

# Exploring teachers' needs with the Philippine professional standards for teachers' domains as framework: A case in basic education

Herrera, Philip Donald P. ✉

Sacred Heart School – Ateneo de Cebu, Philippines ([philipdherrera@gmail.com](mailto:philipdherrera@gmail.com))



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## ***Abstract***

The study looked into the different felt needs of teachers according to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as a main framework. The study used a standardized survey instrument to obtain the data and involved 27 teachers from the Senior High School Department of Sacred Heart School – Ateneo de Cebu. The findings of such study revealed that, across all the six domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Professional Teachers, needs have been identified. Among the salient themes identified with respect to the needs of the teachers per domain are the following: use of innovative teaching strategies, management of learner behavior, use of authentic assessment, and identification of professional goals. On the side of the administration, the findings of the same study will serve as basis for an individualized growth plan and a series of differentiated retooling sessions for the faculty to address these needs. These were fleshed out during a focus-group discussion (FGD). Finally, as a venue for further studies, it would be interesting to consider an institutional needs analysis study from grade school, junior high school, and senior high school and compare relevant needs based on the same framework.

***Keywords:*** PPST, teachers, needs, professional competence, professional development

## **Exploring teachers' needs with the Philippine professional standards for teachers' domains as framework: A case in basic education**

### **1. Introduction**

The notion of 'professional development' has been a staple in the educational and pedagogical repertoire. There have been many definitions proposed for this notion, but simply, this encapsulates the need for on-going trainings (in various forms and contexts) for in-service teachers. According to Ajani (2020), the goal of such professional development initiatives is to allow teachers to improve in their classroom practices and refine their instructional strategies, thereby allowing for optimal learning on the side of the students/learners to happen. As teachers hopefully improve in their classroom practices, Ajani, in a separate publication in (2019), asserted that quality teaching-learning is ensured in the sense that teachers, themselves, are the implementers of whatever they have learned from these initiatives to their own individual classrooms.

Aside from ensuring quality teaching-learning through professional development initiatives, a study by Ventista and Brown (2023) extended this view by pointing out that issues that have emerged in 21<sup>st</sup> century such as the rise of AI, the emergence of populism, the global pandemic, climate change need utmost attention by the learners of today such that they need to develop critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity to address these pressing issues. However, before they can do that, teachers must be able to model them and adapt new teaching strategies. In other words, teachers are in constant pursuit of new knowledge and skills as they keep up with their students considering these issues. Therefore, high quality, effective, and sustainable professional development initiatives are needed. Not only that, they also pointed out to the fact that these initiatives are also a potent factor for teachers' personal development such that these determine their employment longevity among others. However, despite the perceived beneficial intentions of these professional development initiatives as articulated above, Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) has made it very clear that this comes with a lot of challenges. Research has revealed, according to them, that these professional development initiatives appear to be ineffective in supporting changes in teacher practices and learning outcomes.

These challenges were best concretized by Payne (2018). Such challenges on professional development initiatives were as follows: (1) passive learning experiences, and (2) one-time workshops and trainings. These have little to no effect on instruction and teacher practices. In the same study, they suggested that, to counteract these, multiple-session workshops and trainings that include active learning and expand over time must be implemented. In the same vein, the Research Partnership for Professional Learning in 2022 outlined professional development formats that, according to them, are effective in producing instructional effectiveness which are listed as follows: (1) teacher to teacher collaboration, (2) one-to-one coaching, and (3) follow-up meetings. These formats complement what Payne (2018) mentioned that professional development initiatives must be consistent and sustainable. It is also worthy to mention that these formats allow for personalized coaching and a stronger collaboration not only with teachers to their trainers/mentors but also, most importantly, to their fellow teachers as well.

At the heart of these professional development initiatives and formats is the fact that effective professional development lies in determining, first and foremost, the needs of teachers who are at the receiving end of these activities. In other words, before any professional development program to be consistent and sustainable, it must first address the needs of the teachers. This was explicitly mentioned in the study of Ye and Shi (2020) in their study on the strategies for improving professional development of teachers in primary and secondary school in Taiwan. They mentioned that a (in-service) teachers' professional standards as well as the use of surveys as guide are potent strategies to tailor-fit these initiatives in the dynamic context of teachers and the teaching-learning process in general. These two points are significant in context of the study such that the PPST is exactly the Filipino teachers' professional standards framework and the current study endeavored to make this framework as

a survey instrument, thereby allowing in-service Senior High School teachers to reflect on their teaching practice in so far as the domains and key indicators are concerned.

