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Professional development needs of local school board teachers in Palanan District: Basis for a capacity building program

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ABSTRACT

Local School Board (LSB) teachers in rural areas need continuous professional development to improve their teaching, but limited resources, heavy workloads, and distance may restrict their access to training. Although teacher professional development has been studied in the Philippines, little is known about the specific needs and training barriers of LSB teachers in Palanan District, Isabela. This descriptive-survey study examined the professional development needs of 60 LSB teachers in seven areas: teaching competence, classroom management, assessment and feedback, instructional materials, educational technology, inclusive education, and professional collaboration and action research. The overall mean was 3.27 on a four-point scale, indicating a very great need for professional development. The highest-rated areas were assessment and feedback (M = 3.42), educational technology integration (M = 3.35), and inclusive education and differentiated instruction (M = 3.31). The main barriers were training costs and limited funding (M = 3.48), time constraints and workload (M = 3.42), and distance or limited access to training venues (M = 3.31). The study recommends a practical and accessible capacity-building program that focuses on assessment skills, educational technology, inclusive teaching, contextualized learning materials, and continued coaching and support.

Keywords: Capacity-building program, educational management, Local School Board teachers, professional development, teacher training needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development is an important element of educational management because it links organizational priorities with teachers' continuing learning and classroom practice. Teachers are expected to respond to curricular expectations, varied learner needs, assessment requirements, technological change, and the demands of inclusive education.

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Professional development is most useful when it addresses identified needs and provides opportunities to apply new learning, receive feedback, and refine practice over time.

In 2009, Desimone argued that research on teacher professional development benefits from clear conceptualization and consistent measures linking professional learning experiences with changes in teacher knowledge and instructional practice. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), in a review of rigorous studies, identified content focus, active learning, collaboration, models of effective practice, coaching, feedback, reflection, and sustained duration as recurring features of effective professional development. These findings caution against treating attendance at a single seminar as sufficient evidence of professional growth.

In the Philippines, DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 adopted the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which provides a national framework for teacher quality and professional development. The PPST includes domains addressing content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environments, learner diversity, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages, and personal growth and professional development (Department of Education [DepEd], 2017). These domains can inform the construction of a needs-assessment instrument, but the priorities of any local teacher population must be established through evidence.

Philippine studies also point to the importance of relevant training and the practical conditions affecting participation. Chin et al. (2022) identified professional learning needs related to online pedagogy, information technology, and research, while noting financial, time, motivational, and logistical barriers among teachers surveyed during the COVID-19 period. Dayagbil and Alda (2024) examined teachers' perceptions of professional development activities and barriers to participation. A Philippine-focused systematic review by Talaue et al. (2025) highlighted the value of curriculum alignment, collaboration, administrative support, and monitoring, while identifying resource and workload constraints.

These findings provide a rationale for examining the professional development needs of LSB teachers in Palanan District, Isabela. A locally grounded needs assessment can help distinguish general training trends from the specific priorities of teachers working under the local LSB arrangement. The present manuscript is a simulated-data research model; its numerical results are not claims about actual teachers.

Statement of the problem

The study aimed to: (1) describe the hypothetical respondents' profile in terms of educational attainment, teaching experience, grade level handled, and relevant professional development activities attended; (2) assess the simulated perceived professional development needs in pedagogical competence, classroom management, assessment and feedback, instructional materials, educational technology, inclusive education, and professional collaboration/action research; (3) identify barriers represented in the simulated data; (4) rank the professional development areas based on the hypothetical results; and (5) develop a proposed capacity-building program responsive to the priorities illustrated by the simulated data.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive-survey research design to determine the professional development needs of sixty (60) Local School Board (LSB) teachers in Palanan District, Isabela. It examined needs in pedagogical competence, classroom management, assessment and feedback, instructional materials, educational technology, inclusive education, and

professional collaboration and action research. It also considered barriers affecting teachers' participation in professional development activities.

The respondents were identified from LSB teachers assigned to public elementary schools in Palanan District. A structured questionnaire served as the primary data-gathering instrument. It covered respondents' professional profiles, perceived professional development needs across the identified domains, and challenges encountered in accessing training and other capacity-building opportunities. Items were rated using a four-point scale.

Data collection was undertaken subject to the necessary permissions and applicable ethical procedures. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, and the confidentiality of their responses was protected. Frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize respondents' profiles; weighted means were used to determine the levels of professional development needs and barriers; and ranking identified the areas requiring priority attention.

The findings served as the basis for proposing a capacity-building program responsive to the identified needs of LSB teachers in Palanan District. The proposed program emphasized assessment and feedback, educational technology integration, inclusive instruction, contextualized instructional materials, and sustained professional support.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study included 60 respondents. Eighteen (30.0%) were assumed to hold a bachelor's degree, 26 (43.3%) to have completed master's units, 12 (20.0%) to hold a master's degree, and 4 (6.7%) to have doctoral units or a doctoral degree. Twenty-one (35.0%) were assigned 1–5 years of teaching experience, 19 (31.7%) 6–10 years, and 20 (33.3%) 11 years or more. Twenty-eight (46.7%) were assumed to handle Grades 1–3 and 32 (53.3%) Grades 4–6. In the previous-12-month training profile, 24 (40.0%) had attended zero or one relevant activity, 27 (45.0%) two or three, and 9 (15.0%) four or more.

