

OPTIMIZING EDUCATIONAL REFORMS: A TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR GRADE 1 TEACHERS IN SANTA IGNACIA NORTH DISTRICT

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Article Info

Keywords:

Abstract

The implementation of the K to 12 curriculum in the Philippines requires competent teachers who can effectively carry out the new requirements of the program. To assess the competencies of Grade 1 teachers in Santa Ignacia North District, this study was conducted with the aim of proposing a teacher development program based on the findings. The study revealed that the Grade 1 teachers were competent in their instruction, particularly in lesson planning, classroom management, and assessment of learning. However, some encountered problems in lesson planning, language difficulty, insufficient training on K to 12, and inadequate background in Mother Tongue concepts. These findings serve as a basis for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of teachers, enabling school heads to provide assistance, and alerting parents, communities, and government agencies of issues in implementing the curriculum. The proposed teacher development program aims to address these encountered problems through training programs, mentoring activities, and other initiatives. The program aims to enhance the instructional competence of Grade 1 teachers, leading to better teaching performance in implementing the K to 12 curriculum and improving the pupils' academic performance.

1. Introduction

The Philippines is undergoing a drastic change in its educational system because of the problems encountered in the previous system particularly the comparability of its 10-year basic education to international standards. In the ASEAN region, the Philippines is the only country offering 10 years of basic education and one of the three countries in the whole world.

In the past, several studies had also been conducted in relation to the basic education curriculum and they revealed that there is inadequacy in the basic education curriculum. Most of the surveys had recommended the restoration of Grade 7 and additional one or two years to the basic education curriculum (Department of Education, 2010).

In response to these challenges, the government had initiated solutions through Department of Education. It had pursued a package of policy reforms towards the realization of quality education based on elements of the Basic Reform Agenda (BESRA). Hence, the introduction of an enhanced curriculum known as K-12 came into being based on DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2012 dated April 17, 2012. The result triggered the DepEd officials to make a

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major reform in the Philippine education system as a way of improving it and reassuring that this program could alleviate the present set up in the field of education. The Philippine President, Benigno S. Aquino III has signed Republic Act 10533 entitled “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013” mandating the full implementation of K to 12 Curriculum.

The Aquino Administration takes a great courage to implement the said educational reform behind the knowledge that tons of problems will be faced in the long run of implementation. It takes a stand firm on it because the enhancement of quality of education is very urgent, critical and is the key to nation’s development.

K-12 curriculum has started its implementation during school year 2012-2013. Teachers, as curriculum implementers of the educational reform, need to be equipped and should implement different strategies to deliver quality instruction in order to produce pupils who are competitive and have the necessary competencies to succeed in their life as a learner. Definitely, its success or failure lies more on the hands of the teachers since they are the ones who implement the said curriculum. Grade 1 teachers, as key players in the implementation of the Enhanced K to 12 Curriculum, must be prepared and ready to implement it. Since the researcher is formally a Grade 1 teacher, she felt the hardship on how to become an equipped teacher under this new curriculum because of no relevant training, insufficient knowledge and poor foundation of Mother Tongue concepts and teaching strategies. She then realized that if the foundation of learning of the pupils is good and the teacher is effective and competent enough to implement the new curriculum likewise, the pupils she will produce.

School administrators and other stakeholders need to assess the readiness of Grade 1 teachers to ascertain if the grade 1 teachers are prepared to handle their classes given the training they have undergone in May of 2012. Is their knowledge of the subject matter sufficient? Do they have adequate sufficient materials and effective teaching strategies? This study is also a way of support to this educational reform to help achieve the vision of K to 12 curriculum which aims to produce Filipino graduates who are holistically-developed with 21st century skills prepared for higher education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study was conducted to look into the profile and competencies of the Grade 1 teachers in Santa Ignacia North District as key implementers of the K to 12 curriculum.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How are the Grade 1 teachers of Santa Ignacia North District described in terms of:
 - 1.1 age,
 - 1.2 position,
 - 1.3 length of service,
 - 1.4 educational attainment, and
 - 1.5 Trainings/seminars attended relevant to K to 12 Curriculum?
2. How is the competency of Grade 1 teachers of Santa Ignacia North District described along:
 - 2.1 lesson planning,
 - 2.2 art of questioning,
 - 2.3 use of appropriate motivation,
 - 2.4 selection and utilization of instructional materials/teaching aids,
 - 2.5 classroom management,
 - 2.6 teaching strategies and methods, and
 - 2.7 Assessment of learning?
3. How are the Grade 1 teachers of Santa Ignacia North District described in terms of their level of partnership with stakeholders?
4. What problems are encountered by the Grade 1 teachers and school heads of Santa Ignacia North District in the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum along their profile and competence?
5. What teacher development program may be proposed for a more successful implementation of K to 12 curriculum by the Grade 1 teachers?

