

## Article

# Mastering Essential Skills: Prioritizing Professional Development in Education

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**Abstract:** This study examines the proficiency of teachers in various aspects of teaching, learning environment management, curriculum planning, assessment, and professional development, along with its impact on student performance. Utilizing a descriptive research method, data was collected through structured questionnaires focusing on key themes such as student well-being, parental involvement, and instructional strategies. Findings reveal that teachers are generally highly proficient, particularly in content knowledge, technology integration, and assessment. However, areas such as research writing, collaborative teaching, and differentiated instruction require further enhancement. The results also show that students achieved a Very Satisfactory level of performance across core subjects. These findings emphasize the importance of continuous professional development tailored to teachers' diverse needs, alongside curriculum enhancements and targeted instructional interventions. Strengthening teacher collaboration, refining assessment techniques, and incorporating inclusive teaching strategies will be crucial in fostering an improved learning environment and boosting student achievement. This study underscores the need for sustained teacher development programs to ensure long-term educational quality and effectiveness.

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**Keywords:** Teacher Proficiency, Professional Development, Curriculum Planning, Student Achievement, Inclusive Education

## Introduction

In K-12 education administration, it is essential for school leaders to encourage teachers to engage in continuous professional development (PD) to enhance instructional effectiveness, student learning, and job satisfaction (Harwell et al., 2000). Beyond initial teacher education, there is broad agreement that high-quality professional development plays a pivotal role in improving teaching strategies, which directly influences student learning outcomes (Holloway, 2006).



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Research indicates that teacher professional development significantly contributes to achieving school goals. Educational leaders who facilitate PD opportunities do so with the expectation that these experiences will enhance teachers' skills, motivate them to implement new instructional techniques, and ultimately lead to improved student outcomes (Badara et al., 2024). School leadership is crucial in fostering a learning-oriented environment by assisting teachers in identifying their professional growth needs, promoting instructional experimentation, allocating resources for professional learning, and supporting the implementation of newly acquired knowledge (Al Shabibi et al., 2019).

Moreover, research highlights that teachers themselves can serve as development leaders within their schools. For instance, teacher leadership has been shown to foster broader professional growth within school communities (Bunane & Abraham, 2024). Additionally, continuous teacher development is widely regarded as a fundamental driver of classroom transformation, school improvement, and enhanced student performance (Kisi, 2023). Professional learning can occur in structured environments such as professional development programs, teacher research groups, and formal mentorship initiatives (Akiba & Liang, 2016). However, informal learning through peer collaboration, joint lesson planning, and collegial mentoring also plays a crucial role in professional growth (Kind, 2019).

Both novice and experienced teachers have diverse PD needs influenced by factors such as age, years of experience, and prior knowledge (Badara et al., 2024). Despite this, a standardized "one-size-fits-all" PD model is still prevalent (Kisi, 2023). Addressing teachers' individualized needs, offering tailored support, and overcoming barriers to effective professional development require greater attention in teacher training design (Priya & Sangeeta, 2024). When PD is misaligned with teachers' specific needs, participation and engagement may decline (Lauer et al., 2014). Research emphasizes that PD is most effective when it directly addresses the diverse needs of teachers, incorporating a variety of topics such as content mastery, classroom management, special education strategies, and technology integration (Holloway, 2006; Akiba & Liang, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to online teacher professional development (oTPD). This transition was necessary as educational systems worldwide faced unprecedented disruptions, impacting over 1.6 billion learners across 194 countries (UNESCO, 2020). Emergency responses included an immediate shift to digital and distance learning, highlighting the need for resilient and adaptive education systems (Shaha et al., 2015). Consequently, UNESCO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) identified teacher PD for new learning modalities as a priority in both recovery and long-term resilience planning.

