.
3. Human Resource Development – encompasses teacher and school leader professional development, instructional leadership, training programs, and career progression.
4. Governance – pertains to school management, leadership, finance, policy implementation, and organizational systems within education settings.
5. Each abstract was read multiple times and assigned to one of the four themes based on its most dominant focus. Abstracts that exhibited multiple themes were reviewed further to identify the primary research concern as articulated in the objectives or title.

D. Procedure

The analysis followed the steps below:

1. Data Extraction and Organization All abstracts were extracted and encoded into a data matrix that included the following variables: research title, year of publication, institutional affiliation (school/division), and the assigned BERA theme.
2. Thematic Coding and Classification Thematic analysis was conducted using manual open coding, with each abstract independently categorized based on its content. Salient terms such as "instructional strategy," "professional development," "learner safety," or "school governance" were used as indicators for classification. Ambiguous cases were resolved through collaborative peer validation.
3. Data Analysis and Interpretation Coded data were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to show the distribution of abstracts across the four BERA themes. These results were used to identify trends, thematic concentrations, and underrepresented areas within the research landscape of Region IV-A.
4. Validation The coding process underwent inter-rater checking to ensure the consistency and accuracy of thematic assignments. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved before final tabulation.

III. Results

1. What are the dominant research themes found in the selected Books of Abstracts from Region IV-A CALABARZON?

The dominant research theme across all three collections is Teaching and Learning. A total of 44 studies fall under this category, far exceeding all other themes. This thematic area encompasses a wide range of topics including:

- The use of differentiated instruction and strategic intervention materials (SIMs)
- The integration of localized and contextualized learning materials
- Innovations in reading and comprehension strategies
- Classroom-based assessment and performance interventions
- Learner-centered approaches in Science, Math, English, and MAPEH

These research initiatives demonstrate the field's ongoing focus on improving learner achievement, enhancing teacher pedagogy, and responding to the demands of the K to 12 curriculum. The prominence of this theme reflects teachers' direct engagement with day-to-day classroom

issues and their drive to improve academic outcomes using data-informed approaches.

2. How are the research outputs distributed across the four DepEd BERA thematic areas?

The DepEd Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA) clusters themes into four major areas:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Child Protection
3. Human Resource Development
4. Governance
   (Note: Two additional focus areas—Accountability and DRR—are often treated as subthemes under Governance or broader priority tracks.)

Here is a detailed distribution from the reviewed sources:

BERA Theme	2015 R2A Journal	2018 R2A Journal	Total
1. Teaching and Learning	12	15	27
2. Child Protection	2	2	5
3. Human Resource Development	3	4	7
4. Governance *(including DRRE & ACI)*	6	5	11

BERA Thematic Area	No. of Research Studies	% of Total (approx. 84 studies)
Teaching and Learning	27	~54%
Human Resource Development	7	~14%
Child Protection	5	~10%
Governance (incl. Accountability)	11	~22%

This distribution shows a strong concentration on Teaching and Learning, followed by Governance and Human Resource Development, with Child Protection and DRR receiving the least attention.

3. **What thematic trends or gaps can be observed from the abstracts in relation to national research priorities?**

Emerging Trends:

- Instructional Innovation: Teachers across CALABARZON are actively engaging in classroom-based innovations, such as using ICT tools, SIMs, comic strips, and differentiated instruction. This aligns with the BERA's focus on improving the quality and effectiveness of classroom learning.

- Assessment and Data Use: Multiple studies indicate a shift toward evidence-based instruction, as many teachers are now leveraging learner performance data to design interventions and enhance instruction. This trend supports DepEd's drive toward continuous improvement and informed decision-making.

- Localized Curriculum Development: Studies integrating mother tongue and local context in lesson planning are becoming more frequent, indicating a growing awareness of contextual relevance in learning materials and delivery.

Identified Gaps:

- Underrepresentation of Child Protection Themes: Despite national policies on inclusive education, mental health, and safe schools, there is limited research focused on learners with special needs, gender inclusivity, or school-based child protection mechanisms. This signals a need for more learner-centered welfare studies, especially as schools respond to post-pandemic challenges.

