

Competency Needs of Secondary School Teachers of Lopez West District based on PPST Domains

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Abstract

This study assessed the competency needs of secondary school teachers in the Lopez West District, Division of Quezon, using the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as the guiding professional standards framework and an input-process-output logic for translating results into a proposed Teacher Enhancement Program. The research employed descriptive-survey, descriptive-evaluative, and descriptive-comparative approaches across nine secondary schools. From a population of 304 teachers, 121 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling (Slovin's formula, 7% margin of error). Data were gathered using a PPST-based checklist with a two-part format (demographic profile and seven PPST domains) rated on a 4-point competency scale; the instrument underwent expert validation. Analyses included percentages, weighted arithmetic means, tests of homogeneity and normality, and nonparametric group comparisons using Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H tests. Findings showed respondents were predominantly female and early-career, largely baccalaureate degree holders, and mostly married. Overall competency across all seven PPST domains was rated Competent, with relatively higher ratings in Diversity of Learners and Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, and comparatively lower ratings in Personal Growth and Professional Development, Community Linkages and Professional Engagement, and Learning Environment. No significant differences in competency needs were found by sex, while significant differences emerged when grouped by age, civil status, educational qualification, and length of service. Based on lower-rated indicators across domains, a Teacher Enhancement Program was developed to address prioritized competency needs through targeted professional learning and school-level support mechanisms. This study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) through standards-based teacher upskilling and strengthened professional practice. Its sustainability impact lies in promoting an institutionalized, evidence-informed professional development system that improves instructional quality, inclusive practice, and stakeholder engagement over time.

Keywords: Assessment and reporting; Community linkages and professional engagement; Content knowledge and pedagogy; Diversity of learners; Learning environment; Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST); Teacher enhancement program; Teacher competency needs

1. Introduction

The government of the Philippines has sustained reforms aimed at strengthening teacher quality and professional accountability through the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which articulate domains, strands, and indicators for assessing teacher knowledge, skill, and classroom practice in the K-12 reform context. (Order 42 of the 2017 Series from the Department of Education). Within this policy and professional environment, the present study centers on understanding teachers' competency needs across the seven PPST domains among secondary school teachers in the Lopez West District, Division of Quezon, amid evolving expectations for 21st century teaching, technology integration, inclusive practice, evidence-based assessment, and continuous professional learning.

Teacher quality is positioned as a critical driver of student achievement and national development, requiring rigorous preparation, a professional mindset, and sustained upskilling aligned with classroom realities and diverse learner needs. Teachers are expected to demonstrate clear objectives, strong subject interest, and openness in multicultural classrooms, particularly when adequate support and training are available to improve learning outcomes (Hussain, 2018). In support of the Department of Education's direction, teachers must be both content-competent and instructionally skilled in building and sustaining learning environments that enable learners to attain higher levels of understanding and skill (Harel et al., 2018), consistent with the institutional aspiration to develop "Filipinos who are enthusiastic about the Philippines and whose values and competences enable them to attain their full potential and meaningfully contribute to the nation's building" (DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2013). Professional responsibility is further reinforced by ethical expectations that "every teacher shall uphold the highest possible educational quality standards, make the greatest preparations for professional teaching, and be at his/her preeminent moments and in the practice of the profession" (Article IV, Section 2).

In this view, teaching effectiveness is shaped not only by what teachers accomplish but also by how they enact strategies and approaches suited to varying tasks and learner requirements; teacher approach is therefore central to classroom effectiveness (Salandanan (2018)). In the Lopez West District, teachers reportedly bring extensive experience and education (DSMEPA, 2018), and schools have initiated seminars and technology-based pedagogical practices. However, infrequent professional development appears insufficient to sustain engagement and ensure baseline performance compliance, especially given heavy workloads and high student numbers. With the “new normal” in education, the study proceeds to examine whether teachers’ job performance and 21st century capabilities within PPST expectations are adequate, and to identify competency needs that can inform a responsive Teacher Enhancement Program.

