

Self-Evaluation of Proficiency Levels by Alumni-Teachers based on Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

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Abstract: This study assesses the graduated Harris Memorial College (HMC) students' ability as early childhood teachers based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The research uses a quantitative and qualitative approach to look into the self-assessments of alumni in the domain of content knowledge and pedagogy. Quantitative findings indicated that all sub-domains under "Content Knowledge and Pedagogy" rated "Very Good," the highest proficiency being in teaching strategies for literacy and numeracy (mean: 4.27) and the lowest in understanding research-based teaching principles (mean: 3.77). The weighted mean of the domain was 4.09, which reflected high proficiency. Qualitative analysis of alumni interviews revealed six recurring themes as follows: appropriate and effective teaching strategies, engaging learners, creative use of resources and technology, adequate preparation, research-based principles, and lesson integration. "Appropriate and Effective Teaching Strategies" was the most frequently mentioned theme and supports the quantitatively found results, while the lower frequencies concerning research-based principles and lesson integration represent areas for future improvement. These results underscore an integration of good content with innovative pedagogies or teaching methods and resonate, therefore, with educational research and biblical teaching principles. Actionable insights based on these findings can offer further refinements for HMC's teacher education curriculum by enhancing graduates' competencies in early childhood education.

Keyword: content knowledge, self-evaluation, proficiency level, alumni- teachers,

Introduction

The Commission on Higher Education has emphasized in 2004 that the quality of education in the Philippines is essentially tied with the service of teachers and thus underscores the need for the highest possible standards to be set on pre-service teacher education curricula. This statement from CHED shows the extreme influence that teacher proficiency may have on educational outcomes and, hence, makes it imperative for the nation to enhance its teacher proficiency through the improvement of teacher education programs.

In order to address this need, the Department of Education introduced the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, which aims to establish a culture of continuous professional growth among educators. In this regard, Higher Education Institutions are tasked with evaluating their teacher education programs and graduates against the PPST, using the results to refine and enhance their curricula. Recent graduates would be a valuable source for evaluative input into an institution's curriculum, says Perry Shaw (2014), who further supports this notion.

Harris Memorial College (HMC), as the country's pioneering institution in kindergarten education and teacher training, has almost a century of experience in preparing educators. As HMC

approaches its dual centennial milestones-in 2022, the kindergarten program, and in 2024, the teacher training-it stands at a critical juncture. Questions arise with these ongoing national and global educational reforms: Are HMC graduates proficient early childhood educators? Do they meet the PPST's standards in the area of content knowledge and pedagogy?

The urgency behind these questions arises from extensive research, spanning the past sixty years, which insists that early childhood development must serve as a foundational principle. Time and again studies have emerged from anthropology and human development that clearly explain that the experiences and the learning acquired during early childhood mark an individual's entire lifelong trajectory. These foundational years influence spiritual formation, physical growth, language development, motor skills, adaptive abilities, and social-emotional functioning all contributing to academic competence, workplace success, healthy relationships, and meaningful contributions to church and society.

This study aims to evaluate the proficiency levels of HMC's early childhood teacher-education graduates and assess their preparedness to serve as educators in this critical developmental stage. By examining their alignment with the PPST, the findings will serve as a basis for refining HMC's teacher education curriculum and ensuring the continued production of competent, spiritually grounded early childhood educators.

Research Question

How do the selected alumni-teachers evaluate their own proficiency level in terms of content knowledge and pedagogy?

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on a trifocal theoretical and scientific framework, namely, the social constructivist theory of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers of DepEd, and Harold Burgess's Model for Analyzing Religious Education Curriculum. The theory of Vygotsky explains the essence of the research theme: teacher proficiency. It elaborates on why the highly competent educators are the need in children's learning venture and why, thereby providing a peculiar characteristic and primary purpose for this research, that is to assess the proficiency levels of some teacher-education graduates from HMC. The PPST and Burgess's model for the analysis of religious education curriculum, however, shall serve as bases of the four domains that shall be utilized in determining the level of proficiency of the research subjects in the aspects of content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, and spiritual maturity and Christian witness.

