WJSAM | World Journal of Sustainable Advances in Multidisciplinarity
RESEARCH | INNOVATION | INTERDISCIPLINARITY | SUSTAINABILITY
Volume 1, Issue 2 | ISSN: 3155-783X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.65339/wjsam.V1.I2.24

Teachers' Readiness, Professional Competence, and Career Advancement Experiences under the Expanded Career Progression System among Public Elementary School Teachers in Alamada, Cotabato: An Explanatory-Sequential Mixed-Methods Study

Mark Ronel N. Garcia[1], Princess B. Mayo[1], Cairodin G. Bagumbaran[1], Manilyn S. Buenaflor[1], Gian Anthony B. Buenaflor[1], Milady B. Mayo[1], Monen Grace Ulie-Sultan[1], Dr. Eduardo M. Tejeros III, LPT[2], Dr. Mark Gennesis B. Dela Cerna, LPT[2]

[1]Student, Doctor of Philosophy in Education Major in Educational Leadership, Central Mindanao Colleges, Kidapawan City, Cotabato, Philippines

[2]Faculty, Graduate School Education - Central Mindanao Colleges, Kidapawan City, Cotabato, Philippines

Email: jaymierellon1020@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined public elementary school teachers' readiness, professional competence, and career advancement experiences under the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) System in Alamada, Cotabato. An explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design combined questionnaire responses from 306 teachers selected through total enumeration with semi-structured interviews involving purposively selected participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and thematic analysis. Teachers reported very high levels of perceived readiness (M = 4.331), professional competence (M = 4.511), and career advancement experiences (M = 4.379). Readiness was significantly associated with professional competence (r = 0.819) and advancement experiences (r = 0.918), while competence was significantly related to advancement experiences (r = 0.830; all $p < .001$). Readiness and competence jointly explained 85.6% of the variance in advancement experiences ($R^2 = 0.856$), with readiness emerging as the stronger predictor. Qualitative findings highlighted professional learning, mentoring, and policy clarity alongside challenges involving documentation, workload, financial constraints, and preparation time. The study concluded that career advancement experiences were closely associated with professional preparedness and institutional support. Strengthening ECP orientation, competency-based training, portfolio coaching, and equitable institutional assistance was recommended. Self-reported assessments and the localized setting limited causal interpretation and broader generalization. The findings provide context-specific evidence to guide institutional decisions and strengthen competency-based teacher career progression.

Keywords: *Career Advancement, Career Readiness, Elementary Teachers, Expanded Career Progression, Mixed-Methods Research, Professional Competence, Teacher Mentoring*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Context of the Study

Teacher professional growth and career progression are essential components of educational quality, workforce development, and institutional sustainability. Continuous professional learning enables teachers to strengthen their instructional competencies, adapt to changing educational demands, and improve their professional practices. The UNESCO and International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) emphasized that strengthening the teaching profession requires sustained investment in professional development, supportive working conditions, and meaningful career opportunities. Similarly, the OECD (2025a) highlighted the importance of professional learning, mentoring, and institutional support in developing teacher expertise. Career structures also influence how teachers understand advancement opportunities, recognize competency expectations, and prepare for professional progression. The OECD (2025b) emphasized that clearly differentiated career stages, transparent assessment systems, and accessible professional learning opportunities contribute to meaningful career development. Mok et al. (2023) further demonstrated that individualized support activities, including feedback, modeling, and reflection, strengthened teacher self-efficacy during the early stages of professional development. In the Philippines, teacher career advancement is guided by established professional standards and competency-based policies. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) provide expectations for professional practice across career stages and serve as a foundation for teacher development, performance assessment, and promotion (Department of Education [DepEd], 2017). Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022 established the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) System to broaden professional advancement opportunities for public school teachers (Office of the President of the Philippines, 2022). Its implementation was further strengthened through DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025 and subsequent amendments under DepEd Order No. 034, s. 2025, which clarified competency requirements, assessment procedures, and promotion mechanisms (DepEd, 2025a, 2025c). For public elementary school teachers in Alamada, Cotabato, these developments provide an important context for examining professional readiness, competence, and career advancement experiences. Understanding how teachers navigate competency expectations, promotion requirements, professional development opportunities, and institutional support is necessary for interpreting their experiences under the ECP System.

