

## Exploring the Link Between Teacher Professional Development and Academic Success in Elementary Education

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### Abstract:

This study explores the impact of continuous professional development (CPD) on teaching effectiveness and student performance in elementary schools. As education systems evolve, the need for teachers to stay updated with current pedagogical strategies, classroom management techniques, and subject knowledge has become increasingly critical. Through a systematic review of scholarly literature, this research highlights how structured and sustained CPD programs contribute significantly to teacher growth and improved student outcomes. The findings reveal that teachers who engage in meaningful CPD demonstrate enhanced instructional planning, differentiated teaching, and more responsive classroom practices. Consequently, students show higher levels of engagement, better academic achievement, and improved motivation, particularly in diverse and low-income learning environments. The study emphasizes that high-impact CPD should be relevant, collaborative, and aligned with classroom realities. It also underscores the importance of mentorship, peer learning, and follow-up support in ensuring lasting change in teaching behavior. While policy frameworks like the CPD Act of 2016 in the Philippines offer a structural foundation, more robust implementation is necessary to achieve systemic improvements. The research calls for greater investment from educational institutions and policymakers in context-specific CPD initiatives that address the unique challenges faced by elementary educators. Recommendations include the integration of reflective practices, digital literacy training, and data-informed instruction within CPD programs. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of CPD on both teaching and learning. Ultimately, the study affirms that improving teacher professional development is a key driver in elevating the quality of basic education.

**Keywords:** Teacher Professional Development (CPD), Teaching Effectiveness, Student Performance, Elementary Education

### Introduction:

Effective teaching is the cornerstone of student achievement. As the educational landscape becomes increasingly complex due to globalization, technological advances, and diverse learner needs, the role of teachers has expanded from mere knowledge delivery to that of learning facilitators, mentors, and designers of dynamic classroom experiences (Loughran & Hamilton, 2016; Paniagua & Istance, 2018).

Teachers' competencies, attitudes, and instructional practices are among the strongest determinants of student outcomes, making their professional capacity a pivotal factor in educational success (Kyriakides, Christoforou, & Charalambous, 2013; Nairz-Wirth & Feldmann, 2019). Therefore, teacher quality must be developed continuously through deliberate and well-structured professional development initiatives.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) refers to the ongoing process by which educators refine their skills, deepen subject knowledge, and adapt to current pedagogical trends to meet evolving educational demands (Ajani, 2019; Osamwonyi, 2016). In many systems worldwide, CPD is recognized as essential to improve instructional planning, classroom management, rapport with students, and innovative delivery methods (Schipper et al., 2017; Cuñado & Aboejo, 2019). Research has shown that CPD enhances teacher self-efficacy, fosters creativity in teaching, and strengthens professional identity (Cayirdag, 2017; Steinert, O'Sullivan, & Irby, 2019). When teachers engage in meaningful professional learning, they are better equipped to create inclusive, engaging, and culturally responsive learning environments that benefit all learners (Adedoyin & Okere, 2017; Kruse, Rakha, & Calderone, 2018).

Instructional effectiveness is also closely linked to the development of classroom rapport and management strategies, both of which are fundamental aspects of CPD. Studies emphasize that a teacher's ability to build positive relationships with students and manage diverse classrooms leads to higher student engagement, better behavior, and improved academic outcomes (Ahmad, 2018; Gage et al., 2018; Burke-Smalley, 2018).

These soft skills, often nurtured through ongoing training and reflective practice, contribute to a supportive classroom climate that fosters student motivation and confidence (Buskist, Busler, & Kirby, 2018; Shernoff, Ruzek, & Sinha, 2017). Effective CPD programs, therefore, must integrate modules that address emotional intelligence, rapport-building, and proactive classroom management (Sunday-Piaroi, 2018; Arslan & Karamese, 2018).

Furthermore, teacher qualifications, attitudes, and mastery of content—often enhanced through CPD—are proven to influence students' academic achievement significantly (Ajayi, Onibeju, & Olutayo, 2020; Fitria, 2018). Teacher preparedness and engagement in lesson planning not only improve instructional quality but also develop students' higher-order thinking skills and literacy (Pang, 2016; Singha et al., 2020). CPD fosters these instructional competencies by allowing teachers to reflect on practice, receive feedback, and adapt to new educational tools and curricula (Kapici & Akcay, 2020; Gore et al., 2017). Through collaboration and shared learning experiences, teachers also build professional learning communities that support their continued growth (Kyndt et al., 2016; Callahan, 2016).

