

Teachers' Awareness, Perceptions, and Challenges on the First-Year Implementation of the Expanded Career Progression System (2025) in the Department of Education

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Publication history:

Received: September 26, 2026

Revised: October 24, 2026

Accepted: October 26, 2026

Published: October 27, 2026

[International Journal of Sustainable and Integrated Studies, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 868–878, October 2026.](#)

Abstract

This study examined teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges during the first-year implementation of the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) System in South District 5, Cebu City Division, during School Year 2025–2026. Anchored on Diffusion of Innovations Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, it employed a descriptive–correlational–comparative design involving 62 public elementary and secondary school teachers selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using an adopted structured questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, and Pearson correlation. Findings revealed high awareness of ECP objectives, qualification standards, and procedures, alongside favorable perceptions of fairness, merit recognition, motivation, and professional growth. However, respondents experienced moderate challenges related to documentary requirements, administrative procedures, workload, time constraints, and institutional support. Awareness and perceptions did not differ significantly across demographic groups, whereas challenges differed significantly according to years of service. Awareness was positively and significantly associated with perceptions, but neither awareness nor perceptions showed a significant relationship with implementation challenges under the study's reported significance criteria. The study concluded that practical and administrative barriers remained despite teachers' understanding and acceptance of the system. It recommended clearer guidelines, streamlined documentation, strengthened orientation, differentiated assistance, and an ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit for Teachers. The research aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education, through teacher professional development, and Goal 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, through transparent career progression processes. Its contribution to sustainability lies in supporting equitable advancement, consistent policy implementation, and strengthening institutional capacity for continuing teacher professional development.

Keywords: Administrative Challenges; Career Progression; Descriptive-Correlational-Comparative Research; Expanded Career Progression System; Institutional Support; Professional Development; Teachers' Awareness; Teachers' Perceptions

1. Introduction

Teachers play an essential role in achieving educational quality through effective instruction, professional competence, and continuous development. Recognizing their contribution, DepEd has implemented policies that strengthen professional standards, expand career opportunities, and promote teacher retention. However, traditional promotion systems have often been characterized by limited advancement opportunities, competition for higher positions, and administrative requirements that may restrict professional mobility. The Expanded Career Progression System addresses these limitations by establishing competency-based pathways that recognize teaching excellence and professional achievement without requiring teachers to transfer exclusively into administrative positions. It aligns career advancement with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), emphasizing professional competence, instructional effectiveness, and continuous learning (Department of Education [DepEd], 2025c). DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025 provides implementing guidelines covering qualification standards, promotion procedures, competency indicators, and documentary requirements. These mechanisms seek to strengthen transparency, fairness, and consistency across public schools. Training, mentoring, and capacity-building initiatives also support teachers in meeting professional expectations. Nevertheless, implementation challenges may arise from insufficient orientation, inconsistent dissemination of information, limited institutional resources, and difficulties interpreting documentary requirements. These concerns highlight the importance of examining teachers' actual understanding and experiences, particularly during the system's initial implementation. In South District 5 of Cebu City Division, evaluating teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges provides an opportunity to identify operational concerns and determine appropriate support mechanisms. Such evidence can guide the development of practical resources that improve teachers' understanding of career progression requirements.

Related literature identifies three interconnected dimensions influencing teacher career progression: awareness of professional standards and procedures, perceptions of fairness and advancement, and challenges affecting compliance and participation. Recent international evidence indicates that teachers' professional learning and career decisions are influenced by working conditions, appraisal arrangements, and access to relevant development opportunities (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2025b). The OECD (2024) also provides comparative indicators on teaching conditions and the organization of education systems. Systematic reviews show that motivation to undertake professional learning depends on teachers' goals and working contexts (Stark et al., 2025), while well-designed professional development can strengthen teaching and learning (Sims et al., 2025; Visscher et al., 2025). Teachers' perceptions of advancement are therefore best considered alongside professional recognition, transparent evaluation, and opportunities for meaningful learning. Recent meta-analyses identify job demands, organizational conditions, and wellbeing as important factors associated with teachers' professional experiences and retention (Gundlach et al., 2024; Li & Yao, 2022; Zhou et al., 2024). A systematic review further documents the pressures created by workload intensification and limited time (Creagh et al., 2025). These findings provide a current evidence base for examining teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges during the first-year implementation of the Expanded Career Progression System.