1.2. Significance of the Study

The profile and competencies of the Grade 1 teachers will give significance to the teachers, specifically the Grade 1 teachers, findings will serve as a basis for them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses to better enhance their instruction. To the school administrator/heads, it may serve as a basis in providing assistance to the teachers for them to manage effectively the implementation of K to 12 curriculum. To the parents, community and other stakeholders for them to be mindful of the curriculum being implemented. To the Department of Education and other concerned bodies of government, the result may serve as an eye opener towards the real state of the curriculum implemented.

1.3. Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study covered the Grade 1 teachers and school heads of the ten (10) schools of Santa Ignacia North District during the school year 2014-2015. This study included the following: The personal profile of the Grade 1 teachers, instructional competence, level of partnership with stakeholders of the Grade 1 teachers, and the problems encountered by the Grade 1 teachers and school heads of Santa Ignacia North District in the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum along their profile and competence.

1.4. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

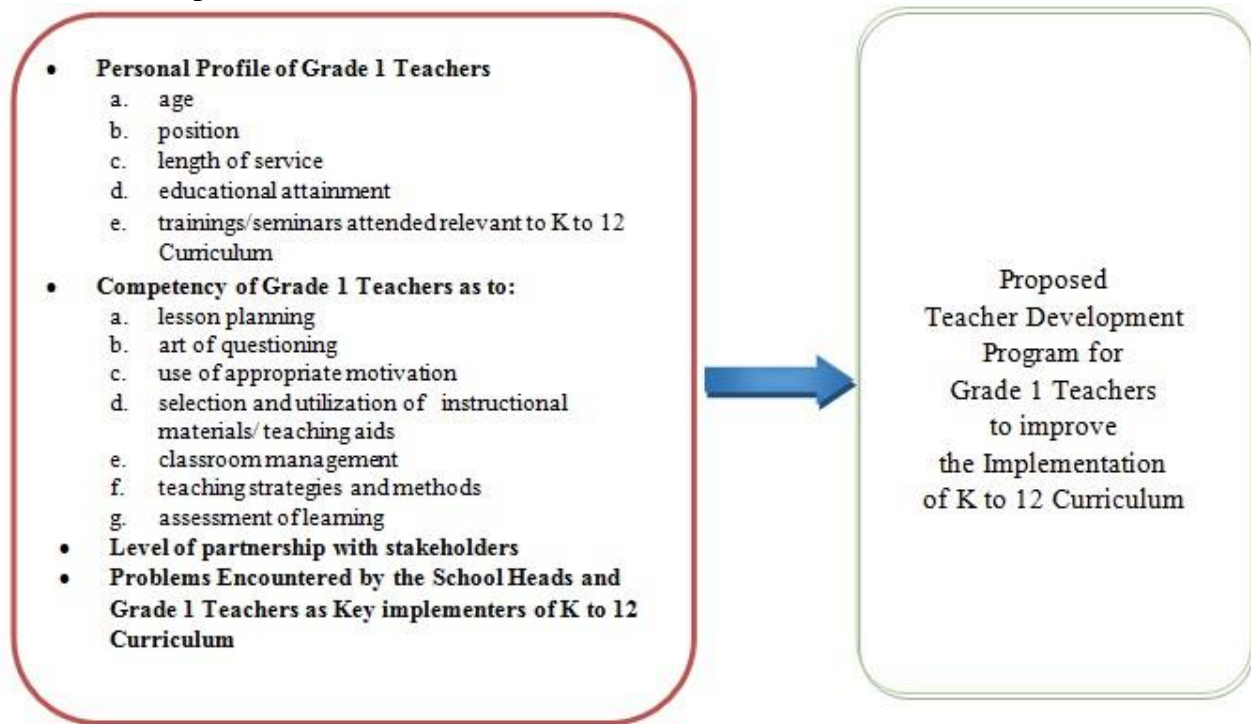


Figure-1. Conceptual framework of the study.

