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Teachers' Perceived Readiness for the Career Progression System (ECPS) in the Public Elementary Schools: A Basis for the Expanded Career Progression Development Program

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed public elementary school teachers' perceived readiness for the Expanded Career Progression System (ECPS) and identified priorities for a proposed career development program. A descriptive-comparative design was employed among 150 purposively selected Teacher I–III personnel from selected schools in District 4, Schools Division Office of Manila. Data were obtained through a validated 25-item, four-point questionnaire and supplementary semi-structured interviews, then analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, analysis of variance, and thematic analysis. Respondents reported very high overall readiness (M = 3.40, SD = 0.61), with training and professional development highest (M = 3.58) and experience and length of service lowest (M = 3.28). Significant differences in readiness were found according to age, educational attainment, and teaching experience, but not sex or Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers career stage. The principal challenges involved extensive documentation, limited preparation time, competing workloads, and restricted promotion opportunities. Thus, favorable self-assessments did not eliminate procedural and institutional barriers to career advancement. The proposed Expanded Career Advancement and Readiness Enhancement (ECARE) Program should prioritize eligibility guidance, service-record verification, portfolio preparation, mentoring, and targeted professional development. Findings are limited by purposive sampling, self-reported measures, and the absence of program implementation testing. By informing context-specific career support and more transparent processes, the study offers potential contributions to educational and institutional sustainability, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Keywords: *Career Progression, Elementary Teachers, Philippine Education, Professional Development, Promotion Barriers, Teacher Readiness*

1. INTRODUCTION

Professional growth and equitable career advancement are integral to maintaining a competent and motivated teaching workforce. In the Philippines, Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022 established the Expanded Career Progression System (ECPS) to broaden advancement opportunities for public school teachers within the classroom teaching and school administration career lines (Office of the President of the Philippines, 2022). Its implementation is guided by DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025, as amended and clarified by DepEd Order No. 034, s. 2025 (Department of Education, 2025a, 2025b). These policies make preparedness for qualifications, performance assessment, professional development, and documentation central to career progression. The present study examines the perceived readiness of Teacher I–III personnel in public elementary schools in District 4, Schools Division Office (SDO) of Manila, as a basis for a proposed Expanded Career Progression Development Program.

Research Problem

Despite the expanded career structure, teachers may face difficulties translating eligibility and professional experience into readiness for advancement. Sinsay-Villanueva and Orbeta (2023) identified unclear career pathways and inadequately aligned professional development as challenges in the Philippine teacher-development system. Navalta (2024) likewise documented preparedness concerns involving competency standards, workload, and career transitions, while Osman and Adanza (2024) reported teachers' concerns about the transparency and implementation of revised promotion processes. International evidence further emphasizes the need for meaningful professional support throughout teachers' careers (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). The thesis reports that, as of May 2025, 291 of the 923 teachers in District 4 held Teacher I positions (31.53%). This figure does not establish that all these teachers sought promotion, but it underscores the relevance of examining advancement readiness within the district. The specific problem is the limited localized evidence on how Teacher I–III personnel perceive their preparedness in educational qualifications, experience and length of service, performance ratings, training and professional development, and outstanding accomplishments, as well as the difficulties they encounter in meeting ECPS requirements.

Assumptions of the Study

The study assumes that readiness for career progression is multidimensional rather than equivalent to policy awareness or years of service alone. Teachers may possess different levels of preparedness across the five indicators, while their career circumstances and access to institutional support may shape how they respond to advancement requirements. Recent research cautions against treating teachers at the same career stage as having identical professional development needs (Coppe et al., 2024). The study also assumes that respondents can provide meaningful self-assessments of readiness and report challenges relevant to the ECPS; such perceptions, however, should not be interpreted as independently verified eligibility or actual promotion outcomes. For its comparative component, the study tests the null hypothesis that the level of perceived readiness does not differ significantly when respondents are grouped according to age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) career stage.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to determine the perceived readiness of public elementary school Teacher I–III personnel in District 4, SDO Manila, for the ECPS and use the findings to formulate an Expanded Career Progression Development Program. Specifically, it seeks to describe respondents' demographic profiles in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of teaching

experience, and PPST career stage; assess perceived readiness in educational qualifications, experience and length of service, performance ratings, training and professional development, and outstanding accomplishments; determine whether readiness differs significantly across demographic groups; identify the challenges teachers encounter in navigating the ECPS; and propose a development program responsive to the documented needs.

