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Teaching practices, challenges, and instructional quality of Neophyte teachers

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ABSTRACT

This survey-correlational research investigated the level of teaching practices, challenges, and instructional quality of neophyte teachers. The participants of this study were the eighty – five (85) neophyte teachers in public elementary and secondary schools in Unit III composed of four districts in the Division of Aklan for school year 2025 – 2026. The independent variables of the study were the teaching practices and challenges encountered, while the dependent variable was the instructional quality of neophyte teachers. The data in this study were gathered using a 20 - item researcher-made Teaching Practices of Neophyte Teachers Questionnaire, a 19 – item researcher-made Challenges encounter of Neophyte Teachers Questionnaire, and a 20 – item researcher-made Instructional Quality of Neophyte Teachers Questionnaire. The descriptive statistics used in the study were the mean and standard deviation. Moreover, for inferential statistical tools, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson r were utilized. The alpha level of significance was set at 0.05. Based on the results, the major findings of the study were the following: The overall level of teaching practices of neophyte teachers was "very high" in terms of lesson planning preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment of learning and feedback. For the level of challenges encountered by neophyte teachers, the overall rating was "moderate" in terms of instructional delivery, classroom management, workload and administrative tasks, and support and mentoring. When it comes to instructional quality, the overall level was "very high" in terms of lesson effectiveness, student engagement, learning environment quality, learning outcomes. The correlation between teaching practices and challenges encountered was found not significant. In contrast, a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship was observed between teaching practices and instructional quality. Meanwhile, the relationship between challenges encountered and instructional quality was found not statistically significant.

Keywords: Teaching practices, challenges, and instructional quality of Neophyte.

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INTRODUCTION

Newly qualified teachers who have just started their careers in education are in the process of moving from theoretical knowledge to practical application in the classroom (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). In the Philippines, neophyte teachers in the Department of

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Education (DepEd) are those who have recently been hired, typically with 0 to 3 years of experience in the public school system. They are commonly seen as novice educators who fulfill the necessary qualifications to enter the teaching field but are still in the initial phase of enhancing their instructional skills and managing a classroom effectively (DepEd Order No. 11, s. 2019).

The teaching methods of novice teachers involve not just imparting knowledge but also effectively managing student behavior, setting up routines, and experimenting with innovative instructional strategies (Mananay and Sumalinog, 2024). In the process of building their confidence, new educators tend to try out a range of teaching practices. They utilize various fellows, approaches, implement different techniques, seek assistance and support from parents or other community members, learn by observing their colleagues, and request guidance from fellows especially the seasoned teachers (Tantiado and Enriquez, 2024). Neophyte teachers also focus on clearly communicating the objectives of their lessons, evaluating their interactions with students, and working to organize their teaching methods effectively (Cabrera and Baguio, 2025).

Neophyte teachers with one to three years teaching in service commonly face various challenges such as managing classroom behavior, delivering the curriculum, planning lessons, grading, and adjusting to the school environment. Because of these challenges, they often require mentorship and structured assistance through initiatives like the Teacher Induction Program (TIP) to facilitate a smooth transition into the teaching profession and to enhance their instructional strategies and skills (Balutoc, 2023). In a research study conducted by Tantiado and Enriquez in 2024, it revealed that there are several challenges the neophyte teachers had faced, these include uncomfortable students in the classroom, makeshift classroom or temporary learning facility (TLF) which is not conducive for learning, language barriers between teacher and students, and struggle in managing the class.

Teachers can be categorized in several ways, including “born teachers” who thrive with little guidance and supervision, “potentially competent teachers” who require experience and oversight, and “misplaced individuals” who may face greater challenges in the teaching field. Effective mentorship, technical assistance, and induction programs are essential for the development and success of these educators (Aquirre and Faller, 2017).

These approaches lay the groundwork for instructional quality or effectiveness, illustrating how teachers plan/design lessons, deliver or facilitate learning, select and use teaching materials including integration of technologies, manage classrooms, and evaluate student learning and provide feedback. Nevertheless, neophyte teachers frequently encounter challenges in successfully implementing these strategies due to insufficient experience, lack of professional guidance, and contextual obstacles in the school setting. The quality of instruction is defined by well-defined goals, stimulating teaching techniques, efficient evaluation, and constructive learning environments that enhance student success. Ultimately, effective instruction plays a crucial role in improving student performance and contributing to the overall development of schools (Stronge, 2018).

Teachers in the K-12 system and 21st century learning are expected to adopt innovative, student-focused methods that foster critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration among students. Nevertheless, many new teachers are still adapting to these demands, resulting in discrepancies between theoretical understanding and practical application.

Considering this context, this study intends to investigate the teaching practices and challenges faced by neophyte teachers and how these aspects affect the quality of their instruction. The results provide new teachers with ideas to value self-awareness and practical strategies and learn to evaluate their baseline instructional competence—such as lesson preparation, instruction delivery, classroom management, questioning techniques, and positive

use of ICT—helping them identify strengths and gaps early in their careers. The results are predicted to offer important perspectives for school heads to plan, design and provide technical assistance; conduct school learning action cell (LAC), and implement school-based training to address the needs of the novice teachers; for the educational leaders to design and conduct trainings and teachers induction programs (TIP) to enhance knowledge and develop skills of beginning teachers; and for Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) to review and improve their BS Education programs aligned with real-world needs. For the students to understand and help new teachers to adjust and improve.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the teaching practices, challenges, and instructional quality of neophyte teachers during the School Year 2025 - 2026.