Given these insights, this paper investigates how continuous professional development impacts teaching effectiveness and student performance in elementary schools. It particularly focuses on CPD components such as instructional planning, delivery methods, classroom rapport, and management strategies.

### **Review of Related Literature:**

Professional development (PD) is integral to enhancing teachers' knowledge and instructional practices, directly impacting student achievement and overall educational quality. Effective PD encompasses a range of activities designed to improve educators' competencies, from formal training sessions to informal learning experiences. This literature review explores various dimensions of professional development, emphasizing its significance, components, and impact on teaching efficacy and student outcomes.

Teacher effectiveness is a critical determinant of student success. Stronge (2018) posits that while student achievement is influenced by multiple external factors, the teacher's role remains paramount. Effective teachers not only facilitate academic growth but also leave a lasting positive impact on students' lives. Marzano (2007) underscores that teaching embodies both art and science; the art involves creativity and adaptability, while the science pertains to structured instructional design and implementation. This duality necessitates continuous professional development to balance and enhance both aspects.

Central to effective teaching is Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which integrates subject matter expertise with pedagogical strategies. Paniagua and Istance (2018) highlight that PCK encompasses lesson planning, content mastery, and student engagement techniques. A systematic review by Depaepe and König (2018) reveals that PCK is positively correlated with teachers' content knowledge and self-efficacy, both of which are crucial for delivering high-quality instruction. Furthermore, Suglo et al. (2024) found a significant relationship between teachers' PCK and students' academic performance in mathematics, specifically in understanding circle theorems. These findings underscore the necessity for teachers to develop robust PCK to enhance instructional effectiveness and student outcomes.

### **Teacher Qualifications and Student Performance**

The qualifications and attitudes of teachers are pivotal in shaping student achievement. Ajayi, Onibeju, and Olutayo (2020) assert that teachers with strong content mastery, positive attitudes, and effective pedagogical skills significantly contribute to improved student performance. Similarly, Igberadja (2016) emphasizes that both the gender and qualifications of teachers can influence student outcomes in vocational technical education. These studies suggest that investing in teacher education and fostering positive dispositions are essential for enhancing educational quality.

In the Philippines, the Continuing Professional Development Act of 2016 (Republic Act No. 10912) mandates that educators engage in ongoing professional development as a prerequisite for licensure renewal. This legislation aims to ensure that teachers remain abreast of evolving teaching methodologies and educational standards. CPD activities promote collaborative learning among educators, facilitating the exchange of best practices and fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Adedoyin & Okere, 2017; Loughran & Hamilton, 2016). The Act underscores the government's commitment to elevating the teaching profession and enhancing educational outcomes nationwide.

Effective classroom management is essential for creating conducive learning environments. Studies by Gore et al. (2017) and Hagermoser Sanetti et al. (2018) demonstrate that CPD programs focusing on classroom management strategies can significantly improve student behavior and academic outcomes. These programs equip teachers with skills to establish clear expectations, implement consistent routines, and address behavioral issues proactively, thereby fostering a positive classroom climate that supports learning.

### **Informal Learning and Professional Growth**

Beyond formal PD programs, informal learning activities play a crucial role in teachers' professional growth. Kyndt et al. (2016) highlight that everyday experiences, peer collaborations, and self-directed learning contribute to long-term instructional improvement. Such informal learning opportunities allow teachers to reflect on their practices,

experiment with new strategies, and adapt to the dynamic educational landscape. Recognizing and supporting these informal learning avenues can enhance the overall effectiveness of professional development initiatives.

Mentorship programs are instrumental in supporting novice teachers and reducing attrition rates. Callahan (2016) emphasizes that structured mentoring provides new educators with guidance, emotional support, and practical strategies, facilitating their transition into the profession. Effective mentorship not only aids in retaining talented teachers but also ensures the continuity of quality instruction, ultimately benefiting student learning.

The organizational culture within schools significantly influences teacher performance and job satisfaction. Fitria (2018) found that a positive organizational culture, characterized by trust and collaborative relationships, enhances teacher performance. When school leaders cultivate an environment of mutual respect and shared vision, teachers are more motivated to engage in professional development and implement innovative teaching practices.

Developing cultural competency is increasingly recognized as vital in teacher education. Kruse, Rakha, and Calderone (2018) argue that as classrooms become more diverse, teachers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to address the needs of students from various cultural backgrounds. Professional development programs that focus on cultural competency prepare teachers to create inclusive learning environments that respect and value diversity.

Despite the acknowledged benefits of CPD, challenges in its implementation persist. Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018) highlight issues such as inadequate funding, lack of access to quality programs, and resistance to change among educators. Addressing these challenges requires systemic support, including policy reforms, increased investment in PD initiatives, and fostering a culture that values lifelong learning among teachers.

