

Assessing the Teachers' Competence in Diocesan Catholic Schools Relative to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers

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ABSTRACT. Competent teachers are essential in successful Catholic education. However, Catholic schools are confronted with the exodus of qualified teachers, which compromises the quality of instruction. Through a descriptive-correlative design, this paper assessed the teaching competence of Antique diocesan schools relative to Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Likewise, it investigated the relationship between the teachers' demographics and their competence. Utilizing a standardized PPST questionnaire, 102 administrators and teachers responded using the scale: 1-beginning, 2-proficient, 3-highly proficient, and 4-distinguished. In analyzing the data, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson *r* were administered. Generally, the teaching competence is highly proficient with personal growth and professional development as the highest and diversity of learners as the lowest. The result showed a correlation of competence with age and employment status

while sex and professional status do not. In ensuring the teaching quality, the retention of qualified teachers and continuous professional development are necessary.

1.0. Introduction

Competent teachers are vital in an excellent educational system, contributing to the learners' holistic formation (Szymańska, 2017; Sonia, 2017). Their unique role enables the students to maximize their potentials to become critical thinkers (Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Ford et al., 2014). Further, they are agents of knowledge and awareness for learners and for the growth and development in the building of our nation (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Therefore, they must manifest high value and respect for professional competence to advance this mission (Badri et al., 2016; Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, global competitiveness necessitates the teachers to become competent in equipping the learners with 21st-century skills (Zhao, 2010; Grosemans et al., 2015). These include global awareness, financial, economic, civic, and entrepreneurial literacy, where teachers are encouraged to embrace and perform (Biesta, 2014; Muschell & Roberts, 2011). That is why the professional formation of educators essentially plays in leading learners towards global interconnections (Sadruddin & Wahab, 2013; Shields, 2017). Correspondingly, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) was developed by the Department of Education to reinforce teaching competence responsive to 21st-century demands. Also, it establishes measures for the teachers' professional learning and effective pedagogical practices in advancing quality education (Department of Education [DepEd], 2017).

However, most Catholic schools are faced with the gradual migration of qualified teachers to public institutions, which jeopardizes the quality of Catholic education (Bual & Madrigal, 2018). These schools encountered an annual decline in enrollment which affects the financial stability and sustainability of most Catholic institutions that rely solely on students' fees (Ang, 2017). As a result, the salary of teachers is also compromised (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018).

In the Philippines, there were studies conducted on the competence of teachers: among secondary student-teachers in a state university (Rivera, 2017), among pre-service teachers (Vecaldo et al., 2017; Rodriguez & Abocejo, 2018), among public basic education teachers (Abulon, 2014), among professors in a public graduate school (Daguplo, 2013), among higher institutions (Gavino, 2013), among chemistry teachers (Lucenario et al., 2016), and among Catholic schools (Petalla & Madrigal, 2017; Roberto & Madrigal, 2018; Queroda & Nama, 2018). However, there has been a dearth of literature on teaching competence, especially in the diocesan Catholic schools. This is the research gap which this study would like to fill in.

Thus, this study assessed the level of teaching competence among diocesan schools in Antique during the academic year 2019-2020 in the light of content knowledge and pedagogy, learning

environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages, and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development domains of PPST as assessed by the administrators and teachers when they are taken as a whole and when teachers are grouped according to age, sex, employment status, and professional status. Likewise, it investigated if there exists a relationship between the teachers' competence and age, sex, employment status, and professional status. The findings of the study may serve as a basis to improve teacher quality and competent instruction among diocesan schools.

2.0. Framework of the Study

Conceptually, the study was anchored on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, which was developed by the Department of Education (DepED) from the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS). The professional standards aim to improve the quality of teachers in the country in response to the K-12 reform and 21st-century educational demands. This contains the different domains, strands, and indicators to measure the teachers' professional competence, practice, and engagement for the improvement of the learning outcomes and the quality of Philippine education (DepED, 2017).

The professional standards comprise the different characteristics that a teacher should possess to competently advance 21st-century education. A quality teacher should: 1) acknowledge the significance of content knowledge mastery and the application of instructional theories and principles, 2) provide learners with a safe, secured, fair, and supportive learning environment, 3) establish a learning atmosphere that is responsive to diverse learners, 4) adhere to the curriculum requirements, 5) apply varied tools and strategies in assessing the learners' needs, progress, and achievement, 6) establish school-community linkage in promoting a successful educative process, and 7) value the importance of personal growth and professional development in advancing the dignity of the profession. Further, the standards have 37 strands that refer to the specific teacher practices spread across the seven (7) domains. These domains are content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development (DepED, 2017).