Specifically, study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of teaching practices of neophyte teachers as a whole and in terms of lesson planning preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment of learning and feedback?
2. What is the level of challenges encountered by neophyte teachers as a whole and in terms of instructional delivery, classroom management, workload and administrative, and support and mentoring?
3. What is the level of instructional quality of neophyte teachers as a whole and in terms of lesson effectiveness, student engagement, learning environment quality and learning outcomes?
4. Are there significant relationships among teaching practices, challenges encountered, and instructional quality by neophyte teachers?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design utilizing stratified random sampling to determine the required distribution of respondents. The participants of the study were 85 out of 108 neophyte teachers, defined as those with 0 to 3 years of teaching experience, employed in the identified public elementary and secondary schools within the Geographical or Spatial Clustering (Unit III), composed of the Districts of Lezo, Malinao, Makato, and Numancia, Division of Aklan, for the school year 2025-2026. Stratified random sampling was employed by drawing separate random samples from each stratum, following the procedure described by Sullivan (2008). A stratified proportional random sampling technique was used in determining the required number of respondents per district, while the total number of participants to be selected was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. Proportional allocation was applied to obtain the appropriate sample size from the various groups or classes of the population involved in the study. Based on this distribution, the district of Lezo had a population of 9 neophyte teachers with a corresponding sample of 7, the district of Malinao had a population of 36 with a corresponding sample of 28, the district of Makato had a population of 36 with a corresponding sample of 28, and the district of Numancia had a population of 27 with a corresponding sample of 22, yielding a total population of 108 neophyte teachers and a total sample of 85 respondents across the four districts.

Data were gathered using three research-made questionnaires. The first instrument, the Teaching Practices of Neophyte Teachers Questionnaire, aimed to assess the teaching practices of neophyte teachers in their early-career stage. It measured the frequency and effectiveness of

lesson planning, instructional strategies, assessment of learning, and classroom management implemented by neophyte teachers. For statistical purposes, numerical weights were assigned to the corresponding responses as follows: a score of 5 corresponded to Always, 4 to Often, 3 to Sometimes, 2 to Rarely, and 1 to Never. For the descriptive interpretation of the computed mean scores, the following scale was used: a mean range of 4.21 to 5.00 was interpreted as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.62 to 3.40 as Average, 1.81 to 2.61 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low, with a higher mean score indicating a higher level of practices among neophyte teachers. Prior to the collection of data, this questionnaire was subjected to content validation by three panel experts to ensure its clarity, relevance, and construct validity. Following validation, a pilot test was conducted with 30 neophyte teachers who were not included in the actual number of respondents, and the reliability coefficient was computed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a value of 0.05 or higher internal consistency.

The second instrument, the Challenges Encountered by the Neophyte Teachers Questionnaire, aimed to determine the instructional delivery, classroom management, and work and administrative challenges faced by the respondents. It was measured using a research-made questionnaire developed based on relevant literature and expert validation to assess the extent of the challenges experienced by neophyte teachers during their early career in the teaching profession and practice. For statistical purposes, numerical weights were assigned to the respective responses as follows: a score of 5 corresponded to Very Great Extent, 4 to Great Extent, 3 to Moderate Extent, 2 to Small Extent, and 1 to Not at All. The same descriptive scale used in the first instrument was applied for interpreting the computed mean scores, wherein 4.21 to 5.00 was interpreted as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.62 to 3.40 as Average, 1.81 to 2.61 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low, with a higher mean score indicating a higher level of challenges encountered by the participants. As with the first instrument, this questionnaire was subjected to content validation by three panel experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and construct validity, after which a pilot test was conducted with 30 neophyte teachers who were not included in the actual number of respondents. The reliability coefficient was likewise computed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a value of 0.05 or higher internal consistency.

The third instrument, the Instructional Quality of Neophyte Teachers Questionnaire, aimed to assess the instructional quality of teaching as perceived by the neophyte teachers. It was measured using a researcher-made questionnaire developed based on relevant literature and expert validation to assess the teachers' instructional quality and effectiveness. For statistical purposes, numerical weights were assigned to the respective responses as follows: a score of 5 corresponded to Integrating, 4 to Consolidating, 3 to Applying, 2 to Developing, and 1 to Organizing. The descriptive interpretation of the computed mean scores followed the same scale, wherein 4.21 to 5.00 was interpreted as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.62 to 3.40 as Average, 1.81 to 2.61 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low, with a higher mean score indicating a higher level of instructional quality among the respondents. A pilot test was likewise conducted with 30 neophyte teachers who were not included in the actual number of participants, and the reliability coefficient was computed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, yielding a value of 0.05 or higher to ensure internal consistency.