Related literature positions standards-based teacher competence as central to 21st-century education and improved student outcomes. Teaching standards clarify the knowledge and skills teachers should demonstrate (Beck et al., 2012; CEPPE, 2013; Chung & Kim, 2010; CEPPE, 2013) and emphasize that instructional quality is a major determinant of academic performance (CEPPE, 2013), supporting shared conceptions of effective teaching (Rasool et al., 2017). Studies further associate student achievement with teacher and work-related factors such as educational background, subject knowledge, instructional quality, assessment strategies, job satisfaction, credentials, and professional development (Squirre and Kelly (2012); Esseini et al. (2016); Choi and Lee (2016)). Competence is also framed in human resource terms as a combination of core competence, specialist skills, and essential “Soft Competencies”, and is defined as a measurable set of job-related knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that can be improved through training. Teacher competence and classroom affective conditions are likewise linked to student well-being and achievement (Birch & Ladd, 2017; Hamre & Pianta, 2010; Pianta et al., 2018). Domain-focused literature highlights key areas shaping teaching quality: debates on whether content knowledge influences pedagogy versus claims that pedagogical topic knowledge may be independent of subject expertise, indicating unresolved issues (Halim and Meerah (2012); Van Driel, De Jong, and Verloop (2012); Napoleon claimed that pedagogical topic knowledge was unaffected by subject matter expertise (2019)); inclusive and multicultural education that treats diversity as inherent and potentially beneficial when addressed through varied strategies (Goslin, 1965; Knight, 2009; Ortiz & Phoads, 2015; Schwartz and Green (2011); Forlin's (2015); UNESCO, 1994; McMillan, 1987; Inoue, 2015; Lynn (2018); Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund, and Parente (2001, p. 528); Pascarella, Palmer, Moye, and Pierson (quoted in Inoue, 2015)); curriculum planning and collaboration linked to performance and improved implementation (Coloma-Paxi et al. (2017); Moreira (2012)); and assessment practices where assessment for learning and timely feedback strengthen learning beyond summative evaluation (Black & William, 2018; Rabinowitz, 2010; O'Malley & Pierce, 2016; Herman, 2013; Achieve Inc. (2013); Black & William, 2019). Finally, professional growth research underscores sustained, contextualized, job-embedded professional development (Borko, 2014; Timperley, 2011; Little, 2012; Kwakman, 2003; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2018; Fullan (2017); Darling-Hammond, Chung, Andree, & Richardson, 2019), noting that school culture, leadership, collaboration, and trust shape whether professional learning translates into meaningful instructional change (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijssels, 2011; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Walker (2007); Wolcott, 2008; Forte and Flores (2014); Vangrieken, Dorchy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015; TALIS, 2013; European Commission, 2013; DuFour & Fullan, 2012; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Borko (2004); Van Es, 2012; Dobie & Anderson, 2015; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2010; Lewis, Perry, & Murata, 2016; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Lewis, Fischman, Riggs, & Wasserman, 2013; Ermeling & Yarro, 2016; Stigler & Hiebert, 2019; Hutchins, 2016; Alexandrou and Swaffield (2014); MacBeath and Dempster (2018); Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Louis, 2017; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2017; Birky, Shelton, & Headley, 2016).

Nationally, Philippine policy anchors teacher quality in constitutional and statutory commitments to accessible, relevant quality education, including Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Republic Act 10533, and professional ethics requirements that oblige teachers to understand and implement valid school policies (Article VI, Section 1 of the Code of Ethics). The PPST was institutionalized through DepEd Order No. 42, series of 2017, and functions as the basis for professional learning, evaluation, and career-stage expectations, defining seven domains and four career stages (Starting, Proficient, Very Proficient, and Distinguished) aligned with K–12 quality requirements (DepEd Directive No. 42, s. 2017). Policy directions also highlight professional development through the "Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Act of 2016" (Republic Act No. 10912) and teacher training provisions under Section 7 of R.A. No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013). Locally, the Lopez West District context includes efforts to elevate instructional quality via technology-based practices and leadership seminars, but also reveals constraints such as heavy workload, large class demands, and the inadequacy of infrequent training to sustain compliance and engagement (DSMEPA, 2018). This local environment motivates an empirical assessment of teachers’ competency needs across PPST domains to guide a feasible enhancement program responsive to district realities. Globally, education systems similarly confront rapidly changing demands—technology shifts, new conceptions of professionalism, and the pressures of mass education and diversified learners—highlighted in the Green Paper on Teacher Education in Europe (2018). International discourse emphasizes inclusive education principles (UNESCO, 1994) and the need for dynamic professional capacities that go beyond information transmission toward responsive, reflective, and community-engaged teaching (Grossman, 2015; Lowell, 2018).

