

Teachers' Continuing Professional Development Based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

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ABSTRACT: In a changing and developing educational system, working diligently and carrying on the role of a teacher becomes undaunting and unsettling without the standards and norms. Standards of teaching and learning have become a need to provide effective strategies for 21st-century learners. In this way, teachers ascertain the provision of quality education which is the fourth goal of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2017). As to the public schools, the Philippine Professional Standard for Teachers (PPST) was adopted and implemented by the Department of Education which was categorized into Seven (7) Domains including Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, Learning Environment, Diversity of Learners, Curriculum and Planning, Assessment and Reporting, Community Linkages and Professional Engagement, and Personal Growth and Professional Development. The PPST becomes the basis of measurement and evaluation of teaching proficiency for both elementary and high school teachers which is founded on the ideas of education for sustainable development. This study employed a qualitative-inquiry-based type of research where survey questionnaires were distributed among the chosen samples through purposive sampling to provide more tangible and reliable results in determining their perception of the utilization of PPST in the classroom. The results emphasized that the utilization of the PPST and its framework helps ensure that Filipino educators have the knowledge and abilities needed to create a positive and productive learning environment for all students that leads to enhanced learning outcomes and a more resilient educational system.

KEYWORDS: teachers, Philippine Professional Standard for Teachers, professional development, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Teachers incorporate an extraordinary part within the educational context. The teachers assume the responsibility to maintain and sustain their professional growth and progression (Section 16, Education Act of 1982) for the betterment of learning outcomes. As a pillar of nation-building through creating able and competent students, teachers must move forward with the quality of instruction through upgrading their proficient competencies and maintaining the education standards (Bantoc, 2022). Teacher's three aspects of proficient competencies include the cognitive, emotional, and practical aspects (Gepila, 2019).

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), the teacher's professional learning and progression are of great importance to the regulating bodies and school leaders to lay down and support the various aptitudes of students to be prepared for their life and careers in the 21st century". To recognize this importance, a set of norms capsulized within the Philippine Professional Standard for Teachers (PPST) were adopted and implemented by the Department of Education which was categorized into Seven (7) Domains with its strand stated under DepEd Order 42, s. 2017. As stipulated, the PPST shall be used as a basis for all learning and development for teachers to ensure that teachers are properly equipped to effectively implement the K to 12 Program and can also be used for the selection and promotion of teachers.

The PPST which was a revision of the National Competency-Based Teacher Standard (NCBTS) emphasizes setting distinct and clear expectations of teachers embodying the career stages of professional learning and development to maintain best practices in the classroom, in engaging teachers to actively embrace continuing and collaborative efforts in attaining proficiency, as well as in applying a uniform measure to assess performance, to identifying concerns, and providing support for professional development of teachers. Dep Ed is into the revision of the set of standards to cope with the changes in the national and global frameworks and

Teachers' Continuing Professional Development Based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

recognizes the importance of these professional standards in the continuing professional development and progression of teachers focusing on the principle of lifelong learning.

In the public schools, the PPST framework is the basis of measurement and evaluation of the teaching proficiency for both elementary and high school teachers which is founded on the ideas of education for sustainable development and seeks to raise educational standards by endorsing efficient methods of instruction. The PPST consists of seven domains, including (1) Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, (2) Learning Environment, (3) Diversity of Learners, (4) Curriculum and Planning, (5) Assessment and Reporting, (6) Community Linkages and Professional Engagement, and (7) Professional Growth and Professional Development. Roberto and Madrigal (2018) have indicated in their study a strong correlation between teachers' performance as educators and their competency in various domains. The PPST is regarded as crucial for improving teacher quality and maintaining national teaching standards. It is used as a quality assurance tool in the K to 12 curriculum's implementations.

The implementation of the PPST faces various challenges and issues. According to a study by Gepila (2020), the difficulties include managing time, insufficient understanding of the PPST, and motivating faculty members to engage with the standards.