Situating the discourse on professional development programs and initiatives in the context of the country, there have been a number of studies conducted in relation to the topic. A study by Padillo et al. (2021) looked into the quality of instruction and professional development in a specified state university. The study found out that, through these varied professional development activities, the teachers were able to achieve mastery in instructional planning, instructional delivery, knowledge of the subject, rapport with students, and classroom management. This finding is important since it affirms the assertions first made by Ajani (2019) and (2020) who underscored that professional development initiatives are paramount to the improvement of teachers' teaching practices as well as the determination of teaching-learning quality. Additionally, while the study did not use the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as a reference framework, the emphasis on the following areas such as instructional planning, instructional delivery, knowledge of the subject, rapport with students, and classroom management are subsumed in the same framework across domains.

Underscoring the fact that professional development must be consistent and sustainable and that teachers are life-long learners, the study of Ancho and Arrieta (2021) delved into the teacher professional development during the pandemic. The study highlighted the fact that, even at the height of global pandemic, the teachers had continued to be exposed to these activities such as webinars and training on online teaching and learning, technological capacity, and even mental health. Although the pandemic already ceased to exist, this is significant in the discussion in light of what Ventista and Brown (2023) emphasized such that professional development activities are needed in the ever-changing landscape of the education system vis-à-vis the social issues such as the pandemic, climate change, rise of AI, which are at play in this discourse.

A more recent study by Morales and Matriano (2023) dealt with the practices, challenges, and perceived impact of professional development activities among Senior High School teachers. One of their findings affirmed the assertions previously mentioned by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) and Payne (2018) on the challenges of professional development activities. They emphasized that the challenges range from availability of professional development program, cost and design to instructional supervision and assistance. It is, therefore, true that, while there are gains and successes in the conduct of professional development activities, there are also challenges that have to be overcome. Otherwise, the effectivity of these professional development activities will be put into question.

Given the studies surveyed in this paper, it is, therefore, safe to deduce that professional development activities/programs/initiatives are of great importance not only to teachers but, most importantly, to the students. Further, while the intention of these activities/programs/and initiatives is good and there are perceived benefits that come with them, there are, undoubtedly, challenges that need to be addressed.

Thus, the present study anchors on the fact that, for any professional development initiative to be effective and successful, it must first be borne out from a needs-analysis or from a needs-based survey that allow teachers to first reflect on their own teaching practices and instructional strategies. The results yielded from these surveys or analyses should become the bases of the choice, design, and implementation of the professional development program. As such, the study seeks to look into the different needs of the Senior High School teachers using the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as a reference framework. This is with the hope that the findings will shed light on the appropriate and tailored-fit administrative actions and interventions to address these needs. However, it must be noted that the present study only positions itself as one which has baseline data. Factors such as the difference in educational attainments, the length of teaching service, as well as the nature of subjects/strands taught were not included and can very well be recommendations for future researches in this topic. Finally, the study proves to be significant in two aspects: (1) after exhaustive research, it is the first study to use the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as framework which allows for other studies to replicate, and is, therefore, contextualized within the Philippine educational system; and (2) this serves as a

helpful addition to the body literature considering that there were not quite many studies focusing on needs-based professional development or needs analysis in general in the perspective of the Senior High School.

## 2. Theoretical Background

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) is a reference framework that emerged during the term of Secretary Leonor M. Briones as the head of the Department of Education. It came out as a result of the Department Order 42, series of 2017. The same department order articulated that such adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as a reference framework is a way of supporting teachers' needs that lead to quality teaching. Further, it outlined the aims of the reference framework as follows: (1) to be the basis of setting clear expectations for teachers, (2) to be the benchmark for teachers' career progression, and most importantly, (4) to be the reference in identifying teachers' needs and interventions (D.O 42 S. 2017, 2017).

According to the National Research Center for Teacher Quality (n.d), the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) was an offshoot to the National Competency-Based Teachers' Standards otherwise known as the NCBTS. The adoption of the new reference framework was borne in light of the many technological advancements and changes in the educational landscape particularly with respect to ASEAN Integration, K-12 curriculum, and changing profile of learners in schools. In the same document published by the National Research Center for Teacher Quality (n.d) clearly outlines the different domains of the reference framework as well as their key indicators which are reproduced below:

**Table 1**

*The different domains and the key indicators articulated in the PPST*

Domains of the PPST	Key Indicators
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	Content knowledge and its application within and across the curriculum Research-based knowledge of principles of teaching and learning Use of ICT to enrich the lesson Strategies for developing critical and creative thinking, as well as other higher-order thinking skills Oral communication strategies (fluency in the medium of instruction) Use of student-centered activities Seamless integration of values in the lesson Use of varied and innovative teaching strategies Art of questioning and discussion techniques Connection of lessons to real life situations and current social issues Use of appropriate and meaningful motivation, synthesis, and closure of the lesson
Learning Environment	Learner safety and security Fair learning environment Management of classroom structure and activities Support for learner participation Promotion of purposive learning Management of learner behavior
Diversity of Learners	Understanding learners' gender, needs, strengths, interests and experiences Understanding learners' linguistic, cultural, socio-economic and religious backgrounds Understanding learners with disabilities, giftedness and talents Understanding learners in difficult circumstances Understanding learners from indigenous groups Ability to authentically engage the learners, hold their attention and sustain their interest on the task at hand