The study is conceptually anchored on the PPST as a professional standards framework that guides teacher development, assessment, and targeted technical assistance across rating periods (DepEd Directive No. 42, s. 2017). Complementing this standards basis, the study draws on learning and instructional theories explaining how teacher competence develops and how teaching-learning experiences can be structured. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), highlighted by Malunes & Dioso (2020), frames teacher learning as shaped by observation, modeling, and reciprocal interactions among cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. Janse's (2019) reference of Gagne's (1985) Condition of Learning theory supports the view that learning outcomes require specific instructional events, and that systematic instructional design can guide effective lesson planning across diverse learning types. Martin cited Dale's Cone of Experience in 2019 (1946), emphasizing the relationship between concrete and abstract experiences in learning design without implying a rigid hierarchy of experience value. The study further acknowledges a model view of teaching as a structured relationship among instructor, student, subject matter, teacher preparation, and teaching process, as reflected in "Annoh (2013). (2013)." Operationally, the investigation is guided by an Input-Process-Output (IPO) logic to connect teacher demographic profiles and PPST-domain competency needs to analyze of differences and an evidence-based Teacher Enhancement Program as an output.

Despite policy clarity and the availability of standards-based tools, gaps persist between professional expectations and sustainable implementation at the school and district level. The Lopez West District context indicates that training and seminars may be too infrequent to sustain interest and ensure compliance with baseline performance requirements amid workload constraints, motivating a systematic assessment of competency needs to prioritize targeted development support. In the broader literature, unresolved debates remain regarding the relationship between content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge—where some studies argue for influence (Halim and Meerah (2012); Van Driel, De Jong, and Verloop (2012)) while counter-claims suggest limited or no effect (Napoleon claimed that pedagogical topic knowledge was unaffected by subject matter expertise (2019))—indicating continuing uncertainty that warrants contextual evidence. Additionally, concerns about bias in purely mechanistic rating systems and the need to balance written evaluation with valid instructional observations reinforce the rationale for competency assessment that is both systematic and development oriented. Accordingly, the study's rationale is to (a) describe teacher profiles; (b) determine competency needs across the seven PPST domains; (c) test differences when grouped by demographic variables; and (d) translate findings into a Teacher Enhancement Program aligned with PPST expectations and local realities.

The study aligns most directly with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it focuses on teacher competency standards, professional development, and instructional effectiveness as mechanisms for strengthening learning quality and learner outcomes through PPST-guided practice (DepEd Order No. 42, series of 2017; DepEd Directive No. 42, s. 2017). It also aligns with SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth insofar as it emphasizes professional preparation, continuing development, and competence-building as prerequisites for ethical, high-quality teaching work and sustained professional performance (Article IV, Section 2) and through formal professional upskilling structures under Republic Act No. 10912. Given the emphasis on ICT, the "Internet of Things," and technology-based pedagogy within evolving educational demands, the study is also consistent with SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, specifically in the educational innovation dimension of building teacher capacity to use technology effectively for learning. The inclusion and learner diversity focus corresponds with SDG 5 – Gender Equality and SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities to the extent that competent teaching practice requires responsiveness to gender, background, disability, and other learner differences in inclusive learning environments (Inoue, 2015; UNESCO, 1994; Forlin's (2015)). Finally, the domains covering professional ethics, accountability, and community linkages reasonably connect to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals through emphasis on ethical professional conduct, transparent practice, and school–community engagement mechanisms (Harris and Goodall (2018); Sapungan and Sapunga (2019)).

This study contributes to educational sustainability by supporting standards-based teacher development that strengthens instructional quality, learner engagement, and assessment-informed improvement cycles, which are essential for maintaining stable learning gains over time (Black & William, 2018; Herman, 2013; Darling-Hammond, Chung, Andree, & Richardson, 2019). It advances institutional sustainability by reinforcing PPST as a coherent basis for teacher evaluation, targeted support, and continuous professional learning systems that can be embedded in school routines rather than relying solely on isolated seminars (Kwakman, 2003; Fullan (2017)). The emphasis on inclusive classrooms and learner diversity supports social sustainability by promoting equitable participation, respect for differences, and learning environments where no child is excluded from educational opportunities (Schwartz and Green (2011); UNESCO, 1994). The technology-oriented demands and ICT integration dimension supports technological sustainability in education by encouraging teacher competence that can adapt to evolving digital contexts and maintain instructional relevance under changing conditions. Lastly, the focus on community connections and parental involvement supports community sustainability by strengthening school–home–community relationships that enable shared responsibility for learner development and more responsive educational environments (Harris and Goodall (2018); Sapungan and Sapunga (2019)).