1.2. Research Problem

Although the ECP System establishes clearer career advancement pathways, its implementation raises practical concerns regarding teachers' readiness to meet competency-based requirements. Teachers are expected to demonstrate professional competence, understand promotion procedures, prepare documentary requirements, and participate in activities supporting professional growth. The ECP Toolkit provides guidance on these processes, emphasizing the importance of accurate information and coordinated administrative assistance (DepEd, 2025b). Recent Philippine research has identified important dimensions of this concern. Osman and Adanza (2024) examined teachers' understanding and experiences of changes in the promotion system within Region XII and identified concerns regarding workload, transparency, and implementation processes. Similarly, Santidad et al. (2025) investigated teachers' awareness and preparedness for the ECP System and emphasized the importance of professional development support. Prosia and Escarlos (2026) further discussed the relationship between policy-driven professional development, lifelong learning, and career progression. Among public elementary school teachers in Alamada, Cotabato, the specific concern involved determining their readiness, professional competence, and experiences in pursuing advancement. Understanding how these dimensions were related and identifying the support teachers considered necessary were important for interpreting the local implementation of the

ECP System. Existing regional and national evidence provided relevant insights but did not directly establish these relationships within the study setting.

1.3. Research Gap

Recent studies have examined teacher promotion reforms, awareness of career progression requirements, and professional development needs. Osman and Adanza (2024) investigated teachers' understanding and experiences of promotion changes in Region XII, while Santidad et al. (2025) examined awareness and preparedness for the ECP System in another Philippine educational setting. Prosia and Escarlos (2026) synthesized policy-related professional development and implementation concerns. However, these studies did not directly establish how teachers' readiness and PPST-aligned professional competence jointly predicted career advancement experiences among public elementary school teachers in Alamada, Cotabato. Social Cognitive Career Theory explains how self-efficacy, learning experiences, and contextual conditions influence career-related behavior (Lent et al., 1994), while Career Construction Theory emphasizes adaptation to changing professional demands and opportunities (Savickas, 2005). The present study applied these complementary perspectives through an explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design, combining quantitative assessment of variable relationships with qualitative exploration of teachers' experiences, challenges, and perceived support needs.

1.4. Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to determine the readiness, professional competence, and career advancement experiences of public elementary school teachers in Alamada, Cotabato, under the ECP System. Specifically, it assessed teachers' knowledge of ECP requirements, preparedness for professional development, confidence in meeting competency standards, perceived advancement opportunities, and PPST-aligned professional competence. It also examined experiences involving professional development participation, promotion documentation, mentoring, administrative support, and career progression. Furthermore, the study investigated relationships between readiness and professional competence, relationships between readiness and career advancement experiences, and the predictive contributions of readiness and competence to advancement experiences. The qualitative component explored teachers' lived experiences and perceived support needs to explain and contextualize the quantitative findings.

1.5. Significance and Practical Contribution of the Study

The study contributes context-specific evidence concerning competency-based teacher advancement and the professional and institutional conditions associated with career progression. Its findings may assist teachers in identifying areas requiring further preparation and professional development. School heads and education officials may also use the findings to strengthen mentoring, orientation, administrative guidance, and institutional support aligned with ECP requirements. The study complements the implementation priorities identified in the ECP Toolkit, particularly the importance of clear procedures and coordinated assistance (DepEd, 2025b). By integrating quantitative relationships with qualitative experiences, the research provides a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' career advancement needs. It also offers future researchers a foundation for examining professional readiness, competence, and advancement in comparable educational settings.

1.6. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Alignment

The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education, particularly Target 4.c, by examining teachers' professional competencies, development needs, and readiness for advancement within the public education system. It also supports SDG 8: Decent

Work and Economic Growth by addressing professional growth, career progression, and institutional conditions associated with meaningful employment opportunities. Furthermore, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities is relevant because the study examines perceived access to career advancement opportunities and identifies support mechanisms that may promote more equitable participation in competency-based progression. These connections reflect the importance of strengthening teacher development and professional opportunities within sustainable educational systems (United Nations, 2024).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employed an explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design, consistent with contemporary guidance on integrating quantitative and qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The quantitative phase used descriptive-correlational and predictive analyses to assess teachers' readiness, professional competence, and career advancement experiences under the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) System. It examined associations among these variables and whether readiness and competence predicted career advancement experiences. Subsequently, semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions explored participants' experiences, challenges, and support needs. Findings from both phases were integrated to contextualize the statistical results (Hirose & Creswell, 2023).

2.2. Research Locale, Population, and Participants or Respondents

The study involved public elementary school teachers in Alamada, Cotabato, during School Year 2026–2027. The target population comprised teachers eligible for and covered by the ECP System, established through Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022 (Office of the President of the Philippines, 2022). The quantitative analysis included 306 public elementary school teachers from Alamada, Cotabato, who participated in the assessment of readiness, professional competence, and career advancement experiences under the ECP System. The qualitative participants came from the quantitative respondents and discussed their readiness, professional competence, career advancement experiences, challenges, and support needs within the ECP framework.

2.3. Sampling Technique and Sample Determination

For the quantitative phase, total enumeration was used to include eligible public elementary school teachers covered by the ECP System. The final regression model used responses from 306 teachers. In the qualitative phase, purposive sampling selected information-rich teachers from the quantitative respondents, taking into account the quantitative findings, relevant ECP experiences, and willingness to participate. This sequential selection enabled interviews to examine and explain findings emerging from the first phase.

