

UNFOLDING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' VARYING PRACTICES FOR THE K-12 PROGRAM

Abstract

There is no denying that professionals, including teachers, need to develop their knowledge and skills to be able to deliver their duties exemplarily. As expected, school heads should be supportive of the teachers' quest. Hence, this study ventured to determine the practices of school heads that foster teachers' professional development in terms of four aspects: (1) provisions of opportunities for professional growth; (2) assessment of teachers' training needs; (3) conduct of in-service trainings; and (4) financial support. The investigation also included assessing the teachers' development in terms of pedagogical knowledge and skills. A total of 172 teachers from seven (7) public high schools representing nine (9) districts of Marawi City, Philippines participated in this study. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire constructed based on the indicators of the Performance Appraisal System for School Administrators under Staff Development and the National Competency-Based Teachers Standards (NCBTS). Based on the findings, the respondents disclosed that their school heads show only moderate support for the first three aspects of professional development, with conducting of in-service trainings receiving the highest support among them. However, financial support for teachers' professional development was low due to the lack of funds for public schools. These led to the conclusion that professional development is difficult to some teachers, especially in the context of the study, because school heads do not fully support them. Conspicuously, some impeding factors are behind this phenomenon, and immediate solutions are imperative to address such hindrances.

Key words: Professional Development, School Heads, In-service Teachers, In-service Training, Teachers' Needs, K-12 Program

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Introduction

Professional development (PD) of teachers need not be overemphasized since without it, the teaching-learning process would remain stagnant. Much worse is that its absence can put students' future at risk because teachers who are professionally stationary cannot offer quality learning experiences to students. PD is a process in which teachers improve holistically, especially in their professional skills, knowledge, and attitude (Emery, 2012; Zein, 2015, 2016), leading to their ability to design better programs that improve student learning (Karlberg & Bezzina, 2020; Parker, 1990; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). This immense requisite is quite difficult and tedious for teachers if they are deprived of sufficient support. As Sanchez et al. (2020) maintain, "they must feel supported by a strong and knowledgeable leader and have meaningful input into the work that is performed" (p. 18).

In this paper, the support given by school heads for teachers' professional development is explored. As the school leader, school principals must fulfill important duties (Sanchez et al., 2020, p. 1): (1) "sets the tone and pace for daily occurrences, leads the school community in creating a vision for success, and devises and executes a plan to carry out the vision (Cohen et al., 2009)"; (2) commits "to building a strong model of shared leadership and a positive school climate with high collaboration fosters academic achievement (Ciuffetelli Parker, Grenville, & Flessa, 2011)."

Karacabey (2020) opines that school heads are tasked to properly manage all school operations to ensure smooth continuity. Therefore, they should employ leadership skills that work effectively, and part of that is supporting professional development of their subordinates. Considered to be the best in managing human resources, the principal should ensure that teachers are at their best as well so that educational goals are successfully achieved. Since teachers have the most influence on students' success (Buchanan, 2012), school principals should ensure teachers are continuously developing professionally to increase students' chances of succeeding in school (Zepada, 2013). To do this, school heads must facilitate teachers in crafting a professional development plan and give them opportunities to participate in PD activities (Karacabey, 2020). They must be thoughtful enough to determine the professional needs of teachers especially those that directly impact student performance.

This study aims to contribute to the continuing discussion on the role of school heads in teacher professional development by presenting new findings gathered from the Philippine local context. As Tran et al. (2020) posited, there could be differences in practices among schools and regions in teacher professional development due to varying socio-cultural contexts. Particularly, this study assessed the practices of the school administrators in supporting the professional growth of teachers in public schools of Marawi City, Philippines. Specifically, it determined how school administrators contribute to teacher development in terms of the following aspects: (1) Provisions of Opportunities for Professional Growth; (2) Assessment of Teachers' Training Needs; (3) Conduct of In-Service Trainings; and (4) Financial Support.

Methodology

This is a mixed methods research, specifically employing the sequential explanatory design. Creswell (2015) said it is a design that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques, which begins with quantitative data collection and followed by qualitative data that supports the former. In this study, the quantitative data were collected through a survey questionnaire and the qualitative data were gathered by interview. The questionnaire was used to determine school administrators' practices in developing teachers' professional growth, while the interview was conducted to gather insights from teachers regarding their administrators' practices.