Theoretical or Conceptual Basis

The study retains Burke's Teacher Career Cycle Theory as the historical career-stage lens of its original framework, viewing professional development and readiness as changing over the course of a teaching career. Contemporary research offers relevant support for this perspective: Coppe et al. (2024) found that teachers' development needs vary within as well as across career phases, while Susanto et al. (2025) reported associations among sustainable education, teacher career stages, and career management. These findings support examining readiness across demographic and career-stage groups rather than assuming uniform preparedness. Stark et al. (2025) further highlight the importance of teachers' motivation to engage in continuing professional learning. The ECPS provides the study's operational policy framework. Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022 specifies expanded career pathways, while the 2025 DepEd guidelines and subsequent amendments establish implementation requirements and procedures (Office of the President of the Philippines, 2022; Department of Education, 2025a, 2025b). Accordingly, the conceptual input comprises five readiness indicators: educational qualifications, experience and length of service, performance ratings, training and professional development, and outstanding accomplishments. The process involves assessing perceived readiness, comparing respondent groups, and identifying challenges. The intended output is an evidence-informed Expanded Career Progression Development Program, including targeted professional learning, policy orientation, mentoring, and assistance with documentation, subject to the study's actual findings.

The study primarily aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4—Quality Education, particularly Target 4.c on qualified teachers—because the assessment and proposed interventions focus on professional qualifications, sustained learning, and teacher capacity development (United Nations Statistics Division, 2024; UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). It also has a relevant connection to SDG 8—Decent Work and Economic Growth—through attention to fair professional advancement and opportunities for career development. Its examination of transparent assessment, clear policy communication, and administrative support is additionally consistent with SDG 16—Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions—in the limited sense of strengthening accountable institutional procedures (Department of Education, 2025a, 2025b). These linkages concern educational, socioeconomic, and institutional sustainability. By identifying readiness gaps and informing a context-specific development program, the research may support more sustained professional growth and better administration of career progression. It does not directly measure improvements in learning outcomes, promotion rates, labor conditions, or national SDG indicators; therefore, these are prospective contributions rather than demonstrated impacts.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-comparative design using a quantitative survey approach. The descriptive component measured perceived readiness in educational qualifications, experience and length of service, performance ratings, training and professional development, and outstanding accomplishments. The comparative component examined differences in readiness when teachers were grouped by demographic characteristics. Semi-structured interviews with

selected teachers provided additional qualitative information on challenges and contextual factors related to career progression. The study assessed existing conditions without manipulating variables.

Research Locale or Study Setting

The research was conducted in selected public elementary schools in District 4, SDO Manila, which comprised 14 elementary schools and 923 teachers, including 291 teachers holding Teacher I positions. The locale was chosen because the ECPS was being implemented in these schools and the researcher could access respondents through the Schools Division Office.

Participants or Data Sources

The respondents were 150 purposively selected public elementary school teachers from District 4, SDO Manila, including teachers in Teacher I–III positions who were eligible for or preparing for career advancement. They represented different teaching assignments and learning areas, including English, Mathematics, Science, Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, and MAPEH. Selection considered years of service, current position or rank, participation in professional development, and familiarity with career progression guidelines. Respondents were profiled by age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) career stage. Because purposive, nonprobability sampling was used, the results pertain to the selected respondents and were not intended for generalization to all public school teachers.

