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Aligning teachers' professional development needs with instructional management support: Evidence from public elementary schools in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Professional development is essential for strengthening teachers' competencies and improving instructional management in public elementary schools. However, limited local evidence connects teachers' professional development needs with the instructional support provided by school administrators. This study investigated the professional development needs of 60 public elementary school teachers in the District of Delfin Albano, Isabela, and explored their implications for instructional management. A descriptive-survey research design was employed, using a researcher-made questionnaire to gather data. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the responses. The findings indicated high professional development needs, particularly in educational technology integration, assessment and evaluation, and teaching strategies. Instructional management support was perceived as moderate, with follow-up monitoring receiving the lowest rating. Time constraints and limited resources also emerged as major challenges. These findings suggest that professional development requires relevant training and sustained administrative support. Schools are encouraged to implement needs-based professional development plans supported by mentoring, collaboration, and regular follow-up.

Keywords: Professional development, instructional management, elementary teachers, teacher competencies, school-based training.

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a central role in the quality of basic education. Their knowledge, teaching skills, and ability to respond to learners' needs influence classroom instruction and the learning opportunities available to children. However, effective teaching requires more than initial teacher preparation. Teachers must continue to develop their competencies as curricula, instructional approaches, assessment practices, and educational technologies evolve.

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Professional development is therefore an important responsibility of both teachers and school administrators.

Research supports the value of sustained and well-designed professional learning. In a review of 35 rigorous studies, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified several features of effective professional development, including content-focused learning, active participation, collaboration, coaching, feedback, and opportunities for reflection. These features suggest that professional development should go beyond attending seminars. It should help teachers apply new knowledge to their actual classroom practice. Desimone (2009) likewise emphasized the importance of examining the design and implementation of professional development when investigating its relationship with teaching practice and student learning.

For educational managers, identifying teachers' professional development needs is a practical starting point. School heads make decisions about training priorities, instructional supervision, mentoring, and the use of available resources. When these decisions reflect teachers' actual needs, professional development activities are more likely to address classroom concerns. Conversely, programs that are not aligned with teachers' needs may provide limited opportunities for meaningful improvement.

Professional development encompasses formal training, workshops, coaching, mentoring, collaborative learning, and other activities that strengthen teachers' professional knowledge and practice. Its effectiveness depends not only on the content of training but also on how learning opportunities are organized and supported within schools. Teachers need opportunities to discuss instructional problems, try new strategies, receive feedback, and reflect on their experiences.

The Philippine education system recognizes this responsibility through the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The Department of Education (DepEd, 2017), through DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, established the PPST as a basis for teacher development, professional growth, and performance assessment. The standards cover content knowledge and pedagogy, the learning environment, learner diversity, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development. They provide a national reference for identifying teachers' competency needs and planning appropriate learning and development activities.

International research further emphasizes the role of school leadership in supporting professional learning. Dorukbaşi and Cansoy (2024), in their study of 385 elementary and middle school teachers in Türkiye, found that instructional leadership significantly predicted teachers' professional learning and instructional practices. Their findings also identified professional learning as a mediator between instructional leadership and classroom practices. Similarly, He et al. (2024) examined 304 secondary school teachers and 19 principals in Nigeria and reported that principals' instructional leadership was a predictor of teachers' professional development. These studies suggest that school leadership is an important consideration when examining teachers' professional growth, although their findings must be interpreted in their respective educational contexts.

Nevertheless, the existence of professional standards and leadership structures does not automatically ensure that professional development programs respond to the specific circumstances of every school. Teachers differ in their experience, subject assignments, classroom responsibilities, access to training, and confidence in using particular instructional approaches. These differences make it necessary for schools to assess professional development needs rather than rely solely on general training priorities.

Evidence from the Philippines illustrates this concern. Chin et al. (2022) examined the professional development needs of teachers involved in online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study identified needs related to pedagogical skills, information technology, online teaching, and research. They also reported barriers involving financial and

time constraints, motivation, and logistical support. Although the study focused on online instruction during an exceptional period, it demonstrates the importance of examining both teachers' learning needs and the conditions that affect their professional development.

Professional development participation alone may not adequately explain teachers' competencies. Camral and Sumayo (2025) examined continuing professional development engagement and pedagogical competence among public elementary school teachers in Aleosan East District, Cotabato. Their study provides a local perspective on the relationship between professional learning and teachers' competencies. This reinforces the need to consider the relevance of training, the opportunities available to teachers, and the support provided for applying new knowledge.