Prior to the collection of data, the researcher secured formal permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Filamer Christian University and from the Schools Division Superintendent of SDO Aklan. Subsequently, approval was sought from the public schools district supervisors or principals in charge of the four districts and from the school heads to allow the participation of the respondents in the study. Upon approval, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. They were also informed that the data collected would be used solely for research purposes. Participation in the study was voluntary, and each participant was required to sign an informed

consent form indicating their willingness to take part in the research. The questionnaires were distributed either personally or electronically, through email or online survey forms, and the participants were given one week to complete them. After the participants completed the questionnaires, the researcher retrieved and checked these for completeness. The researcher then encoded, tabulated, and analyzed the data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to ensure the accuracy of the computation of descriptive and inferential statistics.

The data collected from the study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The Mean was used to determine the extent of teaching practices, level of challenges, and quality of instruction of neophyte teachers. The Standard Deviation was used to measure the variability or dispersion of responses from the mean. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), set at the 0.05 alpha level of significance, was used to determine the difference among three or more groups, specifically on the significant difference in the teaching practices, challenges, and instructional quality of neophyte teachers. Pearson r was used to determine the relationship between teaching practices, challenges, and instructional quality. The level of significance for all inferential tests was set at 0.05. The results were interpreted using a Likert scale, wherein descriptive equivalents such as Very High, High, Moderate, Low, and Very Low were used to categorize responses. The findings were then summarized and analyzed to answer the research objectives, hypotheses, and questions, and to draw conclusions on how neophyte teachers facilitate learning using pedagogical approaches, the challenges they encountered, and the quality of their instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the interpretation of the data gathered from [N] neophyte teachers who participated in the study and discusses the results in direct relation to the objectives of the investigation. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, utilizing [sampling technique] in selecting the respondents. Data were gathered through the use of [instrument name], a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure the level of teaching practices, the challenges encountered, and the instructional quality of neophyte teachers. The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, to determine the levels of the three variables under study, and inferential statistics, specifically Pearson r, to determine the significance of the relationships among them. The discussion that follows is grounded strictly in the data collected and is interpreted in light of the study's objectives, integrating descriptive results with analytical interpretation and relevant literature to deepen understanding of the findings. The findings are presented in two parts: descriptive data analysis, covering the level of teaching practices, challenges encountered, and instructional quality of neophyte teachers, and inferential data analysis, covering the relationship among these three variables.

Level of teaching practices of neophyte teachers

The overall level of teaching practices of neophyte teachers, encompassing lesson planning preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment of learning and feedback, obtained a "very high" rating ($M = 4.71$; $SD = 0.29$), based on the scale where 4.21 to 5.00 is described as very high, 3.41 to 4.20 as high, 2.61 to 3.40 as moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as very low. In terms of lesson planning preparation

specifically, neophyte teachers registered a "very high" level of practice (M = 4.69; SD = 0.37). Instructional delivery likewise obtained a "very high" level (M = 4.71; SD = 0.38), as did classroom management (M = 4.69; SD = 0.33) and assessment of learning and feedback (M = 4.75; SD = 0.33).

The very high level of practice in lesson planning preparation implies that neophyte teachers are trained and knowledgeable in preparing and planning lessons aligned with learning competency standards, in setting lesson objectives based on learners' needs, in designing learning activities according to the level of intelligence of students, in selecting and utilizing teaching materials before the class session, and in designing varied assessment tools to address the multiple intelligences of learners. The slightly higher standard deviation relative to the overall teaching practices score indicates some variation in how these practices are executed, though perceptions remain largely positive. This finding aligns with Goodwin (2016), whose analysis revealed that novice teachers with access to high quality lesson plans and online learning communities generated superior plans and teaching outcomes compared to those working independently, while a related 2021 study of rural expert teachers demonstrated that fine grained instructional decisions during planning enhanced lesson delivery. In contrast, Cruz and Cabarogias (2020) found that the most pressing issues encountered by neophyte teachers include the preparation of lessons, handling learners with diverse personalities or backgrounds, and managing learners with behavioral problems, while Llego (2021) observed that Filipino neophyte teachers, during their adjustment period, frequently rely on scripted and teacher centered lessons to accomplish learning goals, manage student behavior, and meet administrative requirements.

With respect to the very high level of practice in instructional delivery, the data imply that new teachers are trained and accustomed to presenting subject matter clearly through explanation, real life illustrations, and a variety of examples. They are also practiced in asking questions to stimulate critical thinking, in using differentiated instruction and learning activities tailored to learners' multiple intelligences, and in formulating good test questions to assess student achievement. Sasson (2020) noted that constructivist practices, learner differentiation, collaboration, accountability, and planning partially mediate the relationship between self efficacy and positive attitudes toward teaching, thereby facilitating novice teacher integration. Pandi et al. (2025) similarly emphasized that the development of pedagogical skills, integration of technology, and participation in coaching and mentoring are essential for improving teaching, with variations observed depending on teachers' educational background and experience. Research from IRJSTEM (2022) further shows that neophytes' instructional competence improves gradually through practice, influenced by prior teaching exposure, with emergent themes of adapting to quality shifts, proactive planning, and self initiated improvements revealing moderate, not strong, correlations, akin to studies linking teachers' planning to learner outcomes. However, Viterbo et al. (2025) identified a significant gap between the expected and actual teaching performance of beginning teachers, particularly in communication and instructional skills, clarity of lesson delivery, ability to sustain student engagement, and creation of an effective classroom climate.

