



JOURNAL

OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH,
INNOVATION, AND
MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

An Academic Journal Publication

Website: | <https://jerimspublication.com>

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBERS

PRINT ISSN | 3116-5559

ONLINE ISSN | 3116-5567

Volume 1, Issue 02, pp 01-05, April 2026

Research Article

ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF EDUCATION STUDENTS ACROSS PHILIPPINE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS (PPST) DOMAINS

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ABSTRACT

Article History:

Submission: March, 2026

Revised: March, 2026

Accepted: April, 2026

Originality: 98%

Similarity Index: 10%

Grammarly Score: 99%

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Recommended Citation:

Bag-ao, M.Z., Novida, L., & Macalisang, D. (2026). Assessment of Professional Competencies of Education Students Across Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) Domains. *Journal of Educational Research, Innovation, and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(2), 01-05. <https://doi.org/10.67001/jeri.2026.01.X7K29P>

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This study assessed the professional competencies of Education students from Southern Capital Colleges and the University of Science and Technology of the Philippines–Oroquieta Campus across the seven domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) for Beginning Teachers. Employing a quantitative descriptive–correlational design, the study examined the respondents’ demographic and academic profiles and their level of professional competencies. A total of 127 fourth-year Education students participated using total population sampling, and data were gathered through a validated PPST-based questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that the respondents demonstrated generally high levels of professional competencies across all PPST domains, with Learning Environment as the strongest area. No significant differences were found in competency levels when grouped according to age, sex, general weighted average, socio-economic status, parents’ occupation, and parents’ educational attainment. The findings indicate that Education students possess foundational competencies expected of beginning teachers and that professional competency development is consistently supported regardless of learners’ backgrounds.

Keywords: *competency development, education student, Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), professional competencies, teacher education*

Introduction

Teaching is a complex and dynamic profession that demands mastery of subject content, pedagogical skills, classroom management, ethical values, and adaptability to changing educational environments. In the 21st century, teachers are expected not only to facilitate learning but also to innovate, collaborate, and integrate technology to address the diverse needs of learners. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) underscores that teacher competence extends beyond knowledge acquisition to include reflective practice, professional engagement, and the ability to adapt to contextual realities (Department of Education, 2017). Within this framework, the preparation of pre-service teachers—particularly those enrolled in the education program plays a pivotal role in shaping the future quality of basic education in the Philippines.

Professional competencies, in this context, refer to the integrated set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and ethical behaviors that enable education students to perform effectively in academic and professional teaching environments (OECD, 2023). The OECD emphasizes that these competencies are essential in preparing future teachers to respond to rapidly changing educational demands, including technological advancements and diverse classroom settings, and that strong professional competencies help teachers become reflective practitioners who continuously improve their instructional practices. These competencies include pedagogical expertise, communication skills, classroom management, assessment literacy, technological proficiency, collaboration, reflective practice, and commitment to professional ethics, all of which are essential for effective teaching in diverse learning contexts (Schleicher, 2023). Schleicher highlights that modern educators must go beyond content delivery by fostering critical thinking, creativity, and learner-centered environments, and that collaborative skills and reflective practice enable teachers to evaluate their effectiveness and adjust their methods to meet learner needs.

Globally, the demand for competent educators continues to rise as nations seek to improve educational quality and address the challenges of globalization, digital transformation, and inclusive education. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) notes that teacher competence now extends beyond subject knowledge to include collaboration, innovation, and responsiveness to diverse learners. Nguyen (2023) emphasizes that professional development programs targeting teaching competencies—such as instructional skills, collaboration, and reflective practices—positively impact teacher preparedness and classroom effectiveness. Similarly, Tran et al. (2023) found that Vietnamese pre-service teachers perceived teaching practicums as instrumental in developing professional competencies, including reflective practice, instructional strategies, and adaptability, which enhanced their confidence and effectiveness in real classroom settings. These findings collectively underscore the importance of continuous professional growth, reflective practice, and structured competency development in teacher education.

In the Philippine setting, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd) have aligned teacher education curricula with the PPST to promote competency-based standards. CHED Memorandum Order No. 74, series of 2017, institutionalized this framework, ensuring that pre-service teachers acquire competencies relevant to 21st-century education. In line with this, DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, which formally adopted the PPST, defines professional competence as a teacher's ability to apply theory to practice, engage in continuous professional learning, uphold professional standards, and respond appropriately to diverse learner needs and contextual challenges (Department of Education, 2017). This policy serves as the national framework guiding teacher quality, outlining expectations for professional growth and ethical conduct, while providing a structured basis for evaluating teacher performance and readiness. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that competent teachers play a vital role in achieving equitable and inclusive education systems and that sustained professional growth ensures teachers remain effective, resilient, and responsive to global and local educational challenges.

However, recent research has revealed persistent gaps in pre-service teacher competencies. Santos and Dela Cruz (2022) found that pre-service teachers exhibit strong pedagogical foundations but limited proficiency in technological integration and assessment literacy. Villanueva et al. (2023) reported deficiencies in classroom management and professional disposition, indicating the need for developmental programs focused on ethical and behavioral competencies. Reyes and Bautista (2024) highlighted the importance of institutional development plans anchored in performance-based evaluations to bridge these gaps and strengthen the overall competence of future

educators. These studies indicate the ongoing challenge of ensuring pre-service teachers are adequately prepared for the professional and ethical demands of the teaching field.