Curriculum and Planning	<p>Planning and management of teaching and learning process                      Alignment of desired learning outcomes and competencies with the target evidences of learning outcomes                      Relevance and responsiveness of learning programs                      Professional collaboration to enrich teaching practice                      Quality of instructional materials including library and multimedia resources and ICT tools</p>
Assessment and Reporting	<p>Design, selection, organization and utilization assessment strategies aligned with learning objectives                      Monitoring and evaluation of learner progress and achievement                      Feedback to improve learning and provision of interventions which are differentiated and addressed particular learning difficulties                      Communication of learner needs, progress and achievement to key stakeholders                      Use of assessment data to enhance teaching                      Use of authentic assessments (application of lessons to real world problems)</p>
Community Linkages and Professional Engagement	<p>Establishment of learning environments that are responsive to community contexts                      Engagement of parents and the wider school community                      Guidance on professional ethics                      School policies and procedures                      Use of community resources to enhance instruction (expert infusion)</p>
Personal Growth and Professional Development	<p>Philosophy of teaching                      Dignity of teaching as a profession                      Professional links with colleagues                      Professional reflection and learning to improve practice                      Professional development goals</p>

Based on the given domains and key indicators, it can be said that the reference framework is a comprehensive document that covers all facets of teaching and learning. Not only does it include teachers professional competence and aspirations it also, most importantly, underscores the important role of the students as the primary receiver of quality instruction. Therefore, the insight revealed from this is that the notion of quality (of instruction) is judged on how it is perceived by the learners who are at heart of this process.

While the reference framework clearly puts premium on the need for teachers to have content knowledge and pedagogy as a pre-requisite for teaching, it is important to mention that, in so far as the identification of needs is concerned, it is tied with personal growth and professional development. In other words, as articulated in the D.O 42, S. 2017, it sets not only the perceived needs of teachers in the varied domains of the PPST but also, most importantly, it sets the direction of their personal (beyond them being teachers) and professional (within the context of their teaching practice) development moving forward. Situating the discourse on the context of the present study, it is important that the identification needs as well as the proposed interventions in order to address these needs are within the same reference framework as it serves as a potent guide for administrators and teachers alike especially in the light of on-going professional initiatives such as in-service trainings.

### 2.1 Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to look into the different needs of Senior High School teachers according to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the different needs of the teachers?
- What administrative actions for on-going in-service trainings can be recommended in light of these needs?

### 3. Methodology

**Research Design** - The study utilized a mixed method approach to obtain the needed data. The first part of the study involved carrying out a standardized survey for teachers to answer. The second part was directed to administrators such that a focus-group discussion (FGD) was conducted light of the findings of the study. The choice of using a survey allows for convenience in obtaining the data across all respondents. This was sustained by Sincero (2013) who said that surveys can be convenient since it can be administered in a variety of way such as the use of Microsoft Forms. For the focus-group discussion, this was done to get an in-depth and thorough analysis on the side of administrators as implementers of programs to address these needs.

**Research Environment** - The study was conducted in Sacred Heart School – Ateneo de Cebu particularly in the Senior High School Department located in H. Abellana Street, Canduman, Mandaue City. This chosen as the local in the spirit of convenience as this was the researcher’s home department. Additionally, there have not been any studies conducted similar or related to the present one within the department. Thus, it is a fertile ground to obtain the needed data to answer the study’s sub-questions. It offers three academic strands which are Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS). Just last year, it underwent a preliminary visit conducted by the Philippine Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU) in its pursuit to be quality-assured. The department in particular, and the institution in general, subscribes to the charism of St. Ignatius of Loyola as this is within the jurisdiction of the Jesuit Order. Specific to its context, per observation, the department’s teachers’ profile is diverse in terms of educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and age among others. Such diversity in the teachers’ profile warranted a conduct of this study.