This study was conducted in the nine districts of Marawi City, province of Lanao del Sur, located in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. Marawi City, officially the Islamic City of Marawi, is the capital city of the province of Lanao del Sur on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. The people of Marawi are called the Meranaw or people of the lake (*Ranao*). The city is also called the Summer Capital of the South because of its high elevation and cooler climate. Marawi City is predominantly Muslim which accounts for 95% of the population.

The public high schools of Marawi City are clustered into nine districts. These are Central District, North District, East District, Northeast District, West District, Angoyao District, Northeast District II, and Angoyao East District. A total of one hundred seventy-two (172) high school teachers and majority of these teachers live in the locale where they are assigned while some reside at the center of Marawi City. The samples per district are as follows: twenty-three (23) teachers from RPMD National High

School of Northeast District, nine (9) teachers from Bacarat National High School of West District, eighty-four (84) from Marawi City National High School, and twenty (20) teachers from Angoyao National High School (both schools belong to Angoyao District), fifteen (15) teachers from Babor National High School of Northwest District, nine (9) teachers from Lake Lanao National High School, and twelve (12) teachers from Guinaro Memorial National High School (both schools belong to Angoyao East District).

The instruments used in this study are a survey questionnaire and an interview guide. The survey was patterned from the items indicators of the Performance Appraisal System for School Administrators under Staff Development and National Competency-Based Teachers Standards (NCBTS). It focuses on the varying practices of school administrators under teachers' training needs, preparation of school-based training design, conduct of in-service training, and provision of opportunities for professional growth. It also includes the financial support for teachers' professional development and the development of teachers in terms of pedagogical knowledge and skills. The questionnaire is composed of 100 items and uses a 4-point Likert scale ranging from never practiced to at all times practiced. The interview guide comprises open-ended questions that probed the informants' views and insights regarding certain aspects of professional development.

To ensure validity of the instrument, content validation was done. It is concerned with the substance, areas, and topics that an instrument intends to measure. It ensures that the items encompass the breadth of the content of administrative and supervising responsibilities that include basic practices, building trust with subordinates, delegating work administrative discipline, performance issues and the responsibility. Content validation was done in two ways. First, the documentary analysis involved review of existing literature and studies. Second, it was administered to ten (10) school teachers who were not part of the sample to know whether the items were clear and not ambiguous to the respondents. Based on this small-scale pilot testing and comments and suggestions from colleagues and school administrators, some of the question items were reworded, eliminated and added for the final version of the questionnaire used in the study.

Results and Discussion

This section is divided into five subsections which correspond to the five components of teacher professional development investigated in this study. These are: Provision of Opportunities for Professional Growth of Teachers, Assessment of Training Needs of Teachers, Conduct of In-Service Training for Teachers (InSeT), Financial Support of School Administrators for Teachers' Professional Development, and Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills. In presenting the data, explanations for quantitative results are supplemented by interview responses of teachers.

Provision of Opportunities for Professional Growth of Teachers

Table 1 reflects the teachers' assessment on the extent of practices of school administrators in providing opportunities for their professional growth. These opportunities refer to sending them to seminars, workshops or conferences outside the division among others. The findings revealed that the school administrators gave limited opportunities to teachers in availing of trainings and study grants because nobody would take care of their classes in their stead. As evidenced by Mathibe (2007) that many schooling systems do not fulfill their mandates because of poor management and leadership. Similarly, the rigidity that one finds in school does not only start schools' capacity to develop but also leads to schools that are dysfunctional and unproductive. This is parallel to the finding of Pontillas (2005) that sending teachers to special training and study grants were rarely practiced by the school administrators.