Improving teaching quality remains a major challenge in the Philippine education system. While efforts such as expanding school infrastructure have been implemented to enhance education quality (Department of Education, 2014), resources to support teacher performance remain insufficient. The K to 12 Law, formally known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, aimed to enact major school reforms, including curriculum restructuring and significant teacher recruitment. To support educators during this transition, numerous training workshops were introduced. However, these training sessions were typically condensed into a single week, leaving teachers under pressure to quickly adapt to new expectations (SOSF, 2020). The evolving educational landscape, shaped by technological advancements, necessitates a shift in the role of teachers from knowledge dispensers to learning facilitators. This study aims to deepen the understanding of teachers' perceived needs, the available support systems, and the barriers they encounter in professional development. Additionally, it underscores the importance of aligning PD initiatives with teacher needs to enhance educational quality for students.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive research method to investigate the factors affecting the academic performance of students. A structured questionnaire, informed by the works of Gargiulo & Bouck (2020), Yell et al. (2013), Vaughn et al. (2020), Ainscow & Sandill (2010), Loreman (2017), and Glanz et al. (2015), was used to explore key themes such as students' health and well-being, parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and school-related factors. The study's questionnaire was designed to capture a comprehensive range of influences on student achievement, incorporating perspectives from parents, educators, and specialists in the field of special education. The survey was administered anonymously to parents, with responses measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." This ensured that the data collected was both confidential and representative of diverse parental experiences and insights.

The research utilized statistical analysis to assess the relationships between various factors and academic performance. This helped in identifying which variables had a statistically significant impact on student outcomes. Additionally, correlation and regression analyses were performed to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the variables. Employing rigorous quantitative methods, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence on key contributors to student success. The structured approach provided a clear methodological pathway for understanding the complexities of student achievement in special education settings.

The findings from this study were instrumental in developing a targeted intervention plan designed to foster a globally competitive

learning environment in special education. Additionally, recommendations were made to policymakers and educational institutions to create a more inclusive and supportive educational framework that accommodates diverse learning needs. Addressing these multifaceted factors, this research contributes valuable insights into the development of evidence-based strategies that can be used to improve student learning outcomes. The study underscores the importance of a holistic approach in education, where student well-being, family support, and institutional resources collectively shape academic success. Future research may expand on these findings by exploring additional variables and implementing longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of these interventions.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1. Physical Health Support

Physical Health Support	Mean	VD
The school provides adequate access to healthcare services (e.g., school nurse, regular health check-ups).	4.67	SA
Students have access to nutritious meals and snacks during the school day.	4.20	A
The school promotes physical activity and exercise through various programs.	4.17	A
The school accommodates students' medical needs (e.g., medication administration, medical equipment).	4.87	SA
The school ensures a safe and healthy physical environment (e.g., cleanliness, safety protocols).	4.67	SA
Grand Mean	4.52	SA

The data presented in Table 1 regarding Physical Health Support within the school indicates a very positive assessment across various aspects of student health and well-being. The highest mean score of 4.87 ("Strongly Agree") pertains to the school's accommodation of students' medical needs, such as medication administration and the provision of medical equipment. This suggests that the school is highly effective in ensuring that students with medical needs are well supported. Similarly, the school's provision of adequate access to healthcare services and maintenance of a safe and healthy physical environment both received high mean scores of 4.67 ("Strongly Agree"). These scores indicate that the school excels in providing essential healthcare services, such as access to a school nurse and regular health check-ups, as well as ensuring a clean and safe environment for students. The availability of nutritious meals and the promotion of physical activity and exercise were also rated positively, with mean scores of 4.20 and 4.17, respectively (both "Agree"). These results reflect that while these areas are well-regarded, there is slightly less satisfaction compared to the other aspects of physical health support. Overall, with a grand mean of 4.52 ("Strongly Agree"), the data suggests that the school is highly effective in supporting students' physical health and well-being,

particularly in accommodating medical needs and maintaining a healthy environment.

Table 1. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	Mean	VD
Using effective information and communication technology in teaching under the new normal	3.20	HPT
Conducting and writing research papers	2.87	HPT
Research-based knowledge and principles of teaching and learning	3.20	HPT
Using varied teaching strategies for the 21st century learners	2.90	HPT
Updating content knowledge through latest research findings and principles in teaching	3.27	DT
Developing contextualized and localized instructional materials	3.10	HPT
Grand Mean	3.09	HPT