2.4. Research Instrument and Validation

Quantitative data were gathered using a researcher-adapted, three-part questionnaire addressing teachers' readiness for career advancement, professional competence, and career advancement experiences on a five-point Likert scale. Its conceptual bases included Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994), Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, and applicable ECP guidelines (Department of Education [DepEd], 2025a, 2025b). A semi-structured interview guide, developed from the research questions and quantitative findings, explored experiences, challenges, and support needs. Both instruments underwent expert validation and pilot testing with nonparticipant teachers; questionnaire reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and revisions followed validation findings (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021).

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

After approval of the research proposal, the researchers obtained the necessary permissions from the Schools Division Office of Cotabato and concerned school heads. They coordinated data-collection schedules with school authorities and administered the validated questionnaire through printed copies or an approved online platform. Respondents received information about the study and provided informed consent. Completed questionnaires were retrieved and checked for completeness. Following quantitative analysis, eligible teachers participated in semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. With participants' permission, the qualitative sessions were recorded, and the responses were prepared for thematic analysis.

2.6. Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Quantitative responses were coded and organized, with descriptive statistics used to summarize readiness, professional competence, and career advancement experiences. Pearson's product-moment correlation examined relationships among variables, while multiple regression tested the predictive contribution of readiness and competence to career advancement experiences. Qualitative responses from the individual interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, coded, categorized, and analyzed thematically following the approach described by Braun and Clarke (2022). Reflexive documentation and peer review supported trustworthiness. An audit trail and joint-display analysis linked quantitative patterns and qualitative explanations during interpretation, strengthening integration of the two research strands (Reeping & Edwards, 2022).

2.7. Ethical Considerations

Researchers obtained relevant academic and school-level permissions before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent explained study procedures, confidentiality, the right to decline questions, and withdrawal without penalty. Respondents' identities were protected through minimized identifiers and codes or pseudonyms. Information was used for research purposes, securely stored, and accessible only to researchers and authorized personnel. The researchers also safeguarded participants from adverse employment, performance-evaluation, or promotion consequences and observed applicable institutional policies and Philippine data-protection requirements.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Teachers' Perceived Readiness for Career Advancement

The findings revealed that teachers reported a very high level of perceived readiness for career advancement under the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) System (M = 4.331, SD = 0.634). This indicated that respondents generally perceived themselves as prepared in terms of their understanding of ECP requirements, professional development, confidence in meeting competency standards, and access to career advancement opportunities. Preparedness for professional development obtained the highest rating (M = 4.429, SD = 0.639), indicating teachers' strong commitment to continuous professional learning. This finding was consistent with Dayagbil and Alda (2024), who emphasized the importance of continuing professional development in strengthening teachers' competencies. Similarly, Dagupan and Baylon (2025) identified a significant relationship between continuing education and career advancement among Philippine public school teachers. Confidence in meeting competency standards ranked second (M = 4.313, SD = 0.636), followed by perceived access to career advancement opportunities (M = 4.296, SD = 0.717). Both indicators were interpreted as Very High, suggesting

that teachers generally believed in their professional capabilities and perceived opportunities for progression positively. These findings aligned with Social Cognitive Career Theory, which emphasized self-efficacy, goals, and contextual influences in career development (Lent et al., 1994). Zhou et al. (2023) likewise found that professional development positively influenced teachers' self-efficacy. Knowledge and understanding of ECP requirements received the lowest mean (M = 4.285, SD = 0.733), although it remained Very High. This suggested that policy understanding was a comparatively less favorable aspect of readiness. Lorono and Abarquez (2025) similarly identified unclear promotion guidelines and qualification requirements as challenges affecting career progression. The findings emphasized the importance of clear ECP orientation, competency-based professional development, and accessible career guidance. These measures were consistent with the updated implementation guidelines under DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025, and its subsequent amendments (Department of Education, 2025a, 2025c). Overall, teachers demonstrated favorable perceived readiness, although actual advancement remained dependent on compliance with established qualifications and competency standards.

3.2. Teachers' Perceived Professional Competence

The findings indicated that teachers reported a very high level of perceived professional competence (M = 4.511, SD = 0.620). This suggested that respondents generally considered themselves capable of fulfilling professional responsibilities according to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 established the PPST as the national framework for teacher quality, professional development, and career-stage expectations (Department of Education, 2017). Within this framework, the favorable rating reflected teachers' confidence in their instructional knowledge, professional responsibilities, and continuous development. The findings were consistent with Zhou et al. (2023), who identified positive effects of professional development on teacher self-efficacy. Ventista and Brown (2023) likewise emphasized the contribution of sustained training, coaching, and collaborative learning to professional development. In the Philippine context, Prudente et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of aligning development programs with teachers' professional needs. The result also had implications for the ECP System, which emphasized competency-based qualifications and professional standards in career progression (Department of Education, 2025b). Although teachers reported favorable competence, their assessments did not independently establish actual performance or eligibility for promotion. Overall, the findings emphasized the importance of sustaining professional competence through PPST-aligned training, mentoring, reflective practice, and evidence-based performance assessment. Coppe et al. (2024) further supported the need to consider teachers' career stages and professional circumstances when designing development programs.