In the Philippine policy context, DepEd (2023) issued merit-based recruitment, selection, and appointment guidelines. Subsequent issuances addressed appointments to higher teaching positions (DepEd, 2024b) and amended earlier recruitment provisions (DepEd, 2024a). To address competing responsibilities, DepEd also directed the removal of administrative tasks from classroom teachers (DepEd, 2024c), rationalized workload and overload compensation (DepEd, 2024e), and issued supplementary implementation guidance (DepEd, 2024d). These policies demonstrate that teacher advancement must be considered together with institutional procedures and workload protections. The 2025 ECP implementation guidelines were later clarified through DepEd Order No. 034, s. 2025 (DepEd, 2025b), emphasizing consistent and equitable implementation. These developments strengthen the rationale for investigating teachers' practical experiences with policy communication, documentary requirements, and administrative support.

International research situates teacher career progression within broader concerns about educational quality, professional learning, and institutional capacity. UNESCO and International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) identified the need to strengthen teacher support, professional status, and retention. UNESCO (2024) emphasized the role of leadership, collaboration, and institutional capacity in educational improvement. The OECD (2025a) documented education-system conditions and resources relevant to teachers' professional environments, while the OECD (2025b) examined teachers' working conditions, appraisal, and development experiences. Research on teacher wellbeing likewise emphasizes the relevance of school conditions and support systems (Ozturk et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024). The Global Education Monitoring Report published by UNESCO (2023) also highlights the importance of evidence-informed use of technology, supporting the development of accessible rather than technology-driven policy resources. In the Philippines, the Expanded Career Progression System was established through Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022 (Office of the President of the Philippines, 2022) and operationalized through DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025 (DepEd, 2025c). These policies support competency-based advancement aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, institutionalized through DepEd Order No. 042, s. 2017 (DepEd, 2017). They complement Republic Act No. 4670 (Republic of the Philippines, 1966) and Republic Act No. 9155 (Republic of the Philippines, 2001). This study examines how that policy commitments were experienced by teachers in South District V, Cebu City Division.

This study was anchored on three complementary theories explaining teachers' awareness, perceptions, motivation, and responses to educational policy reforms. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory proposed by Rogers (2003) explains how individuals become aware of, evaluate, and adopt new ideas or organizational changes. Applied to the ECP System, the theory emphasizes that teachers must first understand policy objectives, qualification standards, and implementation procedures before making informed decisions regarding career advancement. Inadequate dissemination and unclear guidelines may therefore influence policy acceptance and participation. The Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Ajzen (1991) explains how attitudes, perceived social expectations, and perceived behavioral control influence individual intentions and actions. Within the ECP framework, teachers' perceptions of fairness, accessibility, and professional benefits may influence their willingness to participate in promotion processes. Perceived difficulties involving documentation, workload, and institutional support may also affect their engagement. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959) emphasizes the importance of professional recognition, achievement, and advancement in promoting job satisfaction. In relation to the ECP, competency-based promotion and recognition of professional accomplishments may strengthen teachers' motivation and commitment. Conversely, unclear procedures and perceived inequities may contribute to dissatisfaction. These theoretical foundations are supported by the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, Republic Act No. 4670 (Republic of the Philippines, 1966), the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers under DepEd Order No. 042, s. 2017 (DepEd, 2017), Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022 (Office of the President of the Philippines, 2022), and DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025 (DepEd, 2025c). Collectively, these frameworks emphasize teachers' professional welfare, competency development, equitable advancement, and institutional responsibility. Conceptually, the study examined teachers' awareness, perceptions, and implementation challenges alongside their sex, age, educational attainment, teaching position, and years of service. It investigated differences among demographic groups and relationships among the three principal variables. The findings provided the basis for developing an ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit for Teachers intended to improve policy understanding and facilitate compliance with career progression requirements. Although the Expanded Career Progression System establishes a competency-based framework for teacher advancement, limited localized empirical evidence addresses teachers' experiences during its first year of implementation under DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025. Existing literature has primarily examined professional standards, promotion readiness, teacher motivation, and administrative challenges rather than simultaneously investigating awareness, perceptions, and implementation difficulties within the newly operationalized system. Previous Philippine studies identified important concerns regarding competency standards and career advancement. Despite these contributions, the literature provides limited evidence specifically examining how teachers' demographic characteristics relate to their awareness, perceptions, and challenges during the 2025 implementation of the ECP System. There is also a need to examine whether understanding the policy and perceiving its benefits are associated with fewer difficulties in meeting its requirements. To address these gaps, the present study investigated teachers' awareness of ECP objectives, qualification standards, and documentary procedures; their perceptions of fairness, professional recognition, and motivation; and the challenges associated with policy interpretation, administrative compliance, and contextual conditions. The study further examined differences according to sex, age, educational attainment, teaching position, and years of service, as well as relationships among awareness, perceptions, and challenges. Its findings served as the basis for developing an ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit for Teachers that could support clearer communication, improved understanding, and more effective implementation of the policy.