**Research Participants** - The study involved twenty-seven teachers from the department who are currently not holding any academic or administrative middle or key level positions as this was set as the inclusion criteria pursuant to the study’s objective which was to provide baseline data for teachers. These twenty-seven teachers were from the three academic strands. These teachers have varying educational backgrounds, with many of whom are not education graduates, and length of teaching experience within of the institution. In terms of the length of teaching within the institution, 82% of teachers are still in their probationary period (Year I-III), and only 19% are regular-tenured faculty members. It is worthy to mention that these variables were not factored in the present study, and this only sought to provide baseline data on needs of teachers irrespective of these variables for purposes of merely determining prioritization in in-service trainings in the succeeding school year(s). In addition, given the number of the participants, it is important to point out that the findings can only shed light on the state of needs within this specific department and may not necessarily represent the entire population of the Senior High School within the city it is situated or within the region.

On the other hand, the focus-group discussion (FGD) was solely conducted to the key and middle level administrators who are holding academic and administrative positions as this was set as its inclusion criteria. This was the case since they are the ones responsible in addressing, in a variety of ways, the different needs that were identified as a result of the survey conducted. In a similar case, the themes obtained from the focus-group discussion can only shed light in so far as the possible administrative actions that can be done in relation to the findings and does not merit generalization of all possible actions outside the study’s context in terms of participants and objective. In both cases, the participants were chosen via convenience sampling as they are employed and teaching in the department; and that their needs were the foremost concern of the present study.

**Research Data** - The needed data were obtained from two sources. The first one was from a standardized survey instrument from the National Research Center for Teacher Quality (n.d) that outlined the seven domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as well as their key indicators. The same survey instrument also had a four-point Likert scale to determine the level of need per indicator within each domain. The scale is as follows: (1) not needed, (2) somewhat needed, (3) moderately needed, and (4) highly needed. The analysis zeroed in on the significant percentages obtained under the Moderately and the Highly Needed portion.

This is pursuant to the aim of this research which was merely to provide a baseline data on the different felt needs of teachers that would serve as basis for prioritization for in-service trainings. The second source of data was from the focus-group discussion (FGD) conducted for the administrators (the principal as the key administrator, the Strand Heads as well as the Cluster Coordinators (as mid-level administrators) in light of the findings of the survey. This focus-group discussion articulated preliminary administrative actions or recommendations to address the needs. This was carried out through a thematic analysis where the oral data from the focus-group discussion were transcribed manually. Afterwards, the researcher fleshed out codes through a coding sheet; and these were then subsumed into prominent themes to answer the second specific question.

**Research Procedures** - Before the study commenced, the researcher obtained the approval of the school's Institutional Research Council (IRC). Once the approval was given, the researcher informed the principal of the department regarding the details of the study particularly the need to conduct a survey for teachers and a focus-group discussion (FGD) for administrators. The timeline was set and the survey instrument was deployed. The teachers were given one week to answer the survey through Microsoft Forms. Once the results were obtained, the researchers then transferred the data into Microsoft Excel and looked into the highest percentage(s) per indicator within each domain for the Highly Needed portion. These were then placed into a tabular presentation for easy reference and to answer the first sub-question. Once this was finalized, the researcher proceeded with the focus-group discussion (FGD) for the administrators. He was invited to the Academic/Administrative Council Meeting scheduled for that week to share the results of the study. Afterwards, the FGD was carried out. It was then written into a transcript; and as such, the researcher used open coding to generate the prominent clustered themes from the codes from the transcript. Such choice of opting to use open coding is supported by Siegle (2023) who asserted that such coding process allows for themes to emerge without specific categories and is, therefore, not restrictive. These codes and themes were then placed into a tabular presentation for easy reference.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The section below shows the data obtained from the standardized survey instrument articulating the different domains and key indicators of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). This is to answer the sub-question 1.

**Table 2**

*Domain 1: Content Knowledge and Pedagogy and its key indicators*

Domain 1: Content Knowledge and Pedagogy				
Key Indicators	Not needed	Somewhat needed	Moderately needed	Highly needed
Content knowledge and its application within and across the curriculum	22.2	33.33	29.6	14.8
Research-based knowledge of principles of teaching and learning	3.7	29.6	29.6	<b>37</b>
Use of ICT to enrich the lesson	22.2	22.2	33.3	22.2
Strategies for developing critical and creative thinking, as well as other higher-order thinking skills	11.1	14.8	<b>40.7</b>	33.33
Oral communication strategies (fluency in the medium of instruction)	25.9	37	25.9	11.1
Use of student-centered activities	11.1	25.9	33.3	29.6
Seamless integration of values in the lesson	22.2	22.2	22.2	<b>33.3</b>
Use of varied and innovative strategies	7.4	7.4	40.7	<b>44.4</b>
Art of questioning and discussion techniques	22.2	14.8	37	29.5
Connection of lessons to real life situations and current social issues	22.2	33.3	29.6	18.5
Use of appropriate and meaningful motivation, synthesis, and closure of the lesson	11.1	33.3	25.9	29.6