Classroom management likewise received a very high rating, reflecting teachers' effectiveness in maintaining order through setting rules and regulations and employing discipline, in creating and maintaining a safe, friendly, and respectful learning environment, in handling student misbehavior consistently, and in providing a conducive learning environment. The low variability observed signifies consistent classroom management practices among teachers. Bardelli et al. (2021) stated that effective classroom management strategies are linked to stronger overall performance, yet novice teachers require targeted support for behavior and time management, with individual factors such as grade point average accounting for additional variance. This is supported by Goh and Wong (2017), who found that new teachers must focus

on maintaining classroom order by using appropriate behavior and classroom management strategies, prioritizing control over student centered approaches. In contrast, Fantilli and McDougall (2017) reported that neophytes find it hardest to prepare lessons, manage classrooms, and implement theory into actual teaching.

Among the specific dimensions, assessment and feedback obtained the highest mean score, indicating that teachers are trained and particular in employing assessments aligned with lesson objectives, in providing timely and constructive feedback to students, in using formative and summative assessments to improve teaching practices, and in using positive reinforcement such as praise, rewards, or shout outs to encourage good choices. The relatively low standard deviation implies that this perception is shared consistently across respondents. Asirit, Hua, and Mendoza (2022) found that neophyte teachers designed learning assessments aligned with learning outcomes based on their demonstrated instructional competencies, but they struggle with uncertainties and shifting quality standards. Brandmo (2025) found that high quality, tailored, action-oriented feedback enhances student achievement, motivation, and engagement, a conclusion supported by twelve studies linking comprehensive feedback to positive achievement outcomes, while negative or vague feedback leads to demotivation and avoidance, with students overwhelmingly preferring direct, individualized feedback over generic types. Hattie and Clarke (2019) similarly stated that new teachers usually give corrective feedback and comments to learners but sometimes need to deliver it more properly.

Overall, all indicators of teaching practices fall within the "very high" range based on the given scale of 4.21 to 5.00. The consistently high mean scores and relatively low standard deviations across all dimensions imply that teachers demonstrate strong and uniform teaching practices, reflecting a high level of instructional readiness and suggesting that effective teaching behaviors are well established and consistently practiced among neophyte teachers.

Level of challenges encountered by neophyte teachers

The overall level of challenges encountered by neophyte teachers, in terms of instructional delivery, classroom management, workload and administrative tasks, and support and mentoring, obtained a "moderate" rating (M = 2.66; SD = 0.96), based on the same five-point scale in which 2.61 to 3.40 is described as moderate. Specifically, neophyte teachers reported a "moderate" level of challenges in instructional delivery (M = 2.68; SD = 1.05), a "moderate" level of challenges in classroom management (M = 2.69; SD = 1.03), a "moderate" level of challenges in workload and administrative tasks (M = 2.96; SD = 1.11), and a "moderate" level of challenges in support and mentoring (M = 2.20; SD = 1.13).

The moderate level of challenges in instructional delivery implies that new teachers found it slightly difficult to manage their time in preparing lessons, moderately struggled to differentiate instruction for diverse learners, found it slightly difficult to maintain student engagement, and moderately struggled to construct assessment tools. New teachers faced a range of instructional challenges and responded by using coping strategies to address pedagogical difficulties, as their early teaching experiences require adaptability in navigating the demands of the profession. Asirit and Mendoza (2022) noted that the quality of instruction can be improved through proper mentorship, supportive supervision, and professional development programs. Related literature further indicates that poor instructional quality results from the inability of neophyte teachers to manage severe behavioral problems among learners due to inadequacy of ideas and knowledge on how to deal with them (Ma and Cavanagh, 2018; Sciuchettie et al., 2019; Smart and Igo, 2010).

Regarding the moderate level of challenges in classroom management, the data suggest that neophyte teachers slightly struggle to manage learners' disruptive behavior and off task conduct, to enforce classroom rules consistently, to address multiple student needs and learning styles without feeling overwhelmed, and to maintain student engagement throughout lessons. Long and Benadon (2020) emphasized that behavior management and differentiation are common challenges faced by teachers during their early years in the profession. Saleem et al. (2021) further found that novice teachers encountered a range of challenges such as managing disruptive student behaviors, including bullying, disobedience, high noise levels, and aggression, while Osai et al. (2021) noted that overcrowded classrooms, inadequate facilities, and administrative responsibilities added to these difficulties. Neophyte teachers also struggled to address the diverse needs of students that varied according to socio-economic background, abilities, and learning styles, a challenge intensified by a lack of formal training or induction. Despite these obstacles, novice teachers adapted by independently implementing strategies such as activity based learning and peer tutoring and by building positive relationships with students, which contributed to improved behavior and a more manageable classroom environment (Salem, 2021). Karasova and Nehyba (2025) suggest that teachers with practical behavior management skills, when trained in communication techniques, are better able to manage behavior, motivate students, and improve the overall classroom atmosphere.

