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Pathway to a Proficient Teacher

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Abstract

Aim: This study examined the professional development of proficient junior high school teachers in the Schools Division of Catbalogan City by assessing their competence across the five domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). It also explored the relationship between the highest educational attainment and teacher proficiency, while capturing perspectives on instructional effectiveness.

Methodology: A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative data for comprehensive analysis. The quantitative strand involved 173 junior high school teacher-respondents and utilized descriptive-correlational techniques to assess development across PPST domains. The qualitative strand followed an instrumental case study approach, with in-depth interviews from 15 purposively selected proficient teachers analyzed using Colaizzi's method to yield contextual and experiential insights.

Results: Most teachers rated themselves as "Highly Developed" across all PPST domains. However, specific areas such as innovation, assessment application, and reflective documentation required further development. Of all profile variables, only the highest educational attainment showed a statistically significant correlation with proficiency. Qualitative findings emphasized the role of mentorship, emotional support, and collaborative environments in fostering teacher growth and instructional quality.

Conclusion: While teachers demonstrated high levels of self-perceived proficiency, persistent gaps in workload balance, access to training, and technology integration warrant focused interventions. The study underscores the need for structured mentorship, targeted professional development, and supportive policies. It proposes the development of a localized Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) to guide sustained improvement efforts and support the enhancement of instructional practices and teacher development, particularly within rural public school settings.

Keywords: Teacher Proficiency, Professional Development, Technical Assistance Plan, Educational Attainment

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are pivotal in influencing student learning outcomes and advancing the nation's educational objectives. Their effectiveness in designing, delivering, and assessing instruction directly affects the quality of classroom experiences, particularly in remote and under-resourced areas (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In the Philippines, the Department of Education introduced the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) in 2017 as a structured, competency-based framework defining expected professional practices and attributes across different career stages.

Despite this framework, teachers in rural contexts often face difficulties in applying these standards to achieve substantive professional growth. Limited access to training, inadequate mentoring, and overwhelming workloads frequently obstruct advancement beyond the proficient level (Mateo & Buan, 2020). Additionally, professional development programs are often fragmented, lacking structured follow-up, coaching, and evaluation, essential components of sustained development (Caoli et al., 2021). This is particularly true in science education, where Pacala (2023) revealed that systemic barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited internet connectivity, and out-of-field teaching assignments significantly hinder effective instruction in rural Philippine schools. These

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challenges emphasize the need for holistic professional development efforts that address both pedagogical and structural dimensions.

In the Schools Division of Catbalogan City, where most of the 336 junior high school teachers are categorized as proficient, there is a pressing need to understand how these educators perceive and experience their growth journey. Generating these insights is vital for designing targeted support systems. This study aims to develop localized, data-driven recommendations to inform a Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) that supports long-term teacher development in rural public schools (UNESCO, 2018).

Objectives

The study aimed to determine the level of development of junior high school teachers at the proficient stage and to understand their progression toward higher levels of proficiency.

The research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the socio-demographic profiles of the respondents in terms of the highest educational attainment?
2. What is the level of development across the five domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), namely: independence in teaching, curriculum and assessment, collaborative learning, reflective practice, and continuous professional development?
3. What is the relationship between the teachers' profile variables and their developmental levels? What recommendation may be offered based on the results of the study?
4. What are teachers' perceptions of what it means to be a proficient teacher?

Hypothesis

Given the stated research problems, the following hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_0: There is no relationship between teacher-respondent profile variables and their level of development.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to explore junior high school teachers' professional development. Quantitative data were collected through a descriptive-correlational survey to assess teacher profiles, proficiency levels based on the PPST, and statistical relationships among variables. Concurrently, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method to capture lived experiences. The integration of both data sets provided a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of teacher proficiency and development.