The study aligns primarily with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). These goals are relevant to its focus on teacher development, equitable career advancement, and effective educational governance. SDG 4 – Quality Education. The study supports quality education by examining a career progression system designed to strengthen teachers' competencies, professional development, and instructional effectiveness. By identifying gaps in awareness and challenges in meeting competency standards, the research provides evidence that may inform more accessible professional learning and career development support. Its proposed resource toolkit is intended to help teachers understand advancement requirements and participate more effectively in professional development opportunities. SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. The study relates to decent work through its examination of merit-based promotion, professional recognition, career mobility, and teacher motivation. The ECP System seeks to establish clearer advancement pathways that recognize qualifications, competencies, and professional performance. Understanding teachers' experiences may contribute to more responsive career development practices and improved professional working conditions. SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities. The study addresses equity in career advancement by examining whether teachers with different demographic and professional characteristics experience varying levels of awareness, perceptions, and implementation challenges. Identifying differences in access to information, administrative assistance, and professional development opportunities may help educational institutions provide more appropriate support across teaching ranks and career stages. SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. The study contributes to institutional accountability by examining teachers' perceptions of fairness, transparency, and consistency in the implementation of promotion policies. Its findings may assist DepEd administrators in strengthening policy communication, standardizing procedures, and addressing operational difficulties that affect confidence in institutional processes. These SDG

connections reflect the study's potential contributions to educational quality, professional equity, and responsible institutional governance. They represent the broader relevance of the research rather than outcomes directly measured by its survey.

The study contributes to multidisciplinary sustainability through its relevance to educational, socio-economic, institutional, policy and governance, and technological sustainability. These dimensions are interconnected because the long-term effectiveness of educational reforms depends on competent teachers, accessible professional opportunities, and reliable institutional support. In terms of educational sustainability, the research supports continuous teacher development by identifying factors affecting understanding of competency standards and participation in professional advancement. The ECP System emphasizes professional learning, instructional improvement, and recognition of teaching competence. The study's findings may help educational leaders strengthen orientation, mentoring, and professional development mechanisms that support teachers throughout their careers. Regarding socio-economic sustainability, the study addresses equitable professional advancement and the importance of transparent promotion opportunities. Career progression can provide teachers with professional recognition and opportunities for improved economic welfare. By identifying barriers involving workload, qualifications, documentary requirements, and access to institutional support, the research may contribute to more inclusive career development practices. For institutional sustainability, the study provides evidence that may assist school administrators and DepEd offices in improving policy implementation. Understanding teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges can support clearer communication, consistent evaluation practices, and responsive administrative assistance. These mechanisms are relevant to maintaining effective educational institutions and sustaining teacher engagement in professional development. In relation to policy and governance sustainability, the research examines the implementation of competency-based promotion guidelines and their perceived fairness and transparency. Its findings may inform policy refinement, strengthen accountability, and help align institutional procedures with the objectives of the Expanded Career Progression System.