3.3. Teachers' Career Advancement Experiences under the ECP System

Teachers reported a Very High extent of career advancement experiences (M = 4.379, SD = 0.646). The findings indicated generally favorable perceptions of professional development, mentoring, advancement opportunities, preparation of requirements, and experiences in pursuing career progression. Professional development participation received the highest rating (M = 4.445, SD = 0.655), suggesting that professional learning was an important component of teachers' advancement experiences. This finding agreed with Dagupan and Baylon (2025), who identified continuing education as significantly related to career advancement. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2025b) similarly emphasized continuing

professional learning across teaching careers. Mentoring and administrative support ranked second (M = 4.387, SD = 0.681), followed by career advancement opportunities (M = 4.383, SD = 0.686). These findings highlighted the relevance of institutional guidance and career development opportunities. Torquido and Boquia (2024) reported positive relationships between human resource management practices and teacher career progression, while Keese et al. (2023) and Mok et al. (2023) emphasized the benefits of mentoring and individualized professional support. Experiences in pursuing career advancement also received a Very High rating (M = 4.366, SD = 0.709), indicating favorable perceptions of respondents' career progression efforts. However, these assessments did not establish that all respondents had already received promotions. Preparation of promotion requirements obtained the lowest rating (M = 4.314, SD = 0.709), although it remained Very High. This suggested that documentary and procedural preparation required comparatively greater attention. Lorono and Abarquez (2025) identified unclear promotion procedures as a career advancement challenge, while Paquibot et al. (2025) highlighted financial constraints and workload as barriers to teachers' further education. Overall, the findings indicated favorable career advancement experiences, particularly in professional learning and institutional support. Nevertheless, documentation assistance, mentoring, and consistent implementation guidance remained important for supporting teachers' progression under the ECP System (Department of Education, 2025a, 2025c).

3.4. Relationship between Teachers' Readiness and Professional Competence

Pearson's product–moment correlation revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between teachers' readiness for career advancement and professional competence ($r = 0.819$, $p < .001$). Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected. The finding indicated that teachers who reported greater readiness also tended to report higher professional competence. The result was consistent with Social Cognitive Career Theory, which emphasized self-efficacy, learning experiences, and contextual influences in career development (Lent et al., 1994). It also aligned with Zhou et al. (2023), who reported positive effects of professional development on teachers' self-efficacy. Ventista and Brown (2023) similarly emphasized sustained learning and coaching as important contributors to teachers' professional capabilities. The strong association suggested that readiness and competence were interconnected dimensions of professional growth. However, the finding established a statistical relationship rather than causation. It did not demonstrate that increased readiness directly improved professional competence or vice versa. The findings emphasized the importance of integrating career preparation with competency-based professional development, mentoring, and reflective practice. These approaches were consistent with Prudente et al. (2024), who highlighted the importance of needs-based professional learning and institutional support in strengthening teacher development.

3.5. Relationship between Teachers' Readiness and Career Advancement Experiences

The results revealed a very strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between readiness for career advancement and career advancement experiences ($r = 0.918$, $p < .001$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This indicated that teachers who reported greater readiness also tended to experience career advancement more favorably. The finding was compatible with Social Cognitive Career Theory, which emphasized the roles of self-efficacy, career goals, and contextual conditions (Lent et al., 1994). It also complemented Career Construction Theory, which described career development as an ongoing process of

professional adaptation and growth (Savickas, 2005). Recent Philippine studies supported this interpretation. Dagupan and Baylon (2025) identified a significant relationship between continuing education and career advancement, while Torquido and Boquia (2024) reported positive associations between human resource management processes and teacher career progression. The findings suggested that career readiness was closely connected with teachers' reported experiences of professional development, mentoring, and advancement preparation. Nevertheless, the observed association did not establish a causal relationship. Overall, the result emphasized the importance of strengthening teachers' preparedness through clear career progression information, professional learning opportunities, individualized guidance, and institutional assistance.