Population and Sampling

The study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods design involving junior high school teachers in the Schools Division of Catbalogan City. For the quantitative strand, 173 teachers were selected from a population of 304 using Slovin's formula, with stratified random sampling applied across eight public secondary schools. Participants were active junior high school teachers with at least two years of experience; others were excluded. For the qualitative strand, 15 teachers were purposively chosen based on willingness and diverse backgrounds to provide in-depth insights. This dual sampling approach ensured both quantitative accuracy and rich qualitative perspectives on teacher development across PPST domains.

Instruments

The study's instruments underwent a two-stage validation process to ensure their quality. The quantitative survey was validated by five experts using the Content Validity Index (CVI), meeting the required Item-Level CVI of ≥0.78. Revisions improved clarity and alignment with the PPST. Reliability was confirmed through a test-retest with 30 teachers, yielding a strong Pearson correlation coefficient of r = 0.86. The qualitative interview guide was also validated by three experts through a matrix-based review, with revisions made for thematic alignment. These steps ensured the instruments' clarity, reliability, and relevance for effective data collection.

Data Collection

The data collection process began with the preparation of request letters addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent and the principals of the eight public secondary schools in Catbalogan City. These were endorsed by

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the researcher's adviser and the Dean of the Graduate School of Samar State University. Once approved, the researcher obtained a list of proficient junior high school teachers from each school. A validated survey questionnaire, aligned with the PPST indicators, was then personally administered to willing participants. The distribution and retrieval of the questionnaires were completed within a day to ensure efficient response time while giving respondents ample opportunity to complete them.

Concurrently, in-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with selected participants to gather qualitative data on their experiences and perspectives related to proficient teaching. Each session lasted between one and two hours and was conducted in a language most comfortable for the respondent, whether English, Filipino, Waray-Waray, or a combination. These interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and later transcribed to support the qualitative analysis.

Treatment of Data

Data were analyzed using a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, with separate processing of quantitative and qualitative strands followed by integration during interpretation. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 18.0, employing descriptive statistics for teacher profiles and PPST proficiency levels. The Shapiro-Wilk test assessed normality, guiding the use of Pearson's correlation for normal variables and Spearman's Rho for ordinal or non-normal variables. Qualitative data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method, with transcripts coded and thematically organized. Integration of both strands ensured a comprehensive, credible, and context-rich understanding of teacher proficiency.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers strictly followed ethical standards during data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights through informed consent. They were assured of confidentiality, with all responses anonymized and personal identifiers removed. Although the study posed no significant risks, possible discomfort from extended surveys and interviews was acknowledged. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time without consequence. Participants were also given the option to request data disposal, ensuring their privacy and respect for their contributions.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The study ensured trustworthiness by addressing credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through expert-validated instruments and pilot testing, supported by CVI and test-retest reliability. Dependability was maintained via systematic data collection and SPSS-assisted analysis, ensuring replicability. Transferability was supported by detailed contextual descriptions of the Schools Division of Catbalogan City, enabling application to similar settings. Confirmability was ensured through ethical adherence, objective analysis, and minimized bias, with an audit trail enhancing transparency. These strategies collectively reinforced the study's validity, reliability, and relevance to teacher development.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study. It highlights the teacher-respondents' levels of proficiency across the five PPST domains, examines correlations with socio-demographic variables, and explores their perspectives on what it means to be a proficient teacher.

Socio-Demographic Profile of Teacher-Respondents

This part presents the analysis and interpretation of the data in line with the objectives of the study, highlighting the significance of the findings within the research framework.