This study is anchored on Jerome Bruner's Theory of Instruction which emphasizes the teacher's role in the instructional and learning process. In this study, the researcher conceptualized that the profile of Grade 1 teachers and their instructional competence are contributory to the effective implementation of K to 12 curriculum. The better the profile and higher the instructional competence of Grade 1 teachers, the more effective would be the implementation of K to 12 curriculum.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study where the profile of Grade 1 teachers of Santa Ignacia North District and their competencies were determined, the level of partnership with the stakeholders, as well as the problems encountered by the teacher and school. The results served as the basis for a proposed teacher development program which intends to address the problems encountered and improve the implementation K to 12 curriculum.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Related Literature

"Either we change our mentality and try to adapt to the new situation or if we do not change we will end up potty" (Anonymous).

One of the determinants of attaining quality education is the presence of relevant curriculum that needs to be implemented by the teachers. The Philippine educational system is at its transition point. Since signing it into law last 15th of May, the K to 12 basic education programs of DepEd continues implementation nationwide on a phased basis with the implementation of Grades 1 and 7 curriculum. K to 12 aims to decongest the academic workload, giving students more time to master competencies, for co-curricular activities and community involvement, thus, allowing a more holistic development. It also seeks to ensure a seamless, continuous and enriched researcher/learner-centered education. Moreover, it wants to improve teaching and learning process through the use of enhanced pedagogies, such as spiral progressions in Science and Mathematics, and appropriate media of instruction (Valles, 2013).

Vitanzos (2014) mentioned that what both parties (school and parent) can do to improve parent involvement is to go beyond the simple meanings of the word involvement. This entails not only counting the number of parents coming during meetings and family days but advocating to them that both parties have the same interest of becoming partners in the learning process and find concrete ways to enhance the partnership. Effective communication is key and warm engagement can be very helpful. Involve them in planning and do not just report to them what is going on, instead ask them and listen to them. Make them feel they are also important stakeholders in school particularly in the education of their children.

The hierarchy of questions that the teachers usually ask regardless of the subjects being taught is based on Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. These are the knowledge or memory, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation questions. The hierarchy possesses different levels of questioning that give the children the opportunity to develop their skills to answer effectively. With these, we can say that questioning is not only an integral part in the educative process. It is also an art that determines the effectiveness of the facilitator and an element that is used to establish a better quality in teaching and learning (Lingad, 2014). The following statements are some of Mcber (2000) description of effective teachers: (a.) ask a lot of questions and involve the pupils in class discussion. (b.) very systematic in the preparation for, and execution of each lesson. (c.) employ a variety of teaching strategies and techniques to engage pupils and to keep them on task. (d.) have a clear strategy for pupil management. (e.) employ a range of assessment methods and techniques to monitor pupils' understanding of lessons and work.

Cheng and Tsui (1988), stated that teacher competencies include the total behavioral, affective and cognitive competence of teachers at provincial, regional and national levels. This layer represents the total static quality of teachers.

According to Shulman (1986) the teacher's level of competency is one of the factors that directly affect the quality of teaching and consequently pupil performance. In order to apply progressive methods of teaching, methods that favor pupil-centered learning based on discovery and consequently on the construction of knowledge by the pupils themselves, teachers are required to have professional training and a level of competence in terms of their subject matter.

As cited by Carpio (2012) there is an urgent need to infuse a new vitality in all public school classrooms by placing professional teacher who are imbued with competencies based on national standards. This will assure the best learning outcomes needed in this time. It is therefore, in practice for the department of education to determine the strengths and training need of teachers in order to find ways how to address them. It is also a high time that all teachers take personal responsibility for their own professional growth by starting with awareness of the competencies they actually hold. All of these will be captured the Teacher Strengths and Needs Assessment tool (TSNA) which was prepared for the purpose.

Sees teaching method as the strategy or plan that outlines the approach that teachers intend to take in order to achieve the desirable objectives. It involves the ways teachers organized and use techniques of subject matter, teaching tools and teaching materials to meet teaching objectives.

With the implementation of K to 12, teachers are comparable to good soldiers. They follow whatever is mandated of them regardless whether they are ready or not. They need to be ready to implement the new program. Although, the presence of skepticism and fear remained in the minds of Grade I teachers more specifically, they are still willing to implement the new curriculum as what they did with the previous curriculums.

