DERIVING INSIGHTS FROM PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' SELF-ASSESSMENT: INPUT FOR A PROPOSED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN"

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Abstract

This correlation study derived insights from 30 randomly selected public school preschool teachers' self-assessment results using the National Competency Based Standards (NCBTS) and Teacher Strength and Needs Assessment (TSNA) in order to identify inputs for a professional development plan. It described the competence of the respondents on the seven domains covered: social regard for learning, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum, planning, assessment and reporting, and community linkages. Correlations between variables were determined by computing for the Pearson r and coefficient of determination (R^2).

Respondents assessed themselves to be highly competent in terms of the indicators in the six domains: social regard for learning, learning environment, planning, assessing and reporting, and community linkages, and they estimated that they are "poor" in the utilization of Information and Communication in teaching. Meanwhile, statistical analysis showed significant positive relationship in the following pairs of specific factors: (1) learning environment and curriculum planning, assessing and reporting and personal and professional growth; (2) diversity of learners as associated with curriculum and community linkages; (3) curriculum as related to planning, assessing and reporting and personal and professional growth. Between domains, significant relationship was found between: (1) social regard learning and personal and professional growth; (2) learning environment and the diversity of learners and community linkages; (3) diversity of learners and personal and professional growth; (4) planning, assessing and reporting and community linkages and personal and professional growth.

In consideration of the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations were offered: a more comprehensive seminar/training on the use of information and communication and other similar activities to enhance the competencies of preschool teachers; a constant improvement of the professional development plan for preschool teachers based on the National Competency – Based Teachers Standards (NCBTS) and to proposed an improved professional development plan.

Keywords: Preschool teachers, self-assessment, professional development, National Competency – Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) and Teacher Strength and Needs Assessment (TSNA)

INTRODUCTION

The knowledge, skills and practices of preschool teachers are significant factors in defining how much a young child learns and how prepared that child is for entry into school. In the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (PL 107 – 110), the understanding of qualities of early childhood educators have been intensified in recent years in order to add to ideal childhood learning and development. This understanding is obtained as the early childhood educators are asked to have a wider appreciation of issues involving child development and early education; when they offer educational experiences to children that are richer than before as they include the disadvantaged and engage children who are exceptional and with varying backgrounds and abilities; when they link or bridge the gaps between or among diverse arrays of families; and when they maximize fewer resources for demands for liability purposes. With this initiative of early childhood educators, the early learning guidelines have become the basis for assessment and practice, and the caring for children individually are mandated to satisfy certain scholastic qualifications and need for professional development to be able to support children's learning. In this light, the professional development has become a critical consideration for the quality of experiences extended to the children.

Professional development in early childhood programs is referred to as a number of experiences that uphold education, training and development opportunities for early childhood educators who work with children birth to age eight years as well as their families. In this manner, it applies to an array of activities that encourage escalation of knowledge base, skills, or attitudinal perspectives that lead the teachers to engage themselves in home visitation, parent education, child care and even preschool and or kindergarten to third grade teaching or instructional support system and this has to be measured in terms of certain standards which are competency-based (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004).

Competency – based means a standard that characterizes good teaching and that defines how capable a teacher is in translating the appreciation of parents, pupils and colleagues on the complex set of attitudes, behaviors and skills he/she possesses or portrays in order to carry out roles and responsibilities satisfactorily.

According to Pitman, Bell and Fyfe (1999), quality assurance is seen as the outcome of a standards-setting process that emphasizes the importance of detailed national standards.

Rothwell and Kazanas (1998) pointed out that competency is a characteristic underlying successful performance. It transcends mere knowledge, skills, and attitudes and includes bodies of knowledge, theories or motivation. Stevenson (1996) has described competency in the context of vocational education and post-compulsory education as the capacity to perform defined and predictable tasks according to some pre-specified standards.

The framework for competency – based standards for teachers is a basis of standards for assessing teachers' readiness, current performance and teachers' priority needs for professional development. Teacher competencies cover such areas as language proficiency, mastery of subject matter, pedagogical and classroom management skill, and commitment to profession and community. These define various dimensions of teachers' capability known to be important for improved learning outcomes. Snyder (2001) concluded that teachers' qualifications based on measures of knowledge and expertise, education and experience

account for a larger share of the variance in student's achievement than any other single factor, including poverty, race and parent education.

Meanwhile, as defined by the Department of Education (DepEd), professional development is a way of developing the competencies and work – related performance by means of a variety of chances to enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes. For teachers, the process of personal and professional growth certainly incorporates the objectives of teachers as a professional in line with the goals of the school, division and region for more improved student outcomes. This has been a struggle for the DepEd as stated in one of the Key Result Thrusts (KRTs) of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) that focuses on the important role of the teachers as driving force in cultivating student learning and educational quality at the school level. For this, as stipulated in the DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2009, pursuant to the implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act of 9155 and the operationalization of BESRA's KRT2, the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) has been adopted in which the standards, processes and tools used in the accomplishment and use of output are based on (DepEd IPPD for Teachers).

NCBTS has clearly stated the strategic and indispensable role of teachers in the learning process of students. Because of this, it is necessary that teachers' development be continuously supported and nurtured based on the NCBTS. Hence it is imperative to determine each individual teacher's strengths and weaknesses along with said competencies.

Along with NCBTS, the Teacher Strengths and Needs Assessment (TSNA) has been designed and anchored on the overarching concept of teachers' professional development. It is formative as a tool that will encourage teachers in taking personal responsibility for their own growth and professional development.

The NCBTS is utilized in the formulation of the Teacher's Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) that will serve as input to the school – based capacity building of teachers.