Highest Educational Attainment

Table 1. Highest Educational Attainment of the Teacher-Respondents

Educational Level	***f***	***%***
Has Units Earned in Any Post-Graduate Programs	*4*	*2.3*
Graduated from Any Graduate Programs	*27*	*15.6*
Have Units Been Earned in Any Graduate Programs	*126*	*72.8*
Undergraduate Degree Only	*16*	*9.2*

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Total	***173***	***100***

The majority of teacher-respondents (72.8 percent) had earned graduate units, while only 15.6 percent had completed a graduate program, and none held post-graduate degrees. This suggests a strong commitment to continuing education, though limited attainment of advanced degrees may reflect financial or institutional barriers. These findings highlight the need for support mechanisms such as scholarships and incentives to encourage higher academic qualifications. As supported by Darling-Hammond et al. (2015) and Abdallah and Abdallah (2023), teachers with advanced degrees tend to exhibit greater instructional competence and are more likely to remain in the profession, reinforcing the importance of sustained investment in teacher education to improve educational quality and student outcomes.

2. Level of Development of Teacher-Respondents as Proficient Teachers

2.1 Independence in Teaching

Table 2. Level of Development of Teacher-Respondents in terms of Independence in Teaching

Attitudinal Statement	***Mean***	***SD***	***Interpretation***
1. I have the ability to make informed decisions and take ownership of my teaching practices without constant supervision.	*4.16*	*0.77*	*HD*
2. I demonstrate autonomy in designing lessons, managing classrooms, and assessing student learning.	*4.26*	*0.74*	*HD*
3. I am creative and innovative in my approach to teaching.	*4.02*	*0.79*	*HD*
4. I am open to trying new strategies, technologies, and methodologies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.	*4.36*	*0.72*	*HD*
5. I critically analyze educational practices, curriculum requirements, and student needs.	*4.04*	*0.73*	*HD*
6. I can adapt and modify teaching methods based on a reflective assessment of my own effectiveness.	*4.18*	*0.75*	*HD*
7. I am resourceful in finding solutions to challenges that arise in the classroom.	*4.33*	*0.75*	*HD*
8. I can effectively utilize available resources, technologies, and support systems to optimize teaching and learning experiences.	*4.27*	*0.76*	*HD*
9. I have a growth mindset and actively seek opportunities for professional development.	*4.35*	*0.75*	*HD*
10. I am a lifelong learner who engages in ongoing training, workshops, and research to enhance my teaching skills and expertise	*4.32*	*0.69*	*HD*
11. I communicate clearly and effectively with students, colleagues, parents, and other stakeholders.	*4.38*	*0.74*	*HD*
12. I can articulate their teaching goals, expectations, and feedback in a way that fosters collaboration and understanding.	*4.18*	*0.69*	*HD*
13. I engage in reflective practice to evaluate my teaching methods and student outcomes.	*4.19*	*0.66*	*HD*
14. I use feedback, self-assessment, and data analysis to continuously improve my teaching practice.	*4.24*	*0.75*	*HD*
15. I prioritize my students' needs and learning objectives in my instructional planning.	*4.49*	*0.17*	*HD*
16. I tailor lessons to accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, and interests, ensuring that each student has the opportunity to succeed.	*4.28*	*0.74*	*HD*
Grand Mean	***4.26***		
Grand SD	***0.58***		
Interpretation	***Highly Developed (HD)***		

Teacher-respondents consistently rated themselves as "Highly Developed" across all 16 attitudinal indicators, with mean scores ranging from 4.02 to 4.49. The highest-rated item emphasized prioritizing students'

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needs in instructional planning, reflecting a strong student-centered orientation. The lowest, though still within the "Highly Developed" range, pertained to creativity and innovation, suggesting an area for further enhancement. The grand mean of 4.26 and a standard deviation of 0.58 indicate high overall proficiency and uniformity in responses. These results underscore the respondents' strong sense of independence in teaching, highlighting their capacity to perform instructional duties effectively with minimal external support.