The standards measure the professional development of the teachers from beginning to exceptional practice. In the context of the study, the diocesan teachers will be assessed using the four career stages to determine where their professional development and competence belong. The career stages are 1-beginning teachers, 2-proficient teachers, 3-highly proficient teachers, and 4-distinguished teachers. Elaborately, the beginning teachers are those who acquired qualifications for entry into the profession and possessed knowledge, skills, values, and understanding of the instructional processes. However, as novices, they normally seek advice from seasoned colleagues to improve their teaching practices.

Meanwhile, proficient teachers are those who are professionally self-sufficient practitioners in the utilization of their knowledge, skills, and values towards the profession. They are also capable of planning, implementing, and managing instructional programs that comply with the curriculum and assessment requirements. They as well actively engage in collaborative training and learning with colleagues and other stakeholders for advancement and development (DepED, 2017).

The highly proficient teachers are those who continuously and consistently practice a high level of teaching performance that is reflected in their in-depth understanding of the instructional processes. They are highly focused teachers who are adept in solving problems and in utilizing educational opportunities for improvement. They also reflect on their personal and community needs and collaboratively work with colleagues in improving the instructional practices through support and mentoring. Lastly, the distinguished teachers are those who exemplify the highest teaching standards that are rooted in best global practices. They also exceptionally improve their teaching practices as well as those of others. They are also acknowledged as educational leaders, initiators, and contributors in the profession that includes creating a lifelong impact on the students and colleagues. They also consistently develop their profession and exceptionally exhibit a commitment to achieving quality education in the country (DepED, 2017).

Theoretically, the teachers' demographics influenced their competence. Accordingly, this was anchored on two theories: The Theory of Action and the Framework for 21st-Century Learning. Theory of action believes that the teachers' continuous professional development affects their

quality instruction (Yoon et al., 2007). Here, if they are unable to provide quality teaching, innovative actions are necessary. Yet, in providing quality teaching, they should improve their qualifications and professional conditions responsive to the current needs (Flood & Brown, 2018). This means that professional improvement is essential to provide better the demands of the learners (Moss & Brookart, 2011).

Meanwhile, the Framework for 21st-Century Learning perceives incorporating the teachers' acquired quality knowledge and skills into instruction (English & Kitsantas, 2013). They also need to be professionally reflective, formative, and constructive through enhancing their instructional competence to meet the expected competencies (Gutierrez, 2015). In this sense, they need to develop their expertise and teaching experiences to become critical thinkers, collaborative, communicative, and technologically oriented, which are expected to hone among learners (Gay, 2013). Hence, they should be productive in their professional growth and development through continuous teacher education (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

In the context of Antique diocesan schools, the successful offering of quality Catholic education depends on their adherence to the standards of 21st-century education (English & Kitsantas, 2013). However, the teachers need to innovate in their instructional practices to be responsive to the current educational demands regardless of age, sex, employment status, and qualifications (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018). Further, they should also improve in their professional expertise and experiences to advance competent teaching and quality learning. Hence, continuous professional growth and development are vitally necessary for advancing competent teaching (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

3.0. Methods

The study employed a descriptive-correlational design to assess the teaching competence of Antique diocesan schools. Further, this correlated the demographics of teachers with their competence. There were 102 respondents in the study composed of 7 administrators and 95 high school teachers of the diocesan schools in Antique during the academic year 2019-2020. The administrators were taken as a whole population while the teachers were determined using stratified random sampling.

The data were collected using a standardized PPST questionnaire with the scale: 1-beginning, 2-proficient, 3-highly proficient, and 4-distinguished. In terms of the data analysis, descriptive and correlational analyses were utilized. Mean and standard deviation were used to assess the level of the teaching competence of the diocesan school teachers. Meanwhile, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk test, the results of the normality tests showed that the data ($KS=0.057$, $p=.200^*$) ($SW=0.984$, $p=0.244$) were normally distributed. Hence, the use of Pearson r in correlating the teachers' demographics with their competence was justified.

4.0. Results and Discussion

Level of teaching competence in Antique diocesan schools

The competence of teachers is manifested in their professional development from beginning to exceptional teachers, as indicated in the career stages. However, to respond effectively to 21st-century education vis-à-vis the K to 12 educational reform, these educators should be high-quality teachers equipped with knowledge, skills, and values to effectively advance quality teaching and learning (DepEd, 2017). Tables 1A and 1B present the level of teaching competence among Antique diocesan schools in the light of the career stages of PPST. The level of teaching competence as a whole ($M=2.96$, $SD=0.39$) is highly proficient. All domains were rated highly proficient with personal growth and professional development ($M=3.14$, $SD=0.48$) as the highest and diversity of learners ($M=2.78$, $SD=0.53$) as the lowest.