The study also has implications for technological and information sustainability through the development of an ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit for Teachers. By organizing policy information and simplifying explanations of qualification standards, documentary requirements, and career progression procedures, the proposed toolkit may improve access to understandable guidance. Its contribution concerns the effective organization and communication of policy information rather than the development of a new digital system. Overall, the study emphasizes that sustainable educational development requires coordinated attention to teacher competence, professional motivation, equitable opportunities, and institutional effectiveness. By generating localized evidence from the first-year implementation of the ECP System, the research provides a basis for strengthening teacher support mechanisms and promoting continuous professional growth within the Philippine public education system.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive–correlational–comparative quantitative research design to systematically examine teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges regarding the implementation of the ECP System. Quantitative research emphasizes objective measurement and statistical analysis to identify patterns and relationships among educational variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The descriptive component determined the existing levels of teachers' awareness, perceptions, and implementation challenges without manipulating the variables (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The correlational component examined relationships among these variables without establishing causation (Cohen et al., 2018). This approach was consistent with social cognitive perspectives, which recognize the influence of knowledge and beliefs on individuals' interpretations and responses (Bandura, 1986). The comparative component examined differences in awareness, perceptions, and challenges according to sex, age, educational attainment, teaching position, and years of service. Inferential statistical principles were applied to determine whether observed group differences were statistically significant (Field, 2018). Integrating these approaches provided a comprehensive examination of existing conditions, relationships, and differences among respondents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study also followed an input-process-output continuum. Inputs consisted of respondents' demographic characteristics and their awareness, perceptions, and challenges regarding ECP implementation. The process involved securing permission, administering questionnaires, collecting responses, and conducting statistical analysis. The resulting findings served as the basis for developing an ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit for Teachers.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public elementary and secondary schools under the Department of Education Schools Division Office of Cebu City, South District V, during School Year 2025–2026. The district included Punta Elementary School, Punta Night High School, Tisa National High School, Tisa Elementary School, Buhisan National High School, Buhisan Elementary School, Toong Elementary School, Toong National High School, and Cebu City National Science High School. These schools operated under the supervision of the Schools Division Office of Cebu City, which oversees educational programs, teacher performance evaluation, and professional

development activities. The research environment represented varying school sizes, teacher experiences, and institutional conditions, providing an appropriate setting for examining how teachers understood and experienced the implementation of the ECP System.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 62 public elementary and secondary school teachers from selected schools in South District V, Cebu City Division. They were directly affected by the implementation of the Expanded Career Progression System and represented different teaching ranks, including Teacher I to III and Master Teacher I to IV. The respondents included 18 teachers from Tisa National High School, 14 from Tisa Elementary School, 13 from Punta High School, 13 from Cebu National Science High School, and four from Buhisan National High School. Their demographic and professional characteristics were examined in terms of sex, age, educational attainment, teaching position, and years of service. Eligible respondents were full-time public-school teachers employed under DepEd with at least one year of teaching experience who were aware of or affected by ECP implementation. School heads and non-teaching personnel were excluded to maintain the study's focus on classroom teachers.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure representation across teaching levels, years of service, and elementary and secondary school classifications. This procedure was intended to include teachers from different professional backgrounds and career stages within the ECP framework. The sample consisted of 62 teachers from five participating public schools in South District V. The manuscript indicated that the number of participants was determined using standard sampling formulas appropriate to the teacher population within the division. The sampling procedure sought to provide balanced representation and support meaningful comparisons of teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges according to their demographic and professional characteristics.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilized an adopted structured survey questionnaire developed from the research objectives, relevant literature, and existing DepEd policies on teacher career progression and professional development. The instrument consisted of four parts designed to gather respondents' demographic information and measure their awareness, perceptions, and challenges concerning ECP implementation. The first part collected information on sex, age, educational attainment, teaching position, and years of service. The second assessed teachers' awareness of ECP objectives, qualification standards, promotion requirements, competency indicators, and documentary procedures using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not Aware) to 4 (Highly Aware). The third part measured teachers' perceptions of the system's fairness, transparency, recognition of professional achievement, motivation, and career development opportunities. Responses were rated using a four-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The fourth part examined challenges involving policy interpretation, administrative requirements, communication, workload, institutional support, and access to professional development. Responses were measured using a four-point scale ranging from 1 (Not Experience) to 4 (Highly Experience). The numerical responses were interpreted using the corresponding scoring guides established in the manuscript. These scales enabled the quantitative measurement and comparison of teachers' awareness, perceptions, and implementation challenges.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher followed a systematic data-gathering process beginning with the submission of a formal request to the Schools Division Superintendent through the Office of the School Principal. Upon approval, coordination was undertaken with the Schools District Supervisor of South District V and the participating school administrators to explain the study's purpose and facilitate questionnaire administration. The adopted survey questionnaire, entitled "Teachers' Awareness, Perceptions, and Challenges of the Expanded Career Progression System (ECP) for Teaching Career Line on its First-Year Implementation," was personally administered to the identified respondents. Participants received instructions regarding the questionnaire and were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential and be used exclusively for academic purposes. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire without disrupting their teaching responsibilities. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, organized, and encoded in a spreadsheet using the established coding and scoring procedures. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive, comparative, and correlational statistical techniques to address the study's research objectives.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Frequency counts and percentages were employed to describe respondents' demographic and professional characteristics, including sex, age, educational attainment, teaching position, and years of service. Means and standard deviations were computed to determine the average levels and variability of teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges

regarding ECP implementation. The responses were interpreted using the established four-point Likert scales and corresponding descriptive ratings. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine significant differences in teachers' awareness, perceptions, and challenges when grouped according to demographic and professional characteristics. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was employed to examine the strength and direction of relationships between teachers' awareness and perceptions, awareness and challenges, and perceptions and challenges. These statistical procedures provided the basis for identifying patterns, differences, and relationships among the study variables. The findings were interpreted in relation to the research objectives and used to guide the development of the proposed ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit for Teachers.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the ethical standards for educational research established by Cebu Technological University. Formal approval was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor, participating school principals, and the university's Graduate School before data collection. Prospective respondents received information regarding the study's objectives, procedures, and significance, together with an informed consent form. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to decline or withdraw without adverse consequences to their professional standing or relationship with their schools. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Personal identifiers were excluded from the analysis, and findings were presented in aggregate form to protect respondents' identities. Research data were securely stored and made accessible only to the researcher and adviser for academic purposes. The researcher also observed responsible reporting practices by ensuring that collected information was analyzed objectively without fabrication, falsification, or selective presentation of findings. Participants were treated with respect, and the research was conducted with consideration for their professional responsibilities and well-being.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

3.1.1 Sex

Of the 62 respondents, 44 (71%) were female and 18 (29%) were male. Female teachers constituted the majority of participants, indicating that the study predominantly represented their experiences and perspectives regarding ECP implementation. The participation of both groups provided a basis for examining possible differences in awareness, perceptions, and challenges.

3.1.2 Age

The largest age group consisted of teachers aged 31–40 years, with 27 respondents (43.5%), followed by those aged 41–50 years. Teachers aged 20–30 years accounted for 16.1% of the sample. More than 77% of respondents belonged to the 31–50 age range, while the mean age was 38.48 years. The predominance of middle-aged teachers suggests that the findings largely reflect educators in active stages of professional development and career advancement.

3.1.3 Educational Attainment

Among the 62 respondents, 42 (67.7%) had earned units toward a master's degree, representing the largest educational attainment category. The remaining respondents included bachelor's degree holders and teachers with completed or ongoing graduate qualifications. The Department of Education established amended qualification standards for teaching positions under DepEd Order No. 019, s. 2025 (DepEd, 2025a), which provides a policy framework for assessing educational qualifications and other requirements for career progression. The predominance of respondents pursuing graduate education reflects the importance of academic qualifications in teachers' professional development and career advancement. Teachers with advanced educational qualifications may have greater exposure to professional development and policy information, while those still pursuing graduate studies may encounter financial and workload constraints.

3.1.4 Teaching Position

Teacher III constituted the largest group, with 34 respondents (54.8%). Teachers holding Teacher I and Teacher II positions collectively represented 37.1%, while Master Teachers accounted for 8.1% of the sample. Thus, most respondents occupied regular teaching positions, particularly Teacher III. The predominance of Teacher III respondents highlights the relevance of career advancement opportunities for teachers who have accumulated professional experience and qualifications.

3.1.5 Years of Service

The largest group consisted of teachers with 6–10 years of service, comprising 19 respondents (30.6%). More than 77% had served for 1–15 years, and the average teaching experience was 11.2 years. The sample therefore included teachers at different stages of professional experience, with a concentration in early and middle career stages. Years of service provides an important context for understanding teachers' readiness for career

progression. Differences in professional experience may influence how teachers respond to new administrative procedures and advancement requirements. These considerations highlight the importance of examining implementation challenges across different career stages. Contemporary evidence on teacher retention suggests that career-stage experiences should be considered alongside working conditions and professional support (Gundlach et al., 2024; Li & Yao, 2022).

3.2 Teachers' Awareness of the Expanded Career Progression System

3.2.1 Awareness of the Objectives and Purpose of ECP

Teachers demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the objectives and purpose of the ECP System, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 0.48. Individual indicators ranged from 3.47 to 3.65, all interpreted as Highly Aware. The highest rating concerned the provision of additional career advancement opportunities (3.65), while the lowest concerned improving teacher motivation and retention (3.47). The findings indicate that respondents understood the ECP System's primary objectives, particularly its emphasis on expanded advancement opportunities and competency-based professional growth. These perspectives support the finding that teachers were familiar with the fundamental purposes of the new progression framework.