It draws attention to the deficits in teachers' ability to manage learner diversity as outlined in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, indicating a need for development in this area. Also, Malunes et al. (2020) added that there are challenges in effectively integrating constructivist, collaborative, inquiry-based, integrative, and reflective methods into teaching practices. To improve teaching practices and attain better learning outcomes, a connection between required pedagogy and teaching standards had to be made (Roallos, 2022). There are also concerns regarding the level of teaching competence among public elementary school teachers, especially about educational attainment, teaching experience, and assessor designation. Moreover, time management issues, a lack of knowledge about the PPST, and faculty motivation are some of the challenges that are pointed out by Alugar and Itaas (2021). To ensure that the PPST framework is implemented effectively, addressing these issues requires a focus on adaptability management, innovation encouragement, and continuous performance monitoring (Iquiña, 2023). Enhancing the teacher's proficiency is of utmost importance for the advancement of the students' lifelong learning. Thus, the PPST framework must provide continuing professional development and support for teachers as a vital aid to raising student achievement.

Commitment to support teachers, and take cognizance of research evidence that good teachers are vital in raising students' achievement and in attaining transformative learning, therefore, this study aims to enhance teacher quality by proposing action points for faculty development based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers.

Research Objectives

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) serves as a framework in the Philippine educational system, to promote ongoing professional development for educators and improve teaching practices. This inquiry-based research explores the perception, practice as well as challenges of teachers in incorporating the seven domains of the PPST into professional development activities.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the inquiry-based research design. The descriptive approach to inquiry (Braun and Clarke, 2006) involves the researcher staying close to the data, using limited frameworks and interpretations, and cataloging the data into themes.

This study utilized a semi-structured interview schedule (Hammond & Wellington, 2020). A set of open-ended questions were validated by school leaders who have first-hand experience in school management. The study was conducted in a public elementary school in one of the cities in Central Visayas, Philippines.

The participants of the study were teachers teaching from kindergarten to grade six in an elementary school of the Department of Education.

There was a total of seven participants who were interviewed. Most of them were females. Three of them were aged 30 years old and below while the other three were under 31-40 years old. Only one has an age bracket of 41-50 years old. All the participants earned their baccalaureate degrees. However, three were able to pursue their graduate studies. In terms of teaching experience, five were new to the Department of Education and two of them were able to teach for 11 to 20 years already. Since the participants were teaching in an elementary school, most of them were teaching Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (Values Education) and Music Arts, Physical Education, and Health, followed by English and Mathematics. Three were teaching Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies) and Filipino while two were teaching Science and Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education.

After seeking approval from the school principal, the 45-minute interview commenced. The transcription of the participants' responses was transcribed. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach was used to identify the emergent themes.

The ethical considerations were always observed. The identities of the participants were kept confidential. No section in the paper revealed the details of the individual participants. The transcripts both print and non-print were disposed of permanently after the completion of the study. There is no conflict of interest in the conduct of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The responses of the respondents were categorized according to the domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). They expressed their need for enhanced professional activities in each domain.

Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) depends on how teachers interact with the students in their day-to-day activities. This includes the practices that they learn during their preparation and the varied experiences that they gain during ongoing school activities. Moreover, it also comprises teachers' integrated knowledge representing teachers' accumulated wisdom concerning their teaching practice: pedagogy, students, subject matter, and the curriculum (Somani, 2022).

According to Magnusson et al. (1999) cited by Quigley (2023), numerous studies have shown that teachers with strong PCK are more effective in delivering content in a way that makes it accessible and understandable to their students, ultimately leading to better learning outcomes. Teachers expressed that *"having an in-depth knowledge of the different theories and principles of teaching and learning enables educators to design and deliver instruction that is effective, engaging, inclusive, and suited to the needs of diverse learners"* (P1); *"enhancing the effectiveness, fostering student success, and contributing to a positive learning environment"* (P2); and *"guiding them as educators in understanding how students acquire knowledge, develop skills and modify behaviors"* (P3) should be considered in the faculty development program. The faculty development initiatives *"greatly help the teachers in framing their strategies to meet the learners' diverse learning styles and academic needs"* (P6). These views of the teachers support the findings of Quinco et al. (2022) that training helps the faculty develop the competencies and skills needed to provide quality education.