Generally, the overall rating reveals that the Antique diocesan schools have teachers who are professionally developed as categorized in the highly proficient career stage of the standards. Meaning, these diocesan teachers consistently exercise a high level of teaching performance and competence and manifest an in-depth grasp of the instructional processes necessary to advance 21st-century education (DepEd, 2017; Roberto & Madrigal, 2018). These educators are also highly focused teachers who are adept in solving problems relative to the educational needs. Lastly, this also indicates that they unreservedly collaborate with colleagues in determining the personal and school needs in improving the teaching and learning processes through support and mentoring (DepEd,

Table 1A. Level of Teaching Competence

Variable	Domain 1			Domain 2			Domain 3			Domain 4		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Age												
≤30 years	2.84	0.41	HP	2.98	0.54	HP	2.74	0.52	HP	2.86	0.50	HP
≥31 years	3.01	0.39	HP	3.09	0.44	HP	2.82	0.54	HP	3.00	0.47	HP
Sex												
Male	2.92	0.41	HP	3.09	0.44	HP	2.86	0.52	HP	2.95	0.45	HP
Female	2.92	0.40	HP	2.99	0.53	HP	2.72	0.53	HP	2.90	0.52	HP
Employment Status												
Probationary	2.84	0.38	HP	2.89	0.53	HP	2.76	0.53	HP	2.86	0.50	HP
Regular	3.01	0.41	HP	3.17	0.42	HP	2.80	0.53	HP	2.99	0.48	HP
Professional Status												
Licensed	2.92	0.39	HP	3.03	0.50	HP	2.77	0.55	HP	2.94	0.49	HP
Non-licensed	2.92	0.49	HP	3.01	0.51	HP	2.84	0.39	HP	2.81	0.51	HP
As A Whole	2.92	0.40	HP	3.03	0.50	HP	2.78	0.53	HP	2.92	0.49	HP

Note: HP=Highly Proficient; Domains 1=Content knowledge and pedagogy, 2=learning environment, 3=diversity of learners, 4=curriculum and planning

Table 1B. Level of Teaching Competence

Variable	Domain 5			Domain 6			Domain 7			Teaching Competence		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Age												
≤30 years	2.80	0.60	HP	2.95	0.55	HP	3.12	0.52	HP	2.90	0.41	HP
≥31 years	2.98	0.44	HP	3.14	0.44	HP	3.15	0.44	HP	3.02	0.37	HP
Sex												
Male	2.89	0.54	HP	2.96	0.49	HP	3.15	0.45	HP	2.98	0.35	HP
Female	2.88	0.53	HP	3.10	0.52	HP	3.13	0.51	HP	2.94	0.42	HP
Employment Status												
Probationary	2.81	0.57	HP	2.96	0.55	HP	3.08	0.49	HP	2.88	0.39	HP
Regular	2.96	0.48	HP	3.12	0.45	HP	3.20	0.47	HP	3.04	0.38	HP
Professional Status												
Licensed	2.90	0.50	HP	3.06	0.49	HP	3.16	0.47	HP	2.97	0.38	HP
Non-licensed	2.80	0.71	HP	2.89	0.59	HP	2.97	0.55	HP	2.90	0.45	HP
As A Whole	2.88	0.53	HP	3.04	0.51	HP	3.14	0.48	HP	2.96	0.39	HP

Note: HP=Highly Proficient; Domains 5=Assessment and reporting, 6=community linkages and professional engagement, 7=personal growth, and professional development

2017). However, to exceptionally advance in these diocesan schools the 21st-century education rooted in the best global standards, continuous professional development among the teachers is necessary (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018). Hence, this signifies the need for these educators to continuously develop their knowledge, skills, and values to guarantee quality instruction and competence in the profession (Petalla & Madrigal, 2017).

Accordingly, the diocesan teachers must be exceptionally competent in all educative aspects to deliver globalized and lifelong learning to students (Parkhouse et al., 2016). In support, Sengottuvel and Aktharsha (2015) perceive that the excellence of teachers in successfully advancing the teaching and learning processes is influenced by their competence and collaborative professional relationship with colleagues. In other words, successful teaching among diocesan schools entails developing the competence of their teachers and the collaborative mentoring of fellow educators (Ennis, 2015).

