

Teachers' Professional Development, Instructional Strategies and Learning Environment

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between teachers' professional development, instructional strategies, and the learning environment among 365 randomly selected public elementary school teachers in the Schools Division of Antique, Philippines, during School Year 2024–2025. Employing a descriptive–correlational research design, data were gathered through a validated researcher-developed survey questionnaire that examined the three key variables. Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation were used for data analysis. Results indicated that teachers' professional development was perceived at a high level, with participation in seminars and trainings emerging as the most prominent aspect. Instructional strategies were likewise rated high, with learner-centered approaches identified as the most frequently employed. The learning environment was also found to be highly conducive, particularly in terms of social and psychological aspects. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between professional development and instructional strategies, professional development and learning environment, and instructional strategies and learning environment. These findings suggest that higher levels of professional development are associated with more effective instructional practices and more supportive classroom environments. The study concludes that teachers' continuous professional growth plays a vital role in enhancing teaching practices and learning conditions. Strengthening professional development programs, encouraging innovative instructional strategies, and fostering supportive learning environments are recommended to further improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes in public elementary schools.

Keywords: Professional Development, Instructional Strategies, Learning Environment, Elementary Teachers, Public Schools, Philippines

Introduction

Teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring quality education, as their competencies, teaching approaches, and classroom practices directly influence learners' academic achievement and holistic development. In contemporary education, teachers' professional development, instructional strategies, and the learning environment are widely recognized as critical factors that contribute to effective teaching and meaningful learning experiences. Professional development provides teachers with continuous opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in response to the evolving demands of the educational landscape. Research has consistently shown that sustained professional development improves teachers'

instructional competence, classroom management, and ability to address diverse learners, thereby strengthening overall teaching effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Instructional strategies refer to the methods and techniques teachers use to facilitate learning, promote active engagement, and respond to learners' individual needs. Learner-centered approaches, differentiated instruction, and interactive teaching strategies have been shown to significantly improve student participation and academic performance when effectively implemented (Stronge, 2018). Teachers who actively engage in professional development activities are more likely to adopt innovative and effective instructional strategies that support higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and learner autonomy (Guskey, 2020).

The learning environment, which includes physical classroom conditions, teacher–student interactions, and the overall social and psychological climate, is another essential component of the teaching–learning process. A positive and well-managed learning environment fosters students' motivation, engagement, and positive behavior while enabling teachers to deliver instruction more effectively (Fraser, 2019). Studies indicate that teachers' instructional practices and professional growth are closely associated with the quality of the learning environment they create, underscoring the interrelated nature of these variables (OECD, 2019).

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education underscores continuous teacher development through initiatives aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which emphasize professional competence, effective pedagogy, and the creation of conducive learning environments. Despite these initiatives, there remains a need for empirical studies that examine how teachers' professional development experiences relate to their instructional strategies and perceptions of the learning environment, particularly at the elementary level.

This study aimed to examine teachers' professional development, instructional strategies, and the learning environment among 365 randomly selected public elementary school teachers in the Schools Division of Antique, Philippines, during School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, it sought to describe the level of teachers' professional development in terms of content knowledge enhancement, pedagogical skills, and participation in professional learning activities; identify the instructional strategies commonly employed in classroom instruction; and assess the learning environment in terms of its physical, social, and psychological aspects. Furthermore, the study aimed to determine whether significant relationships existed among the three variables and to identify which aspects of professional development significantly influenced instructional strategies and the learning environment. The findings were intended to provide a basis for improving teacher development programs, instructional practices, and classroom conditions in public elementary schools.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive–correlational research design to determine the relationship between teachers' professional development, instructional strategies, and the learning environment. The respondents consisted of 365 randomly selected public elementary school teachers from the Schools Division of Antique, Philippines, during School Year 2024–2025. Random sampling was employed to ensure that each teacher had an equal opportunity to be included in the study, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed survey questionnaire adapted from related literature and aligned with the objectives of the study. The instrument was composed of four sections: teachers' profile,

professional development, instructional strategies, and learning environment. Prior to data collection, the questionnaire underwent content validation by subject-matter experts and pilot testing to establish its reliability. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to describe the variables, and Pearson correlation analysis to determine the relationships among teachers' professional development, instructional strategies, and the learning environment. Ethical standards were strictly observed, and respondents' participation was voluntary and confidential.