3.2.2 Awareness of Qualification Standards, Promotion Requirements, and Competency Indicators

Teachers were Highly Aware of ECP qualification standards, promotion requirements, and competency indicators, obtaining an aggregate weighted mean of 3.41. Individual ratings ranged from 3.31 to 3.55. The highest awareness concerned the alignment of teacher competencies with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (3.55), while the lowest concerned understanding the specific competency indicators used in promotion evaluation (3.31). These findings indicate that teachers were familiar with the general competency-based requirements but had relatively less familiarity with detailed evaluation indicators. The established Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers provided a foundation for understanding promotion qualifications. The results therefore highlight the importance of providing clearer examples and evaluation guidance.

3.2.3 Awareness of ECP Processes and Documentary Requirements

Teachers demonstrated a high level of familiarity with ECP processes and documentary requirements, obtaining an aggregate weighted mean of 3.30. Individual ratings ranged from 3.27 to 3.32, all classified as Highly Aware. Awareness was highest regarding the evaluation process (3.32) and lowest regarding the application process for career progression (3.27). Although respondents demonstrated strong overall awareness, their comparatively lower familiarity with application procedures indicates a need for more detailed operational guidance. The findings suggest that teachers would benefit from simplified application instructions, documentary checklists, and clear procedural guidance. Recent policy clarifications and recruitment guidelines provide a practical basis for improving guidance on documentation and advancement procedures (DepEd, 2024b, 2025b).

3.3 Teachers' Perceptions of the Expanded Career Progression System

3.3.1 Perceptions of Fairness and Transparency

Teachers generally agreed that the ECP System promoted fairness and transparency, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.18 and a standard deviation of 0.67. Individual ratings ranged from 3.13 to 3.26. The highest rating concerned fair opportunities for teacher promotion (3.26), while the lowest concerned the objectivity and impartiality of the evaluation process (3.13). The findings indicate that teachers recognized the system's potential to provide equitable advancement opportunities but expressed comparatively lower confidence in evaluation objectivity. These findings emphasize the need for clear evaluation criteria and transparent assessment practices. This interpretation is consistent with recent national selection and appointment policies emphasizing transparent and merit-based processes (DepEd, 2023, 2024a).

3.3.2 Perceptions of Merit Recognition and Professional Achievement

Teachers positively perceived the ECP System's effectiveness in recognizing professional merit and achievement, obtaining an aggregate weighted mean of 3.25 and a standard deviation of 0.64. Individual ratings ranged from 3.18 to 3.37. Recognition of professional development and training received the highest rating (3.37), while rewarding excellence in teaching received the lowest (3.18). The findings suggest that respondents valued the recognition of professional qualifications, competencies, and continuing development. These perspectives support the need for consistent and transparent recognition of professional achievements.

3.3.3 Perceptions of Motivation, Morale, and Professional Growth

Teachers expressed strongly positive perceptions of the ECP System's contribution to motivation and professional growth, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 0.61, interpreted as Strongly Agree. Four of the five indicators received ratings between 3.32 and 3.39, while improvement in workplace morale received a lower rating of 3.23, interpreted as Agree. The findings indicate that teachers regarded ECP as a source of professional motivation and career development opportunities, although its perceived effect on workplace morale was comparatively lower. These findings suggest that the motivational benefits of ECP coexist with

concerns regarding its administrative requirements. Recent research connects professional-learning motivation with teachers' working contexts and opportunities for meaningful growth (Stark et al., 2025).

3.4 Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of ECP

3.4.1 Understanding and Interpreting ECP Guidelines

Teachers moderately experienced challenges in understanding and interpreting ECP guidelines, with an aggregate weighted mean of 2.59 and a standard deviation of 0.82. Limited orientation or training received the highest challenge rating (2.81), followed by difficulty understanding guidelines (2.60) and confusion regarding implementation procedures (2.56). Unclear explanations of policy provisions (2.50) and difficulty interpreting qualification standards (2.48) were rated Slightly Experienced. These findings reveal that high policy awareness did not eliminate difficulties in applying specific guidelines. The findings suggest that practical training and simplified procedural instructions are necessary to strengthen teachers' understanding of ECP requirements. Research syntheses indicate that sustained and well-designed professional learning is more useful than isolated training activities (Sims et al., 2025; Visscher et al., 2025).

