

Professional knowledge and teaching practices among public secondary school English teachers: Implications for instructional effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

Professional knowledge and practices play a vital role in ensuring effective English teaching and improving learners' academic achievement in secondary schools. However, despite the recognized importance of teacher competence, limited local studies have examined the level of professional knowledge and practices among English teachers in the public secondary schools of Cabagan District. This study determined the professional knowledge and practices for effective English teaching among public secondary school teachers in Cabagan District, Isabela. Using the descriptive survey method, data were gathered from twenty-one (21) English teachers through a validated questionnaire and unstructured interviews. Frequency, percentage, and weighted mean were utilized in the statistical treatment of data. Findings revealed that the respondents demonstrated a "Very Competent" level in content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, classroom management, classroom assessment, and professional practices. Although teachers encountered certain challenges related to administrative support, workload, and professional development opportunities, these were generally perceived as only slightly crucial. Overall, the study concludes that teachers' professional competence, reflective practice, and commitment to professional growth contribute significantly to effective English teaching and improved learner outcomes.

Keywords: Professional knowledge, professional practices, English teaching, classroom management, teacher competence.

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INTRODUCTION

The shift from merely knowing something to knowing how to apply it in practice highlights the importance of professional knowledge in every field. Professional knowledge combines theoretical understanding and practical application, together with the capacity for critical reflection. This integrated relationship forms a multidimensional framework that guides professional practice. In the context of teacher education, this study assumes that the pedagogical act, like the clinical or legal act, possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it as a specialized professional practice. Wenger (1998) emphasized that teacher learning is

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grounded in collaborative and community-based professional practice, where professional growth develops through shared learning experiences among educators.

This study focuses on the dimension of professional identity, which is considered one of the central concerns in teachers' personal and professional development. The professional exercise of teaching has a structural and referential unit, the pedagogical act, which differentiates teaching from other professions as a socially, culturally, scientifically, and ethically legitimate practice. Emery (1996) stressed that reflective practice and collaborative professional learning are essential in enhancing teachers' professional growth and instructional competence.

The Philippines, like many nations, continues to strive toward providing quality education for all learners. In response to educational challenges, the Department of Education (DepEd) launched the National Learning Program (NLP) to improve students' learning outcomes. The program seeks to address issues related to accessibility, equity, and quality in the Philippine educational system.

DepEd envisions an educational system that produces globally competitive and holistically developed learners. Through the NLP, the agency aims to create a learner-centered educational environment that develops critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills while fostering patriotism, social responsibility, and cultural awareness. Hetman and Slomianko (1986) explained that critical thinking strategies and problem-solving skills are important components of effective learning, enabling learners to analyze problems systematically and improve academic performance.

Furthermore, the National Reading Program aims to improve learners' literacy and intellectual growth through reading sessions, assessments, and other literacy-related activities designed for elementary and secondary students. DepEd remains committed to ensuring that every Filipino learner has access to quality education that will enable them to succeed in life and contribute meaningfully to national development.

This study seeks to investigate the importance and effectiveness of DepEd's National Learning Program in improving students' academic performance, particularly in reading skills. It also aims to determine whether continuous reading using various instructional methods influences students' proficiency and academic performance across different subject areas. Ohi (2007) found that teachers' professional knowledge in reading instruction is greatly influenced by their teaching experiences, professional development activities, and collaboration with colleagues, all of which contribute to improved reading instruction and learner achievement.

The findings of this study are expected to provide significant insights into how the National Reading Program contributes to learners' literacy development and intellectual growth. Moreover, this study aims to examine the concept of reading, its significance, and effective strategies for reading instruction and improvement. Murcia (1998) emphasized that teachers must understand learners' backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses to effectively deliver language instruction and develop communicative competence among learners.

Finally, this study assumes that professional teacher educators must provide differentiated training that develops a form of knowledge that both identifies and distinguishes teachers professionally Professional Knowledge of Teachers. Fahey and Prusak (1998) argued that professional knowledge is dynamic and continuously evolving through practice, interaction, and experience rather than merely being transmitted through traditional professional development activities.

Professional practice elements help teachers devote more time and support to improving instructional practices through the examination of reading concepts, their significance, and effective strategies for reading instruction and development. This serves as the primary motivation for conducting the study. Cohen and Hill (2000) further noted that professional

development focusing on instructional methods and subject-specific teaching strategies significantly improves teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