An effective teacher must have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach. As well as a strong understanding of the material being taught, teachers must also understand the ways students think about the content, be able to evaluate the thinking behind students' methods and identify students' common misconceptions (Coe et al., 2014). The teacher-participants mentioned that *"to ensure the mastery of the subject matter then, teachers need to adapt pedagogical approaches to cater to various learning styles and abilities"* (P1) *"of the learners by focusing on the content, building upon prior knowledge to deepen understanding, involving learners with active learning activities that have real-world applications and encouraging metacognition for learners to be aware of their comprehension"* (P2). *"Teachers must also continue their professional development like attending workshops or seminars"* (P7) *"to continuously update the understanding of the subject matter and integrating real applications into the lessons"* (P3). In this way, the teachers can *"connect the lessons within and across the learning area, giving the learners meaningful experiences and importance in their daily lives"* (P5). Also, *to ensure the interconnectedness of the content in teaching diverse learners, "teachers must adopt contextualized learning"* (P1, P5), *integrated learning* (P1, P3, & P6), *collaborative learning* (P1), *incorporating real-world examples* (P1, P7), and *utilizing differentiated activities"* (P1, P2).

Learning Environment

The learning environment where teaching and learning will take place focuses on the social, psychological, and psychosocial circumstances (Radovan & Makvec, 2015) as well as the emotional, and mental conditions of the learners. To encourage students to interact with each other respectfully and assume responsibility for their actions developing their affective development, teachers have noted that these will be attainable through *"encouraging reflection, empathy, and self-awareness"* (P5 and P2), *modeling positive, respectful relationship and behavior* (P1, P2, P5, P3), *"set ground rules for respectful communication"* (P2) and *clear expectations* (P3) at the beginning of the class.

The study of Radovan and Makvec (2015) pointed out that as an important factor of learning, the environment results in learning achievements. Thus, teachers must *"allow learners to express their insights"* (P5, P4). The learning environment describes the quality of the personal relations of learners and adapting to tensions and responding to inappropriate, disrespectful, and misdemeanor. *Teachers must understand the context of the dispute* (P3, P4), *address matters privately* (P2, P6), *maintain fairness* (P3, P5), and *remain calm in situations"* (P2). Moreover, teachers must allow the learners to *"reflect on their behavior and take responsibility for their actions"* (P1, P2, P5). *"Calling parents when necessary"* (P6) and *writing incident reports and anecdotal records* (P6) are also evident in the present study.

In the present study, the learning environment *"promotes learners' engagement"* (P5), *limits factors that lead to disruptive behavior* (P5), *lessens possible hazards in the classroom* (P1 and P5) *as well as potential electrical hazards"* (P2). *"Comfortable, and safe learning environments"* (P1, P6) and *well-being are of top priority* (P2, P3, P4, P6).

Diversity of Learners

Teachers are dealing with diverse learners in their day-to-day interaction in the school setting. One evidence of learners' diversity is their giftedness and talents. One gift or talent may be present in a learner but not in others. Teachers implore needed interventions to identify the learners' giftedness or talents (Moon & Brighton, 2008). They recognize the learners' giftedness or talents through activities, assessment, and observation. With the provision of activities, not just the teachers but also the learners discover their strengths. Accompanied by close observation of the teachers, activities lead the learners to the discovery of their gifts and talents. Learners develop their gifts and talents with differentiated activities and enrichments (George, 2013). It is supported by

Teachers' Continuing Professional Development Based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

the teacher-participant's views on the provision of activities who said, *"I keenly observed pupils' interest during various learning tasks, activities, and subjects to identify areas where they demonstrate exceptional abilities, enthusiasm and/or creativity"* (P2). Also, *"as teachers, we make sure that we provide them with activities to explore themselves and discover their potentials beyond what they think they are capable of"* (P6) and *"provide them with different activities where they can showcase their talents and skills"* (P4).

