

# DELVING ON THE EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATORS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL EDUCATORS ACADEMY OF THE PHILIPPINES: A CASE STUDY

## ABSTRACT

Educators are the carriers of knowledge and are responsible for its transfer. This qualitative case study examined six teachers and administrators who actively integrated National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) professional development into their practice. There were six participants. Five out of six came from the mega-sized secondary schools with two teachers, two master teachers, a school head; and one supervisor, a Division Representative. The six contributors were from the Division of Panabo City, selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study identified several common themes regarding the integration of NEAP learning into instructional and leadership practices, such as the adoption of comprehensive teaching and learning models, student-centered approaches, strategic planning, and strong support systems. Additional themes included mentorship, professional collaboration, and reflective practice. However, challenges requiring improvement were also noted, such as enhancing interactive group dialogue and incorporating research-based learning. Two main themes emerged regarding the understanding of monitoring and evaluation for further improvement: assessment and feedback provision. Recommendations included a careful examination of current and outdated policies, addressing issues related to curriculum overload, enhancing sources of teaching and learning materials, introducing stress-management activities, supporting research-related initiatives, ensuring clear communication, creating feedback loops, and organizing interactive workshops. Participants provided positive feedback on the integration of NEAP learning into their instructional and leadership practices. They appreciated and implemented NEAP-inspired approaches in their classrooms and schools. The study revealed that teachers were not only receptive to these changes but were also committed to the overall development of their students. Their participation in various training programs, workshops, seminars, scholarships, and courses indicated their desire to improve both personally and professionally.

*Keywords: National Educators Academy of the Philippines, Professional Development, Qualitative Case Study, Purpose Sampling, Thematic Analysis, Panabo City*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### **Professional Development in Education**

Professional development has historically played a key role in refining educators' professional skills and knowledge. Traditionally, professional development for teachers is stemmed from experiences

that broadened and strengthened their teaching abilities. Professional development programs were designed to enhance these skills and groom educators to be well-rounded instructors. These programs provided opportunities for self-improvement, maximized teaching effectiveness, and ultimately led to improved student learning outcomes. This focus on continuous learning has remained essential for achieving sustainable educational goals.

### **The National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP)**

The National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) was established in 2016 to address the need for professional development programs for public school administrators and teachers. Founded by the Department of Education (Department of Education, 2017), NEAP's mission statement reflects its commitment to developing educators and school leaders into dynamic and responsive professionals within their respective fields. The offerings of the aforementioned academy have historically encompassed pedagogy, curriculum standards, assessment, technology integration, and leadership development.

### **The Importance of Professional Development**

European policy documents have consistently emphasized the importance of securing specialized, targeted, and systematic professional development programs. These programs were designed to address the changing educational landscape that impacts both educators and learners. Historically, these programs have provided educators with access to the content they teach and effective teaching methods. The European Council's 2010 emphasis on lifelong learning at all levels, with adult education as the foundation for upskilling and reskilling, underscored the crucial role of professional development. Specifically, effective professional development programs require careful consideration of who organizes them, who benefits from them, and how they are delivered. This focus on well-designed programs has led to increased budgetary allocations to tailor programs to the specific needs of teachers and school leaders, fostering continued professional growth and engagement throughout their careers. Research by The New Teacher Project (2015) highlighted the significant advantage of long-term exposure to training and workshops for experienced educators compared to new teachers.

### **Research on Professional Development**

In the study concerning effective professional development, research by Yoon et al (2007) concluded that professional development programs with substantial contact hours, ranging from 30 to 100 hours in total, were more effective in raising student test scores. This finding was further supported by Darling-Hammond et al (2009), who emphasized the importance of sustained and intensive professional development programs embedded within the curriculum for maximum effectiveness.

In Panabo City, a significant number of teachers (432 in 2022 and 678 in 2023) were sent to various professional development opportunities, including seminars, trainings, scholarships, and course programs. This initiative, spearheaded by DepED through NEAP, aimed to continuously develop educators' skills and prepare them for greater responsibilities. It also aimed to boost their confidence and creativity, ultimately leading to career advancement. These opportunities provided educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the educational system and achieve better learning outcomes for students.