Inherent to the Domain 1 of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) is the need for

teachers to be competent in terms of their knowledge of their respective fields of study as well as the art and the science of pedagogy. The three prominent key indicators under this domain reveal that in-service Senior High School teachers need to refine their instructional strategies that are innovative and value-laden to ensure the promotion of important skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. This need is particularly important as this touches on the very core of teaching and learning. As the focus-group discussion (FGD) from the administrators would reveal, this finding would be the utmost priority and will be incorporated in the refined Professional Learning Community (PLC program) as well as in the provision for coaching and mentoring from tenured teachers. This particular move is perceived to be beneficial on the basis that the study of Clark, Zhan, and Semingson (2023) established a clear fact: that effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) influences innovative teaching practices. In other words, when the PLC program is focused on refinement of these practices, these could very well be translated in the classroom. In addition, the study of Geletu (2023) also posited that when pedagogical mentoring and coaching is present, it improves not only the teachers' pedagogical competencies but also their emotional wellbeing and safety.

**Table 3***Domain 2: Learning Environment and its key indicators*

Domain 2: Learning Environment				
Key Indicators	Not needed	Somewhat needed	Moderately needed	Highly needed
Learner safety and security	22.2	25.9	40.7	11.1
Fair learning environment	29.6	22.2	37	11.1
Management of classroom structure and activities	14.8	29.6	29.6	25.9
Support for learner participation	18.5	22.2	<b>44.4</b>	14.8
Promotion of purposive learning	22.2	3.7	<b>55.6</b>	<b>48.5</b>
Management of learner behavior	22.2	22.2	18.5	<b>37</b>

The second domain on Diversity of Learners points out the fact that teacher-respondents feel that they needed professional development initiatives in relation to supporting learner participation, promotion of purposive learning, and management of learner behavior. Granting that 82% of the total teacher-respondents are in their probationary status (which means that they are still in their first to third year of teaching in the institution), these results are well-expected. Additionally, the varying teachers' profile (as most teacher-respondents are holders of specialized degrees and not education degrees) contributed to the yielded results. Tereda (2021) in his commentary mentioned that there is a gap between the classroom management practices (under which these key indicators are subsumed) of beginning teachers and seasoned teachers. He further went on to say that, while there is no replacement of actual classroom experience, there are methods and strategies that could be learned so that beginning teachers can better manage their classes, thereby promoting learner participation and purposive learning. Additionally, the data from the focus-group discussion (FGD) pointed to the strengthening of formative classroom and peer observations and post-conferencing that facilitate teachers' ability for classroom management.

**Table 4***Domain 3: Diversity of Learners and its key indicators*

Domain 3: Diversity of Learners				
Key Indicators	Not needed	Somewhat needed	Moderately needed	Highly needed
Understanding learners' gender, needs, strengths, interests and experiences	14.8	22.2	29.6	33.3
Understanding learners' linguistic, cultural, socio-economic and religious backgrounds	18.5	22.2	33.3	29.6
Understanding learners with disabilities, giftedness and talents	18.5	11.1	33.3	<b>37</b>
Understanding learners in difficult circumstances	33.3	22.2	29.6	14.8
Understanding learners from indigenous groups	25.9	29.6	18.5	25.9
Ability to authentically engage the learners, hold their attention and sustain their interest on the task at hand	11.1	22.2	25.9	<b>40.7</b>



In the context of Domain 3 which emphasizes on the diversity of learners and its key indicators, there are significant points worth discussing. The findings revealed that there are two key indicators that need attention in so far as professional development initiatives are concerned. This is important as this particular domain touches on the very heart of the teaching-learning process, which is the students who are at the receiving end of the teachers' instructional strategies and assessment practices among others. Considering the changing profile of the learners with respect to the rise of AI, the global pandemic, climate change and other social issues as emphasized by Ventista and Brown (2023), teachers must be able to come to terms of with their talents, giftedness, and most importantly their disabilities so that these will be factored in in the design of the lesson.

Aside from that, professional development initiatives must also focus on strategies that keep students engaged with the lesson or the learning experience. A study by Dilekci and Karatay in 2023 noted that the 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum requires that students be trained to show critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and cooperative working skills. These skills can only be exhibited, in the classroom context, when students are constantly engaged with the lesson or the experience. Such engagement is a result of the teachers keeping up with the appropriate strategies learned from professional development initiatives.