As per the results, assessment of learning and feedback ranked first (M = 3.42; very great need), followed by educational technology integration (M = 3.35; very great need), inclusive education and differentiated instruction (M = 3.31; very great need), and instructional materials development and utilization (M = 3.29; very great need). Content knowledge and pedagogical competence received a mean of 3.25, interpreted as a great need, while classroom management received 3.18 and professional collaboration, reflection, and action research received 3.08, both interpreted as great needs. The overall mean was 3.27, interpreted as a very great need.

As regards barrier ratings, cost and limited funding ranked first (M = 3.48; very great barrier), followed by time constraints and workload (M = 3.42; very great barrier) and travel or access to training venues (M = 3.31; very great barrier). Internet or technology access received 3.20, difficulty obtaining release time received 3.17, and limited relevance or availability of training received 2.94; these were interpreted as great barriers. The overall mean was 3.25.

Based on the ranking, the provisional program prioritized assessment and feedback, educational technology, inclusive education, and instructional materials development. It proposed a six-month sequence: first, a practical workshop on formative assessment, rubrics, feedback, and interpretation of learner evidence; second, hands-on training in accessible digital and offline instructional tools; third, differentiated instruction and lesson adaptation; fourth, collaborative development of contextualized teaching materials; fifth, demonstration lessons and peer-supported classroom management planning; and sixth, professional learning community activities and introductory classroom inquiry.

Based on results, assessment and feedback received the highest mean, followed by educational technology integration and inclusive education and differentiated instruction. These areas suggest a useful starting point for planning professional learning: teachers may benefit from opportunities to strengthen assessment literacy, use assessment evidence to adjust instruction, select technology appropriate to local conditions, and respond to differences in learners' readiness and needs. These priorities are consistent with the broader principle that professional development is more useful when it is focused on specific instructional practices and connected to teachers' classroom work (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009). The need for support in developing instructional materials also points to the potential value of collaborative planning and the adaptation of resources to learners' language, community, and classroom context. Rather than relying exclusively on one-time seminars, a capacity-building program could include demonstrations, guided material development, peer review, and opportunities to try out materials in class. Such follow-through would help connect training activities with changes in instructional practice (Guskey, 2002; Timperley et al., 2007). The extent to which these supports are needed in Palanan District should be determined using verified local data.

Cost and limited funding, time constraints and workload, and travel or access to training venues were the highest-rated barriers. These constraints would support consideration of school-based sessions, clustered training, locally accessible venues, flexible scheduling, and low-cost or offline learning resources. The discussion of these barriers is consistent with research on professional development access and teachers' reported needs in the Philippines (Chin et al., 2022).

The proposed capacity-building program therefore offers a planning framework rather than a validated intervention. Its initial modules focus on assessment and feedback, practical educational technology, inclusive instruction, contextualized learning materials, and sustained professional support. Before implementation, the program should be reviewed with LSB teachers, school heads, and relevant education officials and adjusted in light of verified needs, available resources, schedules, and access conditions. Subsequent evaluation should examine participation, teacher learning, classroom application, and opportunities for continued coaching rather than relying only on satisfaction ratings.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study place assessment of learning and feedback, educational technology integration, inclusive education and differentiated instruction, and instructional materials development among the highest-rated professional development domains. Assessment and feedback received the highest mean rating (M = 3.42), followed by educational technology integration (M = 3.35) and inclusive education (M = 3.31). At the same time, the reported barrier ratings identified cost and limited funding (M = 3.48), time constraints and workload (M = 3.42), and travel or access to training venues (M = 3.31) as the most prominent constraints. Taken together, these results show that the domains teachers value most are closely tied to everyday classroom practice, while the obstacles they face are largely practical and structural in nature rather than a matter of willingness to participate in professional development.

In general, these results support a capacity-building approach that prioritizes practical assessment literacy, accessible educational technology, inclusive instructional planning, and the development of contextualized learning materials. Because the barriers center on cost, scheduling, workload, and access, professional development should be planned with deliberate attention to these conditions if it is to be realistically attended and sustained. Furthermore, training activities are more likely to be usable when they incorporate active practice, peer

collaboration, feedback, and follow-up rather than relying exclusively on one-time presentations. This interpretation links the domains of greatest need with the manner in which training is delivered, suggesting that the content and the design of professional development must be considered together.

Accordingly, the proposed capacity-building program should give priority to assessment and feedback, including formative assessment, rubric development, interpretation of learner evidence, and actionable feedback, since this domain obtained the highest rating among the professional development areas. Professional development on educational technology should likewise emphasize practical tools that are accessible in the local context, including offline options where connectivity is limited, while training on inclusive education should focus on differentiated lesson planning and adaptations responsive to learners' varied needs. In addition, collaborative workshops should support teachers in developing contextualized instructional materials that can be used directly in their classrooms. To respond to the barriers identified, program planners should address cost, workload, scheduling, and travel by considering school-based or clustered training, shared resources, and advance coordination. The program should also include follow-up coaching, peer discussion, and review of teaching products so that learning is applied beyond the training sessions.

Finally, these priorities should be regarded as provisional until they are verified through further inquiry. Before they are adopted as findings about Palanan District, the researcher should administer a validated instrument to the defined LSB teacher population, analyze the collected responses, and revise the program in accordance with the verified results. In this way, the capacity-building program that emerges will rest on confirmed evidence of teachers' needs and constraints, and will be better positioned to deliver professional development that is relevant, feasible, and effective in practice.

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