The framework of NCBTS will allow teachers to self – assess their own performance against the Competency Standards in order to identify areas of strength as well as those that need to be developed further in order for them to function more effectively as facilitators of learning.

Professional teachers constantly interact with people in the school and the community. They actively involve with learners, fellow teachers, school officials and community leaders. At the heart of involvement is the teaching – learning process which is characterized by dynamism and relevance. Teachers should continuously assess their competencies to determine personal and professional strengths as well as professional needs. The assessment is a process to provide information about the professional development status vis – a – vis the National Competency-Based Standards set by the Department of Education.

As a result of NCBTS – TSNA, teachers could determine their teaching competencies. They could use the result to formulate their respective individual professional development plans.

The Individual Professional Development Plan or IPPD is an instrument that guides teachers in their quest for continuous professional learning and development. This tool is designed in order for every professional to individually and regularly prepare, implement, monitor and update the plan which can be based on the recognized development needs discovered through the evaluation of training and development needs appropriate for the specific profession. This should be in consistent with the priority of the school, division, and region in terms of development goals. According to Rogan and Grayson (2004) and Tecle (2006), as education systems, where teacher education programs are well stablished, are concerned, Teachers' Professional Development or TPD is illustrated as a process of engaging in all activities that enhance professional career growth or as experiences obtained formally or informally throughout the career of the teachers.

Professional Development is a process of enhancing both the academic standing and the professional competencies of teachers, making them more efficient in discharging the obligations inside and outside the classroom. In the process, teachers are also provided opportunities to discover new roles, change instructional techniques, polish their practice and widen their perspectives both as educators and persons.

Strategies on professional development include group study and individual study such as learning through the internet, professional reading which is either structured or personal, school visits, peer review observation with a co – worker, mentoring and coaching group research. These should in line with the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and with the evidences of practices that are research – based in the classroom as identified by classroom observations which are systematic in nature conducted by a principal or by a colleague. Professional development is a means to elevate the knowledge and skills of administrators, teachers and staff when the SIP calls for new expertise that leads the school to a new direction addressing a particular problem. The success of professional development in the education system is attained when the environment realizes its goals through a strong leadership and support system. The IPPD should follow the SMART principle: Specific – promoting focus; Measurable in terms of accomplishments and development by means of a scheme in monitoring and evaluation; Attainable – which is output – oriented; Relevant strategies suitably related to the objectives and goals; Time – Bounded in terms of targets, flexible when subjected to revision. It should also observe approaches or methodologies that satisfy adult learning recognized to be effective in the achievement of goals and objectives.

The Professional Development Plan or PDP for teachers gives post – observation agenda for a meeting between the observer and the teacher who is being observed and an action plan and record for the conclusions. The plan includes different observations of skills measured through indicators that are research – based and it is usually analyzed to provide guidance that will lead the school in determining professional development targets needed to be improved through mentoring and coaching sessions (DepEd – EDPITAF – STRIVE, 2009).

The DepEd sets the competencies that are incorporated based upon the core values of Filipino teachers and on the principles of effective teaching and learning. There are seven (7) domains that characterize the desired features of the teaching – learning process in the framework. These include a series of elements identified as observable indicators of the quality of teachers' performance which express statements of desired teaching performance. These seven domains are social regard for learning, learning environment, diversity of

learners, curriculum, planning, assessing and reporting, community linkages and personal growth and professional development.

Community linkages. This focuses on the idea that classroom activities have meaningful connection to experiences and aspirations of the students in their homes and communities. The teachers should strengthen the links between schools and communities.

Curriculum. This domain refers to the teaching – learning process that works to assist students in understanding the curricular goals and objectives to achieve high standards of learning defined in the curriculum. Based on the study of Glickman, Gordon, and Ross, (1998) the core of successful instructions and good schools comes from professionals' thoughts and actions in schools. The improvement of the quality of education in a school is attained through professional development that focuses on the enhancement of the skills of teachers that includes workshops for the faculty, consultations with instructional teams, teacher to teacher learning and the principal's work with individual teachers and with teams.

Diversity of learners. This domain emphasizes the idea that teachers can facilitate the learning process to diverse learners by recognizing and respecting individual differences. Then, using the knowledge about differences among students, they design diverse sets of learning activities to ensure that all students can attain desired learning goals. According to Cornett (1983), the myriad of labels and categories used in identifying the different styles of learning can be overwhelming for educators.

The teacher has a broad influence on how information is processed and problems are solved, and it remains stable over many years. Conti (1989) contended that "the overall traits and qualities that a teacher displays in the classroom and that are consistent for various situations can be described as teaching styles". In addition, Martinez (1999) stated that the experience of a teacher will determine his ability to recognize and respond on how the students learn differently and creatively according to their interest, value, success and independent learning.

Learning environment. This domain applies to the significance of giving a social, psychological and physical environment within which all students, irrespective of individual differences in learning, can involve in the various learning activities and work leading to the attainment of high standards of learning. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1989) revealed in their studies that environment should have a high level of motivating students and should use learning as a primary transformative force.

Personal growth and professional development. This seventh domain (7) emphasizes the idea that teachers have a high personal regard for their profession, apprehension for professional development and for continuous improvement as teachers. This research was created through the concepts of the National Competency Based – Teacher Standard. This tool, which is the NCBTS, defines the various dimensions and effective and efficient teaching in all aspects of the professional life of a teacher and in all phases of the teachers' development through a provision of a single framework (DepED-EDPITAF-STRIVE Training and Development, 2010).

