

Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST): Lived Experiences of Public Elementary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Professional teaching standards shape how teachers understand and perform their roles, yet how these standards are personally experienced by teachers remains less explored. In this study, I examined the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in relation to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, I gathered teachers' narratives through in-depth interviews to understand how they experience, interpret, and live out the PPST in their everyday professional work. Guided by Symbolic Interaction Theory, I found that teachers experience the PPST not merely as a policy requirement but as a professional guide whose meaning is gradually formed through school interactions, daily teaching practices, and professional engagement. Teachers live out the PPST implicitly rather than consciously applying it, with experiences of growth and tension forming part of their professional journey. These findings led me to view the PPST as a socially constructed and lived professional framework rather than a static evaluative tool.

Keywords: lived experiences of teachers, Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, meaning-making in teaching practice, professional growth and tension, socially constructed professional standards

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I presented the background of the study, the problem and its scope, the significance of the study, the research questions, and the theoretical lens that guided the inquiry. This chapter laid the foundation for understanding the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in relation to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST).

The Problem and Its Scope

I learned that professional teaching standards have increasingly become a global strategy to strengthen teacher quality, accountability, and professional development. Across various education systems, standards have been introduced to articulate expectations for teaching practice and to guide professional growth. However, recent international education reports have suggested that while professional standards are widely institutionalized, teachers often experience difficulty in translating these frameworks meaningfully into their daily classroom realities (UNESCO, 2021). This indicates that the presence of standards alone does not automatically guarantee deep professional engagement.

When I further explored the literature, I discovered that in several countries, studies have examined professional teaching standards primarily in terms of implementation, alignment, and evaluation

outcomes. Research has highlighted how standards influence instructional expectations and professional accountability, yet limited attention has been given to how teachers personally interpret and experience these standards within their lived professional contexts (OECD, 2021). The existing body of research therefore tended to emphasize measurable compliance rather than the subjective experiences of teachers navigating these frameworks.

Here in my own country, the Philippines, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), institutionalized through DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, served as the national framework defining expectations for teacher performance across career stages. Several local studies have focused on assessing teachers' adherence and proficiency in relation to the PPST domains. For instance, Genebraldo and Arpilleda (2026) examined the extent of adherence of public elementary school teachers to the PPST across various domains and compared perspectives between teachers and school heads. Similarly, other studies have investigated levels of alignment and compliance using quantitative measures (e.g., Cordero & Solar, 2023, Taculog, 2024). While these studies provided valuable insights into the degree of implementation and professional indicators associated with the PPST, they largely approached the standards from a descriptive and evaluative standpoint.

As a public elementary school educator, I observed that teachers encountered the PPST not only through formal evaluations but also through daily interactions, lesson planning, classroom instruction, and professional collaboration. These observations led me to recognize that beyond policy documentation and performance measurement, there remained a need to explore how teachers made meaning of the PPST within real school contexts. Despite the growing discourse on teacher standards, there was a noticeable lack of phenomenological inquiry focusing on teachers' lived experiences in relation to the PPST. This gap underscored the urgency and relevance of the present study.

Significance of the Study

I was convinced that my study on the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in relation to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) was significant in supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which promotes inclusive, equitable, and quality learning opportunities for all. By examining how teachers experienced, interpreted, and lived out professional standards in their daily practice, the study contributed to strengthening teacher quality—an essential pillar in achieving sustainable and effective educational systems.

The study also aligned with the Philippine Development Plan's emphasis on improving teacher competence and advancing professional development within the basic education sector. By exploring teachers' meaning-making processes regarding the PPST, the research provided insights that may inform more responsive teacher support mechanisms, professional learning initiatives, and policy refinement.

Furthermore, the study advanced the Christian Education mission of the Holy Cross of Davao College (HCDC), which upholds faith-inspired, humane, and excellent education. By foregrounding teachers' lived experiences, professional growth, and reflective engagement with standards, the study underscored the importance of nurturing educators who embody competence, integrity, and commitment in fulfilling their vocation. In doing so, the research contributed to fostering a professional culture that values both excellence and humanity in educational practice.