**Table 5**

*Domain 4: Curriculum and Planning and its key indicators*

Domain 4: Curriculum and Planning				
Key Indicators	Not needed	Somewhat needed	Moderately needed	Highly needed
Planning and management of teaching and learning process	11.1	29.6	33.3	25.9
Alignment of desired learning outcomes and competencies with the target evidences of learning outcomes	11.1	29.6	25.6	<b>29.6</b>
Relevance and responsiveness of learning programs	14.8	25.9	22.2	<b>37</b>
Professional collaboration to enrich teaching practice	11.1	18.5	25.9	<b>44.4</b>
Quality of instructional materials including library and multimedia resources and ICT tools	14.8	18.5	37	29.6

In Domain 4 Curriculum and Planning, there are three prominent key indicators that need focus and attention. These are alignment of learning outcomes, relevance and responsiveness of learning programs, and professional collaboration to enrich teaching practice. In terms of alignment of learning outcomes, the study of Wijngaards-de Meij in 2018 emphasized its crucial role in realizing learning objectives. The study also warned that misalignment will result in students lacking in awareness with respect to their position in the curriculum. Given this and the fact that learning outcomes are a staple in the curriculum, teachers must be well-adept in ensuring that the alignment is targeted towards the achievement of competencies and learning outcomes. In the same vein, this is important as this alignment also ensures that learning programs within the classroom are responsive and relevant to the context of the students.

Finally, the key indicator on professional collaboration to enrich teaching practice gives insight on the need to thoroughly review the existing departmental Professional Learning Community program to ensure that authentic collaboration is observed within the PLCs of the grade level or the PLCs of the strand(s) that ultimately result in the improvement of teachers' teaching practice as already pointed out by Clark, Zhan, and Semingson (2023). In addition, in order for this to materialize, consistent monitoring and evaluation of the PLC program itself should be the norm.

**Table 6***Domain 5: Assessment and Reporting and its key indicators*

Domain 5: Assessment and Reporting				
Key Indicators	Not needed	Somewhat needed	Moderately needed	Highly needed
Design, selection, organization and utilization assessment strategies aligned with learning objectives	7.4	18.5	37	<b>37</b>
Monitoring and evaluation of learner progress and achievement	7.4	37	22.2	<b>33.3</b>
Feedback to improve learning and provision of interventions which are differentiated and addressed to particular learning difficulties	3.7	20.2	<b>40.7</b>	<b>33.3</b>
Communication of learner needs, progress and achievement to key stakeholders	11.1	22.2	33.3	<b>33.3</b>
Use of assessment data to enhance teaching	3.7	22.2	33.3	<b>40.7</b>
Use of authentic assessments (application of lessons to real world problems)	11.1	22.2	22.2	<b>44.4</b>

In line with Domain 5 on Assessment and Reporting, there are a number of key indicators that reflect the need for attention according to the teacher-respondents. These key indicators can be subsumed into assessment practices ranging from design and selection, monitoring and evaluation, feedback on assessment and communication of learners' needs and progress, use of assessment data and use of authentic assessments. Similar to what has been articulated in the previous analyses, these results are expected given that most of the teacher-respondents are still in their probationary period. Such period indicates that the teachers are still in the process of learning appropriate assessment practices that are suited to their context. This assertion is sustained by the study conducted by Cuarto and Cuarto (2021) that effective use of assessment practices is directly correlated to the number of years of classroom experience as well as the teacher's highest educational attainment. In other words, effective assessment practices are borne out of experience in the classroom. Given that assessment is very important in the process of teaching-learning as this gives evidence on what has been learned, professional development initiatives such as coaching, mentoring, as well as related seminars must focus on this aspect zeroing in the intricate nature of the cycle of assessment (from design and selection, implementation, feedback, and use of assessment data) vis-à-vis the nature of the subject/strand taught.

**Table 7***Domain 6: Community Linkages and Professional Engagement and its key indicators*

Domain 6: Community Linkages and Professional Engagement				
Key Indicators	Not needed	Somewhat needed	Moderately needed	Highly needed
Establishment of learning environments that are responsive to community contexts	51.9	25.9	7.4	14.8
Engagement of parents and the wider school community	11.1	22.2	<b>33.3</b>	<b>33.3</b>
Guidance on professional ethics	22.2	37	33.3	7.4
School policies and procedures	29.6	29.6	29.6	11.1
Use of community resources to enhance instruction	11.1	11.1	<b>44.4</b>	33.3

Under Domain 6 which focuses on community linkages and professional engagement, two key indicators that obtained significant percentages based on the survey. These are engagement of parents and the wider school community, and use of community resources to enhance instruction. This is an interesting finding as the department has a number of community partners in terms of academic and formation. In relation to parents, the department has ties with the school's alumni association. In addition, the department has also taken pride as it pioneered the Expert Infusion program where community resources (teachers, parent-professionals, other partners) are invited to the classrooms for sharing and academic exchange with the goal of enhancing instruction. Consistent to this finding though is the fact that the existing programs and initiatives need a thorough review in terms of their alignment to curriculum and instruction, responsiveness to the department's needs and sustainability. Such review on the existing programs and initiatives must subscribe to the fact that was

emphasized in the study of Kabesa and Okioma (2019) who said that the school's immediate community (including the school's linkages and partners) is a wonderful curriculum laboratory that provide learning opportunities for students and can indeed enhance teaching-learning.

