



Social Responsibility, Instructional Empowerment, and Professional Growth of Junior High School Master Teachers in Iloilo, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Teachers play a crucial role in nation-building. Quality teachers can develop holistic learners who are steeped in values, equipped with 21st century skills, and able to propel the country to development and progress. This research was conducted to determine the level of social responsibility, instructional empowerment, and professional growth of junior high school master teachers. The respondents of the study involved 191 master teachers in the Schools Division of Iloilo who were determined through proportional sampling per congressional district. This descriptive study utilized an adapted instrument implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd), the Results Performance Management System- Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (RPMS-PPST), which was subjected to expert validation and pilot testing with a reliability coefficient of .949. Descriptive statistics were employed to discuss and interpret the results of the study. Results revealed that master teachers had a "very high" level of instructional empowerment and a "high" level of social responsibility and professional growth. Therefore, master teachers in the Schools Division of Iloilo know their functions and responsibilities, specifically their social responsibilities. However, their social responsibility is generally limited to the learners inside the school. Their instructional empowerment is not well explored and maximized, and their understanding is limited to class observations and LAC sessions. In terms of their professional growth, although there are opportunities, most do not have time to engage and maximize.

Keywords: Social responsibility, instructional empowerment, professional growth, RPMS-PPST, Iloilo, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article XIV, Section 1) states that the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. The Philippine education system implemented the Basic Education Curriculum in 2012, which utilizes learner-centered approaches such as inquiry-based learning pedagogy. Concepts and skills are taught by providing pedagogy that enables students to enhance their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Mastery of the content among educators tapped to facilitate learning and a lack of resources to deliver the necessary content in the K to 12 programs (DEST, 2012).

Teachers play a crucial role in nation-building. Through quality teachers, the Philippines can develop holistic learners who are steeped in values, equipped with 21st-century skills, and enable to propel the country to development and progress. This aligns with the Department of Education's vision of producing: "Filipino who passionately love their country and whose values and competencies enable them to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to building the nation" (DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2013).

The changes brought about by various national and global frameworks, such as the K to 12 Reform and the ASEAN integration, globalization, and the changing character of the 21st century learners necessitate the improvement and adaptability of education and a call for a rethinking of the current teacher standards.

In the new Results-Based Performance Management System-Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (RPMS-PPST) tool, Master Teachers (MTs) are categorized as Highly Proficient Teachers. They are expected to be at the "highly proficient" career stage, which means that they consistently display a high level of performance in their teaching practice. To answer the call of this educational system, school administrators require teachers to be transformational and create fundamental change in their behavior, to lead and renew themselves and their organization, and to be courageous in taking and making decisions (Abbu et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 stated in DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2022 is an example of social responsibility in the education sector. The plan is rooted in DepEd's aspirations and priorities, as well as national and international commitments, and aims to ensure that all Filipinos have access to quality education that enables them to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society. This demonstrates a commitment to social responsibility by ensuring that every Filipino has access to education and the opportunity to reach their full potential.

However, it was observed that master teachers have difficulty balancing their social responsibility, classroom instruction, and professional growth to meet the different needs of students and attain long-term goals, which contributes to poor performance, as evidenced by the Philippines' performance in math and science in the 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The TIMSS uses a 4-level scale to interpret students' scores, and only one (1) percent of Filipino students reached the high benchmark in math, while 13 percent were in the low benchmark in science. Filipino students also ranked last in reading comprehension and second to last in both math and science literacy in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The decline in scores since 2003 also highlights the need for ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education in the Philippines.

Based on the above premise, the researcher wanted to determine the social responsibility, instructional empowerment, and professional growth among secondary school master teachers in the five districts in the Schools Division of Iloilo; thus, this study.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the level of social responsibility, instructional empowerment, and professional growth among secondary school master teachers in the five districts in the Schools Division of Iloilo for the School Year 2020-2021.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of social responsibility of secondary school master teachers?
2. What is the level of instructional empowerment of secondary school master teachers?
3. What is the level of professional growth of secondary school master teachers?