Research Questions

To contribute to a deeper understanding of how teachers experience professional standards in their daily practice, I explored how public elementary school teachers lived and made meaning of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) within their professional contexts. Specifically, I asked the

following questions:

1. How did public elementary school teachers experience the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) in their everyday professional work?
2. How did teachers interpret and construct meaning about the PPST through their school interactions and teaching practices?
3. How did engaging with the PPST shape teachers' professional growth and understanding of their roles as educators?

Theoretical Lens

I anchored this study on **Symbolic Interaction Theory**, originally developed by George Herbert Mead (1934) and later articulated by Herbert Blumer (1969). This theory posits that individuals construct meanings through social interaction and that these meanings guide their actions and interpretations of reality. According to this perspective, people act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them, and such meanings emerge from interaction with others and are continuously modified through interpretation. In the context of this study, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) was understood not merely as a policy framework but as a symbolic guide whose meaning was constructed through teachers' interactions, experiences, and daily professional practices. This theoretical lens helped explain how teachers interpreted, negotiated, and lived out the PPST within their specific school contexts.

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that public elementary school teachers had varied experiences in engaging with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). I further assumed that teachers constructed personal meanings about the PPST through their daily teaching practices and school interactions. I also assumed that the way teachers interpreted and lived out the standards extended beyond formal compliance and evaluation requirements, reflecting deeper professional reflections and growth.

METHODOLOGY

In order to assert the credibility of my study, I discussed subsequently my methodological process to provide vivid information on how I undertook everything. I specifically discussed my research design, sample and sampling, data gathering and analysis technique, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

I used a qualitative phenomenological design to gain an in-depth understanding of how public elementary school teachers experienced and made meaning of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) in their professional practice. This approach enabled me to explore the essence of teachers' lived experiences by focusing on their narratives and reflections. Rather than measuring levels of compliance or proficiency, the study sought to understand how teachers interpreted, constructed meaning, and lived out the standards within their specific school contexts.

Phenomenology is appropriate when the aim is to describe and interpret the meanings individuals attach to a shared experience. Through in-depth interviews and careful analysis of participants' accounts, I sought to capture the common themes that reflected the essence of their experiences in relation to the PPST. This design allowed the study to foreground teachers' voices and emphasize meaning-making as central to understanding professional standards.

Sample and Sampling

In terms of sampling, I purposively selected public elementary school teachers who had direct and sustained engagement with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). I chose participants who had at least one year of teaching experience under the implementation of the PPST to ensure sufficient exposure to the standards in their professional practice. I intentionally selected teachers

who were actively involved in lesson planning, classroom instruction, and professional activities where the PPST served as a guiding framework.

The participants of the study were public elementary school teachers working within the same school context. I focused on those who were willing to share their lived experiences and reflections regarding the PPST. Since phenomenological research prioritizes depth over breadth, I selected a small number of participants capable of providing rich and detailed narratives.

Data Gathering Technique

I collected the data through in-depth semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. This technique allowed me to explore their lived experiences, reflections, and interpretations regarding the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The semi-structured format provided flexibility, enabling participants to freely narrate their experiences while still guiding the conversation toward the focus of the study.

Each interview was conducted individually to ensure openness and confidentiality. I used an interview guide to facilitate the discussion, but I also asked follow-up and probing questions to clarify meanings and deepen understanding. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and were later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Since this study aimed to understand lived experiences rather than to generalize findings, I focused on obtaining rich and detailed narratives. Through careful listening, probing, and reflection, I ensured that the data captured the depth and essence of participants' experiences in relation to the PPST.

Data Analysis

In this study, I applied thematic analysis as the technique for understanding and organizing the data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method used for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within data (Rahman, 2024). This approach enabled me to examine both the explicit meanings expressed by participants and the underlying ideas embedded in their narratives.

