

Professional Development and Teaching Practices of Kindergarten Teachers: Basis for a Teacher Development Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the professional development and teaching practices of kindergarten teachers, focusing on their background information, classroom management, and the challenges they face. The analysis reveals significant disparities in socioeconomic status, diverse occupational backgrounds, and varying levels of academic achievement and attendance among the teachers. These factors provide a comprehensive understanding of the context in which the teachers operate and highlight areas that may influence their professional development needs. The study also explores how kindergarten teachers manage and support the development of their learners, showing that while teachers are generally effective in creating inclusive environments and providing clear instructions, there are areas for improvement. The analysis of significant relationships between teachers' background information and their classroom management practices underscores the

importance of continuous professional development and the influence of age and life experience on teaching effectiveness. Finally, the study identifies several significant challenges faced by kindergarten teachers, with workload and time management, training and professional development, and learner assessment being the most serious. These findings emphasize the need for targeted support and resources to help teachers manage their responsibilities effectively and maintain a positive learning environment for their learners. The study concludes with recommendations for implementing equitable access to professional development opportunities, developing targeted programs, and providing additional support to address the identified challenges.

Keywords: *Professional Development, Teaching Practices, Kindergarten*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the significance of professional development for teachers, particularly in early childhood education. This focus is driven by the recognition that the quality of instruction in the formative years can have a profound impact on learners' long-term academic and social outcomes. Kindergarten teachers play a crucial role in

shaping the early learning experiences of young children, making their ongoing professional growth essential for improving educational quality. The need for an effective professional development program is stressed by the challenges and evolving demands in the educational landscape, especially in developing contexts such as Mabalacat City South.

The early childhood years are a period of rapid development, where children acquire fundamental skills that impact their cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Research has shown that the effectiveness of instruction during these years can have a lasting impact on a child's academic performance and personal development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Consequently, the professional competence of kindergarten teachers directly affects the quality of these formative experiences. Teachers who are well-trained and continually improving their skills are better equipped to provide high-quality instruction, adapt to diverse learning needs, and create engaging and supportive learning environments.

Given this context, the demand for effective professional development program becomes apparent. Such programs must address the evolving educational demands and challenges faced by teachers, especially in under-resourced or developing areas. For instance, Mabalacat City South operates in a context that may present unique educational challenges, including limited resources and specific community needs. In such settings,

the implementation of professional development program that are anchored to local conditions and designed to be practical and applicable is essential for ensuring that teachers can effectively meet the needs of their learners. Moreover, ongoing professional development is critical for helping teachers stay abreast of the latest educational practices and theories. This continuous learning helps teachers refine their instructional techniques, incorporate new educational technologies, and adopt innovative strategies that can enhance learner engagement and achievement. For Mabalacat City South, investing in advanced professional development for its kindergarten teachers can lead to significant improvements in teaching quality and learner outcomes, addressing both immediate educational needs and contributing to long-term educational success.

Prioritizing the professional growth of teachers, schools can foster an environment where both teachers and learners thrive, ultimately driving improvements in educational quality and equity.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that high-quality professional development program for teachers is critical in improving learner outcomes. They argue that effective professional development should be ongoing, embedded in practice, and focused on enhancing instructional strategies. Desimone (2015) pointed out that content-focused professional development incorporates active learning and is designed with coherence in mind

has a positive effect on teaching practices and learner learning.

Meanwhile, Guskey (2016) suggested that professional development program must include opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective practice and to apply new knowledge in their classrooms to be effective. Hattie (2018) provided evidence that professional development interventions that are sustained and directly related to teachers' instructional practices result in significant improvements in learner achievement.

Moreover, the findings from related foreign and local studies suggest that targeted and sustained professional development initiatives lead to substantial improvements in educational practices and learner learning outcomes (Desimone, 2015; Ramos, 2020). In assessing the effectiveness of these programs at Mabalacat City South, this study aimed to provide valuable insights and recommendations that can contribute to the development of more effective professional development frameworks, ultimately benefiting both teachers and learners in the region. This research offered evidence-based recommendations to enhance the implementation and impact of professional development program, addressing specific local needs and contributing to the broader goal of improving early childhood education in the Philippines.