Table 1. Extent of Practice of School Administrators in Providing Opportunities for Teachers' Professional Growth

No.	Statements	Mean	Rank	Description
1	Allowing teachers to have regular opportunities for collaborative working (e.g. joint planning, team teaching, observation, and feedback coaching).	3.1628	4	Moderate Extent
2	Allowing teachers who qualify to attend post graduate educational institutions to enable them obtain improve qualifications.	3.0698	11	Moderate Extent
3	Conducts proper selection/ screening of qualified and potential trainees for scholarship grants	3.0407	12	Moderate Extent

4	Creates time for teachers to learn together.	3.1395	5	Moderate Extent
5	Encourages teachers to be involved in planning lessons together. To observe each other teaching and to discuss outcomes	3.1221	7.5	Moderate Extent
6	Encourages teachers to contribute new innovative ideas for the development of instruction, research and extension	3.1279	6	Moderate Extent
7	Encourages teachers to use-learning activities and learning resources efficiently to challenge students to meet high levels of mastery and understanding of curricular objectives.	3.3198	1	Moderate Extent
8	Encourages teachers to subscribe to professional magazines.	2.6453	21	Lesser Extent
9	Encourages teachers to upgrade knowledge in one's field of specialization.	3.186	3	Moderate Extent
10	Recommends and sends teachers to a special training to develop teaching competence.	3.1221	7.5	Moderate Extent
11	Recommends teachers for scholarship grants and short-term courses.	2.7384	20	Lesser Extent
12	Sets teachers preparation program, entrance requirements or conduct more selective training screening of program activities likely to ensure that prospective teachers will be more effective.	2.9593	16	Moderate Extent
13	Stimulates intellectual discussion with teachers.	3.0116	13	Moderate Extent
14	Teachers' involvement in and Perceived Usefulness of Various Forms of Professional Development.	2.9826	15	Moderate Extent
15	Allows teachers to attend workshops or conferences.	3.2384	2	Moderate Extent
16	Schedules regular collaborations with teachers.	2.9186	14	Moderate Extent
17	School Administrator mentors/coaches teachers.	2.75	17.5	Moderate Extent
18	For the professional growth you have participated in the last 18 months to what extent did you receive scheduled time for undertaking the professional development that took place during regular work hours?	2.75	19	Lesser Extent
19	Reasons that prevent you from participating in more professional development.			
	I did not have the pre-requisites (e.g. qualifications, experience, seniority)	2.4884	25	Lesser Extent
	Professional development was too expensive. I could not afford it.	2.564	24	Lesser Extent
	There was lack of school administrators' support.	2.5814	23	Lesser Extent
	Professional development conflicted with my work schedule.	2.6395	22	Lesser Extent
	I didn't have time because of my family responsibilities.	2.4244	26	Lesser Extent
	There was no suitable professional development offered.	2.407	27	Lesser Extent
20	Extent of practices of your school administrator which activities took place during the current school year.			
	In the meetings, the principal discusses the needs for teachers' professional growth.	2.9186	17.5	Moderate Extent
	The principal gives teachers suggestions as to how they can improve their teaching.	3.093	9	Moderate Extent
	The principal ensures that the teachers are informed about possibilities for updating their knowledge and skills.	3.0872	10	Moderate Extent
	Overall	2.91165		Moderate Extent

This implies that the school administrators sometimes allow teachers to have regular opportunities for developing their professional growth. According to some teachers, their school administrators often

give them collaborative tasks, which include school programs and feedback coaching. With regard to the collaboration of teachers, as relayed by Cascio (2010), “external coaches are often used to help talented executives who are in trouble because of behavioral style deficiencies or to help them lead critical transitions such as having to lead a major change effort.” The process usually proceeds through several stages such as contracting and problem definition, assessment, feedback, action planning, implementation, and follow-up. However, teachers perceived their administrators to have limited concern on this regard.

Administrators are expected to initiate program to ensure that teachers will be more effective. They should provide teachers the opportunities to avail of scholarship grants all the time, ensure that the teachers are informed about the possibilities for updating their knowledge and skills, and give time to let teachers collaborate with each other for effective and innovative teaching. Since they were doing these practices at moderate extent and lesser extent, it means that they are not much interested in the professional growth of their teachers.