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed descriptive survey, descriptive-evaluative, and descriptive-comparative approaches. DepEd Order No. 42 s. 2017 served as the basis for the questionnaire. The descriptive survey gathered respondents' demographic profile (age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and years of experience as secondary school teachers in Lopez West District, Quezon Province, Philippines). The descriptive-evaluative component assessed teachers' competence across PPST domains, while the descriptive-comparative component tested whether proficiency levels significantly differed across groups based on demographic characteristics. The study culminated in a proposed INSET/Teacher Enhancement Program anchored on PPST indicators identified as areas for development across the seven domains.

2.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in Lopez, Quezon, located in the 4th District of Quezon Province and part of CALABARZON (Region IV-A). The locale specifically covered the Lopez West District, where nine (9) secondary schools served as the study sites.

2.3 Respondents

The respondents were secondary school teachers assigned in the nine (9) secondary schools of the Lopez West District. Their demographic information included age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and years of teaching experience, which were used for grouping and comparative analysis. From a population of 304 secondary school teachers in Lopez West District, 121 participated in the study. The sample size was computed using Slovin's Formula with a margin of error of 7%. Stratified random sampling was applied to determine the number of participants per school. The final distribution of respondents across the nine schools was: Cogorin Ibaba National High School (4), Jongo National High School (4), Dao National High School (4), Hondagua National High School (17), Ilayang Ilog A National High School (4), Lopez National Comprehensive High School (70), Pisipis National High School (4), San Francisco B National High School (10), and Guites National High School (4), for a total of 121.

2.4 Research Instruments

The research instrument was primarily based on the PPST instrument and used a PPST checklist format to gather the needed data. It had two parts: the first captured demographic information (age, sex, marital status, level of education, and years of experience), while the second assessed teacher competence across seven areas: (1) content knowledge and pedagogy; (2) learning environment; (3) diversity of learners; (4) curriculum and planning; (5) assessment and reporting; (6) community linkages and professional engagement; and (7) personal qualities. Responses were rated on a 4-point scale, where 4 = extremely competent, 3 = competent, 2 = less competent, and 1 = not competent. The instrument was reviewed by expert validators composed of experienced educators who examined and approved its internal validity.

2.5 Data Collection

The researcher secured approval from the Quezon Schools Division Superintendent, then obtained the signed approval of the Schools District Supervisor to conduct the study in Lopez West District. After this, the researcher requested permission signatures from the nine (9) secondary school administrators to administer the survey in their respective schools. Upon receiving consent, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires according to the schedule, provided a 24-hour completion period, and retrieved the accomplished questionnaires on the same day. After data collection, the researcher tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted the responses, then used the findings to design the proposed Teacher Development/Enhancement Program.