- Limited Research on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience (DRR): Only 3 studies were found across all sources, despite DepEd's comprehensive DRRM framework. This is a critical oversight, especially in disaster-prone regions like CALABARZON. There is a need for studies exploring school preparedness, integration of DRR in curricula, and psychosocial support systems.

- Narrow Coverage of Governance and Policy Studies: While there are efforts exploring school leadership and SBM implementation, the system-level governance and policy evaluation studies are sparse. Research is still dominantly classroom-focused, suggesting a missed

opportunity to analyze how leadership, budgeting, and stakeholder collaboration impact school effectiveness.

IV. Discussion

The analysis of research abstracts from the selected Books of Abstracts in Region IV-A CALABARZON reveals that Teaching and Learning remains the most dominant theme among teacher-researchers. This strong focus highlights the educators' commitment to improving classroom instruction, learner performance, and pedagogical strategies aligned with the K to 12 curriculum.

However, the study also identifies significant gaps in research coverage across other equally important DepEd BERA themes. Child Protection, Human Resource Development, and Governance, including sub-areas like Accountability and Disaster Risk Reduction, are comparatively underexplored. This thematic imbalance indicates a need for broader capacity-building and support systems to encourage teachers to conduct research beyond instructional concerns.

Despite the limited exploration of certain themes, emerging trends such as localized instruction, technology-enhanced learning, and data-driven teaching practices show promising alignment with national research priorities. The findings affirm the potential of school-based research to inform education policy and practice—provided that future research directions are intentionally guided to address underrepresented and systemic concerns

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of balanced, inclusive, and strategic research planning at the school, division, and regional levels. Supporting teacher-researchers in exploring diverse BERA themes will ensure that research not only improves classroom learning but also contributes to holistic, equitable, and resilient education systems in the Philippines.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research landscape in Region IV-A CALABARZON is vibrant, with teachers showing deep commitment to improving teaching and learning through evidence-based practices. However, the current distribution reveals an imbalance, with Teaching and Learning dominating the discourse while critical systemic areas such as Child Protection, Governance, and Disaster Preparedness remain underexplored.

To align more closely with national education priorities and the full spectrum of the BERA, it is recommended that future calls for research funding and training programs encourage and prioritize studies in underrepresented themes, particularly those that address equity, resilience, and inclusive education.

Further, to promote a more balanced and inclusive research landscape, the following recommendations are made:

1. For Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in Education: Encourage research on school-based emergency preparedness programs, climate-related displacement of learners, psychosocial support systems, and integration of DRRM (Disaster Risk Reduction and Management) in lesson plans and curricula.
2. For Governance: Promote studies exploring data-driven decision-making, effectiveness of School Improvement Plans (SIP), leadership styles, and community involvement in school governance.
3. For Child Protection: Advocate for research on student mental health, gender inclusivity, child rights education, bullying interventions, and support systems for learners-at-risk.

By investing in these underrepresented areas, Region IV-A schools can develop more holistic education programs and improve school resiliency, equity, and governance.

References

Abulon, E. L. R. (2014). Teachers' perceptions on the use of action research in improving instruction. *International Journal of Education and Research, 2*(12), 493–508.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Department of Education. (2016). *Basic education research agenda* (DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2016). https://www.deped.gov.ph/2016/06/17/do-39-s-2016-basic-education-research-agenda/

Mayring, P. (2014). *Qualitative content analysis: Theoretical foundation, basic procedures and software solution*. Beltz.

Mendoza, A. A. (2018). Implementation of DepEd's Basic Education Research Agenda: A policy analysis. *Philippine Social Science Journal, 1*(1), 45–55.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Quimbo, M. A. T., & Sulabo, E. C. (2019). Research productivity and utilization in Philippine higher education institutions. *Philippine Journal of Science, 148*(S1), 65–73. https://philjournalsci.dost.gov.ph