3.6. Teachers' Readiness and Professional Competence as Predictors of Career Advancement Experiences

Professional competence was positively and significantly associated with career advancement experiences ($r = 0.830$, $p < .001$). Multiple regression analysis further revealed that readiness and professional competence jointly predicted teachers' reported career advancement experiences. The regression model yielded $R = 0.925$ and $R^2 = 0.856$, indicating that approximately 85.6% of the observed variance in advancement experience scores was statistically accounted for by the combined predictors. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(2, 303) = 902.40$, $p < .001$. Readiness demonstrated the stronger unique contribution ($B = 0.755$, $SE = 0.040$, $\beta = 0.741$, $t = 18.771$, $p < .001$). This indicated that, holding professional competence constant, a one-unit increase in readiness was associated with a 0.755-unit increase in the predicted advancement experience score. Professional competence was also a significant predictor ($B = 0.221$, $SE = 0.041$, $\beta = 0.212$, $t = 5.378$, $p < .001$). Holding readiness constant, a one-unit increase in competence corresponded to a 0.221-unit increase in the predicted outcome. The intercept-only model reported $B = 4.379$ ($SE = 0.037$, $t = 118.632$, $p < .001$), while the two-predictor model intercept was not statistically significant ($B = 0.113$, $SE = 0.105$, $t = 1.071$, $p = .285$). The larger standardized coefficient for readiness suggested that teachers' preparedness, confidence, and understanding of progression requirements were more strongly associated with favorable advancement experiences than professional competence alone. These findings were consistent with Dagupan and Baylon (2025), who emphasized the relationship between continuing education and career advancement, and Torquido and Boquia (2024), who identified supportive human resource management processes as important to teacher career progression. The findings also highlighted the relevance of competency-based advancement under the ECP System, as strengthened by Republic Act No. 12288 (2025). Schools could support career progression through structured mentoring, career planning, and PPST-aligned professional development. Nevertheless, the regression results established statistical prediction rather than causation. Overall, readiness and professional competence were significant predictors of reported advancement experiences, with readiness contributing more strongly to the model.

3.7. Lived Experiences of Teachers in Preparing for and Pursuing Career Advancement

The qualitative findings identified four major themes describing teachers' experiences in preparing for and pursuing advancement under the ECP System. These themes reflected the importance of policy clarity, professional competence, continuous learning, and the practical challenges associated with career progression.

Theme 1: ECP Clarity Converts Career Ambition into Goal-Directed Preparation, but Readiness Remains Uneven

Participants described the ECP System as providing a clearer pathway for advancement by specifying qualifications, competency standards, professional development requirements, and documentary evidence. This theme was reflected in IDI-01, IDI-02, and FGD-01.
One participant stated:
"When the requirements are explained clearly, I can plan my training and documents instead of preparing without a clear target." (FGD-01)

This statement indicated that understanding ECP requirements helped teachers organize their professional goals and identify areas for improvement. However, differences in knowledge and confidence suggested that readiness remained uneven. The finding was consistent with Lorono and Abarquez (2025), who identified unclear promotion procedures and qualification requirements as challenges affecting career progression. It emphasized the importance of regular ECP orientation and individualized career guidance.

Theme 2: Strong Classroom Competence Builds Confidence, but Advancement Requires Broader Professional Evidence

Participants identified classroom management, lesson planning, instructional delivery, assessment, and teaching performance as professional strengths. However, they also recognized the need for additional qualifications, research experience, training, and documented accomplishments. This theme emerged from IDI-02, IDI-03, and FGD-01.

One participant explained:
"I am confident in my teaching because I have experience managing my class and planning lessons, but I also need to strengthen my other evidence for the next career stage." (IDI-02)

The finding demonstrated that perceived classroom competence did not necessarily indicate complete preparedness for advancement requirements. Abella et al. (2024) similarly emphasized challenges involving research productivity and professional resources among Filipino public school teachers. The findings suggested that schools should provide portfolio coaching, research mentoring, and competency-based professional development aligned with career-stage requirements.

Theme 3: Career Advancement Is Experienced as a Continuous Professional Growth Journey

Participants viewed career advancement as an ongoing process of professional development rather than merely obtaining a higher position. Training, mentoring, graduate studies, collaborative activities, and constructive feedback were identified as important experiences supporting professional growth. This theme was represented in IDI-01, IDI-03, IDI-04, and FGD-02.

One participant shared:
"The process made me realize that career advancement is not only about promotion. It also pushes me to continue learning and improve my practice." (IDI-03)

The finding aligned with Coppe et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of career-stage development, and Ventista and Brown (2023), who highlighted sustained professional learning and coaching. The findings suggested that career advancement programs should support continuous professional growth through structured mentoring, reflective practice, and relevant learning opportunities.

Theme 4: Documentation, Workload, Cost, and Unclear Requirements Create a Burdened Pathway

Participants identified documentation requirements, heavy workloads, limited preparation time, financial expenses, and unclear procedures as challenges in pursuing career advancement. This theme was reflected in IDI-02, IDI-04, IDI-05, FGD-02, and FGD-03.

One participant explained:
"I want to prepare for advancement, but completing the documents while handling teaching responsibilities can be difficult when the requirements are not always clear." (IDI-04)

The finding was consistent with Paquibot et al. (2025), who identified workload and financial constraints as barriers to advanced studies. Prudente et al. (2024) similarly emphasized challenges involving time, access, and institutional resources. Overall, the qualitative findings indicated that teachers valued advancement opportunities but required clear policies, accessible professional development, mentoring, and practical institutional support to manage the demands of career progression.