Professional development is a multifaceted endeavor that encompasses formal training, informal learning, mentorship, and cultural competency. It plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher effectiveness, which in turn positively impacts student achievement. In the Philippines, legislative measures like the Continuing Professional Development Act of 2016 underscore the importance of ongoing learning for educators. However, effective implementation of PD programs necessitates addressing challenges related to resources, access, and organizational culture. By fostering a supportive environment for professional growth, the education system can ensure that teachers are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of the profession and provide high-quality education to all students.

### **Methodology:**

This study adopted an exploratory research design grounded in a systematic literature review methodology. The approach aims to investigate the relationship between teacher professional development, teaching effectiveness, and student outcomes. Through this method, the study synthesizes existing scholarly work to identify key trends, gaps, and insights relevant to improving elementary education. A rigorous selection process was followed to ensure the inclusion of high-quality and relevant sources.

The review focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, academic texts, and policy documents published within the last ten years. Priority was given to literature related to elementary education to maintain a contemporary and context-specific perspective. To ensure a comprehensive scope, the inclusion criteria emphasized empirical studies that directly examined the impact of professional development on instructional quality and student performance. This allowed the study to generate a robust evidence base for drawing conclusions.

Relevant literature was sourced from reputable academic databases such as JSTOR, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The search strategy utilized targeted keywords including "teacher professional development," "teaching effectiveness," "student academic performance," and "classroom management." Following a thorough screening and evaluation process, a total of 35 peer-reviewed studies and educational reports were selected for inclusion in the final synthesis. These sources formed the foundation for the study's findings and discussions.

### **Findings and Discussion:**

This study explored the effects of continuous professional development (CPD) on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes through a systematic literature review. Drawing upon 35 peer-reviewed sources and educational reports from the past decade, the findings revealed four major themes: (1) Enhanced Instructional Competence and Pedagogical Strategies, (2) Strengthened Teacher Self-Efficacy and Confidence, (3) Improved Student Engagement and Academic Performance, and (4) The Role of Teacher-Student Relationships in Educational Outcomes.

#### **Theme 1: Enhanced Instructional Competence and Pedagogical Strategies**

A significant theme found across the reviewed literature is the enhancement of instructional competence and the adoption of more effective pedagogical strategies as a result of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). CPD

programs often emphasize core teaching practices such as lesson planning, curriculum design, instructional delivery, and student assessment. These areas are foundational to classroom effectiveness and directly influence the quality of student learning experiences (Depaepe & König, 2018; Schipper et al., 2017).

For instance, Cuñado and Aboejo (2019) observed that teachers who engaged in targeted professional development exhibited notable improvements in lesson planning. These improvements translated to better instructional alignment with learning goals and enhanced student comprehension and retention. The ability to create lessons that cater to various learning styles also increased, demonstrating the role of CPD in promoting differentiated instruction.

Staying current with emerging educational methodologies is another benefit of sustained CPD participation. As noted by Avalos (2011) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), continuous training helps teachers adopt learner-centered and evidence-based teaching methods. These include the integration of technology into instruction and the use of formative assessments to tailor learning to individual needs—both crucial for closing achievement gaps and promoting equity in the classroom (Menéndez et al., 2019).

Moreover, CPD influences teachers' mastery of subject content, especially in critical fields such as STEM. Borko et al. (2010) emphasized that subject-specific training enhances teachers' confidence and precision when delivering complex topics.

This content mastery leads to more dynamic and engaging lessons, thus improving student outcomes. Ajayi, Onibeju, and Olutayo (2020) also confirmed that content mastery is strongly correlated with improved academic achievement among students. Importantly, the structure and duration of professional development activities greatly affect their impact. Long-term CPD programs that include follow-ups, mentoring, and opportunities for reflection are shown to be significantly more effective than one-time workshops (Gore et al., 2017; Orale et al., 2016). These extended programs allow educators to assimilate and apply new strategies within their teaching practices consistently over time.

CPD also plays a critical role in improving teachers' classroom management skills, which are integral to instructional effectiveness. As Gage et al. (2018) and Hagermoser Sanetti et al. (2018) report, teachers who participated in behavior management-focused training were better able to maintain a positive learning environment, which is conducive to active student engagement and better academic performance.