Planning, assessing and reporting. This domain refers to the placement and assessment and planning activities. This emphasizes the utilization of evaluation data to plan and make revisions on teaching – learning plans, incorporation of evaluation procedures in

the design of employment of teaching – learning activities and reporting on learner's actual attainment and behavior (Glickman, 1998)

The keys to a successful education are instituting goals, planning through execution and educating areas of deficiency. Administrators must set high standards for development, give related opportunities and monitor the development of each staff by means of significant formative education (Glickman, 1998).

Evaluation of learning outcomes of the learners can be made through assessment of results, evaluation of portfolios, marks or grades or scores from standardized tests which are indicators of student achievement (Sparks, 1999).

Social regard for learning. This domain concentrates on the idea that teachers are influential and positive role models of values in the quest of knowledge with various efforts in learning.

Teachers are the front-liners in educational system, the deliverers of knowledge and facilitators of learning so it is important to provide them with an opportunity for professional development to have a positive impact on student achievement (Lewis, 1994).

Figure 1 presents the domains of the NCBTS used in this study as framework.

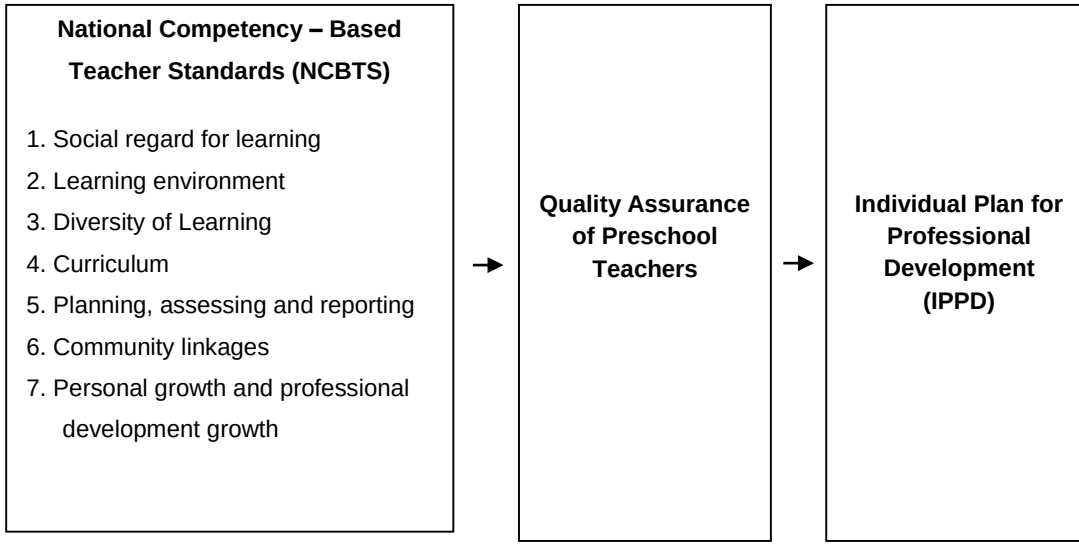

Figure1. Domains of National Competency – Based Teacher Standards Framework for Individual Teachers' Professional Development Plan

This study aimed to derive insights from preschool teachers' self – assessment as inputs to propose a professional development plan. Specifically, it intended to achieve the following objectives: 1) Based on the results of the respondents' self – evaluation, identify their strengths and weaknesses on these domains: social regard for learning, learning environment, diversity of learning, curriculum, planning, assessing and reporting, community

linkages, and personal and professional growth; 2) identify the extent of relationship between and among teachers' competence in the aforementioned domains. The study correlates the variables that measure the competence of preschool teachers based on the 7 domains in the NCBTS in order to have valuable inputs to propose a professional development plan.

The study hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between and among teachers' competence in the following domains: 1) social regard for learning, 2) learning environment, 3) diversity of learning, 4) curriculum, 5) planning, assessing and reporting, 6) community linkages and 7) personal growth and professional development.

It is the goal of the DepEd to deliver quality education to all Filipinos. To achieve this aspiration of the agency, there must be high quality of teachers who will help in improving the learning outcomes of pupils. The results of the study are hoped to help school administrators to assess and evaluate the competency of preschool teachers. In this way, they can determine the competency status, profile, strengths and training needs of preschool teachers.

It is also desired that findings may help enlighten preschool teachers as well as their administrators and the human resources development officers on the necessity of using results of teachers' self-assessment as basis for creating a timely and appropriate professional development plan. Finally, the findings of this investigation are hoped to be of value to other researchers in the pursuit for excellence on the implementation and improvement of professional development plans.

METHOD

This correlation study derived insights from 30 randomly selected public school preschool teachers' self-assessment results using the National Competency Based Standards (NCBTS) and Teacher Strength and Needs Assessment (TSNA) in order to identify inputs for a professional development plan. It described the competence of the respondents on the seven domains covered: social regard for learning, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum, planning, assessment and reporting, and community linkages.

The self-assessment instrument consisted of seven parts with 270 items in the seven domain of NCBTS – TSNA: 18 items in social regard for learning; 58 items in learning environment; 27 items in diversity of learners; 78 items in curriculum; 40 items in planning, assessing and reporting; 18 items in community linkages; and 31 items in personal growth and professional development.

Teachers' self – assessment was conducted after being permitted by the division and school authorities.

For the data analysis, the following statistical tools were utilized: frequency, mean and standard deviation, Pearson r and the coefficient of determination (R2). Correlation analyses between two variables were also conducted using Pearson r.