The data in Table 1 highlights teachers' self-assessment of their content knowledge and pedagogy, indicating their proficiency in various teaching aspects. The highest-rated area is updating content knowledge through the latest research findings and principles in teaching, with a mean score of 3.27 (Distinguished Teacher - DT), suggesting that teachers actively seek professional growth through research. Similarly, using ICT in teaching under the new normal and applying research-based knowledge and principles of teaching and learning both received a mean score of 3.20 (Highly Proficient Teacher - HPT), indicating that teachers are effectively integrating technology and research-based strategies into their instruction. However, conducting and writing research papers (2.87 - HPT) and using varied teaching strategies for 21st-century learners (2.90 - HPT) received slightly lower ratings, implying that while teachers are proficient, there is room for improvement in these areas. Additionally, developing contextualized and localized instructional materials scored 3.10 (HPT), showing that teachers recognize the importance of adapting materials to their students' needs. Overall, with a grand mean of 3.09 (HPT), the results suggest that teachers possess strong content knowledge and pedagogy, though continuous professional development, particularly in research writing and diverse teaching strategies, would further enhance their teaching effectiveness.

Table 2. Learning Environment

Learning Environment	Mean	VD
Promote Learner safety and security inside and outside school	3.17	HPT
Management of learner behavior	3.08	HPT
Building a harmonious relationship among learners through virtual communication and assistant.	3.23	HPT
Handling learners' misbehaviors	3.02	HPT
Maintaining learners' proper discipline	3.27	DT
Increasing learners' participation through motivational activities	3.23	HPT
Promoting fairness, respect, and care among learners	3.12	HPT
Grand Mean	3.16	HPT

The data in Table 2 presents teachers' self-assessment of their ability to create a positive and effective learning environment for students. The highest-rated area is maintaining learners' proper discipline, with a mean score of 3.27 (Distinguished Teacher - DT), indicating that teachers are highly skilled in enforcing discipline and setting clear behavioral expectations. Additionally, building a harmonious relationship among learners through virtual communication and assistance and increasing learners' participation through motivational activities both received a mean score of 3.23 (Highly Proficient Teacher - HPT), suggesting that teachers effectively foster collaboration and engagement among students. Promoting learner safety and security inside and outside school (3.17 - HPT) and promoting fairness, respect, and care among learners (3.12 - HPT) also received strong ratings, reflecting teachers' commitment to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. However, handling learners' misbehaviors (3.02 - HPT) and management of learner behavior (3.08 - HPT) had slightly lower scores, indicating that while teachers are proficient in managing student conduct, this remains an area for further development. With an overall grand mean of 3.16 (HPT), the results suggest that teachers are highly proficient in maintaining a supportive, engaging, and well-managed learning environment, though additional strategies for handling misbehavior and reinforcing discipline could further enhance classroom management.

Table 3. Diversity of Learners

Diversity of Learners	Mean	VD
Learners' gender, needs, strengths, interests, and experiences	3.29	DT
Using different teaching strategies responsive to varied learners	3.18	HPT
Giving the right approach for learners with giftedness and difficulties	3.05	HPT
Developing appropriate strategies inclusive for indigenous learners	3.28	DT
Handling learners in difficult circumstances like a disaster, chronic illness, etc.	3.25	HPT
Handling learners with special needs	3.15	HPT
Learners' linguistic, cultural, socio-economic and religious backgrounds	3.22	HPT
Grand Mean	3.20	HPT

The data in Table 3 reflects teachers' self-assessment of their ability to address the diversity of learners in their classrooms. The highest-rated area is understanding learners' gender, needs, strengths, interests, and experiences, with a mean score of 3.29 (Distinguished Teacher - DT), indicating that teachers excel in recognizing and valuing individual learner differences. Similarly, developing appropriate strategies inclusive for indigenous learners received a mean score of 3.28 (DT), suggesting strong proficiency in creating an inclusive learning environment for indigenous students. Additionally, handling learners in difficult circumstances like disasters and chronic illness (3.25 - Highly Proficient Teacher - HPT) and acknowledging learners' linguistic, cultural,



socio-economic, and religious backgrounds (3.22 - HPT) highlight teachers' ability to cater to students facing various personal and cultural challenges.

The areas of using different teaching strategies responsive to varied learners (3.18 - HPT), handling learners with special needs (3.15 - HPT), and giving the right approach for learners with giftedness and difficulties (3.05 - HPT) scored slightly lower, indicating that while teachers are proficient, there is room for growth in implementing specialized instructional strategies for diverse learners. With an overall grand mean classified as Highly Proficient Teacher (HPT), the results suggest that teachers demonstrate strong competency in handling diverse learners, but further training in differentiated instruction and specialized approaches for students with exceptionalities could further enhance inclusivity and effectiveness in the classroom.