Research Instruments or Materials

The primary instrument was a researcher-made, 25-item survey questionnaire developed from related literature, policy documents, and previous teacher-readiness instruments. Its first part collected demographic information, while the second assessed perceived readiness in five areas: educational qualifications, experience and length of service, performance ratings, training and professional development, and outstanding accomplishments. Responses were rated on a four-point Likert scale: 4 (Very High), 3 (High), 2 (Low), and 1 (Very Low). Three experts—a Public Schools District Supervisor, a School Principal, and a Master Teacher II specializing in teacher evaluation and professional standards—reviewed the questionnaire for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study variables. Their feedback informed revisions. The instrument was pilot-tested with 30 public elementary school teachers from another district of SDO Manila who were excluded from the main sample. The overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.943, interpreted in the source manuscript as excellent (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were also used to gather teachers' descriptions of challenges associated with the ECPS.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first sought approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of SDO Manila and subsequently obtained permission from the Public Schools District Supervisors and the heads of the participating schools. After authorization, the survey was distributed to the selected teachers in printed and online formats. An accompanying consent form explained the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and the use of responses for academic and research purposes. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. School focal persons assisted with distribution and retrieval, and reminders were sent through established school communication channels and online messaging platforms. Semi-structured interviews with selected teachers supplemented the survey responses. Completed questionnaires were organized and encoded into statistical software for analysis.

Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentages described respondents' demographic profiles. Means, weighted means, and standard deviations summarized perceived readiness by item, indicator, and overall level. Weighted mean scores of 3.28–4.00 were classified as Very High, 2.52–3.27 as High, 1.76–2.51 as Low, and 1.00–1.75 as Very Low. The t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine whether readiness differed significantly across demographic groups, as applicable to the group comparisons. Interview data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify the challenges experienced by respondents, including those associated with documentation, access to professional development, and motivation. The quantitative and qualitative findings informed the proposed Expanded Career Progression Development Program.

Ethical Consideration

The study secured permission from the relevant educational authorities before data collection and obtained informed consent from respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw without consequences. The researcher maintained anonymity and confidentiality by excluding personally identifiable information from survey data and reporting, securely storing collected information, and limiting its use to research purposes. The study also observed fairness and non-discrimination, avoided coercion or undue influence, and committed to accurate reporting without manipulation or bias.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic and Professional Profile of the Respondents

3.1.1 Age and Sex

The findings revealed that most respondents were aged 26–35 years (53%), followed by those aged 46–55 years (23%) and 36–45 years (20%). Teachers aged 25 years and below accounted for 3%, while those aged 56 years and above represented 2%. Regarding sex, the majority were female (89%), while male respondents accounted for 11%. The findings indicate that the respondents were predominantly teachers in early and middle adulthood, with women comprising most of the sample. Coppe et al. (2024) emphasized that teachers' professional development needs vary across career phases, although considerable differences also exist within the same career stage. Similarly, OECD (2025) identified age, professional experience, and working conditions as relevant considerations in understanding teachers' career development. These findings highlight the importance of examining teachers' professional needs within their specific career contexts.

3.1.2 Educational Attainment, Teaching Experience, and PPST Career Stage

Most respondents held bachelor's degrees (69%), while 31% had completed master's degrees. Regarding teaching experience, 57% had served for 0–5 years, 19% for 6–10 years, 9% for 11–15 years, and 15% for 16 years or longer. In terms of Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) career stage, 83% were classified as Beginning Towards Proficient, while 17% were classified as Proficient. The findings indicate that most respondents were relatively early in their teaching careers and had not completed graduate degrees. This suggests differences in formal qualifications and accumulated professional experience that may be relevant to career advancement readiness. Navalta (2024) emphasized that teachers' professional preparation and understanding of competency standards are important considerations in implementing the ECPS. Similarly, Osman and Adanza (2024) identified educational qualifications, experience, and performance as essential considerations in teacher promotion systems.