With regard to the moderate level of challenges in workload and administrative tasks, neophyte teachers reported slight difficulty due to excessive paperwork that tends to limit their time and ability to plan, prepare, and reflect on their lessons. The assigned administrative load and ancillary tasks caused them slight stress, particularly when multiple deadlines coincided with their teaching duties. Hachelef and Chami (2020) observed that in the first few years of teaching, beginning teachers face a variety of challenges, including managing complex tasks and heavy workloads, coping with workplace stress without adequate support, feelings of loneliness, self-esteem issues, and less than ideal working conditions, in addition to difficulties related to mistreatment or unclear guidance from educational department officials, ambiguous expectations left by previous teachers, and the need to adapt to the school's culture and organizational norms. Jomuad et al. (2020) similarly identified heavy workload, classroom management, and adapting to the school environment as primary stressors for neophyte teachers, while the OECD (2019) reported that managing a heavy workload and addressing varied learning needs are among the biggest challenges for beginning teachers.

The moderate level of challenges in support and mentoring implies that neophyte teachers slightly struggled in establishing trust and maintaining effective communication with their mentors, found a little lack of individualized support tailored to their needs and context, and slightly lacked motivation and facilitation in mentoring activities. The respondents acknowledged that they received mentoring from experienced teachers and school heads, but that this support was not sufficient. Overall, all challenge indicators fall within the "moderate" range of 2.61 to 3.40, indicating that teachers experience challenges across multiple domains but at a level that does not severely hinder their professional functioning. These findings imply the need for targeted interventions, particularly in reducing workload and administrative demands while strengthening instructional support and mentoring to ensure more consistent teacher experiences. Lagawid (2024) noted that insufficient administrative support influences the quality of teaching performance and instruction. Polinar and Gemota (2025) similarly found that mentorship and support systems emerge as critical drivers of professional growth and resilience among beginning teachers, with guidance from experienced colleagues and administrators playing a key role in their development, even as beginning teachers often struggle to achieve work-life balance and maintain personal well-being amid ongoing professional pressures; collectively, their study underscores the need for structured induction programs and sustained mentorship to strengthen professional development, resilience, and

retention within the public education system. EdResearch for Action (2025) added that coaching emphasizing classroom management and subject specific techniques is essential for enhancing beginning teachers' instructional quality and retention, with effectiveness reinforced by well defined coach criteria and accountability mechanisms. Aguirre and Faller (2017) observed that the difficulties encountered by new teachers can be intensified by a lack of mentoring and guidance, inadequate support materials, and an unsupportive workplace, while Pandi, Labitad, and Comon (2025) reiterated that the development of pedagogical skills, integration of technology, and participation in coaching and mentoring are essential for improving teaching, with variations depending on teachers' educational background and experience. Salvador et al. (2025) concluded that through mentorship, beginning teachers receive guidance and share their ideas, helping them overcome instructional challenges and adapt to school culture, which in turn fosters their professional development and improves teaching effectiveness.

Level of instructional quality of neophyte teachers

The overall level of instructional quality of neophyte teachers, in terms of lesson effectiveness, student engagement, learning environment quality, and learning outcomes, obtained a "very high" rating (M = 4.31; SD = 0.33 as stated in the narrative; Table 3 reports SD = 0.73 for this indicator), based on the scale where 5.61 to 7.00 is described as very high, 4.21 to 5.60 as high, 2.81 to 4.20 as moderate, 1.41 to 2.80 as low, and 1.00 to 1.40 as very low. In terms of lesson effectiveness, neophyte teachers received a "very high" level of instructional quality (M = 4.18; SD = 0.38 as stated in the narrative; Table 3 reports SD = 0.78). Student engagement likewise obtained a "very high" level (M = 4.36; SD = 0.375 as stated in the narrative; Table 3 reports SD = 0.75), as did learning environment quality (M = 4.46; SD = 0.78) and learning outcomes (M = 4.23; SD = 0.84).

The very high level of instructional quality in terms of lesson effectiveness implies that teachers' lessons are well organized and clearly presented. They ensured positive use of ICT to facilitate the teaching and learning process, used a range of teaching strategies that enhance learners' achievement in literacy and numeracy skills, provided examples that help clarify complex concepts, and adapted instruction and approaches based on learners' level of intelligence. Using differentiated instructional strategies and varied learning activities to accommodate diverse abilities and learning differences can effectively address individual student needs and support effective classroom management. Novice teachers showed very high instructional competence in teaching-learning processes, instructional strategies, and authentic assessment, and Cansing and Paciano (2024) highlighted the important role of school leadership in improving instructional quality through coaching and mentoring based on classroom observation. In contrast, Surma (2022) found that neophyte teachers typically identify effective study strategies only when prompted and seldom suggest them on their own, relying instead on less effective approaches such as re-reading, verbatim note taking, highlighting, summarizing, or cramming, a gap that highlights the need for more deliberate and continuous teacher training in evidence based instructional practices.