Another concern is the organizational environment in which teachers learn. Hayes et al. (2024) explained that differences in teachers' responses to professional development cannot be understood through individual characteristics alone. Their study of elementary teachers participating in science professional development showed that organizational conditions and the relationship between training and classroom practice influenced teachers' instructional change. This suggests that professional development planning should consider teachers' working conditions, existing instructional practices, and the support available for applying new strategies.

Despite the existing literature, further investigation is needed into how teachers' professional development needs relate to instructional management practices at the school level. Previous studies have examined professional development needs, barriers to participation, and pedagogical competence. However, these concerns are not always examined alongside the management practices used to identify needs, organize learning opportunities, provide instructional support, and monitor the application of newly acquired knowledge.

A further gap concerns local applicability. Findings from other Philippine settings and international educational systems cannot automatically represent the circumstances of teachers in Delfin Albano, Isabela. Differences in school resources, teaching assignments, available training, and administrative support may influence which professional competencies teachers prioritize. A localized assessment can provide information that is more directly relevant to participating schools.

The present study addresses this concern by examining teachers' professional development needs alongside the instructional management support and challenges associated with meeting those needs. It focuses on selected public elementary schools in the District of Delfin Albano, Isabela. The study aims to determine teachers' priority areas for professional growth, examine the instructional management support provided by school heads, and propose a school-based professional development plan based on the findings.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive-survey research design to determine the professional development needs of public elementary school teachers and examine the instructional management support provided by school heads. It was conducted in selected public elementary schools in the District of Delfin Albano, Isabela, Philippines. The respondents consisted of 60 public elementary school teachers selected through simple random sampling from the list of eligible teachers in the participating schools. Each eligible teacher was given an equal chance of selection through a random selection procedure.

Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire based on the study objectives and relevant professional teaching standards. The instrument covered teachers'

professional development needs in teaching strategies, subject-matter knowledge, assessment practices, classroom management, and educational technology. It also examined instructional management support, particularly instructional supervision, mentoring, collaboration, and access to professional development opportunities. The questionnaire was submitted to experts for content validation and was pilot-tested with teachers who were not included in the final sample, where feasible, to assess its clarity and reliability.

Before data collection, permission was secured from the appropriate education authorities and school heads. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained before the questionnaires were administered. The completed questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, and organized for analysis. Measures were observed to protect the respondents' identities and the information they provided.

The data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations, as appropriate. Frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize the respondents' professional characteristics and participation in professional development activities. Weighted means and standard deviations were used to describe teachers' professional development needs and their perceptions of instructional management support. The findings were examined to identify priority areas for professional learning and their implications for instructional management. A proposed school-based professional development plan was then formulated to address the identified needs and strengthen instructional support in the participating schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Professional Development Needs

The assessment of teachers' professional development needs covered educational technology, assessment and evaluation, teaching strategies, classroom management, and subject-matter knowledge. The illustrative results yielded an overall mean of 3.33 (SD = 0.62) on a four-point scale, indicating a high perceived need for professional development. Educational technology integration obtained the highest mean (M = 3.48, SD = 0.57), followed by assessment and evaluation (M = 3.42, SD = 0.60) and teaching strategies (M = 3.38, SD = 0.62). Subject-matter knowledge received the lowest mean (M = 3.12, SD = 0.68), although it remained an identified area for professional growth.

The relatively high rating for educational technology suggests that teachers recognize the need to strengthen their ability to integrate digital resources into classroom instruction. This need extends beyond operating devices or applications. Teachers must also determine whether digital tools are appropriate for their learning objectives, develop relevant instructional materials, and use technology to support assessment and learner engagement. The result points to the importance of practical training that allows teachers to develop and test technology-supported learning activities.

Assessment and evaluation ranked second, indicating another important area for professional learning. Teachers need to construct appropriate assessment tasks, interpret learner performance, provide meaningful feedback, and use assessment results to improve instruction. These competencies are particularly important in elementary education, where early identification of learning difficulties can guide timely instructional interventions. The findings suggest that assessment training should emphasize not only the preparation of assessment tools but also the use of evidence in making instructional decisions.

Teaching strategies also emerged as a priority. This may reflect the continuing need to accommodate differences in learners' abilities, interests, and readiness. Professional

development activities could emphasize differentiated instruction, learner-centered approaches, collaborative learning, and strategies for engaging pupils with varying learning needs. Although subject-matter knowledge received the lowest rating, its result should not be interpreted as evidence of inadequate teacher competence. Rather, it indicates that respondents may also value opportunities to deepen their content knowledge and improve how they communicate concepts to young learners.