As to the reasons that prevent them from participating in more professional development (indicator 19), all indicators were assessed by the teachers as practiced at a lesser extent. It signifies the willingness of teachers to develop professionally, such as enrolling in graduate programs, and that practical factors barely prevent them from doing so. This could mean that they themselves exert efforts to engage in professional development activities even without the support of their school administrators. Based on interviews with some teachers, school administrators sometimes practiced “favoritism” where only selected teachers are offered scholarship grants and other privileges.

Moreover, statements under indicator 20 are moderately practiced by school administrators. As shown, they did not always give teachers suggestions for improvement and only update them sometimes about opportunities for knowledge and skill improvement. This implies that school administrators did not put much emphasis on teachers’ professional development. Expectedly, school administrators with higher education are supposed to be better equipped with necessary skills to lead and manage their schools. It is therefore necessary to continuously reeducate them to improve their performance. Most importantly, educational qualification and genuine passion to lead and support subordinates should be the prerequisites in selecting and promoting individuals to school head position.

Assessment of Training Needs of Teachers

Table 2 presents the teachers’ perceived extent of practice among school administrators on the assessment of their training needs. The results tell that the school administrators did not set as first priority the teachers’ training needs. Especially that the new K-12 program has just started in the Philippines, it is necessary for teachers to acquire more teaching skills that contribute to the successful and effective implementation of the new curriculum. According to some teachers, when there are innovations or curricular changes, school administrators are expected to identify their training needs as basis for trainings to be conducted. However, their school administrators seemed less interested in assessing their training needs, which implies that less priority is accorded to teachers’ professional growth.

According to Cascio (2010), the purpose of needs assessment is to determine if training is necessary. He cited that assessment (or planning) serves as a foundation for the training effort. This is to define what it is that employees (teachers) need to learn in relation to the desired job behaviors because training may lead to greater innovation and tacit skills. Tacit skills are behaviors acquired through informal learning that are useful for effective performance. Moreover, according to Murell and Meredith (2000), empowering informs, leads, coaches, serves, and liberates. Empowering and assessing training needs of teachers enables talent and capability, foster accomplishment, invest in learning, finds the spirit, and builds relationship.

Table 2. Extent of Varying Practices of School Administrators in the Assessment of the Training Needs of Teachers

No.	Statements	Mean	Rank	Qualitative Description
1	Conducts of training needs assessment.	3.0581	4	Moderate Extent
2	Prioritizes needs in training teachers.	3.093	2	Moderate Extent
3	Developing training needs assessment tools.	2.9244	7	Moderate Extent
4	Analyzes the data gathered from the training needs.	3.0465	5	Moderate Extent

5	Foster good interpersonal relationships and mutual respect in assessing training needs of teachers.	3.0756	3	Moderate Extent
6	Use teaching and learning evaluation schedule to build a picture of teaching and learning to identify priorities for development.	3.1279	1	Moderate Extent
7	To what extent you rate the effectiveness of the process used to identify your training and professional development's needs?	3.0116	6	Moderate Extent
8	Thinking back over the last 12-18 months, how well during that time do you feel your identified training and professional development needs were actually met?	2.907	8	Moderate Extent
	Overall	3.0305		Moderate Extent

During the interview with one teacher, he pointed out that their school administrators observed their classes once a week. This implies that the school administrators were somehow concerned with teachers' instructional development, especially now that the new K-12 program has taken effect. Agreeably, there is a need to observe teachers to know whether they follow, modify, or discard both the intended and the recommended curricula.

He also added that teachers were supervised by subject coordinators in their classroom once a week and during their Independent Learning Session (ILS) to determine if they actually applied the methods and strategies they learned from trainings. Most importantly, the school administrators wanted to observe the teaching practices of their teachers in terms of structural process. Accordingly, most of the time, they were observed not only by the principals but also the master teachers.

What these scenarios reveal is the active involvement of middle leaders in promoting in-service teachers' professional development. Middle leaders, as cited by Bryant et al. (2020, p. 1), "are teachers who have been appointed to formal positions of authority within a school's organizational structure...include heads of department, grade-level leaders, instructional coaches, program coordinators, and cross-school specialists, such as information technology or special educational needs coordinators (Bennett, Woods, Wise, & Newton, 2007; De Nobile, 2018)." While principals are responsible for teachers' professional learning, Bryan et al. (2020, p. 2) added that middle leaders are delegated with the task to help their peers improve student achievement through coaching them (Bryant, 2019; Dinham, 2007; Hairon et al., 2015).