Another way of discovering learners' giftedness and talents is through assessment. A teacher-participant (P1) *believed in the provision of varied assessment tools to know their learners' strengths*. Further, a teacher (P7) said *"I would use a variety of assessment tools and techniques which I can assess the learners' different aspects of giftedness"*. Correspondingly, assessment results also show that learners are in difficult circumstances. Low scores in assessment manifest a poor performance. It was said that *"learners are in difficult circumstances when they show their performances poorly that can be determined by some factors affecting their poor performances in the classroom"* (P5). Another teacher-participant mentioned that *"when a learner is performing low in class, the assessment results show may reveal one's emotional or intellectual status"* (P6). These statements are supported by Rodriguez (2010) who said that teachers' assessment strategies have meaningful connections to the learners' academic fulfillment. However, learners may also experience some challenges that might affect their understanding of the lessons and learning in general (Quinco-Cadosales et al., 2021).

It is also noted that behavior issues are determinants of learners in difficult circumstances. The participants (P1, P7) stated that learners are having behavioral issues and there are changes in behavior. Also, a teacher-participant (P5) responded *"It will be very evident physically if learners are in difficult circumstances for some of them may talk, some may be lonely, others misbehave."* This observation is confirmed by Myers (2004) cited in the study of Vongvilay and Fauziati (2021), that learners manifest misbehavior when they are experiencing unfavorable situations. Socioeconomic status is also seen as a determining factor in learners' difficult circumstances. *"The family background, (P1) parental absence, and lack of parental support led to learners' struggles to reach their full potential"* (P2). To guide the learners, the teacher-participants suggested *"to develop learners' creative thinking and problem-solving skills, boost their confidence, and encourage them to apply and advance their knowledge and skill set"* (P5). Additionally, a participant (P6) added that *"to empower the learners, they can be given equal opportunities of expressing themselves, by maintaining a learner-centered classroom"* (P1). As Keefe and Jenkins (2002 in McCombs and Miller, 2007) asserted, schools may initiate educational settings that help learners be critically aware and continually reflect on the teaching-learning process to help learners become confident and empowered.

Curriculum and Planning

Curriculum and planning are interconnected in that there is action-reflection-action, to corroborate the success of the whole desired process for students' learning (Nogueira, 2021). The teacher-participants claimed that *"curriculum and planning are setting clear learning objectives (P1, P2, P3, P5, P7) taking into consideration the SMART objectives (P5), and using a variety of teaching strategies and providing feedback"* (P7). In curriculum and planning, the teacher had to *"set clear learning goals (P2, P7), design engaging lessons (P1, P2, P3), consider student needs (P1, P5, P6,), use of formative assessment, integrate technology, and foster active learning (P4) and use appropriate teaching strategies"* (P6). Further, *"one must know and understand the learner's need, also consider the teaching/learning activities fit the learners' level"* (P5).

In curriculum and planning, *"lesson planning is an effective way of ensuring that the lessons are well-aligned and there is interconnectedness in every part"* (P6). *"The use of differentiated instructions (P7) must continuously evaluate the learning process and assess the learner's progress"* (P1). In addition, *"curriculum mapping ensures that learning outcomes are aligned with the learning competencies (P5) and provides opportunities to practice and apply the identified competencies for the learners to be globally competitive"* (P2).

Nowadays, *"the students are living in the digital age, which means gadgets are everywhere. Therefore, the use of ICT to integrate into the curriculum is more idealistic for these millennial students"* (P7). *"The use of technology contributes to enhancing the quality of education, making the learning process more engaging, preparing students for the digital world, developing their digital literacy, and supporting teacher professional development"* (P1). *"Educators should be dynamic"* (P2, P3), and *"ensure that student-centered learning environments are aligned with the PPST. Technology is needed to develop the students' 21st-century skills"* (P4).