3.2 Teachers' Perceived Readiness for the Expanded Career Progression System

3.2.1 Educational Qualifications

Teachers demonstrated a Very High level of perceived readiness in educational qualifications, with an overall mean of 3.39 (SD = 0.58). Confidence that their professional skills qualified them for higher positions received the highest mean of 3.43 (SD = 0.59), followed by subject matter competence (M = 3.41) and effective teaching strategies (M = 3.40). Meeting qualification requirements and demonstrating competencies expected for advancement both received means of 3.36. These findings indicate that respondents generally perceived themselves as academically and professionally prepared for career advancement. Osman and Adanza (2024) emphasized the relevance of educational qualifications and professional competence in teachers' understanding of promotion requirements. Sinsay-Villanueva and Orbeta (2023) likewise identified the need for stronger alignment between teacher preparation, professional development, and career pathways in the Philippine education system. Nevertheless, perceived readiness should be distinguished from verified compliance with the qualification standards of a specific promotion position.

3.2.2 Experience and Length of Service

Experience and length of service obtained an overall mean of 3.28 (SD = 0.65), interpreted as Very High. Teachers reported the highest readiness in possessing the required teaching experience (M = 3.37, SD = 0.63), followed by experience supporting promotion eligibility (M = 3.31). Proper documentation of service and professional assignments received a mean of 3.26, while understanding the contribution of length of service to promotion eligibility obtained the lowest mean of 3.19 (SD = 0.68). Although teachers generally perceived themselves as experienced enough for advancement, comparatively lower scores in documentation and understanding eligibility requirements indicated areas requiring further clarification. Navalta (2024) reported that teachers' awareness of the ECPS does not necessarily eliminate difficulties associated with competency requirements and career transitions. Osman and Adanza (2024) similarly highlighted the importance of clear promotion guidelines and institutional orientation. These findings support the relevance of providing teachers with accurate guidance on experience-related requirements and supporting documents.

3.2.3 Performance Ratings

Performance ratings obtained a Very High overall mean of 3.29 (SD = 0.59). Meeting or exceeding performance requirements for promotion received the highest mean of 3.32 (SD = 0.59), followed by understanding the role of performance evaluation in career progression (M = 3.31, SD = 0.57). Using evaluation feedback to improve teaching practices received the lowest mean of 3.27 (SD = 0.62), interpreted as High. The findings suggest that respondents generally recognized the importance of performance evaluation in career advancement, although the relatively lower score for applying feedback indicates an area for professional improvement. OECD (2025) emphasized the relevance of teacher appraisal, feedback, and professional learning in strengthening instructional practice. Osman and Adanza (2024) also identified performance assessment as an important component of teacher promotion systems. These findings support the value of using performance evaluation not only for eligibility assessment but also as a basis for continuous professional development.

3.2.4 Training and Professional Development

Training and professional development recorded the highest level of readiness among the five indicators, with an overall mean of 3.58 (SD = 0.57), interpreted as Very High. Ensuring that professional development activities met DepEd accreditation standards obtained the highest mean of 3.61 (SD = 0.57), followed by maintaining training records and supporting documents (M

= 3.59, SD = 0.55). Participation in seminars and workshops aligned with professional growth obtained a mean of 3.52 (SD = 0.62). These findings indicate that respondents placed considerable importance on participating in professional learning activities and documenting their accomplishments. Chin et al. (2022) emphasized that sustained professional development is necessary for teachers' professional competence, although financial limitations, time constraints, and logistical difficulties may restrict participation. Similarly, Coppe et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of professional development opportunities responsive to teachers' career circumstances. The findings reinforce the value of maintaining accessible and relevant training opportunities that support advancement requirements.

3.2.5 Outstanding Accomplishments

Outstanding accomplishments obtained an overall mean of 3.48 (SD = 0.60), interpreted as Very High. Documenting professional accomplishments received the highest mean of 3.57 (SD = 0.58), followed by developing instructional materials, innovations, and recognized good practices (M = 3.52, SD = 0.58). Participation in research and leadership activities received a mean of 3.47, while obtaining professional awards and recognition recorded the lowest mean of 3.38 (SD = 0.61). The findings suggest that respondents perceived themselves as actively contributing to professional initiatives and maintaining records of their accomplishments. Codilla Jr. and Yangson-Barot (2023) emphasized that teachers' research readiness and participation are associated with professional preparation, research competencies, and institutional support. Chin et al. (2022) also identified research-related skills as an area of professional development need among Filipino teachers. These studies support the relevance of institutional assistance in research, innovation, and professional accomplishments.