3.4.2 Administrative and Procedural Challenges

Administrative and procedural challenges obtained the highest aggregate weighted mean among the three challenge categories at 2.88, with a standard deviation of 0.83, interpreted as Moderately Experienced. Document preparation was the most frequently reported difficulty (3.03), followed by the time and effort required for administrative processes (2.97) and the number and complexity of documentary requirements (2.94). Limited access to documentary information received a rating of 2.79. All indicators were classified as Moderately Experienced. The results identify documentary compliance and administrative procedures as major barriers to ECP participation. The implementation guidelines established under DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025 (DepEd, 2025c) provide the policy framework for teacher career progression. These findings indicate the importance of simplified documentation, standardized templates, and administrative assistance. DepEd's later clarification of the ECP rules and workload-related issuances also underscore the importance of consistent procedures and administrative support (DepEd, 2024c, 2024d, 2025b).

3.4.3 Personal and Contextual Challenges

Teachers moderately experienced personal and contextual challenges, obtaining an aggregate weighted mean of 2.73. Teaching workload received the highest rating (2.89), followed by time constraints (2.87) and additional school responsibilities (2.76). Limited administrative guidance and insufficient access to professional development opportunities both received ratings of 2.56. All indicators were interpreted as Moderately Experienced. The findings indicate that workload and time limitations restricted teachers' capacity to complete ECP requirements. These findings suggest that workload management, mentoring, and accessible professional development opportunities are necessary to improve participation. Reviews of teacher workload and wellbeing reinforce the importance of manageable demands and supportive conditions (Creagh et al., 2025; Ozturk et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024).

3.5 Significant Differences in Teachers' Awareness, Perceptions, and Challenges

3.5.1 Differences in Teachers' Awareness According to Demographic Profile

The statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in teachers' awareness of ECP when grouped according to sex ($p = 0.865$), age ($p = 0.656$), teaching position ($p = 0.680$), years of service ($p = 0.894$), and educational attainment ($p = 0.963$). All values exceeded the 0.05 significance level. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was not rejected. The findings indicate that teachers across different demographic and professional groups demonstrated comparable levels of ECP awareness. The present findings suggest that awareness of ECP was generally consistent among the participating teachers regardless of their backgrounds.

3.5.2 Differences in Teachers' Perceptions According to Demographic Profile

No significant differences were found in teachers' perceptions of ECP when grouped according to sex ($p = 0.262$), age ($p = 0.290$), teaching position ($p = 0.211$), years of service ($p = 0.324$), and educational attainment ($p = 0.985$). All p -values exceeded the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the null hypothesis was not rejected. These findings indicate that respondents generally shared favorable perceptions of ECP regardless of demographic characteristics. The results suggest that favorable perceptions of ECP were broadly shared across the demographic groups represented in the study.

3.5.3 Differences in Teachers' Challenges According to Demographic Profile

The analysis revealed no significant differences in challenges according to sex ($p = 0.565$), age ($p = 0.889$), teaching position ($p = 0.426$), and educational attainment ($p = 0.893$). However, years of service showed a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.042$) at the 0.05 significance level. The findings indicated that teachers with fewer years of service experienced greater implementation challenges than longer-serving teachers. The significant difference according to years of service suggests that professional experience is relevant to teachers' ability to navigate ECP procedures. Teachers with longer service may have greater familiarity with administrative

procedures and documentary preparation, whereas less-experienced teachers may require additional assistance. The findings support differentiated guidance and mentoring based on teachers' years of service. International reporting on teacher working conditions and professional development likewise supports context-sensitive assistance rather than a uniform approach (OECD, 2025b).

3.6 Significant Relationships Among Teachers' Awareness, Perceptions, and Challenges

3.6.1 Relationship Between Awareness and Perceptions

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between teachers' awareness and perceptions of ECP ($r = 0.575$, $p = 0.001$), using the manuscript's reported significance level of 0.01. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that higher awareness was associated with more favorable perceptions of the system. The findings suggest that teachers who were more knowledgeable about ECP tended to evaluate the system more positively. The positive relationship indicates that effective information dissemination and orientation may contribute to favorable perceptions, although the correlation does not establish a causal relationship.