2.2. Related Studies

Akinfe, Olofinniyi, and Fashiku (2012) mentioned that teachers' experience contributes maximally to students' academic performance. Findings revealed that teachers with cognate teaching experience turn out students with relatively higher academic achievement. Teachers' use of instructional materials in teaching is paramount to students' improvement in academic performance. Findings reveal that a good number of sampled schools lacked basic instructional aids, where available they are too few to go round and often in bad shape.

Nuyles (2011) named that personal factors such as age, educational attainment and years in service disclosed negative 'significant' influence on the teaching performance of public elementary school teachers. She concluded therefore that the higher the educational attainment, the older the respondents and the longer in service of teaching the better the performance of teachers.

The intent of the present study is similar to the study of Nuyles (2011) because both pertain to age and length of service of the respondents. However, the present study has not only included age and length of service, instead it includes position, educational attainment and trainings and seminars of Grade 1 teachers as description of their profile.

Similarly, in the study conducted by entitled "Toward Teacher Preparedness in Teaching English Language in Primary Schools" which was carried out in thirty eight (38) primary schools in West Kenya with 64 teachers showed that academic qualifications are another aspect of teacher preparedness.

According to in his study conducted at Bahawalpur (Southern Punjab), poor salary, over workload, bad conditions of school building, lack of library facility, lack of teaching and learning material, status of teacher, respect in society, professional attitude of teachers, mental health, teacher's morale, responsibilities at home, distance of residing area, stress, political inferences, posting in far flung areas, discrimination, lack of cooperation, working relations with staff and head teacher, working environment are the factors that affect the female teachers' performance negatively. Further, teachers should be provided with adequate and pre-service training courses characterized by effectiveness, creativity and improvement. Highest attention should be paid to the utilization of the latest, relevant techniques and technologies in the field of teacher education.

This study is similar to the present study because both focused on teachers' competencies. However, the present study does not include the factors affecting the performance but includes the following: The personal profile of the Grade 1 teachers such as age, position, length of service, educational qualification and trainings/seminars attended; the instructional competence of teachers as lesson planning, art of questioning, use of appropriate motivation, selection and utilization of instructional materials/teaching aids, classroom management, teaching strategies and methods, and assessment of learning; and the level of partnership with stakeholders of the Grade 1 teachers.

Conducted a research entitled "Instructional Materials and Students' Academic Achievement in Physics: Some Policy Implication" and mentioned that the place of instructional materials in the effective implementation of education program cannot be under-mined. Instructional materials perform such functions as the extension of the range of the experience available to learners, supplement and complement the teacher's verbal explanations thereby making learning experience richer and providing the teacher with interest into a variety of learning activities.

Altun (2011) found that teachers' continuing professional development is a crucial element in ensuring the quality of what children experience through their education. As the teachers involved and gained knowledge, skills and experience, their increased confidence and expertise subsequently affects all children within their classrooms.

Tabas (2004) concluded that there were five (5) factors that had much contribution to the teaching competence of teachers. They were as follows: First, knowledge of the subject matter; Second, communication skills; Third, teacher's ability in teaching; Fourth, personality traits; and fifth, length of teaching experience.

Beyond doubt change is inevitable, to stand it we have to adapt and embrace it. If otherwise, forever we will be left behind. K to 12 as seen by the Aquino administration is our key to slowly achieve our nation's progress and its progress is everyone's success. As teachers, most specifically Grade I teachers have to accept all the challenges and responsibilities lies behind K to 12.

3. Methods and Procedures

3.1. Research Design

The study made use of the descriptive survey research design. It is a descriptive study because it describes the profile and competency of the Grade 1 teachers. The problems encountered by the teachers and school was also determined.

3.2. Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in the Santa Ignacia North District, Division of Tarlac Province.

3.3. Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the fourteen (14) public elementary Grade 1 teachers, eight (8) school heads and one hundred (100) stakeholders of Santa Ignacia North District.

3.4. Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher floated the questionnaires and checklists to all Grade 1 teachers and school heads supplemented with an interview.