3.2.6 Overall Level of Teachers' Readiness

The overall level of teachers' perceived readiness for the ECPS was Very High, with a mean of 3.40 (SD = 0.61). Training and professional development obtained the highest mean of 3.58, followed by outstanding accomplishments (M = 3.48), educational qualifications (M = 3.39), performance ratings (M = 3.29), and experience and length of service (M = 3.28). All five indicators were interpreted as Very High. The findings indicate that teachers generally perceived themselves as prepared for career progression, particularly in professional development and accomplishments. Nevertheless, the relatively lower scores for experience and length of service and performance ratings suggest areas where additional support may be beneficial. OECD (2024) emphasized the importance of coherent career structures, professional learning opportunities, and institutional support in sustaining a competent teaching workforce. Navalta (2024) similarly recommended targeted capacity-building and guidance to strengthen teachers' preparedness for the ECPS.

3.3 Differences in Teachers' Readiness According to Demographic and Professional Profile

3.3.1 Differences According to Age

Significant differences in teachers' readiness were found across age groups in all five indicators: educational qualifications (F = 5.97), experience and length of service (F = 7.86), performance ratings (F = 5.96), training and professional development (F = 8.12), and outstanding accomplishments (F = 7.41). All comparisons were reported as statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Teachers aged 26–35 years obtained the highest means in educational qualifications (M = 3.43), training and professional development (M = 3.62), and outstanding accomplishments (M = 3.53). Those aged 36–45 years recorded the highest means in experience and length of service (M = 3.37) and performance ratings (M = 3.37). These findings indicate variation in perceived readiness among age groups, with relatively higher scores concentrated among respondents aged 26–45 years. Coppe et al. (2024) established that professional development patterns differ

across teachers' career phases, although these differences are not uniform. OECD (2025) likewise identified differences in teachers' working conditions and professional circumstances across age groups. The findings suggest the relevance of career-responsive interventions, although the small numbers of respondents in the youngest and oldest age categories warrant caution when interpreting group differences.

3.3.2 Differences According to Sex

No statistically significant differences were observed between male and female respondents in educational qualifications ($p = 0.627$), experience and length of service ($p = 0.089$), performance ratings ($p = 0.814$), training and professional development ($p = 0.868$), and outstanding accomplishments ($p = 0.353$). Male and female teachers reported comparable readiness across all five indicators. The findings indicate that sex was not a statistically significant distinguishing factor in perceived career progression readiness among the respondents. OECD (2024) emphasized the relevance of inclusive professional development, fair career structures, and supportive institutional conditions in strengthening the teaching profession. The present findings support providing career development assistance to teachers regardless of sex, although the absence of statistically significant differences does not independently establish equality in actual promotion opportunities.

3.3.3 Differences According to Highest Educational Attainment

Significant differences were observed between bachelor's and master's degree holders in educational qualifications, experience and length of service, training and professional development, and outstanding accomplishments, with reported p-values of 0.000. Teachers with master's degrees obtained higher mean scores in educational qualifications ($M = 3.54$ versus 3.34), experience and length of service ($M = 3.40$ versus 3.23), training and professional development ($M = 3.72$ versus 3.53), and outstanding accomplishments ($M = 3.65$ versus 3.43). However, the difference in performance ratings was not statistically significant ($p = 0.441$), with means of 3.31 and 3.28, respectively. The findings indicate that teachers with graduate degrees generally reported higher perceived readiness in four of the five indicators. Sinsay-Villanueva and Orbeta (2023) emphasized the importance of strengthening teacher education and professional development pathways. Osman and Adanza (2024) likewise recognized educational qualifications as a relevant component of teacher advancement. Nevertheless, the absence of a significant difference in performance ratings indicates that higher academic attainment does not necessarily correspond to statistically different perceptions of performance readiness within the sample.