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Teachers play an important role in taking responsibility to teach well and instill it to the learners the right knowledge (Abazaoglu, 2014; Macready, 2009). The study was anchored on three relevant theories: (1) The Development of Social Consciousness by Berman (1990); (2) the Baruch Empowerment Model (1998); and (3) Guskey's (2001) Professional Development Evaluation Model.

The Development of Social Consciousness by Berman (1990) states that teachers' social responsibility includes six dimensions, namely: (1) understanding global interdependence; (2) becoming part of a community; (3) developing basic social skills; (4) seizing opportunities to make contributions to others; (5) strengthening group problem-solving and organizational skills; and (6) exploring the real political world. These dimensions form part of the teachers' social responsibility, which they can likewise inculcate among their students.

On the other hand, Baruch Empowerment Model (1998) provides an analytical framework for the organizational contexts of empowerment and is based on two dimensions: "belief in the idea of empowerment" and "fairness" (or honesty). The model highlights the idea of empowerment as viewed by the management of an organization—how the management controls the employees to be empowered or not. In education, this model provides a good basis for discussing a given situation. It is "a clear depiction of the options organizations are faced with in applying empowerment and their consequences" (Baruch, 1998). Empowerment in education is also associated with the classic work of Freire (2018) who expressed the need to empower individuals who are disenfranchised by taking control over their learning and developing a deeper understanding of one's position within a community through active participation and engagement. In relation to the current study, a master teacher who is provided with the opportunity to get empowered (by the Department in general and as supported by the school head) becomes more effective and efficient, as underscored by Baruch (1998).

On teachers' professional growth (development), this study was anchored on Guskey's (2001) Professional Development Evaluation Model. The model identified five levels that must be investigated when assessing the success of professional development: (1) satisfaction; (2) knowledge; (3) teacher practices; (4) administrative support; and (5) student achievement. The model is represented by these five levels/ components that make up a theoretical relationship among and between these components. The highest level, which is student achievement, shows the peak of the teacher's professional growth that is translated to the student's achievement. As related to the study, the master teachers personally assessed themselves to determine their level of professional growth.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design. The respondents were 191 (53%) of 357 master teachers in the Schools Division of Iloilo, representing the five component districts of the province.

An adapted questionnaire from DepEd RPMS-PPST was used to determine the level of social responsibility, instructional empowerment, and professional growth of secondary school master teachers. The instrument, although adapted, underwent content validity from experts and a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha, which resulted in a reliability coefficient of .949. The questionnaire used in this study was composed of three parts: Part I ascertained the level of social responsibility and consisted of 26 items; Part II, the level of instructional empowerment, consisted of 13 items; and Part III, the level of professional growth of the respondents consisted of seven items.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze and interpret the data gathered. Meanwhile, thematic analysis was employed to analyze and interpret the interview transcripts from 21 master teachers who participated in the FGD to validate the survey results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Social Responsibility of Secondary School Master Teachers

Table 1 presents the level of social responsibility of junior high school master teachers in the five congressional districts in the Schools Division of Iloilo. Results show the level of social responsibility of the master teachers in Iloilo. As an entire group, the level of responsibility of the respondents was described as high ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.54$). It can also be seen in the results that the respondents in District 5 had the highest mean score among the groups ($M=4.36$, $SD=0.46$) while District 4 had the lowest ($M=4.10$, $SD=0.38$).

Table 1

Level of Social Responsibility of the Respondents

Group	N	Mean	SD	Description
Entire Group	191	4.19	.54	High
District 1	55	4.20	.51	High
District 2	49	4.18	.64	High
District 3	37	4.11	.55	High
District 4	21	4.10	.38	High
District 5	29	4.36	.46	High

Scale: very high (4.50-5.00); high (3.50-4.49); average (2.50-3.49); low (1.50-2.49); very low (1.00-1.49)

The results mean that master teachers had a high level of social responsibility. This is seen in the five congressional districts surveyed and it shows that they were consistent. This implies that master teachers are doing great in terms of the application of their roles and responsibilities in the field. The level of understanding of their social responsibilities is high, which further means they know what they are doing vis-à-vis their roles and responsibilities as master teachers.

