

Professional Development Program as Basis for Continuous Improvement among Teachers in Upland Schools

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent of the effects of a professional development program as a basis for continuous improvement among teachers in selected upland schools in Tanay District, Division of Rizal, during the School Year 2025–2026. The study covered eleven public elementary schools, namely: Aguho, Alas-Asin, Cayabu, Cuyambay, Daraetan, Laiban, Madilay-dilay, Magata-Manggahan, Pinagsabiran, Tablon, and Tinucan Elementary Schools. A descriptive survey research design was employed, involving one hundred (100) teachers representing the total population of teachers in the identified schools. The respondents were described in terms of age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, length of service, and in-service trainings attended. A researcher-made questionnaire-checklist was utilized to determine the perceived extent of the effects of professional development programs on teachers' continuous improvement with respect to teaching competencies, classroom management techniques, leadership capabilities, and research involvement. Documentary analysis of the teachers' latest Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) ratings was also conducted to determine their level of work performance. Statistical tools were applied to analyze differences and relationships among variables. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents were female, aged 30–39, single, master's degree holders, holding Teacher I positions, with 5–9 years of service, and had attended division-level trainings. Teachers perceived the effects of professional development programs on all four areas of improvement to a high extent. No significant differences were found in the perceived effects of professional development programs when grouped according to demographic and professional profile variables. Moreover, teachers' work performance was rated as Very Satisfactory, and no significant relationship was established between the perceived effects of professional development programs and their IPCR ratings. The study concluded that professional development programs are consistently perceived as beneficial across teacher profiles, though such perceptions do not directly correlate with measured work performance. Based on the findings, a continuous improvement plan is proposed to further enhance teacher development in upland schools..

Keywords: professional development program, continuous improvement, upland schools, teacher competencies, work performance

1. Introduction

Education plays a vital role in shaping an individual's life, particularly during the formative years of young learners. Beyond academic instruction, education encompasses the holistic development of learners, making teachers central to the success of the teaching–learning process. Teachers serve as the prime movers of the educational system, as the effective transmission of knowledge, skills, and values largely depends on their competence, dedication, and continuous professional growth. As human resources are the cornerstone of organizational success, educational excellence is achieved when teachers perform with passion, commitment, and professionalism within a conducive learning environment that fosters meaningful interaction among teachers, learners, and the school community.

In recognition of the critical role of teachers, the Philippine government has institutionalized policies that promote professional advancement. Article XIV, Section 5 (4) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution explicitly mandates the State to enhance teachers' rights to professional development and professional fulfillment. This constitutional provision is operationalized through DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, which introduced the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The PPST emphasizes continuous professional development aligned with teachers' career stages, competencies, leadership roles, and professional engagement to ultimately improve learning outcomes.

Despite these strong policy foundations, evidence from school-based assessments reveals persistent gaps between policy intentions and classroom realities. Based on the Enhanced School Assessment Tool (ESAT), teachers' needs assessments, and classroom observations conducted by school heads, areas requiring improvement remain evident, particularly in teaching competencies, classroom management techniques, leadership capabilities, and research involvement. These findings suggest that while teachers actively participate in professional development (PD) programs, existing interventions may not be sufficiently focused, contextualized, or responsive to actual instructional needs—especially in geographically isolated and disadvantaged upland schools.

The researcher's observations reinforce these assessment results. Professional development activities such as workshops and Learning Action Cells (LACs) were observed to enhance teachers' confidence, collaboration, and instructional awareness. Teachers showed eagerness to apply newly learned strategies in classroom practice. However, many PD programs were noted to be generic and insufficiently aligned with the contextual limitations of upland schools, including limited access to technology, instructional materials, and learning resources. Furthermore, inconsistencies in monitoring, mentoring, and post-training evaluation weakened the sustainability of PD outcomes, limiting long-term instructional improvement.