Means and standard deviations were computed to summarize the data. Means are interpreted using arbitrary scales:

For indicators:

With two (2) items, the following scale has been used:

Mean Rating	Verbal Interpretation
2.00 – 2.99	Poor competence
3.00 – 4.99	Fair competence
5.00 – 6.99	Satisfactory competence
7.00 – 8.00	High competence

With three (3) items:

Mean Rating	Verbal Interpretation
3.00 – 4.49	Poor competence
4.50 – 7.49	Fair competence
7.50 – 10.49	Satisfactory competence
10.50 – 12.00	High competence

With four (4) items:

Mean Rating	Verbal Interpretation
4.00 – 5.99	Poor competence
6.00 – 9.99	Fair competence
10.00 – 13.99	Satisfactory competence
14.00 – 16.00	High competence

With five (5) items:

Mean Rating	Verbal Interpretation
5.00 – 7.49	Poor competence
7.50 – 12.49	Fair competence
12.50 – 17.49	Satisfactory competence
17.50 – 20.00	High competence

With ten (10) items:

Mean Rating	Verbal Interpretation
10.00 – 14.99	Poor competence
15.00 – 24.99	Fair competence
25.00 – 34.99	Satisfactory competence
35.00 – 40.00	High competence

The following values computed from [(highest possible score – lowest possible) ÷ 4] were the bases for classifying the standard deviation as to data homogeneity. If a standard deviation exceeds the corresponding ceiling, data are heterogeneous.

No. of Items	Formula	Ceiling for Std. Deviation
2	$\frac{8-2}{4}$	1.5
3	$\frac{12-3}{4}$	2.25
4	$\frac{16-4}{4}$	3
5	$\frac{20-5}{4}$	3.75
10	$\frac{40-10}{4}$	7.5

Pearson r was also used to determine if there is a relationship between and among teachers' competence in the domains of NCBTS.

All statistical measures were aided by computer and "Statistical Package for Social Sciences" (SPSS) software to ensure the speed and accuracy of calculation.

RESULTS

This section presents the data gathered organized following the order of the stated objectives in the introduction.

Strength and Weaknesses of Teacher – Respondents in the Domains of the NCBTS

This section includes the results in determining the strength and weaknesses of the teacher-respondents in the seven (7) domains in NCBTS – TSNA of DepEd, namely: social regard for learning, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum, planning,

assessing and reporting, community linkages, personal growth and professional development, the summary of which is presented in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Identifying the highest and lowest mean score is not given emphasis in presenting the results of this study due to the different number of items per domain.

Social regard for learning. Data in Table 1 show the result of self – assessment of preschool teachers in the domain 1, social regard for learning. It can be gleaned that the teachers have rated themselves highly competent in all indicators. This reflects a good representation that the preschool teachers have focused on the idea that they serve as a powerful role model of values in the pursuit of learning. Standard deviation reveals that teachers' responses are homogeneous.

Table 1
DOMAIN I - Social Regard for Learning

Indicator	No. of Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Implements school policies and procedures	5	19.17	1.60	High competence
2. Demonstrates punctuality	3	11.57	1.30	High competence
3. Maintains appropriate appearance	3	11.07	1.05	High competence
4. Is careful about the effect of one's behavior on students	4	14.2	1.45	High competence
5. Makes use of various learning experiences and resources	3	11	1.20	High competence

Learning environment. Table 2 presents the results of the teachers' assessment of their respective competence on the area of learning environment. It shows that in all the 17 indicators, teachers have rated themselves highly competent. Data on Table 2 further express that preschool teachers provide social and physical environment within which all students regardless of their individual differences in learning engage in the different learning activities and work towards attaining high standards of learning. Furthermore, their ability to handle behavior problems quickly with due respect to children's rights is rated the highest.

Table 2

DOMAIN II - Learning Environment

Indicator	No. of Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Maintains learning environment of courtesy and respect for different learners	3	11	0.94	High competence
2. Provides gender - fair opportunities for learning	3	10.90	1.30	High competence
3. Recognizes that every learners has strengths	3	14.43	1.55	High competence
4. Maintains a safe and orderly classroom free from distractions.	3	11.33	1.12	High competence
5. Arranges challenging activities in a given physical environment	3	10.97	1.20	High competence
6. Uses individual and cooperative learning activities to improve capacities of learners higher learning	4	14.73	1.70	High competence
7. Encourages learners to ask questions	4	14.77	1.30	High competence
8. Provides learners with a variety of learning experiences	3	10.97	1.25	High competence
9. Provides varied enrichment activities to nurture the desire for further learning	4	14.70	1.66	High competence
10. Communicates and maintains high standards of learning performance	3	10.93	1.28	High competence
11. Handles behavior problems quickly and with due respect to children's rights	5	18.30	1.95	High competence
12. Gives timely feedback to reinforce appropriate learner's behavior	3	10.80	1.32	High competence
13. Guides individual learners to the development of appropriate moral, social and learning behavior	4	14.67	1.42	High competence
14. Communicates and enforces school policies and procedures for appropriate	3	11.10	1.18	High competence
15. Encourages free expression of ideas from students	3	10.90	1.35	High competence
16. Creates a stress - free environment	4	14.67	1.40	High competence

17. Takes measures to minimize anxiety and fear of the teacher and / or subject.	3	10.67	1.24	High competence

Diversity of learners. Table 3 presents the results of self- assessment of the preschool teachers in diversity of learning. It can be surmised from the data that the respondents have a high level of competence in most of the indicators. As the data show, only the indicator (indicator 8) reveal heterogeneous responses.