The results of the study validate the study conducted by Donato (2021) titled "The relationship of the strategies and practices of the school heads and master teachers and teachers' competencies and skills in the new normal." This study points out that master teachers understood their roles and responsibilities well because they were well-monitored by the school heads. Although it was not explicitly mentioned that master teachers showed a high level in terms of the application of their knowledge of social responsibilities, the results have spoken for it. Additionally, the study by Ye and Zhou (2022) "Grow up with the city: Master teachers' experience of teacher professional development in Shanghai" underscored that master teachers in this study reported their responsibility was to care about students in their role as homeroom teachers but also extended it outside the portals of the institution. By this, it is seen that teachers, globally, show a satisfactory level of understanding of their social responsibilities.

Meanwhile, although the results show that respondents had a high level of social responsibility, there are items in the spectrum of social responsibility constructs that can still be improved. The data show that statement number 8, "Scholarship of integration makes connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in a larger context—often educating non-specialists," was ranked 1 with the lowest mean score ($M=3.90$). This is followed by statement 6, "Build support for public investment in higher education," both to provide access to opportunities for students of all backgrounds to pursue an education and to generate knowledge that will address critical societal needs ($M=3.93$). Rounding off in the top three is statement number 2, "Enhance the employability of graduates by providing opportunities to build a strong résumé and explore career goals" ($M=3.94$). Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2

Ranking of Items on Social Responsibility with Lower Mean Scores

Statement Number	Mean	Rank
As a Master Teacher, I		
8. (Scholarship of Integration) make connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in a larger context	3.90	1

—	often educating non-specialists		
6.	build support for public investment in higher education, both to provide access and opportunity for students of all backgrounds to pursue an education and generate knowledge that will address critical societal needs	3.93	2
2.	enhance the employability of graduates by providing opportunities to build a strong resume and explore career goals	3.94	3

The results mean that the high level of social responsibility of master teachers is reflected in all statements asked of them. This implies that the high level of social responsibility is across all the areas tested in the instrument. However, this also implies that even though the results were high, there is still room for improvement on the part of the master teachers, especially in the first two areas—making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in a larger context, and building support for public investment in higher education. Thus, a program to help master teachers improve these areas may be initiated.

Level of Instructional Empowerment of Secondary School Master Teachers

Table 3 presents the level of instructional empowerment of the respondents in the five congressional districts in the Schools Division of Iloilo. In general, the respondents showed a very high level of instructional empowerment ($M=4.52$, $SD=0.46$). The results also show that District 5 had the highest mean score ($M=4.29$, $SD=0.47$), which was described as very high, while District 1 had the lowest ($M=4.48$, $SD=0.50$), which was described as high.

Table 3

Level of Instructional Empowerment of the Respondents

Group	N	Mean	SD	Description
Entire Group	191	4.52	.46	Very High
District 1	55	4.48	.50	High
District 2	49	4.59	.43	Very High
District 3	37	4.51	.43	Very High
District 4	21	4.29	.47	High
District 5	29	4.67	.40	Very High

Scale: very high (4.50-5.00); high (3.50-4.49); average (2.50-3.49); low (1.50-2.49); very low (1.00-1.49)

The results in terms of the level of instructional empowerment of master teachers mean that they did great in terms of empowering themselves concerning curriculum and instruction even during the pandemic. This implies that master teachers take to heart their roles and responsibilities especially in terms of learning instructions and delivery because as master teachers, they are the primary source of teachers about updated and relevant strategies to implement inside the classroom.