"Professional collaboration allows teachers to learn from each other" (P7, P4), *"by fostering the sharing of best practices, peer observations, and feedback, and providing support and mentorship"* (P1, P2), and *"can enhance teaching practices through the sharing of resources, strategies and insights"* (P4, P3). *"It can create a truly shared common vision and goal, develop a sense of community and oneness, work through conflict, and share knowledge and ideas that could progress and improve your personal and professional growth"* (P6). The accounts of the teacher-participants showed the importance of curriculum and instruction. However, their continuous improvement had to be ensured. Bacus and Tagalog (2023) emphasized that contextualized professional development initiatives foster teacher quality. Moreover, Quinco et al. (2023) emphasized the value of training in developing

Teachers' Continuing Professional Development Based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

employees' specialized abilities. It is a means of assisting people in carrying out their duties in an efficient, effective, and responsible manner.

Assessment and Reporting

Aligned assessments ensure that students are evaluated by the curriculum's specific knowledge, abilities, and competencies. In this way, the students are prevented from acquiring ineffective lessons but rather their attention is focused on the essentials in learning. As the teacher-participants (P3, P6) specified that *"teachers need to clearly, fairly, and directly define their expected learning outcomes in order to plan for the appropriate assessment tools to be used."* Further, a participant (P2) added that *"teachers need to take considerations and use strategies like understanding the learning objectives and competencies; breaking down objectives and competencies; select assessment methods; design assessment tasks; consider differentiated approaches; and provide clear instructions."*

In the 21st century, traditional assessment might not fully capture the students who learn differently. The assessment of 21st-century skills, including creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, requires moving beyond traditional evaluation methods to capture the multifaceted nature of student learning and individual strengths (Feybesse et al., 2023). A participant (P2) agreed that *"assessment strategies must cater to the varied abilities and learning styles of the learners. Providing students a variety of assessment options allows learners to demonstrate their understanding and skills in ways that best suit their strengths and preferences."* Another participant (P1) said, *"I used differentiated instruction to enhance the students' reading comprehension, writing skills, and problem-solving skills. I employed group work to build teamwork. I also used rubrics to evaluate their performance tasks."* A participant (P2) added that *"some of the differentiated assessments I used in my class to address the different learning styles of my pupils include written tests, projects, portfolios, art works, dramatization/role playing, and some assessments that use online applications/technology as the need arises."* Moreover, a participant (P5) mentioned that *"like in Math for instance, if learners were not able to satisfactorily manage expectations, they must be given a remediation and are evaluated with the same skill, but of different kinds of assessment aligned in their capacity and standard expectations."*

Effective assessment does not end with students' performance rather teachers must also practice effective feedback and reporting. According to Fletcher (2023), feedback tailored to individual student needs enhances their ability to reflect on their learning and take actionable steps toward improvement. Students can modify their study habits and learning strategies to focus on areas that require improvement when they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. *"Teachers must provide clear, timely, constructive, and encouraging feedback with transparent rubrics for grading criteria to foster a growth mindset that enhances the students' learning experience"* as claimed by the participants (P1, P3). Also, a participant (P2) emphasized the *"importance of aligning the feedback to the learning objectives."*

The fifth domain of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers highlights that effective assessment is more than just assessing performance. It gives students the chance to get concise, useful feedback that enables them to pinpoint their advantages, disadvantages, and areas in need of improvement (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), this feedback process encourages students' metacognition and self-control, which eventually leads to deeper learning.

Community Linkages and Professional Engagement

"It takes a village to educate a child" is a famous African proverb. It means that all members of the village have a task to do to contribute to the educational process of every member. And that each one is a contributor in creating a safe, positive and healthy environment for every child to grow, learn and experience the quality basic education.