Long-standing concerns existed regarding the Philippines' educational system, particularly students' underperformance in international standardized tests compared to neighboring countries (Sulaiman & Crisol, 2020). The effectiveness of educators and administrators played a critical role in the quality of education. Despite Tan's (2017) argument that educators' competence is essential for any

education system's success (David, 2019), many Filipino educators lack access to high-quality professional development opportunities to improve their knowledge and teaching skills.

On the other hand, given the NEAP's professional development initiatives held promise, limited empirical research existed to evaluate their impact and effectiveness, particularly through case studies.

As Posadas (2021) pointed out, "more in-depth qualitative studies are needed to document how NEAP training transfers to classroom practice and school leadership." Examining the connections and gaps between NEAP programming and its implementation realities could provide valuable insights into how professional training shapes educators' quality and effectiveness.

Therefore, this case study investigated the crucial role that NEAP's professional development programs played for educators within the Division of Panabo City, Philippines. Utilizing sociocultural learning theories (Borko, 2004), the study explored how educators actively transferred and applied NEAP training within their specific school contexts. The research aimed to generate recommendations for improving the planning and execution of successful teacher development programs in the Philippines.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This case study explored how the NEAP program contributed to the development of teaching and leadership capacity within the specific contexts of Panabo City. Unlike studies that evaluate NEAP's effectiveness, this study aimed to provide rich and holistic insights into how educators understood, implemented, and integrated NEAP learnings into their practices. It revealed the intricate interplay of factors at individual, school, and system levels that influenced how professional knowledge was transferred and applied, ultimately enhancing or hindering instructional and leadership excellence. Through an immersive case investigation, the study sought to identify key contextual conditions, essential supports, challenges, subtle processes, and unintended consequences associated with facilitating impactful NEAP capacity building that aligned with educators' needs and realities. The findings aimed to inform the development of multifaceted, ecological approaches to strengthen professional development policy and programming, targeting complex changes in teaching, learning, and leadership practices across diverse educational environments in public.

Specifically, the following aspects were the key concerns of the entire study:

1. Examine how educators make sense of, apply, and use the knowledge and skills gained from NEAP training within their real-world practice;
2. Highlight specific examples and models where NEAP capacity building has enhanced teaching, learning, and leadership activities at the school and division level; and
3. Elucidate challenges, gaps, and areas needing improvement in facilitating impactful NEAP professional development opportunities anchored to educators' situated needs and realities.

## **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research assessed the effectiveness of the National Educators Academy of the Philippines' (NEAP) professional development programs by examining the experiences of educators and administrators. It sought to understand how NEAP's training impacts real-world practices, its interaction with existing school environments, and its potential to foster pedagogical excellence. Particularly, it addressed the following questions:

1. How do educators make sense of and integrate the knowledge and skills from NEAP professional development training into their instructional and leadership practices within their specific local contexts?
2. How does NEAP programming interact with existing school cultures, relationships, policies, accountability structures, and instructional resources to shape or hinder changes in teaching, learning, and leadership practices?

3. What are some specific examples and models from the cases where NEAP capacity building at the individual level has propagated to collective growth in pedagogical excellence across groups of teachers or whole-school changes led by administrators?
4. What are the gaps, barriers, and areas needing improvement in the design, delivery, and integration of NEAP professional development to enhance relevance, sustainability, and impact on educators' practices situated in embedded school contexts?

## **1.4 THEORETICAL LENS**

This study drew upon situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which conceptualized teacher professional development (PD) as a contextualized, social process of negotiating meaning rather than simply acquiring knowledge and skills. Learning was situated within authentic activity systems and embedded in the relationships, tools, rituals, and roles that existed in schools (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Mockler, 2020). This perspective recognized that educators actively constructed knowledge through practice within a community rather than passively receiving interventions, which interacted complexly with cultures in context (Chen & Chang, 2022).

Specifically, this framework highlighted how specialized language, modeling processes, stories, and routines within schools guided teacher inquiry and knowledge integration with PD input (Webster-Wright, 2009; Stenhouse, 2020). Collegial collaboration around shared problems of practice within a professional community also shaped the adaptation of new approaches over time (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). Rather than focusing on the fidelity of implementation, this perspective centered on ongoing negotiation and sense-making in transforming practice.