With regard to the very high level of instructional quality in terms of student engagement, the data revealed that neophyte teachers used effective verbal and non-verbal classroom communication strategies to support learners' understanding, participation, engagement, and achievement. They elicited appropriate responses from students and provided additional support to struggling learners, and they provided instructional activities that promote collaboration and critical thinking while making class activities engaging to encourage active

participation. Acacia University (2025) stated that identifying students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles through assessments and observations further helps in instructional decision making. Gray and Diloreto (2016) found that course structure and organization, learner interaction, instructor presence, and student engagement significantly predict student satisfaction and perceived learning, with course structure directly influencing both, while learner interaction and instructor presence boost engagement, which in turn mediates their effects.

The very high rating on instructional quality in terms of learning environment quality shows that neophyte teachers maintained a supportive and conducive learning environment that nurtures and inspires learners to participate, cooperate, and collaborate in continued learning. They applied a range of successful strategies to maintain a learning environment that motivates learners to work productively by ensuring responsibility for their own learning, encouraging collaboration and active participation. Furthermore, new teachers established mutual respect between teacher and students and handled classroom conflicts professionally. Karasova and Nehyba (2025) suggest that teachers with practical behavior management skills, when trained in communication techniques, are better able to manage behavior, motivate students, and improve the overall classroom atmosphere.

With regard to the very high score on instructional quality in terms of learning outcomes, the data imply that most students achieved the lesson learning objectives and demonstrated improvement based on assessment results. Teachers also used instructional approaches that helped students achieve expected competencies, leading to a positive impact on student performance and promoting students' independence and responsibility. Zhang et al. (2024) found that teachers' instructional strategies directly and indirectly boost students' learning engagement in online settings, with students' perceptions of teachers' emotional involvement serving as a mediator and teachers' expectations moderating the connection between perceived emotional engagement and actual student engagement.

Overall, all indicators of instructional quality fall within the "very high" range as reported in the narrative discussion. The consistently high mean scores across all dimensions reflect strong instructional practices that translate into effective learning environments, high student engagement, and positive learning outcomes. These findings suggest that teachers are able to deliver instruction of high quality despite the presence of moderate challenges, reinforcing the effectiveness of their teaching practices. As previously noted, novice teachers showed very high instructional competence in teaching-learning processes, instructional strategies, and authentic assessment, with Cansing and Paciano (2024) again highlighting the important role of school leadership in improving instructional quality through coaching and mentoring based on classroom observation.

Relationship between teaching practices, challenges encountered, and instructional quality

Inferential analysis using Pearson r was conducted to determine the significance of the relationships among teaching practices, challenges encountered, and instructional quality of neophyte teachers, at the 5 percent alpha level, where $p < 0.05$ indicates a statistically significant relationship and $p > 0.05$ indicates a not significant relationship. The correlation between teaching practices and challenges encountered was found to be positive but not significant ($r = 0.065$, $p = 0.555$). In contrast, a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship was observed between teaching practices and instructional quality ($r = 0.462$, $p = 0.000$). Meanwhile, the relationship between challenges encountered and instructional quality was found to be not statistically significant ($r = 0.133$, $p = 0.226$).

The not significant relationship between teaching practices and challenges encountered ($r = 0.065$, $p = 0.555$) implies that the level of teaching practices does not have a statistically

significant relationship with the challenges encountered by teachers. In other words, teachers who demonstrate high teaching practices may still experience challenges, and the presence of challenges does not necessarily diminish the quality of their teaching practices. This is consistent with Pecaza et al. (2022), who found no statistically significant correlations between perceived stressors and teaching practices, resulting in acceptance of the null hypothesis, and likewise found no significant correlation between perceived stressors and teaching performance.

The moderate, statistically significant positive relationship between teaching practices and instructional quality ($r = 0.462$, $p = 0.000$) implies that improvements in teaching practices are associated with higher levels of instructional quality. Teachers who consistently apply effective lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment strategies tend to demonstrate superior instructional quality in terms of lesson effectiveness, student engagement, learning environment, and learning outcomes. This finding is consistent with IRJSTEM (2022), which showed that neophytes' instructional competence improves gradually through practice, influenced by prior teaching exposure, with emergent themes of adapting to quality shifts, proactive planning, and self-initiated improvements revealing moderate, not strong, correlations, akin to studies linking teachers' planning to learner outcomes.

The not significant relationship between challenges encountered and instructional quality ($r = 0.133$, $p = 0.226$) suggests that the challenges teachers experience do not significantly affect the quality of instruction they deliver. Despite encountering moderate challenges, teachers are able to maintain high instructional quality, possibly due to professional competence, resilience, and support mechanisms within the school environment.

Taken together, the findings indicate that teaching practices are not significantly affected by the challenges encountered, so the corresponding null hypothesis is accepted. At the same time, teaching practices remain a critical determinant of instructional quality, so the null hypothesis positing no relationship between teaching practices and instructional quality is rejected. The results also show that the challenges encountered do not significantly hinder instructional performance, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis for that relationship. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening teaching practices through professional development and ongoing support to sustain and enhance instructional quality despite workplace challenges.