2.2 Meeting Curriculum and Assessment Requirements

Table 3. Level of Development of Teacher-Respondents in terms of Meeting Curriculum and Assessment Requirements

Attitudinal Statement	***Mean***	***SD***	***Interpretation***
1. I ensure that my teaching programs align with the national and local curriculum standards.	*4.50*	*0.67*	*HD*
2. I translate curriculum content into relevant and engaging learning activities that support student learning objectives.	*4.22*	*0.73*	*HD*
3. I design well-structured and sequenced lessons that are responsive to the needs of my students.	*4.24*	*0.73*	*HD*
4. I incorporate a variety of teaching strategies, resources, and technologies to enhance learning outcomes.	*4.23*	*0.74*	*HD*
5. I utilize a variety of assessment tools and strategies to monitor, evaluate, and document students 'progress and achievement.	*4.17*	*0.72*	*HD*
6. I use assessment data to analyze and understand my teaching practices and make adjustments to support student learning.	*4.13*	*0.74*	*HD*
7. I provide timely and constructive feedback to students about their learning outcomes.	*4.25*	*0.71*	*HD*
8. I communicate learning goals effectively to support student participation, understanding, and achievement.	*4.32*	*0.74*	*HD*
9. I ensure accurate reporting of students' progress.	*4.39*	*0.68*	*HD*
10. I differentiate my teaching approaches to meet the diverse needs of students.	*4.27*	*0.72*	*HD*
11. I design learning activities that accommodate different learning styles, abilities, and interests to ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed.	*4.16*	*0.72*	*HD*
12. I engage in continuous professional development.	*4.33*	*0.73*	*HD*
13. I seek opportunities to enhance my knowledge and skills related to curriculum design, assessment practices, and educational best practices.	*4.28*	*0.76*	*HD*
14. I collaborate with colleagues, educational professionals, and stakeholders to enhance curriculum delivery and assessment practices.	*4.27*	*0.75*	*HD*
15. I share best practices, exchange ideas, and improve teaching outcomes.	*4.17*	*0.84*	*HD*
16. I uphold professional ethics, accountability, and transparency in my teaching practices.	*4.43*	*0.75*	*HD*
17. I maintain integrity in assessment processes and ensure fairness and equity in evaluating student performance.	*4.42*	*0.73*	*HD*
Grand Mean	***4.28***		
Grand SD	***0.62***		
Interpretation	***Highly Developed (HD)***		

Teacher-respondents rated themselves as "Highly Developed" across all 17 attitudinal statements related to curriculum and assessment, with mean scores ranging from 4.13 to 4.50. The highest-rated item emphasized alignment with national and local curriculum standards, indicating strong adherence to prescribed guidelines. The lowest-rated statement, involving the use of assessment data to inform teaching practices, suggests a need for enhanced data-driven instructional strategies. The grand mean of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 0.62 reflect a high overall proficiency with moderate variability among respondents. These findings highlight teachers' strong

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capacity to meet curriculum requirements while identifying opportunities for professional development in evidence-based instructional refinement.

2.3 Engaging in Collaborative Learning

Table 4. Level of Development of Teacher-Respondents in terms of Engaging in Collaborative Learning

Attitudinal Statement	***Mean***	***SD***	***Interpretation***
1. I join and actively contribute to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where I collaborate with colleagues to share ideas, resources, and best practices to improve teaching and student learning.	*4.03*	*0.84*	*HD*
2. I willingly share my knowledge, resources, and expertise with colleagues, fostering a culture of mutual support and growth.	*4.23*	*0.84*	*HD*
3. I participate in peer observation activities where I provide constructive feedback to my colleagues to enhance teaching practices and promote personal growth.	*4.11*	*0.89*	*HD*
4. I collaborate with peers to plan lessons, units, and assessments, ensuring alignment with curriculum standards and learning objectives.	*4.24*	*0.83*	*HD*
5. I am involved in collaborative learning and engage in co-teaching arrangements where we work together to deliver instruction, differentiate learning experiences, and support all students' needs.	*4.18*	*0.81*	*HD*
6. I engage in reflective practices and discussions with colleagues to analyze teaching strategies, student outcomes, and areas for improvement.	*4.17*	*0.86*	*HD*
7. I attend professional development workshops and training sessions where I collaborate with peers to learn new instructional strategies, technologies, and approaches to enhance teaching effectiveness.	*4.20*	*0.80*	*HD*
8. I engage in problem-solving activities and innovative practices to address challenges and explore new ways to enhance student engagement and achievement.	*4.13*	*0.79*	*HD*
9. I work with my colleagues to analyze student data, monitor progress, and adjust instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners effectively.	*4.16*	*0.80*	*HD*
10. I provide and receive constructive feedback from colleagues, administrators, and other stakeholders to continuously improve my teaching practices and student outcomes.	*4.23*	*0.79*	*HD*
Grand Mean	***4.17***		
Grand SD	***0.73***		
Interpretation	***Highly Developed (HD)***		