Table 4. Curriculum and planning

Curriculum and planning	Mean	VD
Planning and management of teaching-learning process	3.10	HPT
Using variety of resources such as technology to attain the learning objectives.	3.20	HPT
Professional collaboration to enrich teaching practice	3.10	HPT
Developing effective lesson plans	3.40	DT
Aligning teaching methods and assessment tools to learning objectives.	3.27	DT
Collaborating with other professionals to enrich knowledge and teaching practice.	2.88	HPT
Updating and learning the current trends in education curriculum	3.32	DT
Grand Mean	3.18	HPT

The data in Table 4 presents teachers' self-assessment of their curriculum planning and instructional management skills. The highest-rated area is developing effective lesson plans, with a mean score of 3.40 (Distinguished Teacher - DT), indicating that teachers excel in structuring their lessons effectively. Similarly, updating and learning the current trends in the education curriculum (3.32 - DT) and aligning teaching methods and assessment tools to learning objectives (3.27 - DT) received high ratings, highlighting teachers' strong commitment to aligning their teaching strategies with evolving educational standards and assessment practices. Meanwhile, areas such as using a variety of resources, including technology, to attain learning objectives (3.20 - Highly Proficient Teacher - HPT), planning and managing the teaching-learning process (3.10 - HPT), and professional collaboration to enrich teaching practice (3.10 - HPT) indicate that teachers are proficient in integrating technology and managing classroom instruction, though there is still room for improvement. The lowest-rated category, collaborating with other professionals to enrich knowledge and teaching practice, received a mean score of 2.88 (HPT), suggesting that while teachers are proficient, they may need more opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and professional networking.

Table 5. Assessment and Reporting

Assessment and Reporting	Mean	VD
Design, selection, organization, and utilization of assessment strategies	3.10	HPT
Monitoring and evaluation of learner progress and achievement	3.35	DT
Use of assessment data to enhance teaching and learning practices and programs	3.18	HPT
Using a variety of assessment tools appropriate for varied learners	3.05	HPT
Performing test validity, reliability, and item analysis for quality assessment	3.18	HPT
Monitoring and evaluating students' progress and achievement	3.26	HPT
Effective feed-backing on learners' performance	3.08	HPT
Grand Mean	3.17	HPT

The data in Table 5 highlights teachers' self-assessment of their proficiency in assessment and reporting practices. The highest-rated area is monitoring and evaluation of learner progress and achievement, with a mean score of 3.35 (Distinguished Teacher - DT), indicating that teachers are highly capable of tracking student learning outcomes effectively. Similarly, monitoring and evaluating students' progress and achievement (3.26 - Highly Proficient Teacher - HPT) reflects teachers' strong ability to assess student growth over time. Other areas, such as use of assessment data to enhance teaching and learning practices and programs (3.18 - HPT) and performing test validity, reliability, and item analysis for quality assessment (3.18 - HPT), suggest that teachers are proficient in using assessment results to improve instruction and ensure the quality of evaluations. Additionally, design, selection, organization, and utilization of assessment strategies (3.10 - HPT) and effective feedback on learners' performance (3.08 - HPT) indicate a solid understanding of assessment practices and their role in student learning. However, the lowest-rated category, using a variety of assessment tools appropriate for varied learners (3.05 - HPT), suggests that while teachers are proficient, they may need further training on diverse and inclusive assessment methods tailored to different learning needs.

Table 6. Community Linkages and Professional Development

Community Linkages and Professional Development	Mean	VD
Establishment of learning environments that are responsive.	3.05	HPT
Engagement of parents and the wider school community in the educative process	3.07	HPT
Linking with government agencies to promote learners' welfare	3.10	HPT
Contextualizing the lessons in the subject being taught	3.03	HPT
Learning best practices for a good relationship among school, home, and community	3.23	HPT
Learning the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers	3.17	HPT
Professional ethics in the 21st century education using educational technology	3.10	HPT
Grand Mean	3.08	HPT