In a diocesan school in Antique, Roberto and Madrigal (2018) assessed the teaching competence in the light of PPST domains and garnered an overall proficient rating. In this sense, the result revealed that the competence of teachers in this current study is better than that of Roberto and Madrigal (2018). This is probably influenced by the difference in terms of leadership, where the diocesan school in Roberto and Madrigal (2018) is managed by religious brothers while the current study is run by diocesan administrators.

In terms of personal growth and professional development as the highest-rated domain, the result manifests that the diocesan teachers in Antique show high regard for the profession and consistently recognize its dignity (DepED, 2017; Roberto & Madrigal, 2018). They also continuously perceive the importance of continuous formation to develop their knowledge and skills in performing their professional duties and responsibilities (Petalla & Madrigal, 2017). Likewise, they recognize the successful and competent teaching highly depends on mentoring and professional linkages with colleagues (DepED, 2017).

The finding is affirmed by Jepsen (2005), Borko et al. (2010), and Antoniou and Kyriakides (2013) that for the teaching profession to be successful, the teachers' recognition of its value and nobleness is essential. Further, the teachers excellently perform this profession when they exhibit the willingness to undergo continuous formation that enhances their growth and development (Zepeda, 2013; Buenviaje et al., 2017). In other words, teacher education is necessary among teachers to recognize the essentials of the profession and the need for professional upgrading (Mackay, 2017). Hence, diocesan schools need to provide their teachers with professional improvement opportunities that also encourage them to value their profession (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018).

The result validates the highest rating on personal growth and professional development domain in Roberto and Madrigal (2018) and Petalla and Madrigal (2017) on the teaching competence of the Catholic teachers. This is attributed to the Catholic teachers' high value for professionalization that results in their high level of integrity, decisiveness, resourcefulness, commitment, and stress tolerance in the profession (Queroda, 2017).

Meanwhile, the rating on the diversity of learners indicates that the diocesan schools in Antique consistently understand their professional disposition towards the learners' gender, needs, strengths, interests, differences, and experiences (DepEd, 2017). However, of the seven PPST domains, this aspect needs the greatest improvement. The rating could be influenced by the inconsistent incorporation of the diversified programs in the curriculum and the implementation and practice of teachers in their teaching, as found in Roberto and Madrigal (2018) and Bonifacio (2013). Correspondingly, a positive school climate that values the differences of the learners is essential among diocesan schools (Muschell & Roberts, 2011). The teachers are expected to be flexible in establishing a caring teacher-student relationship for these diverse learners to cope with the educational and social demands (Capern & Hammond, 2014). Further, their values should be developed to committedly respond to the diversification processes of instruction (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015). Hence, continuous professional and values formations are vital among teachers to holistically accommodate the needs of these diverse learners (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018).

Relationship between the demographics and teaching competence

This section discusses whether a correlation exists between the teachers' age, sex, employment status, and professional status, and teaching competence. Table 2 presents the relationship between age and teaching competence in Antique diocesan schools using Pearson r. The result showed a significant relationship between this variable and the teaching competence [$r(100)=0.206, p=0.038$]. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Correspondingly, the correlation indicates that the age of diocesan teachers in Antique impacts their competence in the teaching profession. In other words, the older they are in the field, the more they exhibit teaching competence (Queroda & Nama, 2018). This could be attributed to their adjustment in the profession and their honed expertise and experiences, and their acquired professional training and formations in their field of specialization (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Kosgei et al., 2013). Hence, this signifies that Catholic schools should strive to retain their committed teachers to ensure the continuity of their teachers' expertise, competence, and quality instruction.

Table 2. Relationship between age and teaching competence

Variable	r	df	p
Age	0.206*	100	0.038

Note: * the correlation is significant when $p < 0.05$

Table 3 presents the relationship between sex and the competence of teachers. The result showed no significant relationship between the two variables using Pearson r [$r(100)=-0.043, p=0.038$]. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

The result reveals that the sex of teachers in Antique diocesan schools does not impact their competence in the teaching profession. The no correlation of these two variables is supported by Stephanou et al. (2013), Koh et al. (2014), and Otanga and Mange (2014). Koh et al. (2014) found that the sex of teachers does not influence their perceptions on the pedagogical, content, and technological knowledge and skills.

Further, in Roberto and Madrigal (2018), the teachers' sex does not even impact their teaching performance. This could probably be attributed to the schools' provisions of professional formations, which are simultaneously given to teachers regardless of their sex (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018; Koh et al., 2014). Meanwhile, Queroda and Nama (2018) found out that sex positively correlated with the competence of teachers in their instructional skills. For this reason, further investigations are required to validate the claims.