This suggests teachers' professional development is further driven by effective collaboration between senior leaders and middle leaders in schools. Thus, though middle leaders are functioning without the support of principals, teachers' growth will still be limited.

Conduct of In-Service Training for Teachers (InSeT)

The teachers' assessment of the practices of school administrators in initiating in-service training is presented in Table 4. These findings reveal the principals' concern for teachers' punctuality and attendance to seminars, but these are only moderately observed. Besides, professional development is not only limited to punctuality and attendance to seminars.

Further, when principals were asked about it, they responded that they were busy with so many works in the office that they sometimes could not focus on conducting in-service trainings. Since they had too much in their hands, they just relied on their trusted master teachers or coordinators to handle the trainings. This, again, shows that school heads tend to delegate administrative tasks to their middle leaders. This is congruent to the findings of Hassel (1999) that school administrators showed less effort in fulfilling their role to conduct of in-service trainings. Belle (2007) further revealed that school administrators were assessed by their teachers to have occasionally practiced their roles in conducting training for their teachers.

Third in rank is indicator 2 stating that principals coordinate the service of experts in the subject area. This suggests that the school administrators seldom went out of their way to invite resource speakers from outside the school. Cascio (2010) shared that teachers learned much from other people such as trainers in workshops. It would also be much more effective if teachers are exposed to speakers from other schools or institutions instead of their co-teachers or department heads as teachers are already used to them. Outsiders may share some best practices that teachers are still unfamiliar with.

Table 4. Extent of Practice of School Administrators in Conducting In-Service Training

No.	Statements	Mean	Rank	Qualitative Description
1	Acts as training facilitators/resource person.	3.1628	5.5	Moderate Extent
2	Coordinates the service of experts in the subject area.	3.2558	3	Moderate Extent
3	Create effective displays in school to support teachers training.	3.0523	15	Moderate Extent
4	Create social environment during the training where all teachers can effectively engage the learning activities, regardless of their diverse capacities and resources as individual teachers.	3.0291	16.5	Moderate Extent
5	Encourages individual and group interaction during the training.	3.2384	4	Moderate Extent
6	Find whom to contact to provide training on coaching, networking and building capacity.	3.1221	9	Moderate Extent
7	Give the teachers remediation under warranties demonstrate increase classroom effectiveness.	3.02991	16.5	Moderate Extent
8	During the last 18 months, to what extent does your school administrator encourage you to participate in any kinds of professional development activities?	2.9651	19	Moderate Extent
	Courses/workshops (e.g. on subject matter or methods and/or educational related topics)	3.0988	14	Moderate Extent
	Educational conferences or seminars (where teachers present and discuss educational problem)	3.1163	10.5	Moderate Extent
	Qualification program (e.g. a degree program)	2.907	20	Moderate Extent
	Participation in a network of teacher formed specifically for the personal development of teachers	3.0058	18	Moderate Extent
	Mentoring and / or peer observation and coaching, as part of formal school arrangement.	3.1163	10.5	Moderate Extent
9	Shows how useful the seminar is in your teaching	3.3023	2	Moderate Extent
10	Inconsistent in responding to teachers' appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.	2.843	21	Moderate Extent
11	Observes teachers' punctuality through attendance check.	3.4012	1	Moderate Extent
12	Plan for the implement a variety of appropriate teaching-learning activities to help teachers attain the high level of teaching competency.	3.1453	7	Moderate Extent
13	Recognize the strong and weak aspects of teachers in teaching that may or may not help students learning.	3.1047	12.5	Moderate Extent
14	Recognizes teachers, participation during the plenary session and open forum.	3.1628	5.5	Moderate Extent
15	Use appropriate training materials/ equipment and technology.	3.1279	8	Moderate Extent
16	Evaluates results of the training.	3.1047	12.5	Moderate Extent
	Overall	3.1091		Moderate Extent

Moreover, these results signify the school administrators' lack of encouragement for team performance among teachers toward a common goal. If teachers have opposite or conflicting goals, the efficiency of the training will likely to suffer. "Courses/workshops (e.g. on subject matter or methods and/or educational related topic) and "mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching as part of formal arrangement", according to Cascio (2010), are very important for the school administrators to note. The recommendation is to conduct a team-teaching needs analysis to identify the interdependencies among team members and skills required to master coordination of team task.