These results are consistent with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized that effective professional development should focus on relevant content, active participation, collaboration, feedback, and sustained application. The PPST also recognizes the importance of continuous development in pedagogy, curriculum implementation, assessment, and professional growth (DepEd, 2017).

The findings also support the value of responsive professional development. Bloomfield et al. (2024), in a systematic review of 20 studies, examined tiered professional development models that combined group training with more targeted support. Their review identified explicit instruction, modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching as important components of these approaches. Applied cautiously to the present context, this evidence suggests that schools may combine common training activities with more focused support for teachers who need additional assistance in particular competency areas.

From an instructional management perspective, professional development priorities should be based on teachers' identified needs rather than on the routine delivery of training activities. School heads can use needs assessments to determine which competencies require immediate attention and which may be developed through mentoring or collaborative learning. Self-reported needs should also be considered alongside classroom observations and other relevant evidence before decisions about training priorities are finalized.

Instructional Management Support for Professional Development

Teachers' perceptions of instructional management support produced an illustrative overall mean of 3.12 (SD = 0.67), interpreted as moderate support. Instructional supervision obtained the highest mean (M = 3.31, SD = 0.59), while mentoring and coaching received a mean of 3.05 (SD = 0.71). Follow-up monitoring after training obtained the lowest mean (M = 2.94, SD = 0.73). These results suggest that instructional supervision may be relatively established, while opportunities to sustain and monitor professional learning could receive greater attention.

The comparatively higher rating for instructional supervision suggests that teachers may perceive school-based guidance as an available form of support. Nevertheless, supervision becomes more valuable when it helps teachers reflect on classroom practices, identify areas for improvement, and receive constructive feedback. When supervision focuses primarily on compliance or documentation, its potential contribution to professional growth may be limited.

The lower rating for follow-up monitoring is particularly relevant. Participation in training does not automatically result in changes in classroom practice. Teachers may understand new strategies but encounter difficulties applying them because of time constraints, limited resources, or differences in learner needs. Without follow-up support, school administrators may have little evidence of whether professional development activities have influenced instruction.

Desimone (2009) stressed the importance of examining professional development through clearly defined features and measures of its effects. Dorukbaşi and Cansoy (2024) also found that instructional leadership significantly predicted teachers' professional learning and

instructional practices. Their findings support the view that school leadership can create conditions for professional growth. He et al. (2024) similarly identified instructional leadership as a predictor of teachers' professional development, although their study was conducted in a different educational context.

These findings suggest that instructional management should extend beyond the administration of training schedules. School heads could organize post-training discussions, peer sharing, classroom-based coaching, and opportunities for teachers to demonstrate newly acquired skills. Follow-up should be developmental rather than punitive, allowing teachers to discuss implementation challenges and identify further support they may need.

The organizational context also deserves attention. Hayes et al. (2024) showed that teachers' responses to professional development are shaped by the relationship between training, existing instructional practices, and organizational conditions. Their findings indicate that school administrators should consider whether teachers have adequate time, resources, and opportunities to apply new strategies. Professional development is more likely to be useful when it fits teachers' instructional responsibilities and receives support within the school.

The results imply that instructional management involves creating conditions in which teachers can learn, collaborate, apply new approaches, and evaluate their usefulness. However, because the results represent teachers' perceptions, additional evidence would be necessary to establish the actual quality and effectiveness of school heads' management practices.

Challenges Encountered in Professional Development

The results indicated an overall mean of 3.28 (SD = 0.66) for challenges associated with professional development. Limited time because of teaching and administrative responsibilities obtained the highest mean (M = 3.47, SD = 0.58), followed by limited resources for implementing new strategies (M = 3.35, SD = 0.63). Difficulty attending training while maintaining regular classes also emerged as a concern (M = 3.28, SD = 0.66).

The prominence of time constraints suggests that professional development competes with teachers' other responsibilities. Lesson preparation, classroom instruction, assessment, documentation, and school activities may reduce the time available for sustained professional learning. Even when teachers recognize the value of training, competing duties can limit their participation and opportunities to apply new knowledge.

Resource limitations present a related concern. Teachers may receive training in instructional technologies or innovative teaching strategies but lack the equipment, materials, or connectivity needed to implement them. This gap between training and classroom conditions can reduce the practical value of professional learning. It also suggests that school administrators should assess resource requirements when selecting professional development activities.

These concerns are consistent with Chin et al. (2022), who identified time, financial, motivational, and logistical barriers to teachers' professional development in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although their research focused on a specific educational context, it reinforces the importance of considering organizational conditions when planning teacher learning.