METHODS

Research Design

The research design for evaluating the efficacy of the advanced professional development program in elevating kindergarten teaching practices and learners' achievement at Mabalacat City South involved a descriptive correlational approach to provide a comprehensive analysis of the program's impact.

Participants and Locale

Complementing the quantitative data, qualitative methods included semi-structured interviews and focus groups with teachers, school administrators, and possibly parents. These interviews explored participants' experiences with the professional development program, perceived changes in teaching practices, and impacts on learner learning. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to gather detailed insights into how teaching practices had evolved.

Sampling and Data Collection

Complementing the quantitative data, qualitative methods included semi-structured interviews and focus groups with teachers, school administrators, and possibly parents. These interviews explored participants' experiences with the professional development program,

perceived changes in teaching practices, and impacts on learner learning. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to gather detailed insights into how teaching practices had evolved.

Data Analysis

The following tools were utilized to treat the data statistically:

Ethical Considerations

The research design for evaluating the efficacy of the advanced professional development program in elevating kindergarten teaching practices and learners' achievement at Mabalacat City South involved a descriptive correlational approach to provide a comprehensive analysis of the program's impact.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The analysis reveals significant disparities in socioeconomic status, diverse occupational backgrounds, and varying levels of academic achievement and attendance among the teachers.
2. These factors provide a comprehensive understanding of the context in which the teachers operate and highlight areas that may influence their professional development needs.

3. The analysis of significant relationships between teachers' background information and their classroom management practices underscores the importance of continuous professional development and the influence of age and life experience on teaching effectiveness.
4. Finally, the study identifies several significant challenges faced by kindergarten teachers, with workload and time management, training and professional development, and learner assessment being the most serious.
5. These findings emphasize the need for targeted support and resources to help teachers manage their responsibilities effectively and maintain a positive learning environment for their learners.
6. Dev. | Skewness | Kurtosis Honors/Distinction Level | 14 | 17 | 13.046 | 0.383 | -1.009 Advanced/High Proficient Level | 24 | 30 | | Proficient Level | 33 | 42 | | Developing Proficiency Level | 1 | 1 | | Below Basic/Remedial Level | 8 | 10 | | Total | 80 | 100 | | Attendance Rate | f | % | Std.
7. Dev. | Skewness | Kurtosis Excellent Attendance | 14 | 18 | 10.431 | 0.541 | -1.488 Good Attendance | 22 | 28 | | Moderate Attendance | 30 | 38 | | Poor Attendance | 7 | 8 | | Chronic Absenteeism | 7 | 8 | | Total | 80 | 100 | | Starting with the monthly income in the household, the data reveals a significant disparity among the teachers.

8. The majority of the teachers, 42%, fall within the Php 11,000 - Php 20,000 income bracket, indicating a lower-middle-income status.
9. This is followed by 30% of teachers earning between Php 21,000 - Php 30,000, and only 14% earning Php 31,000 or more.
10. The standard deviation of 12.708 suggests a wide variation in income levels, which is further supported by the positive skewness of 0.713, indicating that more teachers earn below the mean income.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The socioeconomic and demographic background of kindergarten teachers significantly influences their professional development needs and teaching practices.

Kindergarten teachers are generally effective in managing and supporting learner development, but there are specific areas that require improvement.

Professional development through training and age are significant factors influencing classroom management and support practices.

Kindergarten teachers face several serious challenges, with workload and time management being the most critical.

Recommendations

1. Implement equitable access to professional development opportunities to address income disparities among teachers.
2. Develop targeted professional development programs to enhance individualized support, creative expression, and social interaction in the classroom.
3. Prioritize continuous professional development and training to enhance teaching effectiveness, with a focus on the influence of age and life experience.
4. Provide additional support and resources to help teachers manage workload, time, and other significant challenges effectively.

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