In line with this, developing training objectives address boost task-work and teamwork skills are necessary. This includes adaptability, shared awareness of situations, performance monitoring, and feedback. Looking at the data, it can be inferred that school administrators do not prioritize in-service training of teachers, more specifically evaluating their training needs and letting them collaborate.

School administrators are less mindful whether the design of training would focus on teamwork skills that facilitate information exchange, cooperation, and coordination with the job-related behaviors.

Financial Support of School Administrators for Teachers' Professional Development

Table 5 presents the extent of practice among school administrators on providing financial support for teachers' professional growth. Based on the interviews with some teachers, this is what is actually happening in their respective schools. There are monetary rewards for teachers even though the recipients are underperforming. More specifically, those who usually receive the rewards are the closest ones to the school administrators. This scenario shows that some school administrators do not necessarily reward based on performance because even the underperforming teachers are given incentives. Clearly, there is a need to rethink the reward system to focus solely on merit and worth of contribution.

As observed, school administrators in the area practiced so-called "family system", which means the relatives of the administrators benefit more from the rewards. This is clearly unfair and difficult for those teachers who aim high and perform well. Since they are not related to the administrators by blood or by law, there is a high propensity that their efforts will be left unrecognized.

Table 5. The Financial Supports of School Administrators for Teachers' Professional Development

No.	Statements	Mean	Rank	Qualitative Description
1	Monetary Resources Supporting Teachers' Professional Development			
	Stipend for professional development that took place outside the regular workday.	2.6337	2	Lesser Extent
	Full or partial reimbursement for graduate school tuition	2.3953	7	Lesser Extent
	Full or partial reimbursements for conference or workshop fees.	2.5	6	Lesser Extent
2	Books or instructional supplies are provided.	2.6221	3	Lesser Extent
	For the professional development in which you have participated, the school administrator gives salary supplement for undertaking the professional development activities that took place outside regular work hours.	2.5233	5	Lesser Extent
	In my opinion, in this school the school administrator takes steps to refuse to give monetary rewards of a persistent underperforming teacher.	2.7267	1	Lesser Extent
	In my opinion, the most effective teachers in this school receive the greatest monetary or nonmonetary rewards.	2.5814	4	Lesser Extent
	Overall	2.5689		Lesser Extent

Financial support for teachers' professional growth seems to be a great problem because based on the observations and interviews with teachers, mostly if not all, teachers are financially incapable, even those who have served long.

They further disclosed that teachers self-fund their professional development activities. According to one school administrator, reimbursement of expenses for his/her tuition fees in graduate school can only be possible if the teacher is sponsored by government institutions or agencies, like the Department of Science and Technology. She added that school administrators had other means of helping teachers in their graduate school endeavors, but reimbursement of fees is very rare.

Teachers received books or instructional supplies only when available. To cope with the shortage, teachers bought their books to supplement their teaching. On this aspect, Hassel (1999) enumerates essential resources to support professional development: money, expertise, and facilities. Basically, materials are important assets of a teacher that facilitate their journey towards professional growth as facilitators of learning.

Overall, the results revealed that the teachers' development program is affected by limited budget allocation. Teachers reported that the condition has adverse effect to their service. In fact, they claimed that financial support for teachers' professional development is the most helpful in increasing their effectiveness.

In light of the findings, the researcher recommends that school heads need to re-acquaint themselves with the roles they play in the professional development of teachers. These are enshrined in Philippine laws such as the Batas Pambansa 1982 or the Educational Act, Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers, among others. This step will ensure that teachers' professional growth is given utmost attention from school leaders and that necessary teacher professional development programs and initiatives are designed and implemented. Finally, researchers are encouraged to explore further the teachers' insights and experiences with regard to their professional development journey and to determine other factors that affect them aside from their school heads.

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