3.5. Data Gathering Instruments

Data for the survey were collected using the questionnaire and checklist. It was divided into four (4) parts. The first part dealt on the personal profile of Grade 1 teachers. Part 2 included instructional competence (DepEd Performance Appraisal System for Teachers (PAST)) of Grade 1 teachers. Part 3 dealt on level of partnership with stakeholders of the Grade 1 teachers. Part 4 reflected the problems met by Grade 1 teachers and school heads towards the development of proposed teacher development program to address the problems that they encountered along teacher profile and competence for a more successful implementation of K to 12 curriculum.

3.6. Data of Analysis

The responses of the respondents in the questionnaires and checklists were tallied and tabulated. For Objective No. 1, frequency and percentage were used. For Objectives No. 2 and 3, weighted mean was used. For Objective No. 4, frequency and rank were used to.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Profile of the Grade 1 Teachers in Santa Ignacia North District

Education has often been considered as the best instrument in the growth and development of the country. It is considered as the key to nations' prosperity. This is true in the Philippines where people place high premium on education where education is the "prime mover of change" in terms of skills and competencies, attitudes, values and ideals necessary to transfer aspiration and expectation to reality.

The quality of education is said to be dependent upon the quality of teachers that the system employs. Teachers, especially those in Grade 1, are one of the most potent factors in the educational progress because they are the initial molders of the growth and development of the children to become upright citizens of the country showcasing the 21st century skills expected from them. Furthermore, they lay down the foundation curriculum to their pupils for the fact that formative years provide a strong influence in their holistic formation.

Table 1 presents the profile of Grade 1 teachers in terms of their age, position, length of service, educational attainment, and seminars/in-service trainings attended relevant to K to 12 curriculum.

4.1.1. Age

As to age, four (28.57%) each have ages ranging between 46-50 years old and 25-29 years old, two (14.29%) each have ages ranging between 40-45 years old, and 51 years old and above, one (7.14%) each have ages ranging between 20-24 years old and 30-34 years old, respectively.

This goes to show that majority of the Grade 1 teachers are 40 years old and above.

4.1.2. Position

As to the position of Grade 1 teacher-respondents, result shows that there are six (42.86%) each for Teacher I and Teacher III positions, and one (7.14%) each for Local School Board Teacher and Master Teacher I positions. The data indicate that majority of the Grade 1 teachers in Santa Ignacia North District are Teacher I and Teacher III. Record shows that Teacher I are the younger ones and novice in the teaching profession, while Teacher III are the older ones in age and in the service as well.

4.1.3. Length of Service

As to length of service, result shows that seven (50%) have been teaching for five years and below; two (14.29%) each have been teaching for 16-20 years, 20-25 years, and 26-30 years; and one (7.14%) has been teaching for 11 to 15 years.

This further shows that most of the grade 1 teachers are novice in the service. As per district record, newly hired permanent teachers are usually assigned in Grade 1.

4.1.4. Educational Attainment

As to educational attainment of Grade 1 teachers, nine or 64.29% have MA units; three or 21.43% have BEED degree specialized in General Education; one or 7.14% has a Bachelor's degree with 18 units in Education; and another one has Master's degree.

Table-1. Profile of Grade 1 Teachers.

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-24	1	7.14
25-29	4	28.57
30-34	1	7.14
40-45	2	14.29
46-50	4	28.57
51 and above	2	14.29
Total	14	100
Position		
Local School Board (LSB) Teacher	1	7.14
Teacher I	6	42.86
Teacher III	6	42.86
Master Teacher I	1	7.14
Total	14	100
Length of Service		
0-5 years	7	50.00
6-10 years	0	0.00
11-15 years	1	7.14
16-20 years	2	14.29
20-25 years	2	14.29
26-30 years	2	14.29
Total	14	100
Educational Attainment		
BEED, Specialized in General Education	3	21.43
Bachelor's Degree with Educ 18 units	1	7.14
MA/MS Units	9	64.29
MA/MS Graduate	1	7.14
Total	14	100

Seminars/In-service Trainings Attended		
Division	9	64.29
None	5	35.71
Total	14	100

Majority of the Grade 1 teachers in Santa Ignacia North District have earned MA units indicating their desire of upgrading their education to improve their competencies as well as their position.

4.1.5. Seminars/in-Service Trainings

As to the seminars/in-service trainings attended by the teachers relevant to K to 12 curriculum, it was shown that nine or 64.29% of the teacher-respondents have attended the division mass training on K to 12 curriculum for Grade 1 teachers held last May 2012, and five or 35.71% of the teacher-respondents have no K to 12 training at all. This reveals that there are still Grade 1 teachers who are quite struggling in implementing the K to 12 curriculum. According to them, after the division mass training no follow up trainings were conducted.