3.6.2 Relationship Between Awareness and Challenges

The analysis reported a negligible negative correlation between teachers' awareness and implementation challenges ($r = -0.117$), with a reported p -value of 0.365. The manuscript classified this relationship as not significant using its stated 0.01 significance criterion and retained the null hypothesis. The weak negative correlation suggests that awareness had little association with the challenges teachers experienced. The findings suggest that improving awareness alone may not sufficiently address documentary demands, workload constraints, and limited institutional support.

3.6.3 Relationship Between Perceptions and Challenges

The Pearson correlation analysis showed a negligible negative relationship between teachers' perceptions and challenges ($r = -0.085$, $p = 0.512$). The relationship was not statistically significant at the 0.01 level, and the null hypothesis was not rejected. The findings indicate that teachers' favorable perceptions of ECP were not significantly associated with fewer implementation challenges. Respondents could recognize the benefits of the system while simultaneously experiencing difficulties with documentation, workload, and procedural requirements. This distinction reinforces the importance of addressing practical implementation barriers alongside efforts to sustain teachers' positive perceptions of career progression.

3.7 Overall Findings and Implications for the ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit

The overall findings revealed that teachers demonstrated high awareness of ECP objectives (3.54), qualification standards (3.41), and processes and documentary requirements (3.30). They also expressed favorable perceptions of fairness and transparency (3.18), merit recognition (3.25), and motivation and professional growth (3.32). However, moderate challenges were encountered in understanding guidelines (2.59), administrative and procedural compliance (2.88), and personal and contextual conditions (2.73). Demographic characteristics were not associated with significant differences in awareness or perceptions, while years of service showed a significant difference in implementation challenges. Awareness was positively associated with perceptions, but neither awareness nor perceptions demonstrated a significant relationship with challenges under the manuscript's reported statistical decisions. These findings establish the need for an ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit for Teachers that provides accessible information on qualification standards, promotion procedures, competency indicators, and documentary requirements. The proposed toolkit responds to the identified gaps in procedural understanding and administrative compliance through simplified guidance, visual instructions, and organized reference materials. It is intended to complement existing ECP policies and strengthen teachers' readiness to participate in career advancement opportunities. Guidance on the responsible use of education technology suggests prioritizing accessibility, relevance, and evidence-informed design when developing teacher resources (UNESCO, 2023).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) System was generally understood and positively perceived by public-school teachers during its first year of implementation. Teachers demonstrated high awareness of its objectives, qualification standards, and procedures and recognized its fairness, merit-based advancement, and contribution to professional growth and motivation. No significant differences in awareness and perceptions were found across demographic groups. However, teachers experienced moderate implementation challenges, particularly excessive documentary requirements, heavy workloads, time constraints, and limited institutional support, with less-experienced teachers reporting significantly greater difficulties. Higher awareness was significantly associated with more favorable perceptions, while neither awareness nor perceptions showed significant relationships with implementation challenges. These findings indicate that the primary concerns involve administrative and operational difficulties rather than teachers' understanding or acceptance of the ECP System.

The study recommends that the Department of Education streamline administrative procedures, simplify documentary requirements, conduct regular orientations and capacity-building activities, and provide sufficient time and logistical support for ECP compliance. School administrators should ensure timely and transparent information dissemination, establish technical assistance and peer-mentoring mechanisms, particularly for less-experienced teachers, and maintain communication with division offices to address implementation concerns. Teachers are encouraged to utilize the ECP Guidelines-Based Resource Toolkit, seek clarification on policy requirements, and collaborate in sharing resources and effective practices. The researcher should pilot-test, validate, and refine the toolkit based on user feedback and disseminate the findings to participating schools and the Schools Division Office of Cebu City. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct studies involving larger populations and broader geographic areas, evaluate the toolkit's long-term effectiveness, and examine institutional support, professional development opportunities, and resource availability as factors affecting ECP implementation.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

This study adhered to the ethical standards for educational research established by Cebu Technological University. Formal permission was secured from the concerned educational authorities and school administrators before data collection. All respondents provided informed consent and participated voluntarily, with the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by excluding personal identifiers and presenting findings in aggregate form. Collected data were securely stored, accessed only by authorized research personnel, and used exclusively for academic purposes. The researcher ensured honesty, objectivity, and integrity in data collection, analysis, and reporting while respecting the rights, privacy, and welfare of all participants.

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