2.6 Data Analysis

After data collection, responses were manually tallied and encoded using (SPSS), licensed statistical software for the Graduate School of Sacred Heart College, for statistical computations and easier calculations. The study used percentage and weighted arithmetic mean, as well as a Test of Homogeneity and a Test of Normality to determine whether parametric or non-parametric methods would be applied. For group comparisons, non-parametric tests were used, specifically the Kruskal-Wallis H test and the Mann-Whitney U test. Percentage was computed as frequency divided by the number of respondents multiplied by 100 ($P = f/N \times 100$). Weighted arithmetic mean was computed using $WAM = \sum fw/n$, where $\sum$ = summation, F = frequency of responses, w = weighted value of each option, and N = total number of responses per item. Weighted mean results were interpreted using the continuum: 3.26–4.00 (Highly Competent), 2.51–3.25 (Competent), 1.76–2.50 (Less Competent), and 1.00–1.75 (Not Competent). Source: SHC Statistical Guide Revised Edition, 2018. The Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis tests were applied using the stated parameters in the manuscript (n_1 , n_2 , and R_j for rank-based computations; and for Kruskal-Wallis: K , n , n_j , and R_j). For the researcher utilized the Tally tool for the data analysis and SPSS Statistics Data Software licensed to SHC.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards were observed throughout the conduct of the study to protect the participating teachers and the integrity of the data. Formal permission to administer the survey was secured through the appropriate school authorities prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were adequately informed of the study's purpose, procedures, expected time commitment, and the non-intrusive nature of the questionnaire. Teachers were assured that refusal to participate or withdrawal at any point would carry no penalty and would not affect their employment status, performance evaluation, or standing in the school. To ensure confidentiality and minimize any risk of harm, the survey did not require personally identifying information, and responses were coded for analysis. Collected data were handled with strict privacy controls, stored securely, and accessed only for research purposes. Findings were reported in aggregate form to prevent identification of individual teachers or specific responses, particularly because the instrument was anchored on professional standards that could be sensitive if linked to individual appraisal. The administration of the questionnaire was scheduled to reduce disruption of teaching duties, and the results were used solely to inform the development of a Teacher Enhancement Program rather than for evaluative or disciplinary purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

3.1.1 Sex

Results showed that most respondents were female (n=99; 82%), while male respondents accounted for a smaller portion (n=22; 18%). This pattern aligns with the view that teaching remains a strongly feminized profession, where women are highly represented in the education workforce (Philippine Commission on Women report (2017)).

3.1.2 Age

Results indicated that the sample was predominantly young adults, with most respondents aged 25–30 years old (96%) and a smaller share aged 31–35 years old (4%). This distribution is consistent with early adulthood being characterized by entry and consolidation in career roles, where individuals strengthen competencies and work identity as they take on adult responsibilities (Kozier et al. (2016)).

3.1.3 Civil Status

Results showed that most respondents were married (60.3%), while a substantial minority were single (39.7%). This reflects population-level patterns where marriage remains common among working-age adults, and civil status may coincide with increased role demands and stability that influence work engagement and professional focus.

3.1.4 Educational Qualification

Results showed that most respondents held a baccalaureate degree (83%), followed by master's degree holders (11%) and doctoral degree holders (6%). This profile is consistent with professional expectations in public school systems where teachers typically enter service with undergraduate preparation, while graduate studies provide additional expertise that can strengthen instructional practice and professional learning (Desimone et al., 2012), supported by professional standards adoption such as DepEd Order No. 42 S of 2017 and expectations for continued development (Cruz (2016)).

3.1.5 Length of Service

Results indicated that many respondents had 1–3 years of service (48%), followed by 4–6 years (29%), 7–9 years (17%), and 10 years and above (6%). This suggests a largely early-career cohort, consistent with staffing patterns in which many teachers remain within the first several years of practice before accumulating longer tenure (Lorenzo (2009)).

3.2. Competency Needs Based on PPST Domains

3.2.1 Domain 1: Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Results showed an over-all weighted arithmetic mean of 3.14 (Competent), with the strongest indicator emphasizing content knowledge and its application within and across curriculum areas (WAM=3.35), while the lowest-rated area was the use of a range of teaching strategies that enhance learner achievement in literacy and numeracy skills (WAM=2.72). This pattern supports the importance of strong pedagogical decision-making anchored on content mastery, where effective teaching depends on both what teachers know and how they translate it into learning experiences (Berman (2006); Salandanan (2018)).

3.2.2 Domain 2: Learning Environment

Results showed an over-all weighted arithmetic mean of 3.02 (Competent), with higher ratings for managing classroom structure and routines through strategic classroom arrangement (WAM=3.13) and maintaining supportive environments that nurture learners' engagement (WAM=3.12), while the lowest indicator involved managing learner behavior constructively through positive and non-violent discipline (WAM=2.87). These findings emphasize that classroom learning conditions depend not only on physical organization but also on sustained behavior support and positive discipline practices that preserve learning-focused environments (Harel and colleagues (2014); Nagler's (2016); Tartari (2018); Stevens (2018)).