4.2. Instructional Competence of Grade 1 Teachers

The teachers' level of competency is one of the factors that directly affect the quality of teaching and consequently pupil performance. Thus, it seems logical to say that measures of teaching performance may predict effective teaching performance and pupil achievement.

As to instructional competence in lesson planning, the teachers involved obtained an over-all mean rating of 4.38 which is described as competent. This means that Grade 1 teachers are able to formulate, adopt, communicate, and deliver SMART objectives (written in two to three domains) that shows relevance and coherence to the subject matter.

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Table-2. Instructional Competence of Grade 1 Teachers.

Instructional Competence	Rated BY School Head		Rated BY Grade 1 Teachers		OAMR	VI
	WM	VI	WM	VI		
A. Lesson Planning	4.50	Highly Competent	4.26	Competent	4.38	Competent
B. Art of Questioning	3.95	Competent	3.87	Competent	3.91	Competent
C. Use of Appropriate Motivation	4.25	Competent	4.11	Competent	4.18	Competent
D. Selection and Utilization of Instructional Materials/Teaching Aids	4.05	Competent	4.04	Competent	4.05	Competent
E. Classroom Management	4.18	Competent	4.07	Competent	4.13	Competent
F. Teaching Strategies and Methods	4.10	Competent	3.96	Competent	4.03	Competent
G. Assessment of Learning	4.00	Competent	3.86	Competent	3.93	Competent
Overall	4.14	Competent	4.02	Competent	4.08	Competent

Legend:

OAMR- Over All Mean rating.

WM- Weighted Mean.

Verbal Interpretation (VI) Range.

Highly Competent 4.50-5.00

Competent 3.50-4.49

Moderately Competent 2.50-3.49

Less Competent 1.50-2.49

Not Competent 1.00-1.49

Asking varied types of questions both directed and non-directed to allow everyone in their class to participate and to think outside the box. With regard to use of appropriate motivation, teachers are competent with an over-all mean rating of 4.18. This means that teachers have good motivational skills that enabled them to arouse the interest of their learners. In relation to selection and utilization of instructional materials/teaching aids, teachers achieved an over-all mean rating of 4.05, hence, they are competent. This means that teachers are resourceful and utilizes varied multi-sensory teaching materials which are appropriate and congruent to the lesson and to the learners. Teachers are competent in classroom management and they registered an over-all mean rating of 4.13. This means that they are able to create desirable learning environment reinforcing positive behaviors of pupils and promoting pupils' active engagement due to established classroom routines and smooth transition of activities. In terms of teaching strategies and methods, the teachers are competent with an over-all mean rating of 4.03. This means that teachers are able to employ varied, appropriate and interactive teaching strategies recognizing the different learning abilities of the pupils. In assessment of learning, teachers are competent obtaining an overall mean rating of 3.93. This means that they use different measures of learning which are congruent to lesson objectives, both traditional and non-traditional modes of assessment. Teachers obtained an over-all mean rating of 4.08 which means they are competent. Teachers prepare good lesson plans; utilize the art of questioning; practice appropriate motivations; select and utilize appropriate instructional materials and teaching strategies; employ good classroom management; and utilize appropriate assessments of learning. It can be noted also that the teachers met the expectation of their school heads in terms of their instructional competence since they gave them a higher rating compared to ratings, they gave themselves.

4.3. Partnership with the Stakeholders

Stakeholders' involvement is a powerful influence on the success of the school's programs and activities. When the parents and community are involved in the activities of the schools, they can help in giving sound ideas which make the programs and activities successful, specifically in implementing curricular reforms.

Table-3. Level of Partnership of Grade 1 Teachers with the Stakeholders.