Table 3
DOMAIN III - Diversity of Learners

Indicator	No. of Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Obtains information on the learning styles, multiple intelligences and needs of learners	3	11.17	1.18	High competence
2. Designs or selects learning experiences suited to different kind of learners	3	10.90	1.16	High competence
3. Establishes goals that define appropriate expectations for all learners.	4	15.27	1.31	High competence
4. Paces lessons appropriate to needs and difficulties of learners	3	11.50	0.94	High competence
5. Initiates other learning approaches for learners whose needs have not been met by usual approaches.	4	14.73	1.74	High competence
6. Recognizes multi - cultural background of learners when providing learning opportunities	3	10.87	1.25	High competence
7. Adopts strategies to address needs of differently - able students	3	11.10	1.24	High competence
8. Makes appropriate adjustments for learners of different socio – economic backgrounds	4	15.47	5.26	High competence

Curriculum. Table 4 shows the results in curriculum. It can be inferred that the preschool teachers assess themselves as having high level of competence in the majority of the items. Conversely, the respondent – teachers are poor in the utilization of ICT with mean score of 3.58. This indicates that the preschool teachers urgently need trainings for the utilization of ICT which means that they need to take part in the continuous self-improvement toward attaining a high standard of learning. As the standard deviation results in the 15th and

16th indicator reflects 7.65 and 7.42 respectively, responses in these indicators appear heterogeneous which means that perceptions of the teacher are highly dispersed.

Table 4
DOMAIN IV – Curriculum

Indicator	No. of Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Delivers accurate and updated content knowledge using appropriate methodologies, approaches and strategies	3	11.10	1.18	High competence
2. Integrates language, literacy and quantitative skill development and values in the subject area	3	10.87	1.20	High competence
3. Explains learning goals, instructional procedures and content clearly and accurately to students.	3	10.93	1.31	High competence
4. Links the current content with past and future lessons	3	11	1.29	High competence
5. Aligns with lesson objectives the teaching methods, learning activities, and instructional materials or resources appropriate to learners.	3	10.67	1.37	High competence
6. Creates situations that encourage learners to use high order thinking skills	3	10.67	1.32	High competence
7. Engages and sustains learner's interests in the subject by making content meaningful and relevant to them	3	10.83	1.37	High competence
8. Integrates relevant scholarly works and ideas to enrich the lesson as needed	3	10.77	1.38	High competence
9. Integrates content of subject area with other disciplines	3	11.13	1.28	High competence
10. Sets appropriate learning goals	3	11.07	1.17	High competence
11. Understand the learners goals	3	11.33	1.18	High competence
12. Establishes routines and procedures to maximize instructional time	3	11.13	1.25	High competence
13. Plans lessons to fit within available instructional time	3	10.90	1.42	High competence

14. Translates learning competencies to instructional objectives	3	10.73	1.20	High competence
15. Selects, prepares, and utilizes technology and other instructional materials appropriate to the learners and the learning objectives	5	19.73	7.65	High Competence
16. Provides activities and uses instructional which fit the learners' learning styles, goals and culture	3	12.30	7.42	High Competence
17. Uses a variety of teaching approaches and techniques appropriate to the subject matter and the learners	3	11	1.17	High competence
18. Utilizes information derived from assessment to improve teaching and learning	3	10.87	1.25	High competence
19. Provides activities and uses materials which involve student in meaningful learning	4	14.63	1.50	High competence
20. Designs and utilizes teaching methods that take into account the learning process	4	14.50	1.61	High competence
21. Cultivates good study habit through appropriate activities and projects	4	14.30	1.51	High competence
22. Utilizes Information and Communication Technology to enhance teaching and learning	10	3.58	0.38	Poor

Planning, assessing and reporting. The data show that the respondent – teachers assessed themselves as highly competent in all items in Domain V which is on planning, assessing and reporting. However, their responses in the indicator (indicator 1) where the highest mean score (18.6) is reflected appears to be highly dispersed as compared to the rest of the indicators. This implies that while some teachers assessed themselves highly competent on this indicator, others view themselves with lesser degree of competence on the same indicator. Moreover, preschool teachers focus on the aligned use of assessment and planning activities to ensure that the learning activities are maximally appreciated by the learners' current knowledge and learning levels. Further, the standard deviation shows homogeneity as presented on the data.

Table 5
DOMAIN V - Planning, Assessing and Reporting

Indicator	No. of Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Shows proofs of instructional planning	5	18.6	2.08	High competence
2. Implement instructional plan	3	11.5	0.94	High competence
3. Demonstrates ability to cope with varied teaching milieu	3	11.17	1.05	High competence
4. Prepares formative and summative tests in line with the curriculum	3	10.63	1.52	High competence
5. Employs non - traditional assessment techniques	3	10.77	1.50	High competence
6. Interprets and uses assessment results to improve teaching and learning	3	10.93	1.08	High competence
7. Identifies teaching - learning difficulties and possible causes and takes appropriate action to address them	5	18.50	1.61	High competence
8. Uses tools for assessing authentic learning	3	10.83	1.34	High competence
9. Provides timely and accurate feedback to learners to encourage them to reflect on and monitor their own learning growth	4	14.57	1.50	High competence
10. Keeps accurate records of grades / performance levels of learners	2	7.53	0.78	High competence
11. Conducts regular meetings with learners and parents to report learners' progress	3	11.43	1.25	High competence
12. Involves parents to participate in school activities that promote learning	3	10.80	1.16	High competence

Community Linkages. Table 6 reveals that the level of competency of teachers is high in most indicators of community linkages. It can be construed that the preschool teachers focus on the school activities that link to experiences and aspirations of the learners. Further, the respondent – teachers assess themselves satisfactory in terms of their competence in using community networks with a mean score of 10.47. This indicates that the teachers' efforts are directed to link the school with community activities in the attainment of the curricular objectives. The standard deviation in all items indicates homogenous responses.