Statement of the problem

Effective English language teaching in public secondary schools demands a high level of professional competence encompassing both knowledge and practice. Teachers of English are expected to possess mastery not only of content and pedagogy but also of curriculum design, learner characteristics, instructional media, classroom assessment, and educational objectives, alongside demonstrable professional practices rooted in accountability, fairness, and efficiency. In the context of the Cabagan District, where public secondary school teachers serve diverse learner populations under varying institutional conditions, understanding the extent of teachers' professional knowledge and practices becomes essential to informing capacity-building efforts and improving instructional outcomes. This study therefore focused on the professional knowledge and practices for effective English teaching in the public secondary schools of Cabagan District, with the intent of identifying existing competencies, surfacing experienced setbacks, and determining whether demographic and professional characteristics significantly influence teachers' perceptions of those challenges. In light of the foregoing, this study sought to address the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, latest performance rating, present position, number of years in teaching, and level of seminars attended in English instruction?
2. How competent are the teachers in English instruction in terms of professional knowledge covering content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, instructional media, knowledge of educational context, art of questioning, classroom assessment, knowledge of educational objectives, and knowledge of classroom management practices, as well as professional practices covering service to the public, obligations, accountability, fairness and integrity, and efficiency and effectiveness?
3. What setbacks are encountered by the respondents in relation to professional knowledge and practices, and to what extent are these experienced?
4. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' perceptions of the setbacks encountered in professional knowledge and practices when grouped according to gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, latest performance rating, present position, number of years in teaching, and level of in-service training attended?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the descriptive survey method to determine the professional knowledge and practices for effective English teaching in the public secondary schools in Cabagan District, Isabela. According to Good and Scates, the descriptive method is concerned with existing conditions within a group and provides a quantitative description of its general characteristics. Likewise, Calmorin explained that the descriptive design is appropriate when determining the extent to which varying conditions exist among subjects, while Andales (1992) stated that descriptive surveys describe situations as they occur and investigate the causes of particular concerns.

The study was conducted in the public secondary schools in Cabagan District, Cabagan, Isabela. The respondents consisted of twenty-one (21) teachers from Cabagan Riverside

National High School, Rodolfo B. Albano Stand-Alone Senior High School, and Delfin Albano High School.

The researcher utilized a questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument and an unstructured interview as the secondary instrument to validate and verify the responses obtained from the questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared based on a careful review of related literature and studies and was divided into three parts: respondents' profile, professional knowledge and practices, and setbacks encountered. The instrument underwent a try-out among teachers from other districts in the Schools Division of Isabela to establish validity and reliability before its final administration.

In the conduct of the study, the researcher sought permission from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent and coordinated with school heads for the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaires. Follow-ups were conducted to ensure a complete retrieval of the research instruments.

For the statistical treatment of data, frequency and percentage were used to determine the profile of the respondents, while weighted mean was employed to analyze the extent of competence and the seriousness of setbacks encountered by the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed that most of the respondents were within the age bracket of 31–35 years old, comprising 33.33% of the respondents, while female teachers dominated the sample with 76.19%. Married respondents accounted for 71.43%, and 42.86% had been teaching for 1–5 years. Moreover, most respondents had already pursued graduate education, with 66.67% earning master's degrees and 19.05% completing doctoral studies. These findings imply that the teaching workforce in Cabagan District is composed of academically prepared and professionally advancing educators. Wenger (1998) emphasized that professional growth flourishes within communities of practice where collaboration and continuous learning enhance teachers' competencies and professional identity. Similarly, Kennedy (1998) found that professional learning communities strengthen teachers' instructional competence and classroom performance through collaborative professional development. The findings therefore suggest that the respondents' advanced educational attainment may contribute positively to their instructional effectiveness and professional engagement.

In terms of professional knowledge, the respondents demonstrated a "Very Competent" level in content knowledge, obtaining an overall weighted mean of 4.63. Teachers highly rated mastery of subject matter, understanding difficult concepts, and helping learners comprehend lessons effectively. These findings support the assertion of Murcia (1998) that teachers must possess strong knowledge of learners and subject matter in order to determine appropriate instructional starting points and language structures to be taught. Likewise, Ryan (1974) identified mastery of subject matter as one of the essential characteristics of effective teaching. The respondents' strong ratings imply that teachers possess the disciplinary expertise necessary to facilitate meaningful learning experiences and improve learner achievement.

The integration of technology in instruction also received a high rating, indicating that respondents recognize the importance of digital tools in promoting meaningful learning. This finding aligns with Leal's (1978) view that the availability of instructional materials and conducive learning environments contributes significantly to learner development and improved academic outcomes. The result further suggests that teachers are adapting to contemporary instructional demands by incorporating technology-enhanced learning strategies.

Pedagogical content knowledge likewise obtained a “Very Competent” rating with an average weighted mean of 4.63. Teachers demonstrated competence in making lessons understandable, adapting instructional strategies to learner needs, and integrating interdisciplinary approaches in teaching. This finding is consistent with Ohi’s (2007) study, which revealed that teachers’ professional knowledge in reading instruction develops through experience, observation, and professional interactions with colleagues. The findings indicate that respondents can transform content knowledge into learner-responsive instruction, an essential characteristic of effective English teaching.

Curriculum knowledge was also rated positively, particularly in terms of awareness of instructional materials, teaching procedures, and student-centered approaches. However, it obtained the lowest mean among the professional knowledge indicators. This finding may imply that although teachers are knowledgeable about curriculum implementation, there remains a need for continuous curriculum enhancement and training. Fahey and Prusak (1998) argued that professional knowledge is dynamic and continuously evolving rather than fixed or static. In this regard, teachers need sustained professional development opportunities to remain responsive to curricular reforms and emerging instructional trends.