Indicators	WM	VI
1. Organizes and maintains functional homeroom PTA	4.51	Very Good
2. Communicates to stakeholders the features of the K to 12 programs (subjects, projects, grading system etc.)	4.27	Good
3. Conducts homeroom/PTA meetings to report learners' progress	4.44	Good
4. Disseminate school policies /plans/ programs/ accomplishments to the school clientele	4.20	Good
5. Encourages involvement of parents and other stakeholders in school programs and activities	4.40	Good
Over-all Weighted Mean	4.36	Good

Legend:

Verbal Interpretation	Range
Very Good	4.50-5.00
Good	3.50-4.49
Fair	2.50-3.49
Poor	1.50-2.49
Needs Improvement	1.00-1.49

Table 3 shows the level of partnership of Grade 1 teachers with the stakeholders. Results of the study shows that teachers are very good in organizing and maintaining functional homeroom PTA. They are good in communicating/disseminating policies, plans and programs of the school, conducting meetings, as well as in encouraging parents and other stakeholders to participate in school activities. In general, they obtain a weighted average of 4.36 which is described as good. Teachers are able to build a good rapport to both internal and external stakeholders and the latter are able to appreciate it. Teachers are able to communicate and disseminate necessary school matters to them and treat them rightfully and respectfully even outside the school premises. In the interview conducted, some stakeholders mentioned that regular homeroom meetings and card days allow them to keep track of the progress of their children and it allows them to provide the necessary support for the welfare of their children. With regards to K to 12 curriculum, the Mother Tongue issue in particular, parents have opposing views, there are some who are in favor while others seem to be against it.

4.4. Problems Encountered by the Grade 1 Teacher in the Implementation of K to 12 Curriculum

With this curriculum reform, teachers being in the front line of the learning arena have the first-hand knowledge of the several challenges and problems they met since the initial implementation of the K to 12 curriculum last school year 2012-2013.

Table 4 shows the problems encountered by Grade 1 teachers as the key implementers of K to 12 curricula. There are eight (8) pressing problems identified and among these problems, difficulty in lesson planning in Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP), Aralin Panlipunan (A.P.), and MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health) subjects due to the lack of teaching guide and/or the lesson objective itself on the given manual received the highest frequency and ranked first. This means that teacher's guide and learner's material provided were not that detailed, comprehensive and logically presented. According to the teachers, the production of those materials seemed to be hastened to comply with the initial implementation of the K to 12 curriculum last school year 2012-2013. According to them, they have to spend much time scanning the material because there were no clear lesson objectives to be tackled. In addition, they tend to repeat the least learned/difficult lessons since the lessons provided in some subjects are few to cover one quarter rather to teach anything under the sun and as well as for better mastery of the skills being taught.

Table-4. Problems Encountered by Grade 1 Teachers.

Problem	Frequency	Rank
1. Difficulty in lesson planning in Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP), Aralin Panlipunan (A.P.) and MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health) subjects due to the lack of teaching guide and/or the lesson objective itself on the given manual.	13	1
2. Language difficulty and inadequate vocabulary for Mother tongue of both teacher and student.	12	3

3. Inability to implement the scope and coverage to be taken in a single lesson most especially in Mother Tongue because of numerous activities which cannot be accomplished in the allocated time for the lesson.	12	3
4. Insufficient training on K to 12.	12	3
5. Inadequate background and poor foundation of Mother Tongue concepts used in the teaching guides/learner's materials.	9	6
6. Difficulty in the use of different criteria in the assessment of pupils' performance in their MAPEH subject.	9	6
7. Difficulty in producing instructional materials aligned to the teaching guide provided such as making one's own small/big book of a story.	9	6
8. Insufficient mastery of using new techniques.	8	8

Another set of problem that received the highest frequency and ranked third is: (a) language difficulty and inadequate vocabulary for Mother Tongue of both teacher and student; (b) insufficient training on K to 12; and (c) inability to implement the scope and coverage to be taken in a single lesson most especially in Mother Tongue because of numerous activities which cannot be accomplished during the allocated time for the lesson. In terms of language difficulty and inadequate vocabulary for Mother Tongue, teachers themselves admitted that they cannot fluently speak it nor comprehend it, especially the younger teachers and pupils whose native language is not Ilocano. In the interview conducted, it was revealed that they solved the problem by making researches and asking information from their peers and co-workers. In addition, school heads encourage teachers to practice speaking the language regularly.

To help the pupils, teachers translate it in a way that they understand and encourage them to regularly practice speaking the language. A teacher also mentioned that during the beginning of the school year, she had a big number of pupils who are unable to speak Ilocano but because of constant practice, her pupils are now good in using it. She added that as of now, they even answer her questions in complete Ilocano sentences.