Accordingly, the findings imply that the diocesan schools should continuously provide their teachers with professional advancement opportunities to improve their competence regardless of their sex. Further, they should also not make this variable a potent criterion in designating their

teachers to institutional tasks and responsibilities.

Table 3. Relationship between sex and teaching competence

Variable	r	df	p
Sex	-0.043	100	0.668

Note: * the correlation is significant when $p < 0.05$

Table 4 presents the relationship between employment status and teaching competence. The result showed a significant relationship between the two variables using Pearson r [$r(100)=0.198$, $p=0.046$]. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The result reveals that the more the teachers become permanent in the profession, the more they exhibit greater professional competence in the field. This could be attributed to the findings of Convey (2014), where the teachers perceived that the more they stay in the Catholic schools, the more they become stable, motivated, and satisfied with the job. Part of this motivation and satisfaction is the privilege of staying in the Catholic educational institutions. In support, Queroda and Nama (2018) found out that the more experienced the teacher, the more competent they are in instructional, personal, social, guidance, and evaluation skills, which probably might have influenced the rating. Further, Zhu et al. (2013) perceived that the stability of the teachers in terms of their years of service was significantly related to their innovative teaching performance.

Relatedly, this finding validates Roberto and Madrigal (2018) that regular teachers in an Antique diocesan school perform better than the probationers. These probationer teachers are usually prone to high attrition risks to other educational institutions (Pryzygocki, 2004). Not to mention, these novice teachers normally experience difficulties in familiarizing their multiple assigned duties and responsibilities along with the school policies and procedures (Cho & Kwon, 2004). The findings imply that the diocesan schools should satisfy their teachers' interests to ensure their commitment and retention, which sustain the competent Catholic school teaching.

Table 4. Relationship between employment status and teaching competence

Variable	r	df	p
Employment status	0.198*	100	0.046

Note: * the correlation is significant when $p < 0.05$

Table 5 presents the relationship between professional status and the competence of teachers. The result showed no significant relationship between the two variables using the Pearson r [$r(100)=-0.060$, $p=0.547$]. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

The result indicates that the qualifications of Antique diocesan teachers do not impact their competence in the teaching profession. The majority of the teachers are qualified compared to those non-licensed. Despite this, some of these teachers are not education graduates who only acquired certificates in teaching upon hiring and passed the professional board exam (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018). This stems from the exodus of teachers to other schools, which led Catholic institutions to hire new and unqualified teachers (Bual & Madrigal, 2018). Such a phenomenon may have affected the no correlation rating between the two variables.

However, the study of Wachira et al. (2013) perceives that the academic qualifications of the teachers increase their disposition to teach. In other words, despite the result, the Antique diocesan teachers still need to qualify themselves to perform better their professional duties and responsibilities (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018). Hence, the finding signifies that these schools should improve their recruitment to ensure teacher quality and competent teaching. This also implies the need to effectively prevent the attrition of qualified teachers (Bual & Madrigal, 2018).

Table 5. Relationship between professional status and teaching competence

Variable	r	df	p
Professional status	-0.060	100	0.547

Note: * the correlation is significant when $p < 0.05$

In the context of the theories to which this study was anchored, the correlational results partially validate both the Action Theory and the Framework for 21st-Century Learning. In terms of the teachers' age and employment status, the correlations confirm both theories that regardless of these demographics, improvement is necessary for their competence to better provide the learners with the current demands in education (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; English & Kitsantas, 2013). Meanwhile, the no correlations on sex and professional status do not affirm the veracity of both theories. In these contexts, they signify that the diocesan schools in Antique should strive to retain their committed and qualified teachers to ensure the competent 21st-century teaching and quality of Catholic education (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018; Bual & Madrigal, 2018). Aside from this, the varied correlational results indicate the need for additional studies on these variables to validate the claims relative to the theories.

5.0. Conclusion

As a whole, the teaching competence of Antique diocesan Catholic schools is highly proficient with personal growth and professional development as the highest and the diversity of learners as the lowest. Further, all seven domains were rated highly proficient by all administrators and teachers. Age and employment status were found significantly related. In contrast, sex and professional status do not correlate with the teaching competence of Antique diocesan teachers.

The competence of the teachers can be assured when the diocesan schools in Antique ensure their commitment to the profession. This can be done when these schools satisfy the interests and needs of these educators. Meanwhile, it is also important for these schools to strive to ensure the retention of their qualified and committed teachers to preserve the continuity of excellent teaching and, at the same time, the quality of Catholic education. Hence, continuous professional formations are necessary to enhance their instructional values and practices, which can better cater to the 21st-century diverse educational needs and demands of the learners.

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