Table 6
DOMAIN VI - Community Linkages

Indicator	No. of Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Involves community in sharing accountability for learners' achievement	3	10.6	1.33	High competence
2. Uses community resources (human, material) to support learning	3	10.6	1.43	High competence
3. Uses community as a laboratory for learning	3	10.5	1.53	High competence
4. Participates in community activities that promote learning	3	10.6	1.61	High competence
5. Uses community networks to publicize school events and achievements	3	10.47	1.48	Satisfactory
6. Encourages students to apply classroom learning to the community	3	10.70	1.39	High competence

Personal Growth and Professional Development. Table 7 presents the results of the teachers' self – assessment of their respective competence on the indicators of personal growth and professional development. It can be inferred that preschool teachers value the idea of having a high personal regard, concern for professional development and continuous improvement as teachers. It is interesting to note that of all the indicators under Domain VII, the respondents almost unanimously assessed themselves highly competent on accepting personal accountability to learners' achievement and performance (indicator 9) as indicated by the high mean score (11.6) and low standard deviation (0.81).

Table 7
DOMAIN VII - Personal Growth and Professional Development

Indicator	No. of Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Maintains stature and behavior that upholds the dignity of teaching	3	11.17	1.42	High competence
2. Allocates time for personal and professional development through participation in educational seminars and workshops, reading educational materials regularly and engaging in educational research	3	11.40	1.04	High competence

3. Manifest personal qualities like enthusiasms, flexibility, and a caring attitude	3	11.40	0.93	High competence
4, Articulates and demonstrates one's personal philosophy of teaching	3	11.1	1.12	High competence
5. Keeps abreast with recent development in education	3	10.87	1.31	High competence
6. Link with other institutions and organizations for sharing best practices	3	10.7	1.37	High competence
7. Reflects on the quality of his/her own teaching	3	10.9	1.27	High competence
8. Improves teaching performance based on feedback from the mentor, students peers, superiors and others	3	11.3	1.88	High competence
9. Accepts personal accountability to learners' achievement and performance	3	11.60	0.81	High competence
10. Uses self - evaluation to recognize and enhance one's strength and corrects one's weaknesses.	3	11.57	0.90	High competence

Extent of Relationship Between and Among Teachers' Competence in the National Competency Based Teacher Standards. This section shows the extent of relationship between and among the respondent – teachers competence in the seven domains of the NCBTS – TSNA. Based on the results, the highest positive correlation is found between learning environment and curriculum. This is followed by the relationship between planning, assessing and reporting, and community linkages. Meanwhile, from among these domains with no relationship the lowest correlation coefficient is found between social regard for learning and community linkages.

Table 8
Pearson Coefficient of Correlation

Domain	Correlation Coefficient	r^2	P	Interpretation
1. Social regard for learning Learning environment	0.234	0.055	0.212	No relationship
2. Social regard for learning Diversity of learners	0.029	0.0008	0.878	No relationship

3. Social regard for learning Curriculum	-0.125	-0.016	0.512	No relationship
4. Social regard for learning Planning, assessing & reporting	-0.076	-0.076	0.691	No relationship
5. Social regard for learning Community linkages	**-0.008**	**-0.021**	**0.967**	**No relationship**
6. Social regard for learning Personal growth & professional	0.366	0.134	0.047	Significant positive correlation
7. Learning Environment Diversity of learners	0.450*	0.203	0.013	Significant positive correlation
8. Learning Environment Curriculum	**0.682****	**0.465**	**0.000**	**Highly significant positive correlation**
9. Learning Environment Planning, assessing & reporting	0.525**	0.276	0.003	Highly significant positive correlation
10. Learning Environment Community linkages	0.447**	0.200	0.013	Significant positive correlation
11. Learning Environment Personal growth & professional	0.621**	0.386	0.000	Highly significant positive correlation
12. Diversity of learners Curriculum	0.603**	0.364	0.000	Highly significant positive correlation
13. Diversity of learners Planning, assessing & reporting	**0.25**	**0.063**	**0.183**	**No correlation**
14. Diversity of learners Community linkages	0.467**	0.218	0.009	Highly significant positive correlation
15. Diversity of learners Personal growth & professional	0.436**	0.19	0.016	Significant positive correlation
16. Curriculum Planning, assessing & reporting	0.525**	0.276	0.003	Highly significant positive correlation
17. Curriculum Community linkages	0.509**	0.259	0.004	Highly positive correlation
18. Curriculum Personal growth & professional	0.486**	0.236	0.006	Highly significant positive correlation

19. Planning, assessing & reporting Community linkages	**0.708****	**0.501**	**0.000**	**Significant positive correlation**
20. Planning, assessing & reporting Personal growth & professional	0.427*	0.182	0.019	Significant positive correlation
21. Community linkages Personal growth & professional	**0.309**	**0.095**	**0.096**	**No correlation**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

DISCUSSION

The National Competency – Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) as presented in this study covers the seven (7) domains of competence: social regard for learning, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum, planning, assessing, and reporting, community linkages and personal growth and professional development.

Table 1 findings reveal that the respondent – teachers are highly competent in social regard for learning and this domain is their strength. Although it can be thought that training is not a priority as assessed, teachers should continue to enhance this competency toward attaining high standards of learning.

As teachers, it is important to be fully aware of the school policies and procedures and implement them. This strength will help to facilitate learning. The actions, statements, and different types of social interactions with students exemplify this ideal. Further, teachers may have to continue attending seminars and trainings on social regard for learning to improve teaching competence.

Findings on Table 2 show that the respondent – teachers are highly competent in the second domain- the learning environment. The results show that the teachers encourage learners to develop a positive attitude toward their learning experiences. Based on the findings, teachers use appropriate procedures when dealing with learners with behavioral problems.