Teacher-respondents rated themselves as "Highly Developed" across all 10 indicators of collaborative learning, with mean scores ranging from 4.03 to 4.24. The highest-rated item reflected strong collaboration in lesson and assessment planning, emphasizing curriculum alignment. The lowest-rated, involving active participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), while still rated highly, suggests room for deeper engagement in structured peer collaboration. The grand mean of 4.17 and a standard deviation of 0.73 indicate a strong overall proficiency in collaborative learning, with moderate variability in individual experiences. These findings affirm a culture of teamwork among teachers while pointing to opportunities for more consistent and meaningful participation in professional learning networks to enhance teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

2.4 Reflective Practices

Table 5. Level of Development of Teacher-Respondents in terms of Reflective Practices

Attitudinal Statement	***Mean***	***SD***	***Interpretation***
1. I demonstrate self-awareness by critically examining my beliefs, values, teaching practices, and interactions with students to gain insights into their strengths and areas for improvement.	*4.28*	*0.73*	*HD*

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2. *I engage in critical thinking by analyzing my teaching methods, lesson outcomes, and student responses to identify what worked well, what needs improvement, and how to enhance student learning experiences.*	*4.22*	*0.72*	*HD*
3. *I keep reflective journals or documentation where I record my thoughts, reflections, and insights about my teaching experiences, classroom observations, and professional development activities.*	*3.77*	*0.85*	*HD*
4. *I set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals based on my reflections to guide my professional growth and improvement in teaching practices.*	*4.18*	*0.81*	*HD*
5. *I actively seek feedback from peers, mentors, administrators, and students to gain different perspectives on my teaching practices and receive constructive criticism for personal and professional development.*	*4.17*	*3.91*	*HD*
6. *I develop action plans based on my reflections, feedback, and goals to implement changes in their teaching practices, instructional strategies, and classroom management techniques.*	*3.91*	*0.86*	*HD*
7. *I participate in ongoing professional development opportunities, workshops, seminars, and training sessions to enhance my knowledge, skills, and teaching effectiveness.*	*4.24*	*0.75*	*HD*
8. *I collaborate with colleagues to engage in reflective discussions, share experiences, exchange ideas, and learn from each other to continuously improve my teaching practices and student outcomes.*	*4.17*	*0.77*	*HD*
9. *I analyze student data, assessment results, and classroom observations to update my reflections, identify trends, track student progress, and adjust instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners.*	*4.16*	*0.77*	*HD*
10. *I demonstrate adaptability by making adjustments to my teaching practices, lesson plans, and assessment strategies based on their reflections, feedback, and data analysis to better meet the needs of my students.*	*4.18*	*0.79*	*HD*
Grand Mean	***4.13***		
Grand SD	***0.68***		
Interpretation	***Highly Developed (HD)***		

Teacher-respondents consistently rated themselves as "Highly Developed" in reflective practices, with mean scores ranging from 3.77 to 4.28. The highest-rated item emphasized deep self-awareness in evaluating teaching practices and student interactions, while the lowest-rated involved the use of reflective journals, suggesting that systematic documentation is less commonly practiced. The grand mean of 4.13 and a standard deviation of 0.68 reflect strong overall engagement in reflective thinking with moderate variability across respondents. These results highlight teachers' commitment to self-assessment and continuous improvement, while also pointing to the need for enhanced use of structured reflection tools to support professional growth.