3.2.3 Domain 3: Diversity of Learners

Results showed an over-all weighted arithmetic mean of 3.15 (Competent), with a high rating for using inclusive practices that build learners' confidence and willingness to participate (WAM=3.30), while the lowest-rated indicator focused on designing, adapting, and implementing strategies responsive to learners with disabilities, giftedness, and talents

(WAM=3.00). This suggests that teachers were generally confident in inclusive participation strategies but identified comparatively greater need in specialized differentiation for exceptionalities, consistent with the view that inclusive education requires both inclusive classroom culture and targeted pedagogical adaptations (Lowell (2012); Craig (1998); Baker (2012); Berman (2013)).

3.2.4 Domain 4: Curriculum and Planning

Results showed an over-all weighted arithmetic mean of 3.11 (Competent), with the highest rating for planning and managing teaching-learning processes aligned with curriculum requirements and competencies (WAM=3.14), while the lowest area concerned adapting and implementing learning programs to ensure relevance and responsiveness to all learners' needs (WAM=3.07). This indicates that while alignment with curriculum requirements was strong, adaptive planning to address varied learner needs remained a comparatively greater development area, consistent with curriculum work requiring both compliance with learning standards and responsiveness to learner diversity (McDonald's (2015); Ben-Peretz (2018); McLaughling and Marsh (2018); Oliva (2010)).

3.2.5 Domain 5: Assessment and Reporting

Results showed an over-all weighted arithmetic mean of 3.12 (Competent), with the highest rating for monitoring and evaluating learner progress using attainment data (WAM=3.26), while the lowest indicator involved communicating promptly and clearly learners' needs, progress, and achievement to key stakeholders, including parents/guardians (WAM=2.95). This suggests stronger competence in monitoring progress than in stakeholder-facing communication of assessment information, aligning with the view that assessment competence includes both technical use of evidence and effective communication for learning support (Stiggins and Conklin (1992); Amoako (2018); Bahati, Tedre, Fors & Mukama, 2016; Kline, 2013; Magno & Lizada, 2015; Mayosore, 2015; Mehmood, Hussain, Khalid & Azam, 2012); Pellegrino and Goldman (2008)).

3.2.6 Domain 6: Community Linkages and Professional Engagement

Results showed an over-all weighted arithmetic mean of 3.04 (Competent), with the highest rating for complying with and implementing school policies and procedures to foster harmonious stakeholder relationships (WAM=3.22), while the lowest indicator involved building relationships with parents/guardians and the wider school community to facilitate involvement in the educative process (WAM=2.87). These results indicate stronger perceived competence in policy compliance than in sustained family and community partnership-building, supporting the need to strengthen structured engagement strategies that extend learning support beyond the classroom (Harris et al. (2017); McKinley (2015); Eclavea (2019)).

3.2.7 Domain 7: Personal Growth and Professional Development

Results showed an over-all weighted arithmetic mean of 2.95 (Competent), with the highest rating for setting professional development goals based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (WAM=3.09), while lower ratings were evident for adopting practices that uphold the dignity of teaching as a profession (WAM=2.92) and applying a personal philosophy of teaching that is learner-centered (WAM=2.88). This suggests that while goal-setting aligned with PPST was a relative strength, deeper reflective foundations of practice and professional identity-building remained key areas for strengthening to support sustained professional learning and ethical, learner-centered teaching.

3.2.8 Summary of competency needs across domains

Results across domains indicated that all PPST areas were rated Competent, with relatively higher over-all means in Diversity of Learners (3.15) and Content Knowledge and Pedagogy (3.14), and comparatively lower over-all means in Personal Growth and Professional Development (2.95), Community Linkages and Professional Engagement (3.04), and Learning Environment (3.02). This overall pattern indicates that while instructional competencies were generally rated positively, professional growth systems and external engagement competencies represent priority development areas for sustaining teacher effectiveness and broader educational support ecosystems.

3.3. Differences in Competency Needs When Grouped by Demographic Profile

3.3.1 Sex

Results showed no statistically significant differences in competency needs across PPST domains when grouped by sex, based on nonparametric comparison results (p-values greater than 0.05). This suggests that competency needs were broadly comparable across male and female teachers in the district, indicating that professional development priorities may be planned at the domain level rather than differentiated primarily by sex.

3.3.2 Age

Results showed statistically significant differences across all PPST domains when grouped by age ($p=0.000$), with higher mean ratings for the 31–35 age group compared with the 25–30 age group across Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, Learning Environment, Diversity of Learners, Curriculum and Planning, Assessment and Reporting, Community Linkages

and Professional Engagement, and Personal Growth and Professional Development. These results are consistent with the idea that competence strengthens through expanded learning opportunities and accumulated teaching experiences over time (Kunter's (2012)), and they align with evidence that differences in teaching practice and support needs may be associated with professional growth and evolving expertise (Belmonte's (2012)).