3.8. Professional Development, Mentoring, and Institutional Support Needed to Strengthen Career Readiness

The second qualitative analysis identified four major themes describing the support teachers considered necessary to improve career readiness under the ECP System.

Theme 1: Career Readiness Requires ECP-Aligned, Competency-Based Professional Development

Participants emphasized that professional development should address competencies and qualifications required for higher career stages rather than focus primarily on training certificates. Teachers valued seminars, Learning Action Cell sessions, graduate studies, and collaborative learning when directly relevant to their advancement needs. This theme was reflected in IDI-01, IDI-03, and FGD-01.

One participant stated:
"The training is more useful when it is directly connected to the competency I need for the next career stage." (IDI-01)

The finding was consistent with Prudente et al. (2024), who emphasized needs-based professional development, and Dayagbil and Alda (2024), who highlighted the importance of relevant learning opportunities. The results suggested that schools should align professional development activities with PPST competencies and applicable ECP requirements.

Theme 2: Structured Mentoring and Portfolio Coaching Support Career Preparation

Participants identified Master Teachers, school heads, principals, and experienced colleagues as important sources of guidance in interpreting ECP requirements, preparing portfolios, and identifying professional development needs. This theme emerged from IDI-02, IDI-04, and FGD-02. Teachers emphasized that mentoring helped them understand career-stage expectations and organize the evidence required for advancement. The finding aligned with Keese et al. (2023), who identified positive outcomes associated with formal mentoring programs. Mok et al. (2023) likewise emphasized the benefits of individualized feedback, modeling, and reflection. These findings suggested that structured mentoring and portfolio coaching could strengthen teachers' career preparation by providing practical guidance and developmental feedback.

Theme 3: Clear Standards, Regular Orientation, and Developmental Feedback Strengthen Readiness

Participants emphasized the importance of clear ECP requirements, regular orientation, accessible checklists, consistent instructions, and constructive feedback. This theme was reflected in IDI-01, IDI-05, and FGD-03.

One participant explained:
"Constructive feedback helps me know what to improve and whether the evidence I am preparing is aligned with the requirements." (FGD-03)

The finding was consistent with Lorono and Abarquez (2025), who identified unclear promotion procedures as barriers to advancement. The results reinforced the importance of consistent policy communication, particularly following the implementation guidelines and amendments issued by the Department of Education (2025a, 2025b).

Theme 4: Institutional Support Must Protect Time, Reduce Cost, and Ensure Equitable Access

Participants recommended affordable professional development, protected preparation time, flexible schedules, mentoring, and equitable access to institutional resources. They identified workload, financial limitations, and insufficient time as barriers to advancement preparation. This theme emerged from IDI-03, IDI-04, IDI-05, FGD-02, and FGD-03.

One participant stated:
"Teachers are willing to learn, but time and cost can prevent them from joining activities that would help their career development." (IDI-04)

This finding was consistent with Paquibot et al. (2025), who emphasized workload and financial constraints, and Dayagbil and Alda (2024), who identified similar barriers to continuing professional development. The OECD (2025b) also highlighted the importance of addressing barriers to teachers' professional learning. Overall, the qualitative findings emphasized that effective career advancement preparation required competency-based professional development, mentoring, policy clarity, and institutional assistance responsive to teachers' professional responsibilities.