**Table 8**

*Domain 7: Personal Growth and Professional Development and its key indicators*

Domain 7: Personal Growth and Professional Development				
Key Indicators	Not needed	Somewhat needed	Moderately needed	Highly needed
Philosophy of teaching	25.9	33.3	14.8	25.9
Dignity of teaching as a profession	22.2	37	25.9	14.8
Professional links with colleagues	22.2	25.9	22.2	<b>29.6</b>
Professional reflection and learning to improve practice	14.8	29.6	26.6	25.9
Professional development goals	14.8	22.2	25.9	<b>37</b>

Under Personal Growth and Professional Development, there are two prominent key indicators that the teacher-respondents feel they highly needed. These are: professional links with colleagues and professional reflection and learning to improve practice. This finding under this domain underscores the desire of teachers to connect and learn with their peers ultimately with the goal of advancing professional growth and professional development. The respective percentages under these identified key indicators could be attributed to the profile of teachers in terms of their employment status or length of service in the institution. As articulated, 82% of the respondents are still in their probationary period; as such, they still need guidance and mentoring in terms of collaborating with colleagues and identifying their own professional development goals. The review of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) program of the school should already factor in the following needs such that allotted PLC sessions should focus on these topics, thereby allowing teachers to establish links among co-faculty and other colleagues outside of the department and to refine their own professional development goals.

In general, the findings yielded from the survey instrument shed light on the varied needs of teacher-respondents across the different domains and their key indicators in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). While it could be overwhelming to look at as there is quite a number of key indicators per domain, the department is towards the right track in determining priorities for present and future in-service trainings for teachers as complemented by the results in the next table.

The following data below were obtained from the focus-group discussion on the side of the administrators during one of their academic-administrative council meeting. This was done to map out the recommendations to address these needs. This is to answer sub-question 2.

**Table 9**

*Codes and Themes from the focus-group discussion*

Codes	Clustered Theme
Code 1: 'prioritization based on the most needed indicators for training within identified number of years' Code 2: 'factor in the results to the department's strategic planning' Code 3: 'results will serve as basis for trainings' Code 4: 'include results in the three-year faculty development plan' Code 5: 'ensure monitoring and evaluation of these results vis-à-vis teaching performance'	Prioritization of the most-needed in-service trainings based on the results and their (the results) inclusion to the departmental faculty development plans
Code 1: 'review PLC program for the department to include these results' Code 2: 'intensify faculty development day as a venue for PLC by using results as topics of action research' Code 2: 'look into the onboarding for faculty for expert infusion activities'	Review of the department's existing programs on Professional Learning Community as well as Expert Infusion as venues for faculty development through benchmarking of best practices from other Ateneo schools

Code 3: 'benchmark from other schools on best practices such as PLC, expert infusion, and other strategies from other Ateneo schools'

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Code 1: 'incorporate results in the individualized faculty growth plan'

Code 2: 'provision for one-on-one mentoring'

Code 3: 'tailor fit trainings according to seniority and strand/subject taught'

Code 4: 'mentor-mentee program for seasoned and beginning teachers'

Code 5: 'echo seminars and trainings and capacity-building activities learned from other schools'

Code 6: 'strengthen formative classroom/peer observations and post-conferencing'

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Individualized and tailored-fit training, mentoring, and coaching of teachers from identified teacher-mentors and other venues for learning

The codes from the focus-group discussion for the key and mid-level administrators revealed three important clustered themes as an answer to sub-question 2 on the administrative actions that can be carried out in relation to the results from the survey. The first theme is on the prioritization of the most-needed in-service trainings for faculty and the inclusion of the results in the department's faculty development plan. This was borne out of the fact that there are a significant number of key indicators within and across the PPST domains that need attention; and it is impossible to include all of them as one. This notion of prioritization is complemented by the assertion made by Payne (2018) that professional development initiatives need to be consistent and sustainable for them to be effective. In that regard, the department is on the right track to addressing all the needs of the teachers by making, first and foremost, a prioritization on what professional development initiatives should be carried out first. The study of Anderson (2018) also highlights the need for priority in ensuring that professional development activities are effective. Although the study was contextualized among language teachers, it cannot be denied that priorities have to be clear and have to come from the needs of the teacher-respondents to avoid being overwhelmed and burned out in the process.