Collectively, the descriptive and inferential findings of this study address its stated objectives by demonstrating that neophyte teachers exhibit a very high level of teaching practices ($M = 4.71$; $SD = 0.29$) and a very high level of instructional quality ($M = 4.31$; $SD = 0.33$), even as they contend with a moderate level of challenges across instructional, classroom management, workload, and mentoring domains ($M = 2.66$; $SD = 0.96$). The significant positive relationship between teaching practices and instructional quality ($r = 0.462$, $p = 0.000$) affirms that pedagogical competence, rather than the absence of challenges, is the stronger predictor of instructional effectiveness among beginning teachers, while the non-significant relationships involving challenges encountered ($r = 0.065$, $p = 0.555$; $r = 0.133$, $p = 0.226$) suggest that neophyte teachers exercise a measure of professional resilience that allows them to sustain quality instruction despite the difficulties of their early careers. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on teacher induction by empirically demonstrating that structured teaching practices can buffer the potential negative effects of workplace challenges on instructional quality, thereby reinforcing the value of continued mentorship, professional development, and institutional support for teachers entering the profession. The next chapter builds on these findings by presenting the summary of results, conclusions drawn

from the study, and recommendations for strengthening teacher preparation, mentoring programs, and instructional support systems for neophyte teachers.

CONCLUSION

This study employed a survey correlation research design to examine the teaching practices, challenges encountered, and instructional quality of eighty-five neophyte teachers, those with zero to three years of teaching experience, drawn through stratified proportional random sampling from the districts of Lezo, Malinao, Makato, and Numancia comprising the Unit III cluster of the Division of Aklan during school year 2025 to 2026. Guided by researcher made and validated instruments and analyzed through mean, standard deviation, one way analysis of variance, and Pearson's r at the 0.05 level of significance, the investigation sought to determine the extent of teaching practices, challenges, and instructional quality among beginning teachers, and to establish whether significant relationships existed among these variables.

The findings demonstrated that neophyte teachers exhibited a very high level of teaching practices across lesson planning and preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment of learning and feedback. This outcome carries substantial implications for the quality of education delivered in the participating districts, as well-developed lesson plans maximize instructional time, provide clear learning trajectories that boost student achievement, and enhance teachers' capacity to adapt to diverse learners, thereby reducing frustration while deepening both content mastery and teaching effectiveness. The very high level of instructional delivery observed among these teachers reflects explicit, active, and student-centered guidance that fosters comprehension, retention, and application of lessons, while simultaneously strengthening learners' confidence, motivation, and persistence in challenging tasks. Effective classroom management, likewise rated very high, was associated with structured environments marked by clear expectations and routines, which in turn reduced behavioral disruptions, improved attendance, lowered anxiety, and increased engagement through positive reinforcement. Similarly, the very high level of assessment and feedback practices indicated that neophyte teachers were able to provide timely, formative feedback that identified learning gaps and promoted self-regulated learning, resulting in improved achievement, heightened motivation, and stronger critical thinking skills, while also fostering learners' psychological well-being and self-efficacy. Taken together, these results affirm that the very high level of teaching practices exhibited by neophyte teachers can be expected to yield quality education, competent learners, and outstanding teacher performance.

With respect to the challenges encountered, the data revealed only a moderate level of difficulty across instructional delivery, classroom management, workload and administrative tasks, and support and mentoring. This moderate level appears attributable to the coping mechanisms extended by school heads and to the positive influence of the Department of Education's Teacher Induction Program, complemented by school-based training initiatives such as Learning Action Cell sessions and Job Embedded Learning. Rather than being detrimental, the moderate degree of challenges appears to have functioned as a catalyst for professional growth, prompting neophyte teachers to develop time management skills, refine differentiated instruction, design more effective assessment tools, and adopt innovative classroom management strategies for addressing disruptive behavior. This pattern is consistent with self-efficacy theory, wherein manageable stressors build confidence and teaching efficacy rather than eroding them, encouraging mentorship seeking behavior and the integration of feedback that accelerates growth without overwhelming novice teachers. Unlike excessive challenges that might lead to attrition, the moderate level experienced by these teachers appears

to have promoted persistence and the refinement of essential skills, particularly when supported by mentoring structures already in place within the schools.

The study further found that neophyte teachers achieved a very high level of instructional quality in terms of lesson effectiveness, student engagement, learning environment quality, and learning outcomes. This result reflects the cumulative effect of effective teaching practices, reinforced by in service training received after entry into public service as well as by prior pre service teaching experiences. Continued participation in Learning Action Cell sessions and Job Embedded Learning, facilitated by school heads, appears to have played a meaningful role in sustaining this level of quality. Such an outcome has far reaching implications, as it suggests the likelihood of outstanding teacher performance, improved quality of education, competent learners, and high performing schools, while also cultivating trust and confidence among educational stakeholders.