3.9. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of teachers' readiness, professional competence, and career advancement experiences under the ECP System. The quantitative results indicated Very High levels of readiness (M = 4.331, SD = 0.634), professional competence (M = 4.511, SD = 0.620), and career advancement experiences (M = 4.379, SD = 0.646). The qualitative findings complemented these results by highlighting teachers' emphasis on professional learning, mentoring, and competency development. Professional development emerged as a central component of career readiness. Preparedness for professional development received the highest readiness rating (M = 4.429), while professional development participation received the highest advancement experience rating (M = 4.445). Participants similarly emphasized continuous learning, graduate education, and mentoring as important preparation activities. These findings were consistent with Dayagbil and Alda (2024) and Prudente et al. (2024), who highlighted the importance of relevant, needs-based professional development. Although professional competence was rated Very High, qualitative participants identified the need for additional qualifications, portfolio evidence, and clearer progression procedures. This finding complemented the comparatively lower ratings for knowledge of ECP requirements (M = 4.285) and preparation of promotion requirements (M = 4.314). Lorono and Abarquez (2025) similarly identified procedural concerns as barriers to professional advancement. The statistical findings revealed significant positive relationships between readiness and professional competence (r = 0.819), readiness and career advancement experiences (r = 0.918), and professional competence and career advancement experiences (r = 0.830), with all p-values below .001. Regression analysis further indicated that readiness (β = 0.741) and professional competence (β = 0.212) jointly accounted for 85.6% of the observed variance in advancement experiences (R^2 = 0.856). The qualitative findings complemented these statistical relationships by describing the importance of career planning, confidence, mentoring, and institutional guidance. Nevertheless, these results established associations rather than causal relationships. Participants also reported documentation challenges, workload, financial constraints, and limited preparation time despite generally favorable assessments of institutional support. These concerns aligned with findings from Torquido and Boquia (2024) and Paquibot et al. (2025), emphasizing the importance of supportive organizational conditions. The findings were relevant to the ECP System established under Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022, and further institutionalized through Republic Act No. 12288, with implementation guided by current Department of Education policies (Department of Education, 2025a, 2025c; Office of the President of the Philippines, 2022; Republic Act No. 12288, 2025). Overall, the integrated findings indicated that teachers generally perceived themselves as ready and professionally competent but continued to experience procedural and resource-related challenges. The study emphasized the importance of combining competency-based professional development, structured mentoring, clear progression guidelines, portfolio assistance, and equitable institutional support to strengthen teachers' preparation for career advancement.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that teachers reported very high levels of perceived readiness for career advancement, professional competence, and career advancement experiences under the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) System. Professional development emerged as a particular strength, while understanding ECP requirements and preparing promotion documents remained areas requiring additional support. The significant positive relationships among readiness,

professional competence, and career advancement experiences indicated that teachers who perceived themselves as better prepared and more competent also reported more favorable advancement experiences. Readiness emerged as the stronger statistical predictor, although professional competence also contributed significantly. The qualitative findings reinforced these results by highlighting the importance of policy clarity, mentoring, continuous professional learning, and institutional assistance alongside challenges involving documentation, workload, and financial resources. Overall, the findings emphasized that teachers' career advancement experiences were closely associated with both individual professional preparedness and supportive institutional conditions, providing a basis for strengthening ECP implementation.

The Department of Education, Schools Division Offices, and school administrators should strengthen the implementation of the ECP System through coordinated career advancement support initiatives. Regular orientation sessions should clarify career stages, qualification standards, competency expectations, and promotion requirements. School leaders should provide PPST-aligned professional development activities that address teachers' competency needs and support continuous professional growth. Structured mentoring, portfolio coaching, and constructive performance feedback should be strengthened to assist teachers in preparing documentary evidence and developing realistic career advancement plans. Educational institutions should also address practical challenges involving workload, preparation time, training accessibility, and financial constraints by providing equitable assistance and appropriate preparation opportunities. Teachers should be encouraged to maintain individualized professional development plans that integrate competency improvement, mentoring, and systematic documentation. Furthermore, school administrators and division officials should regularly evaluate the accessibility and consistency of ECP-related support services to promote more organized, equitable, and sustainable career advancement opportunities.

The study's findings reflected teachers' self-reported assessments of career advancement readiness, professional competence, and advancement experiences, together with qualitative accounts from participating schools. Although the statistical analyses established strong relationships and significant predictive associations, these results did not establish causal relationships or determine long-term career advancement outcomes. The findings should also be interpreted within the institutional contexts represented in the study. Future research may examine additional school divisions, employ longitudinal approaches, and incorporate multiple sources of evidence, including independently assessed professional performance and documented career advancement outcomes, to provide a broader understanding of the ECP System and its implementation.

5. REFERENCES

Abella, J. Y., Cadorna, E. A., Taban, J. G., & Ramirez, L. V. (2024). An assessment of Filipino public school teachers' research competence: A basis for an enhancement professional development programme. International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 23(12), 258–278. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.12.14

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. SAGE Publications. https://books.google.com/books/about/Thematic_Analysis.html?id=25lpzgEACAAJ

Coppe, T., Parmentier, M., Kelchtermans, G., Raemdonck, I., März, V., & Colognesi, S. (2024). Beyond traditional narratives about teacher professional development: A critical perspective on teachers' working life. Teaching and Teacher Education, 139, Article 104436. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104436

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (6th ed.). SAGE Publications. https://us2.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/research-design/book270550

Dagupan, J., & Baylon, J. (2025). Assessing the impact of continuing education on career advancement and job satisfaction of public school teachers: A foundation for professional development framework. Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 45(3), 332–350. https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.450302

Dayagbil, F., & Alda, R. (2024). Continuing professional development opportunities: Teachers' motivation and perceived effectiveness. International Journal of Education and Practice, 12(3), 584–595. https://doi.org/10.18488/61.v12i3.3733

Department of Education. (2017). National adoption and implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017). https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/DO_s2017_042.pdf

Department of Education. (2025a). Amendments and clarifications to DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025: Guidelines on the implementation of the Expanded Career Progression System for teachers and school heads in the Department of Education (DepEd Order No. 034, s. 2025). https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/DO_s2025_034r.pdf