3.3.4 Differences According to Years of Teaching Experience

Significant differences in teachers' readiness were identified across years-of-service groups in educational qualifications ($F = 10.49$), experience and length of service ($F = 5.25$), performance ratings ($F = 2.86$, $p = 0.036$), training and professional development ($F = 6.23$), and outstanding accomplishments ($F = 5.73$, $p = 0.001$). Teachers with 11–15 years of experience obtained the highest means in educational qualifications ($M = 3.66$), experience and length of service ($M = 3.50$), performance ratings ($M = 3.39$), training and professional development ($M = 3.80$), and outstanding accomplishments ($M = 3.67$). The findings indicate that teachers with 11–15 years of experience demonstrated consistently higher perceived readiness across the five indicators. Coppe et al. (2024) emphasized that teachers' professional development profiles differ according to career circumstances, making career-stage-responsive support important. Navalta (2024) similarly identified professional preparation, competency requirements, and institutional support as relevant to ECPS readiness. The results suggest that accumulated experience may be

associated with preparedness, although the findings do not establish a linear increase in readiness with additional years of service.

3.3.5 Differences According to PPST Career Stage

No statistically significant differences were observed between respondents classified as Beginning Towards Proficient and Proficient across the five readiness indicators. The reported comparisons were educational qualifications ($t = -0.69$, $p = 0.496$), experience and length of service ($t = 0.43$, $p = 0.673$), performance ratings ($t = 0.09$, $p = 0.925$), training and professional development ($t = -0.97$, $p = 0.337$), and outstanding accomplishments ($t = -0.72$, $p = 0.477$). These findings indicate that teachers within the two represented PPST career-stage groups reported statistically comparable levels of readiness. Coppe et al. (2024) emphasized that teachers within the same career phase may have varying professional development needs, suggesting that formal career-stage classifications do not fully explain individual preparedness. Navalta (2024) also highlighted the importance of continuous capacity-building and competency development for teachers navigating ECPS requirements. Accordingly, professional guidance and readiness support remain relevant across both represented PPST groups.

3.4 Challenges Encountered in the Expanded Career Progression System

3.4.1 Extensive Documentation Requirements and Limited Preparation Time

The thematic analysis identified extensive documentation requirements and limited preparation time as major challenges encountered by respondents. Teachers reported difficulties compiling documentary requirements, including Means of Verification (MOVs), professional portfolios, and qualification records. They also described insufficient time for completing and submitting the required documents. These findings were identified through qualitative responses rather than quantified frequency estimates. The findings indicate that documentary preparation and limited time may constrain teachers' ability to participate effectively in career progression processes. Osman and Adanza (2024) identified workload and implementation concerns in teachers' experiences with changing promotion systems. Cruz and Agpasa (2024) likewise reported that stringent requirements, limited opportunities, and competing responsibilities can hinder teachers' professional advancement. These findings reinforce the importance of clear documentation procedures and sufficient preparation time.

3.4.2 Workload Constraints

Respondents reported difficulty balancing teaching responsibilities with the preparation of portfolios, reports, and other documents required for career advancement. Classroom instruction, administrative tasks, and professional responsibilities were identified as competing demands that reduced the time available for promotion-related activities. The findings indicate that workload constraints may hinder teachers' participation in career progression even when perceived readiness is high. Creagh et al. (2025) identified workload intensification and time pressure as important challenges affecting teachers' professional responsibilities and well-being. Similarly, Chin et al. (2022) found that time constraints and inadequate logistical support can restrict teachers' participation in professional development. These findings highlight the importance of institutional support in managing professional responsibilities alongside career preparation.