After transcribing the interviews verbatim, I familiarized myself with the data through repeated reading. I then conducted initial coding by identifying significant statements related to teachers' experiences of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). These codes were grouped into categories and subsequently developed into broader themes that captured shared patterns across participants' accounts. The analysis was conducted iteratively, allowing refinement of themes as deeper understanding emerged. Through thematic analysis, I was able to organize participants' lived experiences into coherent themes that reflected how they understood, interpreted, and lived out the PPST in their professional contexts. The focus was not on generalization but on capturing the depth and essence of their shared experiences.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the ethical integrity of my study, I properly informed all participants about the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, potential risks, and their rights, including the freedom to withdraw at any time without consequence. I emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and obtained informed consent prior to data collection.

To uphold anonymity and confidentiality, I assigned pseudonyms to all participants and omitted identifying details that could reveal their identities or institutional affiliations. All interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored and were accessible only to me as the researcher. I maintained an audit trail throughout the research process to document analytical decisions and data handling procedures, thereby ensuring transparency, accountability, and integrity in the findings.

RESULTS

The succeeding narrations are the results of my study. I presented them in a way that illuminated the research questions I raised regarding the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in relation to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). This presentation served as the foundation for the discussion, implications, and future directions of the study.

Understanding the PPST as a Professional Guide

When I began asking the participants about their experiences with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), I noticed that their journeys with the framework did not begin in the same way. For some, the PPST was already familiar; for others, it was something encountered gradually, even hesitantly. Participant 1 spoke with clarity and confidence, explaining that “PPST defines the teacher quality in the Philippines... these standards describe the expectation of teachers in increasing levels of knowledge, practice, and professional engagement.” As Participant 1 elaborated, it became clear that the PPST was not merely a document but a framework that supported growth in “broader and more complex range of teaching and learning situations.” There was a sense of recognition in the way this participant described it — as though the standards had already been internalized as part of professional identity.

Participant 4 reflected more personally, describing the PPST as something that “serves as the springboard for teachers’ performances... according to our weaknesses and strengths.” In this sharing, the PPST was not portrayed as a rigid requirement but as a reflective tool — something that helps teachers look inward, assess their limitations, and work toward improvement for both themselves and their learners.

For Participant 7, the PPST carried strategic weight. It was described as “a strategy in which DEPED designed to help teachers achieve the highest potential in proficiency... to achieve quality education.” The emphasis here was not only on personal growth but on contributing to a larger educational mission.

Yet not all encounters with the PPST were immediate or clear. Participant 2 recalled the early days of its introduction during district meetings and admitted wondering, “Ano ni siya? Ano ni siya nga kailangan naton?” The question was not dismissive but curious — reflecting the uncertainty that often accompanies new institutional frameworks. There was hesitation, even confusion, in that initial reaction.

Participant 3 also shared that at first, “hindi masyado alam kung ano ba yung PPST... parang siya yung standard na dapat sundin ng mga teacher,” acknowledging limited understanding of its domains during the early stages. The PPST, at that point, was something heard about, mentioned in meetings, but not yet fully grasped.

For several participants, deeper understanding emerged through structured school processes. Participant 8 remembered encountering the PPST while preparing for RPMS, explaining that it became the basis “for us to assure kung paano tayo maging effective and efficient teacher.” What started as a requirement connected to evaluation gradually transformed into something more meaningful.

Across these narratives, I observed that the PPST was not experienced as a fixed idea. Instead, its meaning unfolded over time — shaped by meetings, discussions, preparation for performance evaluation, and repeated engagement. What began as confusion or compliance slowly evolved into recognition of the PPST as a professional guide embedded in everyday teaching life.

Meaning-Making through School Interactions

As I continued listening to the participants, I realized that their understanding of the PPST did not develop in isolation. It was not something they mastered alone by simply reading a document. Instead, its meaning gradually emerged through conversations, meetings, collaborative planning, and shared professional spaces.