2.5 Continuous Professional Development

Table 6. Level of Development of Teacher-Respondents in terms of Continuous Professional Development

Attitudinal Statement	***Mean***	***SD***	***Interpretation***
1. *I actively engage in professional development opportunities that are interactive and engaging, and provide reflection and collaboration with peers.*	*4.26*	*0.75*	*HD*
2. *I prioritize professional development sessions that are relevant and practical, focusing on strategies and tools that can be directly applied in the classroom to enhance student learning outcomes.*	*4.24*	*0.76*	*HD*
3. *I seek professional development opportunities that are informed by research-based practices or real-world experiences, ensuring that the*	*4.23*	*0.77*	*HD*

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learning is practical, effective, and grounded in evidence-based strategies.			
4. I engage in professional development that is tailored to my individual needs, allowing for personalized learning experiences that address my specific areas for growth and development.	*4.16*	*0.76*	*HD*
5. I actively evaluate the impact of my professional development activities, seeking feedback, reflecting on my learning, and identifying areas for improvement to enhance my teaching practice continually.	*4.17*	*0.76*	*HD*
6. I collaborate with colleagues, mentors, and experts in the field to share best practices, resources, and experiences, fostering a culture of collaboration and collective learning with the educational community.	*4.22*	*0.75*	*HD*
7. I demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning by actively seeking out new professional development opportunities and attending workshops, conferences, and courses to stay updated on the latest trends and advancements in education.	*4.24*	*0.75*	*HD*
8. I engage in reflective practices to assess my professional development experiences, apply new knowledge and skills in my teaching practice, and continuously refine and improve my instructional strategies based on my learning.	*4.17*	*0.76*	*HD*
Grand Mean	***4.21***		
Grand SD	***0.70***		
Interpretation	***Highly Developed (HD)***		

Teacher-respondents rated themselves as "Highly Developed" across all 8 indicators of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), with mean scores ranging from 4.16 to 4.26. The highest-rated item emphasized active participation in interactive and collaborative CPD activities, while the lowest-rated highlighted a relative gap in access to personalized professional learning opportunities. The grand mean of 4.21 and a standard deviation of 0.70 reflect a strong collective commitment to ongoing professional growth, with moderate variation in CPD experiences. These findings affirm the importance of CPD in enhancing teaching competencies while suggesting the need to expand individualized learning pathways to better meet teachers' specific developmental needs.

3. Correlation Between the Teacher-Respondents' Profile Variate and Their Level of Professional Development

3.1 Profile Variate and Independence in Teaching

Table 7. Correlational Analysis Between the Teacher-Respondents' Profile Variate and their Level of Development along with Independence in Teaching

Variates	***r-Value***	***p-Value***	***Decision***	***Evaluation***
Highest Educational Attainment	*0.193***	*0.011*	*Reject H_o*	*Significant*

The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between the highest educational attainment and instructional independence (r = 0.193, p = 0.011), indicating that teachers with higher academic qualifications tend to demonstrate greater autonomy in their teaching practices. This finding highlights the value of promoting advanced education and continuous professional learning as key strategies for fostering instructional self-sufficiency. It suggests that while other factors may have limited influence, educational advancement plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher autonomy and overall competence in the classroom.

3.2 Profile Variate and Meeting Curriculum and Assessment Requirements

Table 8. Correlational Analysis Between the Teacher-Respondents' Profile Variate and their Level of Development along with Meeting Curriculum and Assessment Requirements

Variates	***r-Value***	***p-Value***	***Decision***	***Evaluation***
Highest Educational Attainment	*0.189**	*0.013*	*Reject H_o*	*Significant*

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The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between higher educational attainment and improved curriculum implementation, indicating that teachers with advanced degrees are better equipped to align instruction and assessments with established standards. This finding emphasizes the importance of encouraging further studies and providing targeted professional development to strengthen teachers' curriculum-related competencies and instructional effectiveness.