Fernandes et al. (2023) found that while teachers expressed high satisfaction with training content and delivery, the actual impact on teaching practices and self-confidence was moderate, emphasizing the need for sustained mentoring and follow-up support. Similarly, Popova et al. (2022) identified that effective PD programs share key characteristics—such as subject focus, lesson enactment, incentives, and follow-up coaching—features often missing in large-scale, government-led PD initiatives. These gaps mirror the contextual realities faced by upland schools. Emerging studies also highlight the potential of flexible and technology-enabled PD models. Stavermann (2024) demonstrated that online and blended professional development formats positively influence teacher competencies and self-efficacy when they include synchronous interaction, collaboration, and active instructor support. For geographically isolated schools, these models present viable alternatives, provided they are pedagogically sound and context-sensitive. Local studies further corroborate these findings. Añis (2021) and Guzman and Aguilar (2025) reported that teachers generally demonstrate very satisfactory performance regardless of demographic variables and that professional development participation does not always correlate directly with IPCR ratings. Conversely, Saludo and Baguio (2021) established a significant relationship between continuing professional development and instructional effectiveness, particularly in classroom management and instructional delivery. Qualitative insights from Romorosa and Uchang (2025) revealed that teachers are motivated to engage in PD for continuous learning, professional growth, and collaboration—factors essential for sustaining improvement.

Anchored on policy mandates, empirical evidence, and the researcher's firsthand observations in upland school contexts, this study examines professional development programs as a basis for continuous improvement among teachers. Specifically, it seeks to determine the effects of PD programs on teaching competencies, classroom management techniques, leadership capabilities, research involvement, and work performance. The findings of this study aim to inform the design of needs-based, context-responsive, and sustainable professional development initiatives that can enhance teaching quality and learner outcomes in upland schools.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was applied utilizing a researcher-made questionnaire-checklist to determine the extent of effects of professional development program on the improvement among teachers with respect to teaching competencies, classroom management techniques, leadership capabilities, and research involvement. Likewise, documentary analysis was also used to determine the work performance of teachers based on their latest rating in their Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR).

2.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in Tanay District, Division of Rizal. These schools include Aguho Elementary School, Alas-Asin Elementary School, Cayabu Elementary School, Daraetan Elementary School, Madilay-dilay Elementary School, Magata-Manggahan Elementary School, Monte De Tanay Elementary School, Pinagsabiran Elementary School, San Andres Elementary School and Tablon Elementary School.

2.3 Respondents

The respondents of the study were the total population of teachers in selected upland schools in Tanay District. These consist of 100 teachers. They were described in terms of age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, length of service, and in-service trainings attended.

2.4 Research Instruments

The study employed a researcher-made questionnaire–checklist as the primary data-gathering instrument, supplemented by documentary analysis. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part elicited the demographic and professional profile of the respondents, including age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, length of service, and in-service trainings attended; while the second part measured the perceived extent of the effects of the professional development program on teachers' improvement in terms of teaching competencies, classroom management approaches, leadership capabilities, and research involvement. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with weighted values and corresponding verbal interpretations ranging from Always (Very High Extent) to Never (Least Extent).

To further strengthen the study, documentary analysis was conducted to determine teachers' work performance based on their most recent Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) final ratings, classified from Outstanding to Poor. The questionnaire–checklist underwent content validation by experts in research and education, including the thesis adviser, professorial lecturers, statistician, dean of the graduate studies program, a master teacher, and a head teacher. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated to refine and finalize the instrument prior to its administration.