Furthermore, CPD fosters pedagogical creativity and innovation. Fonsén and Ukkonen-Mikkola (2019) and Paniagua and Istance (2018) highlight that well-structured CPD can encourage teachers to act as designers of innovative learning environments, utilizing creative approaches to problem-solving and content delivery. This shift from traditional teaching to more student-centered strategies empowers teachers to cultivate critical thinking and collaboration among learners.

Lastly, CPD enhances self-efficacy among teachers, which is closely linked to improved classroom performance and student motivation (Ajani, 2019; AKDEMİR, 2019). Teachers who feel confident in their pedagogical abilities are more likely to implement diverse instructional techniques and take ownership of their professional growth. This personal development ultimately contributes to a stronger, more effective teaching force capable of meeting diverse educational demands.

## **Theme 2: Strengthened Teacher Self-Efficacy and Confidence**

Another recurrent finding was that CPD significantly strengthens teacher self-efficacy, which in turn influences classroom performance. Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's capacity to perform specific teaching tasks, has been linked with increased teacher motivation, classroom innovation, and resilience in the face of challenges (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers who participated in collaborative professional learning communities, coaching sessions, or mentoring programs reported higher levels of confidence in their instructional decisions.

Bellibas and Gumus (2016) emphasized that professional development focusing on peer collaboration, reflection, and feedback positively correlates with self-efficacy. Teachers who received constructive feedback from colleagues and instructional coaches were more likely to experiment with new teaching methods and revise their strategies based on student needs. Moreover, CPD created a sense of professional identity and collective purpose, reducing teacher burnout and isolation.

Programs emphasizing classroom management were particularly influential in boosting teacher confidence. As shown in the study by Lewis et al. (2013), CPD that included behavior management training helped teachers develop proactive discipline strategies and maintain a positive classroom climate. This confidence reduced student behavioral issues and allowed teachers to focus on instruction rather than discipline.

The impact of CPD on self-efficacy extended beyond the classroom. Teachers reported feeling more competent in engaging with parents, participating in school improvement plans, and assuming leadership roles. As teachers gained more autonomy and a deeper understanding of educational principles, their professional satisfaction increased—an important factor in teacher retention and long-term school improvement (OECD, 2020).

### **Theme 3: Improved Student Engagement and Academic Performance**

There is compelling evidence that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) directly enhances student engagement and academic outcomes. As teachers refine their pedagogical approaches and boost their self-confidence through CPD, a positive ripple effect extends to their learners. Cronin et al. (2018) found that students taught by educators who regularly participated in professional learning exhibited higher levels of academic achievement, stronger motivation, and more advanced social skills. These students were not only performing better academically but were also more emotionally and cognitively invested in their learning processes.

One of the most significant ways CPD influences student learning is through the adoption of interactive and inclusive teaching methods. Educators trained in student-centered strategies are more likely to create classroom environments that are engaging, respectful of diversity, and conducive to active participation.

This shift in instructional practice leads to improvements in students' attitudes toward learning. When teachers utilize differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and inquiry-based approaches acquired from CPD, students become more curious, attentive, and eager to participate in classroom activities.

Student achievement was especially pronounced in classrooms where teachers implemented data-informed instruction—an approach strongly emphasized in many professional development programs. According to Timperley et al. (2007), teachers who engaged in the regular analysis of assessment data were better able to design tailored lesson plans, deliver timely interventions, and monitor student progress effectively. By leveraging formative assessments, teachers could identify learning gaps early and adjust instruction to meet individual student needs. This practice proved particularly effective in addressing disparities among learners from multilingual backgrounds and low-income communities.

Moreover, CPD played a crucial role in equipping students with 21st-century skills. Programs that included digital literacy and educational technology training empowered teachers to use tools such as interactive whiteboards, digital learning platforms, and gamified instructional methods. As a result, students became more engaged, collaborative, and autonomous in their learning journeys. Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) emphasized that when teachers integrate technology effectively, it not only increases motivation but also fosters higher-order thinking skills among learners.

Beyond academic outcomes, CPD indirectly supports social and emotional development. Teachers trained in trauma-informed practices, inclusive classroom management, and culturally responsive teaching are more attuned to the holistic needs of their students. This heightened awareness enables teachers to build stronger relationships with learners, foster a sense of belonging, and reduce behavioral issues. Improved student-teacher rapport has been consistently linked to higher academic performance and increased classroom engagement.

However, it is important to acknowledge that not all professional development yields the same level of impact on student learning. The effectiveness of CPD depends heavily on its quality, relevance, and duration. Short-term, one-size-fits-all workshops often fail to create lasting changes in teaching practices. In contrast, long-term, context-specific CPD initiatives that offer hands-on learning opportunities, mentorship, and follow-up support tend to produce more substantial improvements in student outcomes.