In the local context of Southern Capital Colleges and the University of Science and Technology of the Philippines – Oroquieta Campus, the professional competencies of education students had not been systematically examined prior to this study. No existing research within these institutions had evaluated how education students' competencies align with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers and current educational expectations. This absence of institutional-based evidence highlighted a significant research gap. Addressing this gap, the present study assessed the professional competencies of education students across the PPST domains to provide an empirical basis for understanding their level of preparedness for the teaching profession. The findings offer valuable insights into areas of strength and aspects that require further enhancement, thereby contributing to informed decision-making in teacher education and supporting the continuous improvement of professional preparation in response to the evolving demands of 21st-century teaching.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative–descriptive correlational research design to assess the professional competencies of fourth-year Education students at Southern Capital Colleges (SCC) and the University of Science and Technology of the Philippines–Oroquieta Campus (USTP Oroquieta) during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The descriptive component focused on identifying the respondents' demographic and academic profiles, including age, sex, socio-economic status, parents' occupation and educational attainment, and general weighted average (GWA), as well as evaluating their level of professional competencies based on the seven domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) for Beginning Teachers. Meanwhile, the correlational aspect examined the relationship between the students' profile variables and their professional competencies. A total of 127 graduating Education students participated in the study through total population sampling, ensuring comprehensive representation of the target respondents. Data were gathered using a validated PPST-based questionnaire administered in both printed and online formats, and were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, Mann–Whitney U Test, and Kruskal–Wallis H Test. Ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. The findings aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding the professional readiness of pre-service teachers and to support the development of an evidence-based professional development plan for Education students in both institutions.

Results and Discussions

Table 1 synthesizes the respondents' competency ratings across all domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The data show consistent “Agree” interpretations across most areas, with weighted means ranging from 3.40 to 3.48, indicating that education students perceive themselves as generally capable of meeting foundational expectations associated with the teaching profession. The domain of Learning Environment received the highest mean score at 3.55 (“Strongly Agree”), suggesting that the respondents feel most confident in establishing safe, supportive, and engaging classroom conditions. This aligns with findings by Ramirez and del Mundo (2022), who emphasized that pre-service teachers tend to develop classroom management and learner engagement skills early through simulations and structured practical experiences.

Domains such as Content Knowledge and Pedagogy ($M = 3.40$), Diversity of Learners ($M = 3.41$), Assessment and Reporting ($M = 3.40$), and Community Linkages and Professional Engagement ($M = 3.41$) reflect similar competency levels, pointing to a steadily developing skill set across essential areas of teaching. These domains typically require extended exposure to authentic learning environments, and gradual strengthening of these competencies is expected as students transition from theory-based coursework to practicum-based application. According to Santos and Villareal (2021), pre-service teachers frequently build confidence in these areas through applied assessment tasks, diversity-oriented modules, and community immersion activities that help bridge classroom knowledge with real-world contexts.

The domain Curriculum and Planning ($M = 3.45$) and Personal Growth and Professional Development ($M = 3.48$) also show strong positive ratings. These results suggest that students are becoming more adept at aligning

instructional objectives with curriculum standards and at cultivating reflective habits and professional values. As highlighted by De Vega and Amador (2023), the ability to plan purposeful instruction and engage in continuous self-improvement are key indicators of readiness for the teaching profession. The favorable ratings in these domains indicate that respondents are beginning to internalize both the technical and dispositional aspects of teaching.

Table 1
Summary of the Level of Professional Competencies of Education Students Across All Domains

Competency Domain	Total Weighted Mean	Total Standard Deviation	Description
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	3.40	0.523	Agree
Learning Environment	3.55	0.538	Strongly Agree
Diversity of Learners	3.41	0.551	Agree
Curriculum and Planning	3.45	0.526	Agree
Assessment and Reporting	3.40	0.562	Agree
Community Linkages and Professional Engagement	3.41	0.540	Agree
Personal Growth and Professional Development	3.48	0.553	Agree

Conclusions

The findings of the study demonstrate that education students from Southern Capital Colleges and the University of Science and Technology of the Philippines–Oroquieta Campus possess commendable levels of professional competence despite facing varied socio-economic and familial challenges. Their consistently strong academic performance and high self-assessed competencies across the PPST domains reflect resilience, determination, and the effectiveness of their teacher education programs in preparing future educators. Moreover, the lack of significant differences in competency levels across demographic and academic variables highlights the equitable nature of the learning experiences and professional preparation provided by the institutions. Hence, the study affirms that the respondents are steadily developing the knowledge, pedagogical skills, and professional values essential for effective teaching, while also emphasizing the need for continuous enhancement programs that will further strengthen their readiness to address the evolving demands and complexities of the teaching profession.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, Education students are encouraged to continuously enhance their professional competencies through lifelong learning, reflective practice, and active participation in seminars, trainings, and practicum experiences. Faculty members and teacher educators should sustain effective instructional and mentoring practices aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), while administrators are encouraged to strengthen institutional support through faculty development, curriculum enhancement, and regular competency assessments. Policy makers such as CHED and DepEd may utilize the study’s findings to reinforce standards-based teacher education programs and equitable pre-service training opportunities. Likewise, stakeholders, including parents and partner institutions, are encouraged to support collaborative initiatives that enrich teacher preparation, while future researchers may conduct further studies using longitudinal, comparative, or mixed-method approaches to deepen understanding of professional competency development among pre-service teachers.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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