The results of this scientific work are supported by the study of Dahiru and Gbolahan (2022) on “Mediating role of teacher empowerment on the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness.” Their study revealed that there is a significant relationship between instructional leadership, teacher empowerment, and school effectiveness. It was also found that teachers' empowerment mediates the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness with a direct significant positive correlation. This simply means that the empowerment of a teacher will translate into instructional performance. It further means that master teachers were empowered, as shown in the results of the study. They were likewise performing well because much was expected from master teachers, as evidenced by their IPCRF (Individual Performance and Review Form).

Meanwhile, although the results show that respondents had a very high level of instructional empowerment, there are items in the spectrum of instructional empowerment constructs that can still be improved. Table 4 shows the top three items with low mean scores. The data show that statement number 2, “Collaborated with colleagues in the conduct and applications of research and to enrich the knowledge of content and pedagogy” was ranked 1 with the lowest mean score ($M=4.36$). This is followed by statement 9, “Advised and guided colleagues in the selection, organization, development, and use of appropriate teaching and learning resources, including ICT, to address specific learning goals” ($M=4.38$). Rounding off in the top three is statement number 11, “Interpreted collaboratively monitoring and evaluation strategies of attainment data to support learner progress and achievement” ($M=4.41$).

Table 4*Ranking of Items on Instructional Empowerment with Lower Mean Scores*

Statement Number	Mean	Rank
As a Master Teacher, I		
2. collaborated with colleagues in the conduct and applications of research to enrich the knowledge of content and pedagogy	4.36	1
9. advised and guided colleagues in the selection, and organization, development and use of appropriate teaching and learning resources, including ICT, to address specific learning goals	4.38	2
11. interpreted collaboratively monitoring and evaluation strategies of attainment data to support learner progress and achievement	4.41	3

The results mean that there are still areas that can be improved concerning the level of instructional empowerment of master teachers especially in areas of research collaboration and selection, organization, and development of instructional materials and resources. This implies that capacity-building seminars may be conducted to enhance these two areas so that the level of instructional empowerment of master teachers may also be improved.

The results of the study could be related to the study conducted by Hite and Milbourne (2022) on "A proposed conceptual framework for K-12 STEM master teacher (stemmate) development." They emphasized in their study that master teachers to further their instructional development as some do not embrace changes brought about by technological developments. This can be related to the study as the results suggest also that some master teachers are hesitant or refuse to be capacitated especially in research, which has been gaining popularity nowadays.

On the other hand, there is a scarcity of studies to validate the results in this particular area. However, the study by Basilio and Bueno (2019) titled, "Research skills and attitudes of master teachers in a division towards capability training," showed that master teachers had only satisfactory attitudes in terms of submitting themselves to research capability training. This means that they have a lot to improve and this implies that they are also hesitant to spearhead capability-building seminars in research. This further implies that they have to work out their social responsibility skills in initiating professional growth and development in the institution.

Level of Professional Growth of Junior High School Master Teachers

Table 5 presents the level of professional growth of junior high school master teachers in the five districts in the Schools Division of Iloilo. The results show that in general, the respondents had a high level of professional growth ($M=4.43$, $SD=0.55$). The results also show that District 5 had the highest mean score ($M=4.53$, $SD=0.44$), while District 3 had the lowest ($M=4.28$, $SD=0.74$).

Table 5*Level of Professional Growth of the Respondents*

Group	N	Mean	SD	Description
Entire Group	191	4.44	.55	High
District 1	55	4.50	.48	Very High
District 2	49	4.44	.53	High
District 3	37	4.28	.75	High
District 4	21	4.38	.45	High
District 5	29	4.53	.44	Very High

Scale: very high (4.50-5.00); high (3.50-4.49); average (2.50-3.49); low (1.50-2.49); very low (1.00-1.49)