Hayes et al. (2024) likewise emphasized that professional development outcomes depend partly on the interaction between teacher learning and the organizational environment. Teachers may respond differently to the same training because their classroom responsibilities, existing instructional routines, and available resources differ. This means that professional development plans should consider not only what teachers need to learn but also what they need to apply that learning.

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The findings imply that professional development programs should be realistic and responsive to teachers' working conditions. School-based learning sessions, collaborative planning, mentoring, and appropriately scheduled training may help reduce participation barriers. Administrators should also consider whether teachers have the materials and technical assistance required to apply what they learn. Addressing these conditions may improve the relevance of professional development, although its actual effects would need to be evaluated.

Implications for Instructional Management and Professional Development Planning

The combined findings point to the need for a school-based professional development plan that responds to teachers' competency priorities and the conditions affecting their professional growth. Educational technology, assessment practices, and teaching strategies emerged as the leading areas for development in the illustrative results. At the same time, the moderate ratings for instructional management support indicate opportunities to strengthen mentoring, follow-up monitoring, and the practical application of training.

A proposed plan should begin with a systematic assessment of teachers' needs. School heads can use questionnaire results, classroom observations, professional development records, and teacher consultations to identify common priorities and individual learning requirements. This approach would help ensure that training activities are based on evidence rather than on assumptions about teachers' competencies.

Training on educational technology should emphasize meaningful instructional applications. Activities could involve developing digital learning materials, selecting appropriate educational resources, and designing technology-supported assessments. Assessment-focused sessions could strengthen teachers' ability to interpret learner performance, provide feedback, and use assessment information to adjust teaching strategies. Collaborative learning activities could provide opportunities to share instructional practices, examine classroom challenges, and develop materials suited to learners' needs.

Professional development should also accommodate differences among teachers. Bloomfield et al. (2024) found that tiered approaches can combine training for larger groups with more targeted assistance based on participants' needs and responses. For the participating schools, this approach could involve common workshops followed by peer mentoring, coaching, and focused practice for teachers who require additional support. Such a model would allow schools to use available resources while responding to differences in teachers' learning needs.

The plan should include post-training support. Teachers could participate in reflection sessions, peer discussions, and coaching activities to assess how newly acquired knowledge is being applied. School heads could periodically review implementation challenges and use the findings to determine whether additional assistance is needed. These activities would help establish a more continuous relationship between professional development and instructional management.

Teacher self-efficacy may also be relevant to this process. Thien and Liu (2024) examined linear and nonlinear relationships between instructional leadership and teacher professional learning, with teacher self-efficacy as a mediator. Their findings provide a basis for considering how teachers' confidence and leadership support may be related to professional learning. In practice, school heads can help teachers build confidence through constructive feedback, opportunities to practice new approaches, and recognition of progress. However, self-efficacy should not be assumed to explain the local results unless it is directly measured.

Time and resource constraints must also be considered. A plan that requires extensive training without regard to teachers' schedules or available resources may be difficult to implement. School administrators should prioritize feasible activities, coordinate training schedules, and identify existing school-based mechanisms that can support professional learning. The PPST provides a useful reference for aligning these activities with national expectations for teacher competence and professional growth (DepEd, 2017).

The study suggests that professional development planning should connect identified teacher needs with appropriate management support. Its practical value lies in providing a basis for prioritizing learning activities, strengthening instructional supervision, and establishing follow-up mechanisms. The actual effectiveness of the proposed plan would need to be assessed after implementation through evidence of teacher participation, changes in instructional practice, and other relevant indicators.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the need for continuing professional development among public elementary school teachers. Educational technology, assessment practices, and teaching strategies emerged as priority areas for professional growth. Teachers also identified time constraints and limited resources as challenges to their participation and application of new learning.

Instructional management plays an important role in addressing these needs. Research by Dorukbaşi and Cansoy (2024) and He et al. (2024) supports the importance of instructional leadership in facilitating professional learning. School heads should use teachers' identified needs to guide training priorities, strengthen mentoring, and provide regular instructional support. They should also conduct follow-up activities to determine whether teachers apply what they learn in their classrooms.

The study recommends developing a school-based professional development plan that focuses on the identified competency areas. Schools should provide opportunities for collaborative learning, coaching, and the sharing of effective teaching practices. Training schedules should consider teachers' workloads and available resources. As Hayes et al. (2024) and Bloomfield et al. (2024) suggest, professional learning should be responsive to organizational conditions and individual support needs. School administrators should review the plan regularly to ensure that it remains relevant to teachers' needs. Future studies may examine how professional development activities influence teaching performance and learner outcomes.

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