Their responses further indicate their awareness of the rights and responsibilities of the child as stated in the RA 7610 or Child Labor Program and PD 603 – Philippine Child and Youth Welfare Code 1974. The teachers are given training regarding Gender and Development (GAD) for the provision of fair learning opportunities to every learner.

It can be surmised from the findings that teachers guide individual learners to the development of appropriate moral and, social and learning behavior. The respondents provide

various enrichment activities to maintain a high standard in terms of learning performance. As Bereiter and Scardamalia (1989) discussed in their studies, that the learning environment should be motivating to students and teachers, and use learning as a primary transformative force.

Teachers can engage in the various learning activities and exert efforts to attain high standards of learning and promote safety and conduciveness to learning in the physical environment. Meanwhile, the school administrators, supervisors and school's division superintendents may consider ensuring the provision of orientation and seminars to teachers regarding learning environment for professional growth and development.

Data in Table 3 as regards the domain on diversity of learner reveal teachers' demonstration of concern for the holistic development of learners. Results show that teachers find it highly important to use techniques to motivate learners who belong to the lower socio – economic status for their learning performance. It can also be noted that adopting approaches and strategies for learners is a big help for those whose needs have not been met by the usual approaches and to address the needs of the differently able learners.

As found in the results of Billingsley as cited in Allen (1999) in his study, teachers must portray and overcome all the difficulties in order to foster diversity while teaching. The teachers determine, understand, and accept the learners' diverse knowledge and experiences to have good learning outcomes.

As a summary, through recognition and respect for individual difference, teacher can facilitate the learning process involving diverse learners. With the utilization of knowledge about differences among students, teachers can design diverse sets of learning activities to guarantee that all students can achieve desired learning goals. The competencies of teachers in diversity of learners are enhanced by giving and adopting some methods and strategies that fit the learners.

Table 4 shows the findings on the curriculum. Curriculum in this study referred to the rudiments of the teaching – learning process that assists students in the attainment of high standards of learning and understanding of the curricular goals and objectives.

These fundamentals involve the knowledge of the subject matter of the teacher, approaches and activities in the teaching – learning process, instructional materials and learning resources. Based on the findings, teachers assessed themselves as almost highly competent in all items. This shows that teachers always are aware that they should design learning activities that match the goal of efficient learning for the learners to attain high learning outcomes. In the actual practice, while teachers are the front liners in making learners achieve high academic standards, the cooperation among teachers, the learners and their parents has to be there toward the continuous school – wide improvement and the attainment of consistent upturn in the learners' performance.

It is likewise good to note that teachers cultivate among learners' good study habits. Cabrera (1995) stated that desirable study habits positively affect the performance of the learners. In connection with study habits, Losare (2007) pointed out that good study habits are tools to success.

However, in one item which is the utilization of information and communication technology to enhance teaching-learning process, teachers are discovered to be poor. This indicates that preschool teachers are aware that they are not equipped of the needed knowledge in utilizing ICT. This may need to be prioritized in their professional development activities/ plans in order to help them be attuned to the demands of the 21st century education. As 21st century educators, they need to integrate and use ICT in teaching lessons to attain high level of competence.

Meanwhile, what makes up for the aforementioned weakness in ICT is the teachers' overall competence in selecting and using different methods, strategies and approaches to facilitate learning. After all, the total effectiveness of teachers depends on their competence and efficiency, teaching and learning resources and methods used to achieve instructional goals with the necessary support from education managers and supervisors (Mosha 2004; Rogan 2004; Van den Akker & Thijs, 2002). At the bottom of it all is the teacher's personal motivation to always step his or her best foot forward in every class session.

The DepEd personnel such as the school heads should plan and make a matrix for trainings and seminars to preschool teachers to improve the learning outcomes of the school especially on ICT. The school should also provide ICT equipment for planning, managing, and designing the teaching – learning process.

Table 5 findings disclose that the respondent – teachers are highly competent in all items in planning, assessing and reporting. Planning, assessing and reporting in this study is the alignment of assessment and planning activities to ensure that the teaching – learning activities are maximally appropriate to the learners' current knowledge and learning levels.

Preschool teachers show high competence in all items in Domain 5. It can be assumed from the findings that preschool teachers show proofs of instructional planning. Planning gives the preschool teachers an opportunity to exert a significant influence on the educational process and which will achieve the learning outcomes of the school. The data further imply that teachers use assessment data to plan and revise teaching – learning plans, integrate assessment procedures in the plan and implement teaching – learning activities.

Formative and summative tests are among the important tools in assessing the learning outcomes of the learners and the instructional plan made. These assessments can be used to determine if the instructional plan is implemented properly and if it is in line with the prescribed curriculum.

Findings on Table 5 further show that teachers are trained in assessing the outcomes of the instructional plan. They also appreciate the value of testing as a tool to improve instruction and learning performance. Today, teachers are using the non – traditional assessment techniques which include portfolio, journals, rubrics etc. Teachers understand the importance of non – traditional technique in assessing and reporting learning outcomes.

With regard to planning, assessing and reporting, Parents In – Pupils Out (PIPO) is one activity of the school to report the accomplishment of the learner. This is done during the parent – teacher conferences. In this manner, the parents are helped to understand their responsibilities and how important their participation in school activities is. Involvement of parents and other stakeholders in school affairs help to promote learning. Participation of parents in school activities supports the school programs to uphold children's learning progress.

The findings also reveal that teachers plan, assess and report the performance and progress of learners. This shows that this domain is one of their strengths.