Research Methods

The research methodology used in this study was a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This mixed-method approach takes advantage of the strengths of both methods while reducing their individual weaknesses, recognizing that no research method is perfect. Integrating multiple methods will enable the study to achieve a more holistic understanding of the research problem and minimize biases. A mixed-method approach was

considered best suited for this study, as it enables a more holistic examination of the performance levels of HMC graduates, in keeping with the objectives of the study.

Results and Findings

Alumni Evaluation on the Domain of Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Each of the seven items under the domain **Content Knowledge and Pedagogy** gained 30 response ratings from alumni respondents. This means that no item was left unanswered. The responses were subjected to the computation of weighted mean in order to identify the proficiency level of the alumni. Based on the mean computations, the sub-domains were ranked from highest to lowest.

Table 1: Alumni's Evaluation of their Proficiency in Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Domain 1. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Rating	Rank
a) Demonstrating content knowledge and its application within and/or across curriculum teaching areas	4.17	Very Good	4
b) Demonstrating an understanding of research-based knowledge and principles of teaching and learning	3.77	Very Good	7
c) Showing skills in the positive use of ICT to facilitate the teaching and learning process	4.23	Very Good	2
d) Demonstrating knowledge of teaching strategies that promote literacy and numeracy skills	4.27	Very Good	1
e) Applying teaching strategies that develop critical and creative thinking, and/or other higher-order thinking skills	3.90	Very Good	6
f) Using Mother Tongue, Filipino and English to facilitate teaching and learning	4.10	Very Good	5
g) Demonstrating an understanding of the range of verbal and non-verbal classroom communication strategies that support learner understanding, participation, engagement and achievement	4.20	Very Good	3
OVERALL MEAN	4.09	Very Good	
Overall Mean Score Interpretation: Proficiency level is high, and alumni are adequately equipped to serve as early childhood educators.			

Table 1 shows that all the items under Domain 1 achieved a constant qualitative rating “Very Good,” but with different mean ratings. The highest mean of 4.27 was on “Demonstrating knowledge of teaching strategies that promote literacy and numeracy skills.” On the other hand, the lowest rating in this domain was on “Demonstrating an understanding of research-based knowledge and principles of teaching and learning,” which got an average mean rating of 3.77.

The overall weighted mean for this item is 4.09 which means that proficiency level is high, and HMC alumni are adequately equipped to serve as early childhood educators.

Very relevant to the survey findings regarding the alumni respondents' self-evaluation of their proficiency in Content Knowledge and Pedagogy is the analyzed interview data from the alumni respondents. The seven HMC graduate representatives for the interview were asked, "What activities or things demonstrate your proficiency on curriculum content and its application in utilizing developmentally appropriate teaching strategies? Please tell a story or an incident in your teaching practice when you were able to effectively communicate the lesson to the children using a meaningful learning activity." All seven answers were transcribed. The interview transcripts were then processed through MAXQDA 2020 software and codes were named and identified from themes that repeatedly occurred in the key informants' accounts. This is founded on Nigel King and Christine Horrocks' (2010) discussion about interviews in qualitative research. They define themes as "recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterizing particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question." This means that the researcher made coding by identifying themes in the accounts and by attaching labels called codes, to index them. To put it in more concrete terms, Figure 1, for instance, presents the six main codes that were generated through the process of analyzing the alumni's answers to the interview question.