Department of Education. (2025b). ECP toolkit: An implementation guide for teachers on the Expanded Career Progression System. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/ECP-Toolkit-10-30-25.pdf

Department of Education. (2025c). Guidelines on the implementation of the Expanded Career Progression System for teachers and school heads in the Department of Education (DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025). https://www.deped.gov.ph/2025/08/28/august-28-2025-do-024-s-2025-guidelines-on-the-implementation-of-the-expanded-career-progression-system-for-teachers-and-school-heads-in-the-department-of-education/

DeVellis, R. F., & Thorpe, C. T. (2021). Scale development: Theory and applications (5th ed.). SAGE Publications. https://us2.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/scale-development/book269114

Hirose, M., & Creswell, J. W. (2023). Applying core quality criteria of mixed methods research to an empirical study. Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 17(1), 12–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/15586898221086346

Keese, J., Thompson, C. G., Waxman, H. C., McIntush, K., & Svajda-Hardy, M. (2023). A worthwhile endeavor? A meta-analysis of research on formalized novice teacher induction programs. Educational Research Review, 38, Article 100505. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2022.100505

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45(1), 79–122. https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027

Lorono, V., & Abarquez, C. (2025). Challenges faced by teachers in pursuit of Master Teacher promotion and advancement. Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 46(3), 357–373. https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.460309

Mok, S. Y., Rupp, D., & Holzberger, D. (2023). What kind of individual support activities in interventions foster pre-service and beginning teachers' self-efficacy? A meta-analysis. Educational Research Review, 40, Article 100552. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2023.100552

Office of the President of the Philippines. (2022). Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022: Establishing the Expanded Career Progression System for public school teachers. https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/5/95420

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2025a). Education policy outlook 2025: Nurturing engaged and resilient lifelong learners in a world of digital transformation. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/c3f402ba-en

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2025b). Results from TALIS 2024: The state of teaching. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/90df6235-en

Osman, A. J., & Adanza, L. (2024). Examining teachers' perspectives on the new changes to the promotion system of the Department of Education: Basis for career path orientation program. JPAIR Multidisciplinary Research, 57(1), 27–47. https://doi.org/10.7719/jpair.v57i1.896

Paquibot, J. L., Lingatong, E. E., Daga, E. D. J. C., Sister, J. M. A. A., Diola, D. K. G. C., & Abrigo, M. R. M. (2025). Does carework impair teachers' capacity to pursue advanced studies in education? Exploring results from a mixed-methods approach (Discussion Paper No. 2025-54). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. https://doi.org/10.62986/dp2025.54

Prosia, C. S., & Escarlos, G. S. (2026). Policy-driven professional development and expanded career progression for basic education teachers: A systematic review of lifelong learning. International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology, 11(5), 1274–1279. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may751

Prudente, M. S., Garcia, J. A. S., Mistades, V. M., Roleda, L. S., & Talaue, F. T. (2024). Systematic review of professional development programs for teachers in the Philippines (Research Paper Series No. 003). Second Congressional Commission on Education. https://edcom2.gov.ph/media/2024/02/18_Prudente-et-al-Systematic-Review-of-Professional-1.pdf

Reeping, D., & Edwards, C. (2022). Integrating using a crossover analysis with formative joint displays in mixed methods research. Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 16(4), 458–477. https://doi.org/10.1177/15586898211047660

Republic Act No. 12288. (2025, September 12). An act institutionalizing the career progression system for public school teachers and school leaders and appropriating funds therefor. https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/2/99832

Santidad, J. M., Manaig, E., & Pendon, F., III. (2025). PRIMA: A proposed teacher development program focused on Expanded Career Progression System (ECPS). International Journal on Integrated Education, 8(4), 465–497. https://doi.org/10.31149/ijie.v8i4.5472

Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work (pp. 42–70). John Wiley & Sons. https://www.marksavickas.com/files/1_Savickas_bio/Interviews/Savickas%20Publications/Book%20Chapters/Theory_and_Practice_of_Career_Construction.pdf

Torquido, S. M. O., & Boquia, A. H. (2024). Human resource management processes for achieving quality teachers through the lens of career progression. Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives, 2(12), 156–165. https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2024.0544

UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. (2024). Global report on teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession. UNESCO. https://doi.org/10.18356/9789231006555

United Nations. (2024). The Sustainable Development Goals report 2024. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/

Ventista, O. M., & Brown, C. (2023). Teachers' professional learning and its impact on students' learning outcomes: Findings from a systematic review. Social Sciences & Humanities Open, 8(1), Article 100565. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100565

Zhou, X., Shu, L., Xu, Z., & Padrón, Y. (2023). The effect of professional development on in-service STEM teachers' self-efficacy: A meta-analysis of experimental studies. International Journal of STEM Education, 10, Article 37. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-023-00422-x