Therefore, in this case study, NEAP's training efficacy was investigated through educators' participation in authentic pedagogical activities situated in local contexts. The analysis aimed to spotlight how existing artifacts, relationships, identities, and accountability policies enabled or constrained the integration of NEAP's conceptual tools to improve teaching and leadership practice across cases. Broader implications for structuring systemic supports at multiple levels to sustain such situated professional growth should be discussed.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study employed a qualitative research design, adopting a case study approach. As Yin (2018) argued, the embedded and contextualized nature of a case design facilitated a holistic investigation of a complex phenomenon within real-life contexts. This approach yielded nuanced insights into the specific interplay of standardized NEAP training content, modalities, and expectations within the diverse school ecosystems, relationships, and change dynamics that unfolded over extended periods. In contrast to narrowly evaluating or correlating NEAP's impacts, the case framework chosen illuminated the processes and conditions that influenced the successful translation of professional learning into individual pedagogical growth and collective shifts in instructional culture within each unique setting (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

### **2.2 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND THE LOCAL OF THE STUDY**

In this study, six participants were picked. Five out of six informants came from mega-sized public secondary schools, and one supervisor, a division representative, in the Division of Panabo City, was purposefully selected. Their past engagement in NEAP professional development activities over a two-to-

three-year period was the basis for the selection. These five informants were chosen for their varied leadership and performance backgrounds, including two secondary school teachers, two master

teachers, and a school head. All had actively participated in extended NEAP training programs. This selection allowed the researchers to analyze past variations in how NEAP was understood and implemented by educators with different profiles. Additionally, one supervisor was included to provide a broader perspective on the collective dynamics of NEAP capacity building and integration within schools, particularly regarding leadership influences. In total, six participants were interviewed across different cases.

## **2.3 DATA COLLECTION**

The following steps were employed in gathering the data for the study:

The primary data source was comprised of in-depth interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2018) with teachers, master teachers, and a school administrator from the sites. Interviews followed contextualized guides with probes on individual experiences with the NEAP program, operationalization processes, perceived impacts, school-based relationships, structures, and cultures enabling or hindering ongoing NEAP translation.

On the other hand, the post-data collection, transcriptions, translations, expanded notes, and document analysis, collectively supported an extensive qualitative analysis to answer the research questions. The final reporting utilized thick descriptions contextualizing key thematic findings on the situated specific and shared influences on efficacious NEAP translation towards enhanced professional practice.

## **2.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

The researcher systematically analyzed the qualitative data they had collected, focusing on the intricate interplay between external professional development programs and internal school-based ecosystems that fostered discussions about educators learning and growth. Based on Creswell (2013), the constant comparative approach of data analysis involves comparing data from a sample to newly created categories.

In relation, the researcher has also repeatedly read all interview transcripts, immersing themselves in the participants' experiences and interpretations of NEAP training in real-world contexts. These codes coalesced into conceptual thematic frameworks that explained observed patterns in how the locals interpreted, adapted, and propagated NEAP (Saldaña, 2021).

Coded extracts highlighted how individual educators actively grappled with and reinterpreted external NEAP concepts to modify their instructional practices. Other codes captured leadership-driven processes for collective structuring, standardized behaviors, and resource allocation across various schools, which enabled sustained and collaborative application of NEAP. Conversely, codes also identified institutional roadblocks within rigid professional cultures that limited impactful NEAP integration.

Moreover, change trajectory coding traced incremental to radical transformations in policies, teaching methods, collaborative relationships, and student outcomes that developed over time across contexts through sustained NEAP inputs. Careful and consistent comparisons and analyses revealed the contextual factors that influenced and mediated these non-linear, cyclical changes, leading from individual to collective to school-wide leadership-driven NEAP-integrated professional growth (Korotkov, 1998).

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

All participants had undergone NEAP training within the past two to three years. The interviewees described how they had understood and integrated the knowledge and skills gained from the NEAP professional development program into their teaching and leadership approaches within their specific local environments. They also shared their experiences, challenges, and areas for improvement encountered while implementing their newfound learning to address student needs.