Participant 9 recalled that it was during their Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions that the PPST began to make more sense, explaining that they “heard about this when we have our LAC session...,” suggesting that understanding deepened in the presence of colleagues rather than in solitary reading. In those moments of discussion, clarification, and shared interpretation, the standards began to feel more concrete. Participant 5 also connected their understanding of the PPST to institutional gatherings, narrating that they first encountered it during a district meeting when it was introduced as a “re-alignment about sa RPMS.” The formal presentation may have initiated awareness, but it was through repeated professional engagement that its meaning evolved.

In another reflection, Participant 8 described how the PPST became a shared reference point within the school. It was no longer simply a policy requirement; it was something discussed and revisited when preparing documents and evaluating performance. The participant noted that it “serves as a basis and guideline for us as a teacher,” revealing how institutional processes reinforced collective understanding. I observed that teachers often clarified their confusion by talking with one another. When Participant 3 admitted limited understanding of the domains, it was in the context of reflecting on how awareness gradually increased through engagement with peers and professional requirements. The faculty room, LAC sessions, and district meetings became spaces where the PPST was not only explained but interpreted together.

Through these interactions, the PPST transformed from an abstract framework into a shared professional language. It was in these everyday exchanges — asking questions, comparing interpretations, preparing documents together — that teachers constructed meaning around what the standards truly demanded of them.

What became evident in their stories was that the PPST was not merely handed down and accepted. It was discussed, negotiated, clarified, and gradually internalized through interaction. Its meaning was shaped in the collective rhythm of school life.

Living Out the PPST in Daily Practice

As I listened more deeply to the participants, I noticed that their engagement with the PPST was not limited to meetings, documents, or evaluation forms. It surfaced quietly in their everyday routines — in lesson planning, classroom management, and interactions with learners.

Participant 1 spoke about how the standards guided practice in increasingly complex situations, describing how they applied the expectations “in broader and more complex range of teaching and learning situations.” The words suggested that the PPST was not something memorized, but something lived through experience.

Participant 8 reflected that the PPST became the basis for being “effective and efficient teacher,” especially when preparing documents for RPMS. Yet beneath the documentation was actual classroom practice. The participant implied that the standards shaped not only reports but also instructional decisions throughout the year.

Participant 4 described the PPST as a “springboard” for improvement, particularly when identifying strengths and weaknesses. This language revealed an ongoing process of self-evaluation — a teacher continuously measuring practice against professional standards.

What struck me was that none of the participants explicitly said, “I apply the PPST every day.” Instead, their narratives revealed something subtler. The PPST appeared embedded in their thinking. When discussing learner engagement, classroom strategies, or professional conduct, their descriptions reflected alignment with its domains, even when the framework itself was not named.

Through repeated engagement, the standards seemed to move from paper into practice. Teachers adjusted lessons, reflected on learner needs, and evaluated their professional growth. These actions were not mechanical compliance but lived enactment. The PPST, once encountered as a requirement, gradually became integrated into routine teaching life.

In their stories, I observed that living out the PPST was less about consciously referencing domains and more about embodying professional expectations in daily decisions. The standards became woven into their practice — not loudly declared, but quietly enacted.

Experiencing Growth and Tension

As I continued listening to the participants, it became evident that engaging with the PPST was not only a professional process but also an emotional journey. For some teachers, understanding and living out the standards unfolded within challenging institutional environments that affected their sense of belonging and confidence.

Participant 5 shared that when she first transferred to her current workplace, she felt hopeful and excited. However, she later described how “the joy and excitement... quickly turned into a nightmare due to unpleasant encounters” with members of the school. She explained that these experiences “gave me anxiety that challenged my mental health as a human being” and “put my mental well-being at risk”. Her words revealed the emotional weight of navigating professional expectations within a strained environment.