3.3 Profile Variate and Engaging in Collaborative Learning

Table 9. Correlational Analysis Between the Teacher-Respondents' Profile Variate and their Level of Development along with Engaging in Collaborative Learning

Variates	*r-Value*	*p-Value*	*Decision*	*Evaluation*
Highest Educational Attainment	*0.185**	*0.015*	*Reject H_o*	*Significant*

The correlation analysis found a significant positive relationship between the highest educational attainment and collaborative engagement, indicating that teachers with advanced degrees are more likely to participate in professional collaboration. This suggests that promoting higher education contributes to increased involvement in peer mentoring, team-based planning, and professional learning communities. To foster collaborative practices, schools should support teachers' pursuit of further studies and establish structured environments that encourage ongoing professional interaction and shared learning.

3.4 Profile Variate and Reflective Practices

Table 10. Correlational Analysis Between the Teacher-Respondents' Profile Variate and their Level of Development along with Reflective Practices

Variates	*r-Value*	*p-Value*	*Decision*	*Evaluation*
Highest Educational Attainment	*0.151**	*0.048*	*Reject H_o*	*Significant*

The correlation analysis showed that most demographic factors, including age, sex, civil status, income, teaching position, field of specialization, and teaching experience, had no statistically significant relationship with teachers' engagement in reflective practices. Only the highest educational attainment showed a significant positive correlation, suggesting that teachers with advanced degrees are more likely to engage in reflective teaching. These results highlight the importance of structured reflection activities and professional development opportunities, rather than demographic background, in promoting reflective teaching. Schools are encouraged to implement programs such as peer observations, coaching, and collaborative lesson analysis to enhance teachers' reflective practices.

3.5 Profile Variate and Continuous Professional Development

Table 11. Correlational Analysis Between the Teacher-Respondents' Profile Variate and their Level of Development along with Continuous Professional Development

Variates	*r-Value*	*p-Value*	*Decision*	*Evaluation*
Highest Educational Attainment	*0.114*	*0.135*	*Accept H_o*	*Not Significant*

The correlation analysis indicated no statistically significant relationship between the highest educational attainment and teachers' engagement in continuous professional development (CPD), as the correlation coefficient reflected a negligible association. This suggests that participation in CPD is not determined by academic qualifications alone. Rather, factors such as institutional culture, accessibility of structured training, and individual motivation appear to play a more influential role. The findings underscore the importance of implementing inclusive and well-supported professional development programs, such as peer mentoring, competency-based training, and collaborative learning, to promote sustained professional growth.

4. Perspectives of Teacher-Respondents on What It Means to Be a Proficient Teacher

The qualitative component of this study aimed to uncover the perspectives of junior high school teachers in the Schools Division of Catbalogan City on what it means to be a proficient teacher. Using an instrumental case study involving 15 purposively selected teachers, the research explored personal narratives through in-depth interviews to gain contextual and practice-based insights. Thematic analysis of the data produced five major themes that reflect

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how proficiency is perceived and embodied by teachers: (1) Professional Competence and Growth, (2) Instructional Responsiveness and Innovation, (3) Learner-Centered Practices and Engagement, (4) Reflective and Collaborative Teaching, and (5) Fostering Learner Growth and Well-being.

Theme 1 emphasized that professional competence involves subject mastery, flexibility, communication, lifelong learning, and mentorship. Teachers view proficiency as dynamic and evolving through reflection, mentorship, and adaptive practices.