3.3.3 Civil Status

Results showed statistically significant differences across all PPST domains when grouped by civil status ($p=0.000$), with married teachers posting higher mean ratings than single teachers across domains. This indicates that civil status coincided with systematic differences in competency need ratings in this sample, and aligns with reports associating marriage with lower absenteeism, lower turnover, and higher job satisfaction relative to unmarried counterparts (World Press Organization, 2014).

3.3.4 Educational Qualification

Results showed statistically significant differences across all PPST domains when grouped by educational qualification ($p=0.000$), where higher mean ratings generally appeared among teachers with graduate credentials, particularly doctoral degrees in several domains, although domain patterns varied. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons indicated that baccalaureate degree holders differed significantly from master's and doctoral degree holders in multiple domain comparisons. This supports the view that teacher educational level shapes competence variation and that modern teaching demands increasingly require higher-order skills, innovation, and technology-enabled practice (Teachers Council (2016); Lowell, 2018), consistent with systemic expectations for strengthened teacher quality aligned with national education reform (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013).

3.3.5 Length of Service

Results showed statistically significant differences across all PPST domains when grouped by length of service, with teachers having 4–6 years of service reporting higher mean ratings than those with 1–3 years of service across domains. This pattern aligns with evidence linking experience to teaching effectiveness and student impact (McKinley, 2017) and supports the view that the profession requires new skill sets responsive to changing educational demands (Green Paper on Teacher Education in Europe, 2018), including core instructional and professional competencies such as pedagogy, assessment, classroom management, and professional development (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2010).

3.4. Competency Needs Program / Teacher Enhancement Program

Results synthesis indicated comparatively lower weighted mean areas across domains, supporting the development of a Teacher Enhancement Program designed to address prioritized competency indicators aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. The proposed program emphasizes strengthening topic knowledge and pedagogy, reflective practice and lifelong learning, and targeted capacity-building to support improved student learning outcomes, teacher competence, and education quality, with recommended implementation supported by teacher cooperation and school head acceptance to operationalize the intervention for identified needs.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that the secondary school teachers in Lopez West District were predominantly 25–30 years old, mostly female, largely married, and generally baccalaureate degree holders. Overall, respondents demonstrated a competent level across all PPST domains, indicating that they are capable of supporting classroom instruction through effective communication, learner engagement, differentiated strategies for diverse learners, collaborative curriculum planning, and appropriate monitoring, assessment, recording, and reporting of learner progress, while also promoting professional ethics, stakeholder relationships, and reflective professional growth. The results further showed no significant difference in competency needs when grouped by sex, but significant differences emerged when grouped by age, educational attainment, and years of service, implying that competency needs vary with professional maturity and development. Based on these findings, a Teacher Enhancement Program was developed to address the PPST indicators with the lowest weighted mean scores and to strengthen support for improved learning outcomes and education quality.

To improve learning quality and address the competency needs of secondary school teachers based on PPST domains, school leaders may conduct an in-depth assessment of teachers' competency needs to guide targeted growth initiatives, while teachers may actively participate in Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities to adapt to current changes in teaching and strengthen classroom learning environments. Teachers may also engage in professional development courses or graduate studies to enhance specialization and expertise, implement the proposed Competence Needs Program to better support diverse learners and strengthen action planning for effective learning, and seek professional assistance from more qualified colleagues to deepen competence in assessment and reporting practices. Future researchers may conduct parallel studies using other variables and undertake longitudinal research to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed intervention.

The study was limited to secondary school teachers in the nine (9) schools of the Lopez West District and examined competency needs primarily in relation to the demographic variables included in the study; as reflected in the recommendations, further research using additional variables and longitudinal approaches is needed to assess broader patterns and evaluate the sustained effectiveness of the proposed program.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The study complied with recognized ethical standards by securing official permissions, ensuring voluntary participation with informed consent, and protecting teachers from any form of coercion or impact on employment or performance evaluation. All responses were anonymized, kept confidential, stored securely, and reported only in aggregate, consistent with institutional protocols and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

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