Similarly, Participant 8 acknowledged having “bad feelings about the leadership and management,” expressing that she felt “small-minded about the way... newly hired teachers” were handled and stating that “No one is listening to us”. The statement reflected not accusation, but a sense of being unheard and overlooked during a period of transition.

These experiences suggested that teachers’ engagement with professional standards was shaped not only by policy documents but also by the climate in which they worked. Feelings of anxiety, exclusion, or lack of voice influenced how teachers experienced institutional expectations.

Over time, however, some participants described shifts in their emotional landscape. Participant 6 reflected that she had gradually regained confidence, sharing that “*unti unti ko ng naovercome ang mga nawawalang tiwala ko sa aking sarili noon,*” attributing this change to a more supportive and calm professional environment. The transformation was described not in dramatic terms, but as a gradual rebuilding of self-trust.

Across these accounts, growth and tension coexisted. Teachers navigated periods of uncertainty, emotional strain, and perceived lack of recognition. Yet they also described resilience, adjustment, and renewed professional confidence. Their stories reflected that living out the PPST occurred within evolving institutional contexts that could either intensify pressure or foster encouragement.

DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, I discussed the implications of the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in engaging with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). I interpreted the emerging themes through the lens of Symbolic Interaction Theory and supported my interpretations with recent, verifiable scholarly literature. I examined how teachers formed meaning around the standards, how workplace interaction shaped such meanings, and how these meanings guided professional practice.

Implications for Theory and Practice

On Meaning Formation: From Policy Document to Personal Compass. In reflecting on my findings,

I realized that teachers did not encounter the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) merely as a technical document outlining domains and indicators. Rather, they experienced it as a framework that gradually shaped their understanding of what it means to be a “good” and “professional” teacher. Through daily engagement in lesson planning, instructional decisions, performance appraisal processes, and professional conversations, I observed how the PPST evolved from a formal policy document into a lived professional reference point.

This process of meaning construction aligns with the central proposition of Symbolic Interaction Theory, which suggests that individuals act toward objects based on the meanings those objects hold for them, and that such meanings are formed and re-formed through interaction. In this study, I saw that the PPST did not automatically carry meaning for teachers. Instead, its significance emerged as they interpreted its expectations within the realities of their classrooms and school environments.

As I examined related literature, I found that Macam (2022) critically analyzed the ideological intents embedded in the PPST. He argued that the PPST reflects a shift toward defining teacher professionalism through articulated standards and measurable competencies, framing teaching identity within structured career stages and performance indicators. This perspective helped me understand that the PPST does not simply regulate instructional practice; it also shapes how teachers come to understand their professional roles. In my own findings, I noticed that teachers did not passively comply with these standards. Rather, they negotiated their meaning—sometimes embracing the PPST as a guide for growth, and at other times grappling with the implicit pressures associated with performance expectations.

Macam (2022) further suggested that the PPST reinforces individual accountability within a broader reform agenda. As I revisited my participants’ narratives, I recognized similar patterns. Teachers described becoming more conscious of aligning their instructional practices with specific indicators, demonstrating a heightened awareness of professional expectations. However, I also observed that this awareness was not uniformly experienced as empowering. For some teachers, the PPST clarified instructional direction and encouraged reflective practice. For others, it introduced subtle tensions between authentic classroom realities and formalized performance descriptors.

The findings of this study resonate with Oriol’s (2025) documentation of the transition challenges experienced by teachers during the implementation of the PPST. Similar to Oriol’s participants, the teachers in this inquiry described adjustment difficulties, documentation pressures, and heightened expectations associated with professional standards. However, while Oriol primarily framed these experiences within institutional and structural transitions, the present study moves further by examining how teachers internally interpreted and negotiated these expectations. Beyond adaptation to policy, my findings reveal a deeper process of meaning-making and professional identity construction, suggesting that implementation is not merely procedural but deeply interpretive.