Theme 2 focused on the need for instructional responsiveness and innovation. Differentiated instruction, formative assessment, contextualized teaching, and technology integration were essential practices that teachers associated with engaging diverse learners and addressing real-world needs. These findings are consistent with Pacala (2021), who demonstrated that incorporating active learning strategies like the computer-supported Predict–Observe–Explain (POE) model significantly improves student engagement and conceptual understanding. Similarly, Uy (2023) found that structured pedagogical models, such as the GMRCE strategy, which combines gamification, modeling, rewarding, cognitive teamwork, and explicit timing, foster positive learning attitudes and discipline in science classrooms. These approaches underscore the importance of responsive and innovative instruction as key dimensions of teacher proficiency within the PPST framework.

Theme 3 underscored learner-centered practices by highlighting the importance of inclusive environments, socio-emotional support, personalization, and active student engagement. Teachers linked proficiency to knowing learners holistically and tailoring strategies accordingly.

Theme 4 identified reflective and collaborative teaching as a professional disposition. Teachers emphasized continuous self-assessment, collegial dialogue, mentorship, and shared professional learning as key elements of sustained growth and instructional improvement.

Theme 5 expanded proficiency to include the holistic development of students academically, emotionally, morally, and socially. Teachers prioritized academic support, confidence-building, values formation, and relevance to real-life applications.

In the mixed-methods integration, convergence was noted in several domains. Quantitative self-ratings in domains such as independence in teaching, curriculum, and assessment, collaborative learning, reflection, and continuous development, are aligned with qualitative narratives. Expansion emerged in areas beyond measurable indicators, specifically learner-centeredness and holistic well-being, dimensions not fully captured by the quantitative survey. Importantly, no divergence was observed, which strengthens the credibility and consistency of findings.

The synthesis of findings provides a multidimensional understanding of proficiency: a blend of technical expertise, adaptive practice, emotional intelligence, moral commitment, and collaborative engagement. It affirms that proficiency is not solely standard-driven but is deeply rooted in relationships, reflection, and responsiveness to learner needs.

Conclusions

This study explored the professional development of junior high school teachers at the proficient level in the Schools Division of Catbalogan City, specifically assessing their competence across the five domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Teachers consistently rated themselves as "Highly Developed" in the areas of independence in teaching, curriculum and assessment, collaboration, reflective practice, and continuous professional development. Despite these favorable self-assessments, key aspects such as innovation, effective assessment application, and reflective documentation emerged as areas requiring additional support.

Of the profile variables examined, only the highest educational attainment demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with teacher proficiency in multiple domains. This emphasizes the importance of encouraging advanced education as a means to elevate teaching competence. Supporting qualitative data highlighted that mentorship, emotional support, collaborative interaction, and inclusivity were essential contributors to teacher growth. Furthermore, learner engagement and socio-emotional responsiveness were consistently identified by teachers as integral to their ongoing professional development.

Overall, the findings suggest that teacher growth extends beyond technical proficiency in standards-based domains. It is equally shaped by contextual elements such as supportive school culture and institutional mechanisms. These insights informed the development of a localized Technical Assistance Plan (TAP), which integrates targeted interventions such as mentoring, reflective communities, leadership training, and inclusive strategies to support and sustain meaningful teacher development.

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Recommendations

To enhance the development of proficient junior high school teachers, schools should institutionalize structured mentorship programs and sustain Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Learning Action Cells (LACs) to promote collaboration, peer learning, and professional support. Access to research-based training, especially in STEM and assessment practices, must be broadened, while stronger support should be extended to teachers pursuing graduate studies, recognizing the link between higher educational attainment and teaching proficiency.

Equitable workload distribution is essential to prevent burnout and ensure a balanced teaching environment. Recognition and incentive mechanisms should be implemented to celebrate professional accomplishments. Inclusive, technology-integrated teaching practices must also be advanced through responsive educational policies, targeted digital training, and access to relevant tools and platforms.

Furthermore, schools should encourage teacher-led innovations and implement the localized Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) with well-defined roles and accountability at the school level to ensure effective execution. Lastly, further research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of mentorship, school culture, and professional development systems on teacher proficiency and career advancement.

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