Kyriakides et al. (2013), through a comprehensive meta-analysis, underscored that impactful CPD must be aligned with the actual challenges teachers face in the classroom. Programs should provide opportunities for active collaboration, reflection, and practical application. When CPD is grounded in real classroom contexts and supported by ongoing coaching, it leads to sustained instructional improvement and, consequently, a measurable rise in student performance and engagement.

### **Theme 4: The Role of Teacher-Student Relationships in Educational Outcomes**

A final but crucial theme observed in the literature was the role of CPD in enhancing teacher-student relationships, which are foundational to effective teaching and learning. Studies by Ahmad (2018) and Burke-Smalley (2018) underscored that professional development programs focusing on socio-emotional learning, communication, and inclusivity strengthened rapport between teachers and students. These relationships foster a safe, respectful, and motivating learning environment, which is particularly vital in diverse classrooms with students from varying cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Positive relationships were shown to improve student behavior, increase class participation, and reduce dropout rates. Teachers trained in trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices were more likely to build trust with students and adapt instruction to meet individual needs. CPD that emphasized empathy, active listening, and cultural awareness was instrumental in breaking down barriers to student engagement, especially among marginalized groups (Gay, 2010).

Moreover, teachers with strong relational skills tended to create more inclusive classrooms, where all students felt seen and valued. This inclusivity encouraged higher levels of collaboration, reduced disciplinary incidents, and promoted a growth mindset among students. Research by Pianta et al. (2012) demonstrated that teacher-student closeness is a predictor of academic resilience, particularly among students who face academic or behavioral challenges.

However, as Igberadja (2016) pointed out, the success of teacher-student relationships is not solely dependent on teacher demographics such as gender or qualification. Instead, it is the quality of teacher training, professional values, and emotional intelligence that matters. These findings advocate for holistic CPD programs that go beyond technical skills to address the relational and human aspects of teaching.

The collective findings from the reviewed literature highlight the indispensable role of continuous professional development in fostering teaching excellence and improving student outcomes. CPD enhances instructional competence, boosts teacher self-efficacy, positively influences student academic and social development, and strengthens teacher-student relationships. However, for CPD to be truly effective, it must be ongoing, reflective, collaborative, and context-specific.

These themes suggest that education systems should prioritize structured, sustained, and relevant professional learning opportunities for teachers at all stages of their careers. Policymakers and school leaders must move away from one-size-fits-all workshops toward embedded professional learning models that are responsive to the evolving needs of educators and students alike.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to explore the long-term impact of various CPD models, including digital platforms and blended learning approaches. Furthermore, there is a need to investigate how school leadership and institutional support mediate the effectiveness of CPD in different educational contexts, particularly in low-resource settings.

## **Conclusion**

Improving teacher professional development (CPD) is essential for enhancing both teaching effectiveness and student performance, particularly in elementary education where foundational skills are established. CPD programs provide teachers with up-to-date pedagogical strategies, deeper subject knowledge, and refined classroom management techniques. Through continuous and well-structured learning opportunities, educators become more adept at lesson planning, differentiated instruction, and delivering engaging lessons that support better academic outcomes for students.

The findings of this study highlight the transformative power of sustained CPD in shaping teacher competencies and improving learner engagement. Teachers who participate in targeted, meaningful professional development are better equipped to address diverse learning needs and implement data-informed instruction. These improvements in teaching practice ultimately contribute to narrowing achievement gaps, particularly in underserved and multilingual learning environments.

Thus, it is imperative that educational institutions and policymakers invest in comprehensive CPD frameworks that prioritize relevance, consistency, and support. Initiatives should include mentorship programs, collaborative learning communities, reflective practice, and opportunities for hands-on application. While the CPD Act of 2016 in the Philippines provides a crucial foundation, more systemic efforts are needed to ensure that professional development becomes an integral part of every teacher's career progression, supported by both leadership and policy.

Furthermore, the success of CPD programs depends on their alignment with local contexts and classroom realities. School leaders and education departments must consider cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic factors when designing and implementing CPD. Tailoring programs to the specific challenges faced by educators increases the likelihood of meaningful change in teaching behavior and student learning outcomes.

Future research should explore the long-term impact of CPD on teacher performance and student achievement through longitudinal and mixed-method studies. Additionally, examining the barriers to effective CPD implementation—such as limited time, resources, or institutional support—can guide the development of more sustainable and impactful models. By strengthening the foundation of teacher professional development, educational systems can ensure a more effective, equitable, and learner-centered environment for all students.

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