Theoretically, these realizations led me to understand that the PPST functions not only as a regulatory framework but as a symbolic reference that teachers interpret in relation to their professional identity. The meaning of the standards, therefore, is neither fixed nor universal; it is socially constructed through institutional interactions, evaluation processes, peer discussions, and personal reflection. This observation strengthened my use of Symbolic Interaction Theory, as it demonstrated that meaning is produced through interaction rather than residing inherently within the policy itself.

From a practical standpoint, I became convinced that effective implementation of the PPST requires more than dissemination and compliance monitoring. Schools may need to create dialogical spaces where teachers can openly discuss how they interpret the standards, reconcile them with contextual realities, and

integrate them into their professional identity. Without such reflective engagement, I believe standards risk remaining procedural rather than transformative.

In this way, I see my study as extending Macam's (2022) policy-level critique by foregrounding the lived dimension of professional standards. While Macam examined the ideological framing of the PPST, my findings illuminate how those ideological constructs are experienced, negotiated, and embodied by teachers in everyday school life. Together, these perspectives contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how professional standards move from policy text to lived practice.

On Social Construction of Professional Standards. In analyzing how teachers navigated and enacted the PPST within their school realities, I realized that their experiences reflect what policy scholars describe as policy enactment rather than simple policy implementation. Professional standards, like curricular reforms, are not merely followed; they are interpreted, negotiated, and embodied by teachers in everyday practice.

A similar pattern was documented in a Philippine study by Guadalupe, Abaya, and Camposano (2023) in the *Philippine Journal of Education Studies*, where music teachers enacted curriculum contextualization within the constraints of standardized competencies and limited resources. The study revealed that teachers negotiated policy expectations through adaptation, collaboration, and informal decision-making processes rather than mechanical compliance. Teachers' enactment was mediated by their professional background, contextual limitations, and collective strategies.

In my study, I observed a parallel dynamic in relation to the PPST. Teachers did not merely "comply" with the standards; rather, they interpreted them through the lens of their classroom realities, workload, institutional culture, and available support systems. This reinforces the idea that standards frameworks, like the PPST, become meaningful only through teachers' situated enactment.

Thus, similar to the contextualization policy examined by Guadalupe et al. (2023), the PPST functions not as a static document but as a negotiated professional guide whose realization depends heavily on teacher agency, contextual conditions, and collective practice.

On Enactment of Standards in Everyday Practice. In exploring how teachers made sense of the PPST, I came to understand that their professional identity was not simply formed through compliance with prescribed standards, but through lived interpretation and continuous negotiation of institutional expectations. This resonates with Nigar and Kostogriz (2025), who argued that professional identity develops through "lived time, space, body, and relations," emphasizing that identity is continuously constructed within socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Identity, therefore, is not static; it evolves through experience, reflection, and interaction.

Similarly, in my study, teachers did not describe the PPST as a fixed checklist of competencies. Instead, they narrated how they internalized, interpreted, and redefined its domains within their daily classroom realities. Like the concept of "hybrid professional becoming" discussed by Nigar and Kostogriz (2025), teachers in my study demonstrated fluid identity construction — negotiating expectations, aligning personal beliefs with policy demands, and gradually reshaping their professional selves.

At the same time, this finding may be contrasted with the work of Roallos (2022), who examined teachers' utilization of pedagogical approaches aligned with the PPST and found high levels of awareness and reported implementation. While Roallos highlighted teachers' competence in applying constructivist and collaborative strategies within the PPST framework, my findings suggest that such utilization represents only one dimension of engagement. Beyond reported practice, teachers in my study described deeper processes of self-examination, doubt, adaptation, and identity negotiation. This indicates that professional

standards are not merely enacted at the level of pedagogy but are internalized at the level of self-concept and professional being.

This suggests that adherence to professional standards such as the PPST is not purely technical implementation but an ontological and relational process. Teachers become professionals through meaning-making, reflection, and negotiation, not merely through documentation or evaluation metrics. Thus, while existing studies have documented levels of utilization and compliance, this inquiry foregrounds the lived and interpretive dimension of professional standards, expanding current understandings of PPST enactment.