Another clustered theme from the focus-group discussion (FGD) is the review of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) program and the Expert Infusion Program of the department. It is worth mentioning that the department has an existing PLC within year level, within the strand, and within the subjects taught. However, as revealed from the FGD, the administrators agreed that these programs need to be reviewed in terms of their effectivity. This is complemented by the fact that the survey showed that teachers highly need professional development initiatives in relation to professional collaboration (which PLC program falls) to enrich teaching practice as well as in relation to the use of community resources to enhance instruction (which the Expert Infusion program falls).

According to a study conducted Antinlouma, Ilomaki, and Toom (2021), they pointed out that one of the best practices for Professional Learning Communities is that it builds on mutual trust, openness, and collaboration as the members (of the PLC) were encouraged to express their opinions. In light of this, the department may adopt such practice and factor it in as they review the existing program. In relation to expert infusion, the study of Cravens and Wang (2017) affirmed that, when done right, expertise infusion can lead to continuous learning pathways for teachers and enhanced content and pedagogical knowledge. In both cases, the department's decision to review both programs, as fertile venues of faculty development, by way of benchmarking is a step towards addressing the needs mentioned in the survey. Further, both studies already laid the groundwork the effectivity of both programs.

The focus-group discussion also revealed that individualized and tailored-fit training, mentoring, and coaching is needed to address the results of the survey on teachers' needs based on the PPST framework. The Research Partnership for Professional Learning in 2022 already made an important point that professional development initiatives have to be tailored fit and must include mentoring. The study of Ye and Shi (2020) also highlighted this fact by saying that tailored fit initiatives must be derived from standardized surveys from teachers implying that a needs-based approach towards professional development is important.

Both the results of the survey administered to the teachers as well as the focus-group discussion done with the administrators point to the significant fact that there are, indeed, varying needs; and such varying needs, guided by the fact that these cannot be addressed at one time, warrants for the prioritization of the most immediate in-service trainings to be provided to these teachers. Additionally, a complimentary point of both results indicates that, while there are existing professional development programs and initiatives, these may be subjected to review, again, to address the needs of the teachers.

## 5. Conclusions

The study's findings revealed that there are varied felt needs of the teacher-respondents based on the key indicators and the domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). This determination of needs gives an insight on what and how professional development initiatives within the department must be designed, selected, and implemented. The focus-group discussion (FGD) on the side of the administrators pointed to the fact that there has to be done in order to address these needs, and the first step towards is the department's prioritization on the most-needed and immediate professional development initiatives. In addition, the department also highlighted the need to review existing professional development programs, particularly the PLC and the Expert Infusion, so that the results of the present study will be factored in. Finally, the study also emphasized the need for individualized trainings as well as coaching and mentoring as effective ways to arrest these needs.

Given the study's findings and its purpose which is to provide baseline data, it is also equally important to underscore the many practical implications it bears with regard to professional development. First, the present study adds to the existing body of literature by using the PPST as a main reference framework, which is contextualized to the Philippine educational system. No study, after exhaustive research, has used this as benchmark. Second, not only does it add to the on-going discourse of teacher professional development but also it points to the fact that all of these professional development initiatives, especially the ones initiated by the administrators, should be, first and foremost, needs-based—that is to say that the teachers' professional needs should be at the heart of the design or implementation of any program or initiative. Finally, as practical implication of the study, it allows for replication such that other schools may also look at the study as a related literature in their endeavor to make their professional development initiatives needs-based.

In relation to the teachers and learners, it has been reiterated many times in this paper that they are at the receiving end of these professional development initiatives; and as such, particularly for teachers, their needs must be articulated and addressed. In this way, they can be better teachers who are equipped with the necessary skills to address the changing learners' profile in light of the many pressing issues the country's education system, and the country in general, is facing.

### 5.1 Recommendations

Given the findings of the study, the following recommendations are listed as avenues for further studies on the same topic:

- It would be beneficial and more impactful to extend the study by factoring in already the limitations posed in the given context. Specifically, it is best to consider the nature of subject taught, the teachers' educational background, and the teachers' length of teaching experience as variables or factors that might affect the determination of their professional needs.
- It is interesting to also include a focus-group discussion (FGD) on the teachers as a way of verifying/triangulating the results from the survey. A more in-depth analysis of their responses would reveal nuances of their needs; and this can only be fleshed out through a focus-group discussion (FGD).

- A comparison of the needs of teachers across different strands as well as across different departments would yield fruitful results in institutionalizing the needs-based in-service trainings for teachers as well as tailor-fit them according to the dynamics of the department concerned.

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