The data in Table 6 presents teachers' self-assessment of their community linkages and professional development competencies. The highest-rated area is learning best practices for a good relationship among school, home, and community, with a mean score of 3.23 (Highly Proficient Teacher - HPT), suggesting that teachers recognize the importance of fostering strong connections among these stakeholders. Similarly, learning the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers (3.17 - HPT) indicates that teachers have a solid understanding of ethical standards in their profession. Other aspects, such as linking with government agencies to promote learners' welfare (3.10 - HPT) and professional ethics in the 21st-century education using educational technology (3.10 - HPT), suggest that teachers are proficient in engaging external organizations and leveraging modern tools while adhering to professional ethics. Additionally, engagement of parents and the wider school community in the educative process (3.07 - HPT) and establishment of learning environments that are responsive to community contexts (3.05 - HPT) indicate that teachers actively work towards creating a supportive and inclusive educational atmosphere. The lowest-rated area, contextualizing the lessons in the subject being taught (3.03 - HPT), suggests that while teachers are proficient, there is room for growth in making lessons more relevant to students' real-life experiences and community backgrounds. With an overall grand mean of 3.08 (HPT), the findings indicate that teachers are highly proficient in community linkages and professional development. However, further efforts in contextualizing lessons and strengthening partnerships with parents, communities, and government agencies could enhance their ability to create a more responsive and engaging learning environment.

Table 7. Level of Performance of the Students

Subjects	GWA	Description
Mathematics	89.10	Very Satisfactory
Science	89.21	Very Satisfactory
English	88.62	Very Satisfactory

The data in Table 7 presents the level of performance of students across three core subjects: Mathematics, Science, and English, as measured by their General Weighted Average (GWA) and corresponding performance descriptions. The results show that students achieved a Very Satisfactory performance in all three subjects. Science recorded the highest GWA at 89.21, followed closely by Mathematics at 89.10, indicating strong competence in both numerical and analytical skills. English had a slightly lower GWA at 88.62, but it still falls within the Very Satisfactory range, demonstrating a solid understanding of language and communication skills. Overall, these scores suggest that students have a commendable grasp of key subject areas. However, slight variations in performance may indicate the need for targeted interventions or enhanced instructional strategies to further improve student achievement. Continuous support, including effective teaching methodologies and enrichment

programs, could help students reach an Outstanding level of performance in these core subjects.

## Discussion

The results of this study highlight the strong proficiency of teachers in various aspects of teaching, learning environment management, curriculum planning, assessment, and professional development. The findings suggest that while teachers are generally highly proficient in their roles, there are areas that require further improvement, particularly in collaborative teaching, research writing, and handling diverse learners. According to Badara et al. (2024), continuous professional development significantly enhances instructional effectiveness and positively impacts student learning outcomes. The study findings indicate that teachers excel in updating their content knowledge, using research-based teaching principles, and integrating technology into instruction. However, areas such as conducting and writing research papers, varied teaching strategies for diverse learners, and collaborating with professionals to enhance knowledge and teaching practices need further reinforcement. This aligns with the findings of Akiba and Liang (2016), who emphasized that teacher-driven collaboration and professional learning activities significantly contribute to student achievement growth.

Moreover, the students' performance data suggests a Very Satisfactory level of achievement across core subjects, with science having the highest General Weighted Average (GWA) at 89.21, followed by Mathematics (89.10) and English (88.62). These results align with studies indicating that effective curriculum planning and assessment strategies play a crucial role in enhancing student performance (Holloway, 2006). The findings suggest that while students demonstrate competence in key subject areas, further efforts in differentiated instruction, assessment techniques, and enrichment programs may be necessary to bridge learning gaps and elevate student performance to an Outstanding level. According to Kind (2019), effective feedback, diversified assessment strategies, and innovative pedagogical approaches contribute to greater student engagement and achievement. Thus, providing continuous teacher training in inclusive pedagogy, research-based instruction, and personalized learning strategies would further strengthen the quality of education and student success.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underscores the significance of teacher proficiency in fostering student achievement. While teachers exhibit high competence in instructional strategies, assessment, and professional development, areas such as collaborative teaching, research writing, and differentiated instruction require further enhancement. The findings also reveal that students perform at a Very Satisfactory level across core subjects, emphasizing the need for

continuous curriculum improvements and targeted interventions. Strengthening professional development programs and implementing innovative teaching strategies will be essential in ensuring sustained educational quality and improved student outcomes.

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