In terms of insufficient training on the K to 12 curriculum, the data show that there is really a need to provide in-service trainings to Grade 1 teachers not only at the start but throughout the school year. In the interview conducted, a series of training should be provided to ensure mastery and continuity. This can be achieved through School Learning Action Cell (SLAC), District Learning Action Cell (DLAC) and attendance in training in the higher level should be encouraged.

The data show that teachers were not able to implement all activities to be taken in a single lesson most especially in Mother Tongue because of numerous activities for the lesson. While there is a shortage of lesson on other subject, others seem to be quite overloaded. It is because the lesson activities to be carried are usually in a series of activities which are oftentimes hard to be accomplished based on the allocated time for the lesson.

The other problems encountered by the Grade 1 teachers are: (a) inadequate background and poor foundation on Mother Tongue concepts used in the teaching guides and learner's materials; (b) difficulty in the use of different criteria in the assessment of pupils' performance in their MAPEH subject; and (c) difficulty in producing instructional materials aligned to the teaching guide provided such as making one's own small/big book of a story.

To address the inadequate background and poor foundation on Mother Tongue concepts used in the teaching guides/learner's materials, teachers used the given manual and research for the unfamiliar terms since the Ilocano used is quite different in the Ilocano terms used from Central Luzon.

To solve the difficulty in the use of different criteria in the assessment of pupils' performance in their MAPEH subject, teachers attended in-service trainings pertaining to the kinds of assessment that measure the performance of the pupils in terms of knowledge, process/skills, understanding and performance and how to formulate them.

To remediate teachers' difficulty in terms of producing instructional materials aligned to the teaching guide provided such as making one's own small/big book of a story, at their own expense, they hired an artist for their big books since not all teachers are artistically gifted. School heads also allotted funds for the purchase of teacher's guides, learner's materials and instructional materials since supply of teacher's guides and learner's materials are sometimes limited.

Insufficient mastery of using new techniques is the least problem among Grade 1 teachers. It is maybe because majority of the Grade 1 teachers are still young so introducing innovation is not yet a big deal for them.

Undeniably, teachers are facing various obstacles in the implementation of K to 12 curriculum. According to them, training and demonstration teachings as well as the provision of instructional materials needed will contribute to the improvement of their teaching competency

4.5. Proposed Program to Enhance the Instructional Competence of Grade 1 Teachers

Quality instruction is the most emphasized duty of a teacher. Oftentimes, they say, teacher's performance is the reflection of the quality of instruction the teacher has rendered. Hence, it is deemed necessary to enhance the instructional competence of teachers to improve the quality of instruction.

This proposed program aims to enhance the instructional competence of Grade 1 teachers. If implemented accordingly, this would be a great help to Grade 1 teachers to have a better teaching performance in implementing the K to 12 curriculum thus, improving the pupils' performance as well.

5. Conclusions

Most of the Grade 1 teachers are 40 years or older, occupying Teacher 1 and Teacher III positions; are new in the teaching profession; have earned MA units; and have attended only the division level training on K to 12 curriculum. The Grade 1 teachers of Santa Ignacia North District are competent in their instructional competence vis-a-vis lesson planning, art of questioning, use of appropriate motivation, selection and utilization of instructional materials/teaching aids, classroom management, teaching strategies and methods, and assessment of learning. There is a good partnership between Grade 1 teachers and the schools' internal and external stakeholders. The most pressing problems encountered by Grade 1 teachers are difficulty in lesson planning due to the lack of teaching guide, language difficulty and inadequate vocabulary for Mother Tongue, and insufficient training for K to 12 curriculum implementation.

6. Recommendations

Since the Grade 1 teachers are novice and most of them have just earned MA units, school heads may encourage the Grade 1 teachers to improve their competencies by continue enrolling their graduate studies and they may also encourage the teachers to attend trainings relevant to their specializations. As a form of support, school heads may organize in-service trainings/seminars which could also integrate computer literacy training for the Grade 1 teachers who are inept in using technology during School Learning Action Cell (SLAC). Through the schools' MOOE (Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses), funds may be allocated for the purchase of office supplies needed by the teachers for the production of instructional materials, needed teacher's guide, and learners' materials. To address the problems besetting the Grade 1 teachers in the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum, the proposed Teacher Enhancement Program may be adopted. Collaboration among parents, community and other stakeholders is encouraged.

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