The respondents were also found “Very Competent” in understanding learners and their characteristics, obtaining an average weighted mean of 4.24. Observation, home visitation, and involvement in extracurricular activities emerged as the highest-rated indicators. These findings support Marina’s (2001) claim that teachers who adapt instruction according to learner profiles contribute to improved student achievement. The findings therefore indicate that respondents value learner-centered and relationship-oriented teaching practices.

Classroom management also registered a “Very Competent” rating with an overall weighted mean of 4.40. Teachers highly valued participatory rule-setting, positive reinforcement, educational technology, and prompt responses to misbehavior. This result confirms Kounin’s (1970) argument that proactive classroom management practices establish environments conducive to learning. Similarly, Brophy (1999) explained that effective classroom management is closely associated with effective instruction and student engagement. The findings imply that respondents employ supportive and organized management approaches that foster discipline, accountability, and learner participation.

The respondents likewise demonstrated a “Very Competent” level in classroom assessment practices, with an overall weighted mean of 4.65. Teachers showed strong competence in constructing varied assessments, interpreting results, conducting item analysis, and using assessment outcomes to improve instruction. This finding supports Cohen and Hill’s (2000) study, which found that teacher professional development positively influences classroom performance and learner achievement. The findings suggest that respondents recognize assessment as an integral component of the teaching-learning process rather than merely a grading mechanism.

With regard to professional practices, teachers exhibited exceptionally high competence in public service, obligations, accountability, fairness, integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness. The findings indicate that respondents demonstrate professionalism, ethical responsibility, and commitment to learner welfare. Wenger (1998) emphasized that collaborative professional communities strengthen professional identity and shared accountability among educators. Likewise, Emery (1996) highlighted the importance of reflective practice and collaborative teacher learning in improving educational environments and sustaining professional growth. The results therefore suggest that respondents uphold professional values that contribute to positive school culture and effective instructional delivery.

As to the problems encountered, the respondents rated the challenges along professional knowledge as “Slightly Crucial,” particularly in relation to inadequate administrative support, difficult working conditions, and limited professional growth opportunities. These findings may indicate that although teachers remain competent and committed, institutional barriers still affect their professional advancement. Park and So (2014) found that teachers often encounter time constraints, psychological pressures, and limited authentic discussions despite valuing collaborative professional learning opportunities. Similarly, Weiner (2003) argued that institutional and environmental conditions may negatively affect instructional effectiveness and teacher motivation.

Problems encountered along professional practices were interpreted as “Least Crucial,” with concerns centered on administrative workload, time constraints, and limited resources. Despite these challenges, the low severity ratings imply resilience and adaptability among teachers. Oliver, Wehby, and Reschly (2011) emphasized that effective educational environments and preventive management practices help reduce disruptions and sustain productive learning conditions. Thus, the findings suggest that teachers continue to perform their professional responsibilities effectively despite institutional limitations.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the study demonstrates that teachers in the public secondary schools of Cabagan District possess strong professional knowledge and professional practices. Their competence in instruction, classroom management, assessment, and professional ethics reflects their commitment to quality education and learner development. The findings further affirm existing literature that professional growth, collaboration, and reflective practice contribute significantly to effective teaching and improved educational outcomes.

Teachers should continuously strengthen their pedagogical content knowledge by improving their ability to make lessons comprehensible and meaningful to students through the use of examples, metaphors, analogies, illustrations, activities, assignments, and demonstrations. They should also employ teaching strategies that suit the nature, needs, and learning styles of students. Moreover, teachers must deepen their understanding of difficult concepts and common learner misconceptions to facilitate more effective instruction. They should likewise integrate interdisciplinary approaches that demonstrate the interconnectedness of different subject areas.

In terms of curriculum knowledge, teachers should explore alternative teaching tools and learning methods to enrich instruction. They should also remain aware of the competencies and lessons being taught in other subject areas to ensure coherence and meaningful integration of learning experiences.

Regarding classroom management, teachers should encourage students to participate in establishing classroom rules and guidelines. Classroom policies should be properly documented, positive behavior should be reinforced through recognition and rewards, and inappropriate behavior must be addressed promptly and appropriately to maintain a conducive learning environment.

For classroom assessment, teachers should utilize varied assessment methods and understand the strengths and limitations of each type of assessment. They should also provide immediate and constructive feedback that students can apply in improving their learning performance.

In the area of public service, teachers should treat students, parents, colleagues, and other stakeholders with courtesy, fairness, and respect. They should remain sensitive to the diverse social, cultural, and educational needs of learners and organize instruction accordingly.

Teachers are likewise encouraged to support and implement the educational goals and priorities of the school system and collaborate effectively with fellow professionals, parents, and the wider community to promote quality education.

Furthermore, teachers should continue motivating students to strive for excellence, value learning, and uphold academic standards while ensuring that assessment and recording of student performance are aligned with Department of Education policies and procedures.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct related studies using other variables and wider populations in order to further enrich the understanding of teachers' professional knowledge and professional practices.

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