2.5 Data Collection

The researcher followed the Gantt Chart of Activities in the conduct of the study. This includes the formulation of the research problem up to the revision of the manuscript and submission of the final copy. After the validation of the instrument, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned authorities. The questionnaire-checklist was administered to the respondents through the Google survey form considering the guidelines in the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Retrieved data were encoded and processed utilizing Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Based from the interpreted data, summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

2.6 Data Analysis

To analyze and interpret the data gathered, appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools were employed. Frequency counts, percentages, and rank distributions were used to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of the selected demographic and professional variables. The weighted mean was utilized to determine the extent of the effects of the professional development program on teachers' improvement with respect to teaching competencies, classroom management techniques, leadership capabilities, and research involvement. One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to test for significant differences in the perceived extent of these effects when respondents were grouped according to their profile variables. The level of teachers' work performance, as reflected in their Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) ratings, was analyzed using frequency, percentage distribution, and mean. Finally, correlation analysis was employed to determine the significant relationship between the perceived extent of the effects of the professional development program on teachers' improvement and their level of work performance.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study ensured the protection of the rights and welfare of all respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided were strictly maintained, and data were used solely for research purposes. The researcher ensured that the respondents were treated with respect and that no harm, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, would result from their participation in the study..

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the Respondents in Terms of the Selected Variables

The Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, length of service and in-service trainings attended.

It can be deduced from the table that out of 100 respondents, most are 30-39 years old with 52.0% while only 1 or 1.0% are 60 years old and above. Majority of them are females with 84 or 84% while males are 16 or 16%. Most of them are married with 73 or 73.0% while widows/ widowers are 2 or 2.0%.

With regard to educational attainment, many of them are with MA units with frequency of 40 or 40.0%, followed by teachers holding baccalaureate degree with 33 or 33.0% and the rest have MA degree and doctorate units. Meanwhile, 70 or 70.0% of the respondents are Teacher I, while there are only one Master Teacher II position.

In terms of length of service, 37 or 37% have been in service in 5-9 years while 5 or 5% have been in service 20 years and more. Most of the respondents attended in- service training in the division level with 30 or 30%, and the rest have attended trainings in the different levels.

Table 1: *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents in Terms of the Selected Variables*

Age	f	%	rank
60 years old and above	1	1.0	5
50 – 59 years old	3	3.0	4
40 – 49 years old	21	21.0	3
30 – 39 years old	52	52.0	1
20- 29 years old	23	23.0	2
Total	100	100.0	
Sex			
Male	16	16.0	2
Female	84	84.0	1
Total	100	100.0	
Civil Status			
Single	25	25.0	2
Married	73	73.0	1
Widow/er	2	2.0	3
Total	100	100.0	
Educational Attainment			
Doctorate Degree			
With Units(Ed.D/PhD)	6	6.0	4
Master's degree	21	21.0	3
with MA units	40	40.0	1
Baccalaureate Degree	33	33.0	2
Total	100	100.0	
Position Title			
Master Teacher II	1	1.0	4
Master Teacher I	-	-	-
Teacher III	18	18.0	2
Teacher II	11	11.0	3
Teacher I	70	70.0	1
Total	100	100.0	
Length of Service			
20 years and more	5	5.0	5
15-19 years	6	6.0	4
10-14 years	22	22.0	3
5-9 years	37	37.0	1
Below 5 years	30	30.0	2
Total	100	100.0	
In-Service Trainings Attended			
International	3	3.0	6
National	17	17.0	4
Regional	18	18.0	2.5
Division	30	30.0	1
District	18	18.0	2.5
School	14	14.0	5
Total	100	100.0	

3.2. Extent of Effects of Professional Development Program on the Improvement Among Teachers in Upland Schools as Perceived by the Respondents with Respect to Teaching Competencies, Classroom Management Techniques, Leadership Capabilities and Research Involvement

Table 2 presents the composite summary of the perceived effects of the professional development program on teachers' improvement in upland schools. The composite weighted mean of 4.49 indicates a high extent of effectiveness of the professional development program in enhancing teachers' overall performance. Among the indicators, classroom management techniques ranked first with a weighted mean of 4.63, followed by leadership capabilities with a weighted mean of 4.61, and teaching competencies with a weighted mean of 4.60. These results demonstrate that the professional

development program is highly effective in strengthening teachers' instructional and leadership capacities that are essential for effective classroom practice and school operations in upland settings.