"The whole school community covering the internal and external stakeholders must be interacting, collaborating, engaging and must create a lasting partnership with the end goal of giving quality education for every Filipino child" as claimed by the participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7). *"The key for this lasting partnership between the school and other members of the community is through constant communication"* according to the participants (P2, P6, P7) which *"should be clear and proper"* (P1). Communication can be done through a quarterly Parents-Teachers Association (PTA), homeroom meetings, quarterly Parents' General Assembly, quarterly School Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adjustment (SMEA), State of the School's Address (SOCA), home visitations, parents conferences, Local School Board meetings, Brigada Eskwela and other School Programs, Projects and Activities. This is an avenue where open communication could be maintained among the stakeholders who are directly involved in safeguarding quality education.

In the implementation of the activities, *"the school can showcase the school updates, progress reports"* (P1, P3). In this way, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and goals will be realized, and the stakeholders will be informed of the school's progress. In return, *"the school community can gain a hundred percent support"* (P3, P7) from the *"internal stakeholders (teachers, parents, learners) and external stakeholders (government officials, local business leaders, community leaders, non-government organization leaders, alumni, and other volunteers. These stakeholders are the strong pillars of our school organization to stand and function"* as narrated by a participant (P6). Participants also claimed that *"they can share their ideas, expertise, and own perspective in creating school improvement and increase the learners' achievement rate"* (P4, P6, P7). *"These partnerships build a strong relationship, sense of trust, shared decision-making and responsibility among members"* (P1, P2). Being one with the community

Teachers' Continuing Professional Development Based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

is an indicator of a child-friendly school aside from being gender- sensitive, inclusive and learner-centered. This kind of school considers the best interest of the child.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

Goal setting, self-reflection, and upholding a growth attitude are all components of personal progress. Educators who want personal development always to aim to improve their abilities, expertise, and efficiency in the classroom. This could entail evaluating teaching methods, actively searching for professional development opportunities, and asking peers and superiors for feedback. Thus, a *"learner- centered classroom should be established to empower students' passion and strength"* (P1, P6). Which supports what Hayes Mitchell writes, cited by Stanley (2023) that the most effective professional development engages teams of teachers to focus on the needs of their students. They learn and solve problems together to ensure all students achieve success. Workshops, conferences, graduate school classes, and cooperative learning opportunities like learning action cell are just a few of the many activities that fall under the umbrella of professional development. *"Relevant and interesting learning opportunities in line with the needs of educators are the hallmarks of effective professional development. Additionally, it ought to give educators the chance to investigate cutting-edge pedagogies, technological resources, and educational research. To enhance professional development, focus only on objectives, manage obstacles and distractions and lastly make learning a habit"* (P5). As stated by Stanley (2023), without a commitment to continuous learning and support, teachers may hesitate to implement new strategies and ideas in their classrooms. This can lead to unproductive uses of time and resources. It's crucial to make sure teachers receive the necessary support as they strive to enhance their teaching methods. Teachers who are exposed to quality professional development are more likely to see an increase in their skills and abilities (Liu et al., 2015; Xie et al., 2017). Early career teachers tend to focus on classroom management strategies while teachers later in their career focus on ways to enhance their pedagogical teaching practices (Furner & McCulla, 2019). Further, Eguico et al. (2023) listed the formation activities recommended by teachers for continuous personal and professional improvement.

Involving teachers to the different workshops to better their craft is like an investment. It will illustrate human capital versus human profit. but the later will be more in number. All teachers must be open-minded and be very willing to submit themselves in all kinds of communities of practice for through these they can upgrade and refine their skills and capabilities. This supports in general, that teaching is a career that necessitates constant learning and adjustment. Teachers may stay up to date with best practices, enhance student outcomes, and contribute to their own professional success and fulfillment by making personal growth and professional development a priority.

CONCLUSION

The framework of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers ensures that the Filipino teachers have the knowledge and abilities needed to create a positive and productive learning environment to safeguard quality teaching and learning. Teachers combine their subject matter competence with student-centered pedagogies to have better learning gains and a culturally responsive learning environment where respect, empathy, and reflective behavior are modeled and developed. They promote academic success and socio-emotional growth among students. Their ability to utilize developmentally appropriate assessment tools are imperative in guiding the progress of students of the 21st century. Continuous personal and professional development is inevitable among teachers.

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