On Meaning-Making and Professional Identity Reconstruction through PPST. As I reflected on the narratives shared by my participants, I realized that adherence to professional standards was not merely technical compliance. Rather, it involved an ongoing reconstruction of professional identity. Teachers did not simply “follow” domains and indicators; they interpreted, negotiated, and integrated them into their sense of self as educators.

This resonates with Phillips (2021), who found that teachers’ resilience is deeply connected to identity processes. In her qualitative study, teachers interpreted professional challenges through identity frameworks that preserved meaning, distinctiveness, self-esteem, and continuity. She argued that resilience is not merely behavioral adaptation but a process of identity stabilization during professional threat.

In my study, I observed a parallel process in the context of PPST implementation. When teachers encountered evaluation pressures or heightened expectations under PPST, they did not respond purely through compliance strategies. Instead, they engaged in reflective meaning-making — redefining what it means to be a “competent” or “highly proficient” teacher within their contextual realities.

I noticed that teachers began to interpret PPST not only as an evaluative framework but as a narrative of professional growth. Similar to Phillips’ (2021) findings that teachers’ identity is protected through meaning construction, my participants described how aligning themselves with PPST domains strengthened their professional self-concept. They began to see themselves not as subjects of monitoring, but as professionals engaged in intentional development.

In this sense, the PPST functioned not only as a policy instrument but as an identity framework.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding extends Policy Implementation Theory beyond structural compliance. While implementation theories often emphasize resources, leadership, and institutional support, my findings suggest that teacher identity processes significantly mediate how standards are enacted.

Like Phillips (2021), who demonstrated that identity stabilization contributes to resilience, I argue that identity alignment contributes to meaningful policy enactment. When teachers internalize professional standards as congruent with their values and professional identity, implementation becomes transformative rather than mechanical.

Thus, this study contributes a new insight:

PPST implementation is not only a structural or procedural process — it is also an identity negotiation process.

Future Direction of My Study

As I concluded this inquiry into the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in relation to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), I recognized that this study opens several pathways for further exploration. While my research illuminated how teachers interpret and internalize

the PPST within their daily practice, it also revealed areas that require deeper and broader investigation. First, future studies may examine how teachers across different career stages experience the PPST. Since my participants were drawn from a specific professional context, further research could explore whether beginning teachers, highly proficient teachers, and highly proficient teachers construct meaning differently in relation to the standards. Such comparative inquiry may enrich understanding of how professional identity evolves across career trajectories under a standards-based framework.

Second, subsequent research may investigate the role of school-level dynamics in shaping PPST enactment. My findings suggest that collegial interaction, professional dialogue, and organizational climate significantly influence how teachers engage with the standards. A focused study on how institutional culture mediates the lived implementation of PPST could provide insights for school leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen meaningful professional development.

Third, longitudinal studies may be undertaken to trace how teachers' interpretation of the PPST develops over time. Since identity formation and policy internalization are gradual processes, observing teachers across multiple years could reveal how sustained engagement with the standards contributes to professional growth, agency, and instructional practice.

Moreover, future research may explore the experiences of teachers in varied contexts such as rural schools, multigrade classrooms, or resource-constrained environments. Such investigations would deepen understanding of how contextual realities shape the enactment of national professional standards.

Finally, there is an opportunity for theoretical expansion. My study highlighted that the implementation of the PPST is not merely procedural but relational and identity-forming. Future scholars may further examine the interplay between policy implementation theories and identity construction frameworks to build a more integrated model of standards enactment in education.

In moving forward, I believe that research on the PPST must continue to center teachers' voices. Quantitative assessments of alignment and proficiency are valuable, but they must be complemented by qualitative inquiries that capture the lived, interpretive dimensions of professional standards. Only through sustained exploration of teachers' experiences can policy reforms truly translate into meaningful professional transformation.

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