The results mean that master teachers showed interest and commitment to furthering their professional growth and development. This implies that they were open-minded and were willing to learn, even in difficult times, especially during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, although the results show that respondents had a very high level of instructional empowerment, there are items in the spectrum of instructional empowerment constructs that can still be improved. Table 4 shows the top five items with low mean scores. The data show that statement number 2, "Collaborated with colleagues in the conduct and applications of research and to enrich the knowledge of content and pedagogy" was ranked 1 with the lowest mean score ($M=4.36$). This is followed by statement 9, "Advised and guided colleagues in the selection, organization, development, and use of appropriate teaching and learning resources, including ICT, to address specific learning goals" ($M=4.38$). Rounding off in the top three is statement number 11, "Interpreted collaboratively monitoring and evaluation strategies of attainment data to support learner progress and achievement" ($M=4.41$).

As highlighted by Donato (2021) in his study, "The relationship of the strategies and practices of the school heads and master teachers and teachers' competencies and skills in the new normal," school heads play a pivotal role in the success of teachers in terms of their professional growth. In his study, Donato emphasized that school heads who are particular in terms of the professional development of their teachers can lead an institution with teachers who grow healthy and productive concerning their professional growth.

The results of the study are also supported by the study conducted by DiPaola and Wagner (2018) on "Improving instruction through supervision, evaluation, and professional development." Their study concluded that improved supervision, evaluation, and professional development translate to improved instruction. This implies that teachers, including master teachers, with proper guidance and supervision from the school head, can always achieve a high level of professional development.

However, although the results show that respondents had a high level of professional growth, some statements on the professional growth category that reflect the practices of the respondents could still be improved. The results in Table 6 show that Statement 4, "Initiate professional reflections and promote learning opportunities with colleagues improve practice" ($M=4.31$). This is followed by statement 3, "Contribute it's actively to professional networks within and between schools to improve knowledge and to enhance practice" ($M=4.34$). In the top three is statement 6, "Discuss with goalies teaching and learning practices that apply existing codes, laws, and regulations applicable to the teaching profession and the responsibilities specified in the code of ethics for professional teachers" ($M=4.40$).

Table 6

Ranking of Items on Professional Growth with Lower Mean Scores

Statement Number	Mean	Rank
As a Master Teacher, I		
4. initiate professional reflections and promote learning opportunities with colleagues to improve practice	4.31	1
3. contribute actively to professional networks within and between schools to improve knowledge and enhance practice	4.34	2
6. discuss with colleagues teaching and learning practices that apply existing codes, laws, and regulations applicable to the teaching profession, and the responsibilities specified in the code of ethics for professional teachers	4.40	3

The results, once again, mean that there is still room for improvement on the part of the master teachers even though their general level of professional development was high, especially in areas about "initiating professional reflections and promoting learning opportunities with colleagues to improve practice" and "contributing actively to professional networks within and between schools to improve knowledge and to enhance practice". This implies that another set of the capability-building seminar could be done to address this gap.

In the study of Hite and Milbourne (2022) on "Divining the professional development experiences of K-12 STEM master teacher leaders in the United States," they stressed that teachers, when properly guided, especially when the objective of the program is well-communicated to them, would always give their best in terms of their participation to the seminar-training. More often, according to them, this translates positively in their respective classrooms and institutions, thereby communicating what they have learned in the workshop to their colleagues. Similar observations were made by Abramovich and Miedijensky (2019) in their study titled "From a guided teacher into a leader: A Three-Stage Professional Development (TSPD) Model for empowering teachers." They highlighted that proper guidance provided to teachers, especially done by the

Thus, in general, master teachers in the Schools Division of Iloilo are aware of their functions and responsibilities, specifically their social responsibilities. However, their social responsibility is generally limited to the learners inside the school. Their instructional empowerment is not well explored and maximized, and their understanding is limited to class observations and LAC sessions. In terms of their professional growth, although there are opportunities, most of them do not have time to engage and maximize. Weak areas of master teachers have to be explored and be provided with necessary

intervention to maximize their potential in extending knowledge to their respective students as underscored by Vygotsky's theory of Zone of Proximal Development, which highlights the concept of scaffolding.

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