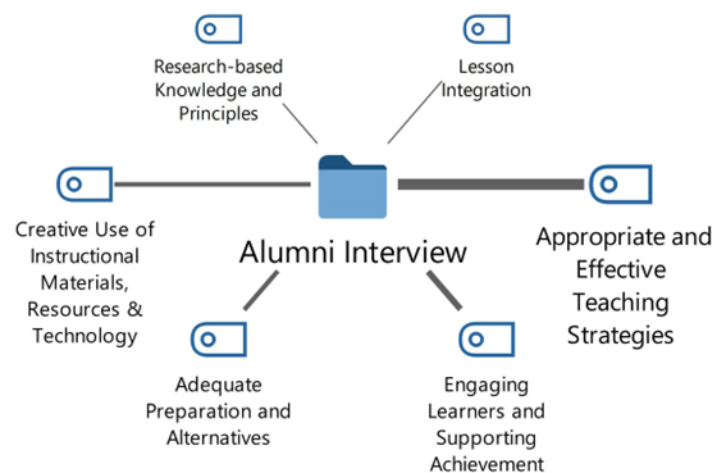


Figure 1: Generated Codes from Alumni Interview on Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

In answering the interview question on content knowledge and pedagogy, the recurrent themes in the alumni interviewees' accounts about the activities or things that they do, which demonstrate their proficiency in curriculum content and pedagogy, were categorized in six themes, identified with the following code names: 1) Appropriate and Effective Teaching Strategies; 2) Engaging Learners and Supporting Achievement; 3) Adequate Preparation and Alternatives; 4) Creative Use of Instructional Materials, Resources and Technology; 5) Research-based Knowledge and Principles; and 6) Lesson Integration. As shown in Figure 1, the six code lines are not equal in thickness because they represent the corresponding frequency count of important phrases or

sentences found in the seven interview documents related to the particular code to which the line is connected. On the MAXQDA map in Figure 1, the code “Appropriate and Effective Teaching Strategies” can be seen to have the densest line attached to it, which means that it has the greatest number of frequency counts among all the six codes. This reveals a pertinent parallelism with the quantitative survey result presented in Table 1 wherein the highest mean score among the sub-domains fell on the item, “Demonstrating knowledge of teaching strategies that promote literacy and numeracy skills.” This signifies that the notable demonstration of the alumni’s proficiency in content knowledge and pedagogy is their teaching strategies. The specific frequency distribution and percentage count of responses related to each code are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Count of Alumni’s Coded Interview Responses in Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Domain 1. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy		
Codes	Frequency Distribution	Percentage Count
1) Appropriate and Effective Teaching Strategies	6	85.71
2) Creative Use of Instructional Materials, Resources and Technology	5	71.43
3) Engaging Learners and Supporting Achievement	5	71.43
4) Adequate Preparation and Alternatives	3	42.86
5) Research-based Knowledge and Principles	2	28.57
6) Lesson Integration	2	28.57
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	7	100.00
PERCENTAGE VALID	-	100.00

Alumni responses to the interview question, as reflected in Table 2, demonstrate proficiency level of the HMC graduates in content knowledge and pedagogy through “Appropriate and Effective Teaching Strategies” (6 over 7 in frequency distribution or 85.71% of the total responses), “Creative Use of Instructional Materials, Resources and Technology” and “Engaging Learners and Supporting Achievement” (both codes got 5 over 7 in frequency distribution or 71.43%), “Adequate Preparation and Alternatives” (3 or 42.86%), “Research-based Knowledge and Principles” (2 or 28.57%), and “Lesson Integration” (also with frequency of 2 or 28.57%).

These findings in fact resonate with a number of studies emphasizing the significance of good and effective teaching strategies that should go with content knowledge. A good teacher possesses professional teaching skills and effective strategies. Gospel accounts also substantiates the connection between content matter and the pedagogical methods even in the supremely effective teaching activity of the Master Teacher Jesus, who impacted his listeners through the sheer content

of his teaching and the way he taught (teaching strategies) (see Matt 7:28; 13:54; 19:25; 22:33; Mark 1:22; 6:2; 10:26; 11:18; Luke 2:48; 4:32).

Discussion

The findings reveal that Harris Memorial College (HMC) graduates exhibit strong proficiency in teaching early childhood education, with a weighted mean score of 4.09 across seven sub-domains, rated as "Very Good." The highest-rated sub-domain, "Demonstrating knowledge of teaching strategies that promote literacy and numeracy skills" (mean = 4.27), highlights a notable strength. Conversely, "Demonstrating an understanding of research-based knowledge and principles of teaching and learning" (mean = 3.77) represents a potential area for improvement. These results affirm that HMC graduates are well-prepared for their profession, with opportunities for further growth in integrating research-based principles.