Specifically, the first question investigated how educators integrated NEAP learning into their instructional and leadership practices within their school contexts. The second question explored instances of positive NEAP impacts on teaching, learning, and leadership that had occurred. On the other hand, the third question aimed to identify gaps and areas for improvement in NEAP design, delivery, and policy alignment that had been identified. Lastly, the fourth question focused on understanding the monitoring, evaluation, and continual improvement processes that had been in place.

**Table 1. NEAP Participants’ Case Description**

Case/ Pseudonyms		Position	Years of Experience in the Current Position
Teachers	Teacher A	Teacher II	7
	Teacher B	Teacher II	4
Master Teachers	Master Teacher A	Master Teacher I	2
	Master Teacher B	Master Teacher I	1
Principal	Principal A	Principal III	5
Supervisor	Supervisor A	Education Program Supervisor	2

### **EXPERIENCES IN THE INTEGRATION OF NEAP LEARNING INTO INSTRUCTIONAL AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES WITHIN THEIR SPECIFIC SCHOOL CONTEXTS**

Based on empirical results, the NEAP organization, which offered professional development (PD) for educators, not only leveraged their teaching expertise, leadership capabilities, and overall educational quality but also facilitated an enriching experience that fostered connections among educators. This experience allowed them to share experiences and collaborate. The invaluable experiences of educators in various educational practices were recognized. Moreover, the school and division leaders also benefited from the program, as it enhanced their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and team management techniques.

### **ADOPTION OF COMPREHENSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING MODEL/APPROACHES/ STRATEGIES**

#### *Professional Development Program Application*

Following participation in professional development (PD) programs, educators identified the importance of applying their newfound knowledge in the classroom. Implementing these new teaching approaches, strategies, and methodologies held the potential to significantly enhance student learning experiences. Integrating the knowledge and skills gained from PD into teaching practices could create a more dynamic and effective learning environment for students.

Participants emphasized the value of applying the knowledge they gained from the NEAP training. Their key takeaways focused on integrating the SOLO framework, Learners Management System, Cooperative Learning, and HOTS PLP (Higher Order Thinking Skills Personal Learning Plans).

#### *Resource Implementation*

The teachers reported the feeling of being supported throughout the process. These valuable resources were then implemented in their respective classrooms, as evidenced by their positive feedback.

*"I have effectively utilized the Learning Management System to enhance student engagement and track progress. I have incorporated technology-aided manipulatives and integrated Microsoft software tools to improve literacy in mathematics teaching." – (T-A)*

The learning management systems platforms have been instrumental in strengthening the learning experience for both teachers and students by providing a virtual classroom environment. These systems tracked student progress (Al-Fraihat Joy, Masa'deh & Sinclair, 2020; Hadjithoma-Garstka S, & Clark, 2011) and offered functionalities like course registration, grade tracking, update notifications, and announcement boards (Al-Fraihat et al, 2020; Oakes, 2002; Watson & Watson, 2012). The continued rise in temperatures has contributed to the enduring popularity of asynchronous classes. As a result, LMS emerged as a valuable tool for educators to share instructional videos, foster online discussions, and upload presentations and documents (Alzahrani, 2019).

*"My learning about using HOTS questions in the classroom and how to categorize the answer of the students in what level of the SOLO Framework." – (T-B)*

*"It stimulates compliance and being receptive to supporting the learning approaches that are driven by the SOLO Model." (MT-B)*

*"Teachers made use of cooperative learning and students performed activities that encouraged them to work with teams such as doing a recital, a group drama that depicted the topics given to them." (MT-A)*

*"Since the emergence of NEAP, it's a big help. Why? We are nurtured and let students do on their own. The teacher helps the students learn on their learning." (P-A)*

*"The teacher who I was able to observe conscientiously integrated the ideas enshrined in the HOTS Professional Learning Packages to address the unique needs of their students. The teacher adapted the strategies suggested in NEAP's HOTS PLPs where she used local environmental issues to engage the learners and make the learning more relevant to their lives. This tailored approach increased student engagement and improved critical thinking skills, as evidenced by their performance in that day's class discussion and assessment activities." (S-A)*

*"Teachers increasingly employed active learning strategies such as group discussions, debates, and project-based learning." (S-A)*

Similarly, Naz & Murad, 2017 emphasized that the use of innovative teaching methods helped enhance the performance of students of diversity.