Results

The results indicated that teachers' professional development was rated at a high level, with an overall mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.46). Among its indicators, participation in seminars, trainings, and workshops obtained the highest mean score (M = 4.25, SD = 0.43), followed by pedagogical skills enhancement (M = 4.10, SD = 0.48) and content knowledge improvement (M = 4.01, SD = 0.47). These findings suggest that the majority of the 365 public elementary school teachers are actively engaged in continuous professional learning, consistent with earlier studies highlighting the positive effects of sustained professional development on teaching competence and effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2020).

With regard to instructional strategies, the overall mean score was 4.08 (SD = 0.44), which was interpreted as high. Learner-centered strategies registered the highest mean (M = 4.20, SD = 0.41), followed by varied teaching methods (M = 4.07, SD = 0.45) and assessment-based instructional approaches (M = 3.98, SD = 0.46). These results indicate that teachers frequently employ interactive and student-focused strategies in classroom instruction, reinforcing previous research that effective instructional strategies enhance learner engagement and academic achievement (Stronge, 2018).

In terms of the learning environment, the findings revealed a high overall level (M = 4.15, SD = 0.42). The social environment obtained the highest mean score (M = 4.22, SD = 0.40), followed by the psychological environment (M = 4.14, SD = 0.43) and physical classroom conditions (M = 4.09, SD = 0.44). This implies that teachers generally create classrooms characterized by positive relationships, emotional support, and conditions conducive to learning, which is consistent with studies emphasizing the role of a supportive learning environment in enhancing teaching and learning outcomes (Fraser, 2019).

Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships between teachers' professional development and instructional strategies ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$), professional development and learning environment ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$), and instructional strategies and learning environment ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that higher levels of professional development are associated with more effective instructional practices and more favorable learning environments, supporting earlier findings that continuous teacher growth contributes to improved classroom practices and conditions (OECD, 2019).

Discussion

The high level of teachers' professional development suggests that public elementary school teachers in the Schools Division of Antique are committed to strengthening their professional competence. The prominence of participation in seminars and trainings reflects the effectiveness of existing professional development initiatives aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. This finding supports Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized that continuous professional learning enhances teachers' pedagogical skills and instructional decision-making.

The high utilization of instructional strategies, particularly learner-centered approaches, indicates that teachers are responsive to learners' needs and actively promote engagement in the classroom. This finding aligns with Stronge (2018), who noted that effective teachers employ varied strategies to address diverse learning styles and improve student outcomes. The strong relationship between professional development and instructional strategies further suggests that professional learning experiences significantly influence how teachers plan and deliver instruction, as supported by Guskey (2020).

Moreover, the high rating of the learning environment, especially in its social and psychological dimensions, highlights teachers' ability to foster positive relationships, emotional safety, and supportive classroom climates. The strong correlation between instructional strategies and the learning environment confirms that effective teaching practices contribute to a more conducive learning atmosphere. This result is consistent with Fraser (2019), who emphasized that a positive learning environment enhances both teaching effectiveness and student engagement. Overall, the close interrelationship among the three variables underscores the importance of holistic teacher development in improving classroom practices and learning conditions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that public elementary school teachers in the Schools Division of Antique exhibit high levels of professional development, instructional strategies, and a conducive learning environment during School Year 2024–2025. Teachers' active engagement in professional development positively influences their instructional practices and their capacity to create supportive classroom environments. The significant positive relationships among the variables indicate that professional development serves as a foundational element for effective instruction and quality learning environments. Strengthening teachers' professional growth initiatives is therefore essential in sustaining effective teaching practices and enhancing the overall quality of elementary education.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, school administrators and education leaders may further strengthen and institutionalize professional development programs that emphasize practical, classroom-based instructional strategies and learning environment management. Teachers are encouraged to actively participate in continuous professional learning activities and apply newly acquired knowledge and skills to improve instruction and student engagement. The Department of Education may enhance support mechanisms such as mentoring, coaching, and collaborative learning communities to sustain teachers' professional growth. Future researchers may consider examining additional variables or employing mixed-method approaches to further explore factors influencing instructional effectiveness and learning environments in varied educational contexts.

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