Qualitative data from interviews with seven HMC alumni corroborate these findings. Analysis using MAXQDA 2020 identified six recurring themes: 1) Effective Teaching Strategies, 2) Learner Engagement, 3) Adequate Preparation, 4) Creative Use of Resources, 5) Research-Based Knowledge, and 6) Lesson Integration. Among these, "Effective Teaching Strategies" emerged as the most significant, noted by 85.71% of respondents, echoing the quantitative findings. However, themes such as "Research-Based Knowledge" and "Lesson Integration" were less prominent (28.57%), paralleling their lower quantitative ratings and suggesting areas for curricular enhancement.

These findings align with existing literature emphasizing the importance of combining robust content knowledge with effective instructional strategies for optimal educational outcomes. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlight that well-prepared teachers with strong pedagogical skills significantly impact student achievement. Similarly, Feeney, Moravcik, and Nolte (2013) underscore the importance of tailoring teaching strategies to meet the developmental needs of young learners, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The importance of research-based teaching practices is also supported by Denzin (1978), who stresses that informed pedagogy grounded in evidence leads to better learning outcomes.

Moreover, studies suggest that integrating innovative instructional materials and active learning experiences fosters student engagement and achievement (Crystal & DeBell, 2002). This aligns with the qualitative findings highlighting HMC alumni's ability to employ creative resources and active learning techniques. Additionally, biblical teaching principles, exemplified by Jesus, emphasize the integration of meaningful content with impactful delivery, as seen in passages like Matt. 7:28, Mark 1:22, and Luke 4:32.

Collectively, the results underscore the strong competencies of HMC alumni while offering actionable insights to bolster their preparation in research-based practices and integrative teaching approaches, reflecting both current research and timeless educational principles.

Conclusion

The findings revealed the high performance of Harris Memorial College graduates in teaching early childhood education, especially within the content knowledge and pedagogy domain. From the quantitative data, it was shown that all the sub-domains of this domain scored "Very Good", with a weighted mean score of 4.09. The highest-rated sub-domain is "Demonstrating knowledge of teaching strategies that promote literacy and numeracy skills," which scored 4.27, while the lowest was "Demonstrating an understanding of research-based knowledge and principles of teaching and learning" at 3.77, so this may be a space for development. Qualitative findings, augmented through alumni interviews, buttressed these findings, while "Appropriate and Effective Teaching Strategies" emerged as the most commonly cited strength. Other significant themes identified included making learning engaging, effective utilization of instructional materials, and proper preparation, while placing lesser emphasis on knowledge acquired through research and incorporation of lessons learned.

These findings align with educational research and biblical principles that the combination of strong content knowledge and appropriate pedagogical strategies will result in effective teaching outcomes. This study thus underscores the competency of HMC alumni while suggesting areas for curriculum enhancement in further strengthening their teaching preparation.

Recommendation

In an effort to build on these insights, several recommendations are proposed:

First, HMC should enhance its curriculum by further strengthening the integration of modules on research-based teaching practices and their application, equipping graduates with the skills to align their strategies with current educational trends. Second, there is a need to optimize lesson integration and interdisciplinary teaching approaches, providing students with more opportunities to practice and reflect on these skills. Third, professional development programs must be offered in the areas of workshops and mentorships to faculty and alumni regarding teaching strategies and familiarity with innovative methods for them to maintain high proficiency levels. Courses dealing with the creative use of technology and instructional materials should be continued and enriched to ensure that all educators are updated on relevant methods to use when interacting with early learners. Finally, periodic reviews of its curriculum, based on graduate opinions and performance appraisal feedbacks, will continue making HMC produce well-balanced and spiritually-based professional early childhood educators as society evolves.

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