To attain positive outcomes of learning, teachers must be aware of the different teaching – learning situations that can affect the implementation of the instructional plans. Relative to this, they also make necessary revision and improvement of the instructional plan that is fitted to the teaching condition.

School heads may consider developing a plan for seminars and trainings on planning, assessing and reporting to enable teachers become more effective and accurate in reporting learners' progress.

Table 6 presents the summary of self – assessment of preschool teachers in community linkages. Community linkages refer to school activities that meaningfully link the experiences and aspirations of the learners to their homes and communities. Preschool teachers are highly competent in all items in community linkages. This implies the teachers' awareness on the fact that the community is a great avenue for the learning experiences of pupils.

The findings show that the preschool teachers involve themselves in community activities and in using community resources in enriching school activities which can either be human or monetary resources or both. It is generally known that the involvement of a community contributes highly to the success of a school's projects and program and that community resource can also help in raising the school's academic achievement and in facilitating the teaching- learning process. With the use of the community resources, learners are able to encounter real world's experiences that greatly contribute to their total development.

A school, to sustain some of its operations, needs the support of the community. This can be seen as the community plays its role in the achievement of school's curricular goals.

Therefore, the school head and the teachers should take steps to develop and maintain a harmonious relationship with the community so that the various programs and activities of the school will be carried out successfully. On the other side, school heads should ensure that preschool teachers are properly oriented on how to use community resources and on how to take part in community activities. It is also part of their role to find effective ways to motivate and intensify the commitment of teachers to make good outcomes possible (Brown University, 2008).

Findings on Table 7 refer to the seventh domain which is on personal growth and professional development. Personal growth and professional development refer to teachers' values of having a high personal regard, concern for professional development, and continuous improvement as teachers. Data show that the preschool teachers have a high competence in this Domain. These reveal that the preschool teachers maintain a set of ethical and moral principles, standards and values embodied in the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers. It can also be gleaned from the data that they have a sense of responsibility and accountability to provide the best possible educational services in order to achieve higher learning outcomes. Effective professional development addresses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers need to ensure that the learners realize success (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

In addition, data imply that the respondent – teachers uphold the dignity as professional teachers. It can be further concluded that they understand the importance of being committed to teaching.

The attainment of new knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and dispositions depends on the perception of a teacher of professional development. These dispositions lead teachers to have pride, self – esteem, team spirit, commitment, drive, adventure, creativity and vision. All these attributes should be owned by teachers (Mosha 2006).

The findings indicate a conception and practice of teachers' professionalism which combines both the raising of teachers' academic qualifications and professional growth. The DepEd personnel such as the Schools Division Superintendent, supervisors and school heads may continue to plan, give seminars and staff development activities to preschool teachers for them to update, develop and improve their teaching practices which will become part of their struggle for continuous professional development.

It can be observed from the findings on Table 8 that the following domains show high significant positive correlation: (a) learning environment as related to curriculum, planning, assessing and reporting and personal and professional growth; (b) diversity of learners as associated with curriculum and community linkages; (c) curriculum as related to planning, assessing and reporting, community linkages and personal and professional growth. This shows that as the domains' desired features become highly observed, then the desired features of the other domains also become highly observed.

Meanwhile, the following domains of the National Competency – Based Teachers Standards obtained a significant positive correlation: (a) social regard for learning as related to personal and professional growth; (b) learning environment as associated with diversity of learners and community linkages; (c) diversity of learners as related to personal and professional growth; (d) planning, assessing and reporting as related to community linkages and personal and professional growth. This means that when the desired features of a domain become more observable then the other domains' desired features also become more observable.

It can be surmised from the findings that there is no significant relationship found between and among the following domains: (a) social regard for learning as related to learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum, planning, assessing and reporting and community linkages; (b) diversity of learning as associated with planning, assessing and reporting; (c) community linkages as related to personal and professional growth. This only means that when the desired features of a domain become more observable or not the other domains are not in any way affected.

Moreover, based on the results, with regard to the competence of the respondent – teachers in each domain, it can be concluded that they are highly competent. This only shows that teachers have a high social regard for learning, maintain an environment conducive to learning, make appropriate adjustments in teaching to meet individual differences, communicate the competencies well to learners, provide feedback on children's academic progress, promote school and community partnership and improve personal and professional values to become more committed in the chosen vocation. However, with respect to the use of community networks in publicizing school events and achievements, the teacher-participants have assessed themselves having satisfactorily performance and with respect to the utilization of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning, they have rated themselves having a poor performance.

In consideration of the preceding conclusions, this study offers the following recommendations: (1) A comprehensive seminar and training on the utilization of information and communication technology may be included in the professional development plan for preschool teachers. This way, the preschool teachers will be assisted in enhancing teaching – learning process in the classroom; (2) An awareness program on school-community partnership should be given to preschool teachers in order for them to realize the role of the community in helping the school in achieving its goal. Hence, they will be able to maximize community resources in promoting learning among pupils.; (3) A scholarship program may also be considered by the school for preschool teachers in order for the latter pursue their graduate studies, thus, personal and professional growth may be achieved. With this, preschool teachers may become abreast with the changes and development in education and may become more equipped in terms of teaching strategies to promote meaningful learning in the classroom. This may be done by seeking assistance from government agencies or from some private institutions or companies willing to finance the graduate studies of preschool

teachers.; (4) A yearly modification on the professional development plan for preschool teachers may be conducted in order for the plan to fit in the needs and priorities of preschool teachers for them to communicate well to pupils what education wants them to become.; (5) A future study parallel to this research may be undertaken by other researchers with the hope of continuously looking for ways to enhance the competencies of the preschool teachers based on the NCBTS and to propose an improved professional development plan for preschool teachers.

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