3.4.3 Limited Opportunities for Career Advancement

Respondents also identified limited promotion opportunities as a challenge. Some expressed concerns about the availability of promotion positions, perceived favoritism, and possible subjectivity in evaluation procedures. These findings reflect the experiences and perceptions reported by respondents and do not independently establish that unfair selection practices

occurred. The findings suggest that perceived limitations in promotion opportunities and evaluation transparency may affect teachers' confidence in the career progression process. Cruz and Agpasa (2024) found that stringent promotion requirements and limited advancement opportunities influence teachers' career development experiences. Osman and Adanza (2024) likewise emphasized the importance of clearer implementation procedures and addressing concerns about transparency. These studies underscore the relevance of fair, transparent, and consistently communicated promotion processes.

3.5 Proposed Expanded Career Advancement and Readiness Enhancement (ECARE) Program

Based on the findings, the study proposed the Expanded Career Advancement and Readiness Enhancement (ECARE) Program to strengthen teachers' preparedness for the ECPS. The program includes career progression orientation, MOV and portfolio preparation workshops, PPST-aligned professional development, mentoring and coaching, research and innovation support, mock evaluation for promotion, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. The proposed activities are intended primarily for Teacher I–III personnel, with school heads, master teachers, and designated coordinators serving as facilitators and mentors. The proposed program responds to the identified readiness gaps and challenges involving documentation, preparation time, workload, and career advancement opportunities. Navalta (2024) recommended targeted capacity-building, mentoring, and support mechanisms to strengthen teachers' ECPS preparedness. Chin et al. (2022) likewise emphasized the importance of accessible professional development and institutional assistance, while OECD (2024) highlighted coherent career pathways and sustained professional learning as essential components of teacher development. The ECARE Program therefore provides a context-specific framework for supporting career progression readiness, although its effectiveness remains to be established through implementation and evaluation.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that public elementary school teachers in District 4, Schools Division Office of Manila, demonstrated a very high level of perceived readiness for the Expanded Career Progression System (ECPS) across all five indicators. Training and professional development emerged as the strongest area, while experience and length of service received the lowest rating. Significant differences in readiness were observed according to age, educational attainment, and years of teaching experience, whereas sex and Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) career stage showed no significant differences. Despite their favorable self-assessments, teachers encountered challenges involving extensive documentation, insufficient preparation time, competing workloads, and limited promotion opportunities. These findings indicate that professional preparedness alone does not eliminate the administrative and institutional difficulties associated with career advancement. The study provides localized empirical evidence supporting the development of targeted professional assistance and the proposed Expanded Career Advancement and Readiness Enhancement (ECARE) Program.

The Schools Division Office of Manila and participating school administrators should prioritize the implementation of the proposed ECARE Program to address identified readiness gaps and career progression challenges. Particular attention should be given to experience and length of service through regular eligibility-mapping clinics, service-record verification, and orientations on ECPS qualification requirements. School heads and human resource personnel should strengthen documentation support, simplify portfolio preparation procedures where permitted, provide adequate preparation time, and promote transparent performance evaluation and promotion processes. Differentiated mentoring, coaching, and professional development

activities should be provided according to teachers' experience, educational attainment, and professional needs. Teachers should also be encouraged to pursue graduate education, relevant training, research, and instructional innovations. Continuous monitoring and evaluation should accompany program implementation to determine its effectiveness and identify necessary improvements. Future researchers should examine the program's outcomes using broader samples and objective measures of professional qualifications and career advancement.

The study was limited to 150 purposively selected Teacher I–III respondents from public elementary schools in District 4, Schools Division Office of Manila, restricting the generalizability of its findings to other educational settings. Readiness was primarily measured through self-reported assessments rather than independently verified qualifications, performance records, or actual promotion outcomes. The investigation did not examine long-term changes in career progression, teacher satisfaction, or student learning performance. Furthermore, the proposed ECARE Program was not subjected to pilot implementation or effectiveness evaluation. Future studies may address these limitations through larger representative samples, additional school divisions, objective administrative records, and longitudinal evaluation of career progression interventions.

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