Research involvement obtained the lowest weighted mean of 4.12, although it still reflects a high extent of effectiveness. This finding suggests that while the professional development program strongly supports classroom instruction and leadership development, it is less effective in promoting sustained engagement in research-related activities. Enhancing research-focused training and providing structured mentoring opportunities may further improve the program's contribution to continuous, evidence-based improvement. This finding is consistent with the study of Saludo and Baguio, which reported a positive relationship between continuing professional development and teachers' professional effectiveness.

Table 2: *Extent of Effects of Professional Development Program on the Improvement Among Teachers in Upland Schools as Perceived by the Respondents with Respect to Teaching Competencies, Classroom Management Techniques, Leadership Capabilities and Research Involvement*

Aspects	WX	VI	Rank
Teaching Competencies	4.60	Always (Very High Extent)	3
Classroom Management Techniques	4.63	Always (Very High Extent)	1
Leadership Capabilities	4.61	Always (Very High Extent)	2
Research Involvement	4.12	Often (High Extent)	4
Composite WX	4.49	Often (High Extent)	

3.3. Significant Difference on the Extent of Effects of Professional Development Program on the Improvement Among Teachers with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of Their Profile

Table 3 presents the computed F-values on the extent of effects of the professional development program on teachers' improvement across different aspects in relation to their profile. The results indicate that all p-values exceed 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This shows that the perceived effectiveness of the professional development program in enhancing teaching competencies, classroom management techniques, leadership capabilities, and research involvement does not significantly differ across age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, length of service, position title, or in-service training attended.

These findings suggest that the professional development program is equitable and consistently effective for all teachers in upland schools, regardless of demographic characteristics. This universality is favorable for program sustainability, implying that improvements in content, delivery, or the enhancement of research skills will benefit the entire teaching population. Unlike prior findings by Popova et al. (2022), which highlighted variability in program effectiveness based on program type and teacher demographics, the present study demonstrates that a well-structured professional development program can deliver consistent outcomes across diverse teacher groups.

Table 3: *Computed F-values on the Extent of Effects of Professional Development Program on the Improvement Among Teachers with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of Their Profile*

Variables/ Aspects	F-comp	p-values	Ho	VI
Age				
Teaching Competencies	.830	.509	Accepted	Not Significant
Classroom Management Techniques	.830	.510	Accepted	Not Significant
Leadership Capabilities	.660	.621	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Involvement	1.328	.265	Accepted	Not Significant
Sex				
Teaching Competencies	.557	.457	Accepted	Not Significant
Classroom Management Techniques	.195	.659	Accepted	Not Significant
Leadership Capabilities	.170	.681	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Involvement	.011	.917	Accepted	Not Significant
Civil Status				
Teaching Competencies	1.433	.244	Accepted	Not Significant
Classroom Management Techniques	.721	.489	Accepted	Not Significant
Leadership Capabilities	.654	.522	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Involvement	.554	.557	Accepted	Not Significant
Educational Attainment				
Teaching Competencies	.769	.514	Accepted	Not Significant
Classroom Management Techniques	.368	.778	Accepted	Not Significant

Leadership Capabilities	.573	.634	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Involvement	1.908	.133	Accepted	Not Significant
Length of Service				
Teaching Competencies	.224	.924	Accepted	Not Significant
Classroom Management Techniques	.696	.597	Accepted	Not Significant
Leadership Capabilities	.963	.431	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Involvement	.127	.972	Accepted	Not Significant
Position Title				
Teaching Competencies	2.779	.948	Accepted	Not Significant
Classroom Management Techniques	1.636	.186	Accepted	Not Significant
Leadership Capabilities	1.448	.234	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Involvement	1.065	.368	Accepted	Not Significant
In-Service Training Attended				
Teaching Competencies	1.759	.129	Accepted	Not Significant
Classroom Management Techniques	1.306	.268	Accepted	Not Significant
Leadership Capabilities	1.448	.215	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Involvement	1.469	.207	Accepted	Not Significant

3.4. Level of Work Performance of the Respondents as Revealed in Their Latest Ratings in the Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR)

Table 4 presents the level of work performance of the respondents based on their latest ratings in the Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR). The results show that the majority of teachers (72%) achieved Very Satisfactory performance, followed by 27% with Outstanding performance, and 1% with Satisfactory performance. The mean rating of 4.329 with a standard deviation of 0.310 indicates a high degree of consistency among teachers.