In examining the interrelationships among the variables, the study found no significant relationship between teaching practices and the challenges encountered by neophyte teachers, indicating that the extent to which these teachers implement effective practices is not meaningfully influenced by the degree of difficulty they face in their early years. This absence of a significant relationship suggests that neophyte teachers have been able to manage their time and responsibilities effectively through coping mechanisms acquired from training, mentoring, and collaborative learning sessions, an outcome that further reinforces their developing sense of professionalism. In contrast, a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship was found between teaching practices and instructional quality, indicating that as neophyte teachers demonstrate stronger lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices, their overall instructional quality correspondingly improves. This finding underscores the centrality of teaching practices in shaping content delivery, learner engagement, the quality of the learning environment, and learning outcomes, and highlights the importance of continuously strengthening these practices among beginning teachers as a pathway toward quality education and high performing schools. Finally, no significant relationship was found between the challenges encountered and instructional quality, since although a positive correlation was observed, it did not reach statistical significance. This suggests that the difficulties neophyte teachers face in classroom management, workload, and administrative responsibilities do not substantially compromise the quality of their instruction, an outcome that itself reflects effective time management and continuing professional growth. Taken as a whole, the study concludes that teaching practices, rather than the challenges encountered, are the primary determinant of instructional quality among neophyte teachers, and that while challenges are an inevitable feature of the early years of teaching, they need not undermine instructional effectiveness so long as teachers possess sound pedagogical skills and instructional strategies. These findings therefore affirm that professional development efforts aimed at strengthening teaching practices should remain a central priority in supporting the growth of beginning teachers.

Building on these conclusions, several courses of action are recommended for the various stakeholders involved. Neophyte teachers, despite already demonstrating very high levels of teaching practice, are encouraged to engage in continuous self-reflection on their instructional delivery to determine whether prepared learning activities remain effective, to take the Teacher Induction Program and Teacher Orientation Program seriously by completing all required modules in close collaboration with their mentors, and to participate actively in Learning Action Cell sessions as a means of further honing their skills. To address the moderate challenges they encounter, teachers may benefit from building resilience through self-initiated strategies, prioritizing time management with the aid of planners, seeking peer observations

for classroom management insights, practicing regular self-reflection to improve delivery, and joining professional networks for informal mentoring. To sustain their very high level of instructional quality, they are encouraged to document successful strategies in a teaching journal, seek feedback regularly, experiment with incremental lesson adjustments, and participate in voluntary micro credential programs, while also engaging in ongoing self-reflection, seeking mentorship early, and joining professional learning communities to mitigate persistent challenges and further reinforce the link between strong practices and high instructional quality through the adoption of research based methods such as active learning and differentiated instruction.

School heads and mentors are encouraged to provide structured coaching through regular classroom observations, constructive and easy to implement feedback, and collegial mentoring and coaching networks that recognize the efforts of high performing teachers, while sharing DepEd compliant tools such as lesson plan templates and other school forms to help new teachers feel valued. In addressing the moderate challenges faced by neophyte teachers, school heads may assign mentors for weekly check ins on classroom management and instruction, reduce administrative burdens through delegation, implement induction programs with lighter workloads during the first year, and organize group sessions on professionalism and student engagement, while experienced teachers provide hands on guidance through co teaching, modeling of effective routines, and confidential debriefs that build trust. To sustain very high instructional quality, school heads may establish structured mentoring programs pairing novice and experienced teachers, provide protected planning time and curriculum specific professional development, publicly recognize achievements to boost morale and retention, and employ tools such as video observations for targeted coaching, while also helping neophyte teachers navigate persistent challenges through weekly feedback sessions, workload adjustments, and a comprehensive handbook outlining school policies and available resources.

Teacher Education Institutions are urged to review and strengthen their education programs with an emphasis on hands on training aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, to request that experienced teachers be assigned to mentor pre service teachers and interns, to update curricula in accordance with current standards, and to integrate research-based innovations in assessment and classroom management. In relation to the challenges neophyte teachers face, these institutions may develop curricula that incorporate practical classroom management simulations and offer post-graduation bridge programs featuring workshops on administrative skills and sustained alumni support networks. To help maintain very high instructional quality, institutions may incorporate real world case studies and simulated scenarios of effective lesson delivery and engagement into pre service curricula, extend alumni mentorship and webinars to novices, and continuously update programs based on evidence from recent research, while also enhancing pre service training with realistic simulations of common challenges such as limited motivation and resource scarcity, and partnering with schools for extended internships that build practical resilience and narrow the gap between expected and actual performance.

Students, for their part, are encouraged to provide constructive feedback on teachers' instructional strategies, classroom management styles, and assessment tools, to participate in self-assessment and peer review, and to foster positive relationships with new teachers by observing classroom rules and regulations. They may further contribute to a supportive teaching environment by offering feedback through anonymous surveys, engaging in cooperative learning to ease management demands, respecting the boundaries of new teachers, actively participating in lessons through questioning and group work, and demonstrating patience as new teachers continue to adjust to their roles, all of which reinforce effective practices and sustain high instructional quality.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal studies to determine whether the very high levels of teaching practice and instructional quality observed in this study persist over time, while controlling for variables such as school type and exploring scalability across diverse Philippine contexts, including rural and urban divides. They may employ mixed methods approaches to examine causal links between specific practices and outcomes, investigate non-significant factors such as workload and ancillary tasks and their effects on teaching strengths, and pursue action research to design upskilling interventions that enhance instructional competence. Researchers may also examine the sustained impact of mentoring and induction programs on teacher retention and performance across varied contexts, develop and test intervention frameworks grounded in longitudinal data, and disseminate findings through accessible policy briefs and syntheses of best practices to guide school leaders, teacher education institutions, and policymakers in strengthening support systems for neophyte teachers.

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