These findings demonstrate that teachers in upland schools perform at a consistently high level, reflecting effective teaching competencies, classroom management, and leadership capabilities. The data suggest that the core components of the professional development program are successfully translating into measurable improvements in work performance. Given that nearly all teachers perform at Very Satisfactory or higher, future professional development initiatives should focus on excellence and innovation, particularly in strengthening research involvement. Leveraging high-performing teachers as mentors and instructional leaders can further enhance the sustainability of the program and foster continuous improvement across the school. The results align with the study of Anis (2021), which reported that teachers' IPCR ratings were similarly Very Satisfactory, confirming that professional development positively influences teachers' work performance.

Table 4.: 3.4. Level of Work Performance of the Respondents as Revealed in Their Latest Ratings in the Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR)

Rating	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.50-5.00	Outstanding	27	27.0
3.50-4.49	Very Satisfactory	72	72.0
2.50-3.49	Satisfactory	1	1.0
Total		100	100
Mean			4.329
Highest			4.971
Lowest			3.438
Std. Deviation			0.310

3.5. Significant Relationship Between the Perceived Extent of Effects of Professional Development Program on the Improvement Among Teachers and their Level of Work Performance

Table 5 presents the computed r-values on the relationship between the perceived extent of effects of the Professional Development Program (PD) on teachers' improvement and their level of work performance. The results indicate that the p-values for teaching competencies, classroom management techniques, leadership capabilities, and research involvement all exceed 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This shows no significant relationship between the perceived effects of the PD program and teachers' IPCR ratings. This result does not suggest that the PD program is ineffective. Rather, it indicates that while teachers perceive the PD program positively, its effects do not differentiate among high-performing teachers whose IPCR ratings are already Very Satisfactory or Outstanding. The program has established a strong performance baseline, but further advancement toward the highest performance levels requires more specialized and innovative content, such as advanced research methodologies or complex problem-solving

skills directly aligned with the criteria for Outstanding ratings. These findings align with Guzman and Aguilar (2025), who reported no significant correlation between access to professional development and actual teaching performance, suggesting that other factors beyond participation in PD programs influence teaching effectiveness. Therefore, enhancing PD content to target higher-order competencies is critical to fostering continued professional growth and elevating teacher performance.

Table 5: *Computed r-value on the Relationship Between Extent of Effects of Professional Development Program on the Improvement Among Teachers and their Level of Work Performance*

	r-values	p-value	Ho	VI
Teaching Competencies	.102	.322	Accepted	Not Significant
Classroom Management Techniques	.096	.350	Accepted	Not Significant
Leadership Capabilities	.112	.274	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Involvement	-.037	.721	Accepted	Not Significant

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

Based on the findings, teachers' perceptions of professional development programs' effects on teaching competencies, classroom management, leadership, and research involvement are consistent across demographic profiles. Age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, length of service, position, and prior trainings do not significantly influence these perceptions. Although teachers recognize the positive impact of professional development, these perceptions do not directly translate into differences in work performance, indicating that the programs establish a high baseline but do not account for incremental performance variations. In light of these conclusions, it is recommended that school administrators are encouraged to conduct needs assessments to identify gaps in knowledge and pedagogy and design professional development programs that target competencies, classroom management, leadership, and research involvement. Mentorship and coaching should be provided to support less experienced teachers, while teachers are urged to actively participate, reflect on their practices, and engage in collaborative sessions to sustain improvement. The proposed continuous improvement plan is recommended for implementation, and similar studies exploring additional variables may further enhance understanding and practice.

Compliance with ethical standards

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