## **STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACHES**

Previously, a shift towards student-centered learning approaches placed students at the forefront of their educational journeys. Interviews with participants revealed that following their introductions to NEAP-inspired methods, they embraced the challenge of empowering learners to take ownership of their

studies. In the past, educators performance evaluations considered solely the timely completion of assigned duties (Giambi&Obiechina, 2019). There is a need to understand the role of technology in the success engagement in designing for learning that involves the use of technology (Kerka, 2020).Hence, their statements were:

*“However, when teachers are sent to several trainings and workshops, they are introduced to various teaching strategies that make them see and experience the practicality of the approach.” (T-A)*

*“I also activated their abilities to think and respond critically.” (T-B)*

*“I have moved away from traditional teaching methods and continuously strive to improve, develop, and stay up-to-date with new teaching methodologies in mathematics. In an era where technology plays a significant role in learning, it is crucial to align my teaching approaches with the diverse preferences of today’s students.” (MT-B)*

*“Shift from Traditional to Student-Centered Approaches. NEAP emphasizes student-centered approaches. Teachers now focus on engaging students actively in the learning process.” (MT-B)*

Given these responses, student-centered approaches proved a major takeaway for teachers in their attendance to the professional development programs. Professional development programs offered a valuable lesson to teachers: the power of student-centered approaches. These programs highlighted how student activity can lead to deeper understanding (Vygotsky, 1978), increased motivation, and greater autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985) for students. Additionally, they explored the concept of learners constructing knowledge themselves, which, as Piaget (1973) explained, fosters a more meaningful learning experience.

*“When translating NEAP learning into practice, several key factors have to be considered by teachers and school heads:*

*Student Population: Understanding the students’ backgrounds, learning styles, and academic levels was crucial. For example, the integrations of HOTS needed to be scaffolded for students with lower proficiency levels to ensure they could grasp higher-order concepts.*

*Resources: Availability of resources like technology and teaching materials.” (S-A)*

The experience of adult learners is the foundation for their educational pursuits (Akin, 2014; Bruner, 1960; Culatta, 2013), which means that instructional materials were relevant in the pursuit of their growing learning exposures. Besides, there’s a quick transfer of learning to their practical lives (Akin, 2014) because of their varied educational practices.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING.**

After participating in the free NEAP training sessions, seminars, and workshops, educators embarked on strategic planning at both the division and school levels. These plans aimed to utilize the valuable knowledge gleaned from the sessions. However, a hurdle emerged: translating these plans into concrete actions. Feedback from participants revealed feelings of being overwhelmed by the implementation process among teachers, school heads, and division personnel. Despite this challenge, positive outcomes were still observed in students' experiences.

*“I have made some adjustments while combining NEAP approaches, varied situations, and experiences.” (T-A)*

*“Teachers supported students by providing clear guidelines, scaffolding, and gradual exposure to new strategies.” (T-A)*

*"When students struggle to articulate their thoughts, I rephrase the questions and assist them in explaining their ideas." (T-B)*

*"Teachers' constant reassurance and welcoming approach in class discussions aid students to stay out of their comfort zones." (T-B)*

*"Engaging activities, such as group discussions, hands-on experiments, and multimedia presentations, captured their interest." (T-A)*

*"NEAP has given different activities and that learning can be derived from their own learning. It's not that we don't teach our students, only that learning takes place from their efforts." (P-A)*

*"Integrating HOTS often required additional time for planning and execution, so school heads have to allot schedules for collaborative expertise through LAC sessions." (S-A)*

A motivational classroom thrives on creativity. In such a setting, educators empower students to express their ideas in unique ways. As educational researcher Mia O'Brien argued in a 2012 work, "The academic world has long needed educators who grasp the essence of creativity and recognize its value in teaching."

## **STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM**

In education, teachers and master teachers required full support from school heads and supervisors. This ongoing support ensured that educators remained current with teaching methodologies. As a result, educators were more likely to embrace new approaches positively. Research by Villanueva and Meer (2021) suggested that a supportive work environment fostered a sense of self-worth and job satisfaction among educators, making them less likely to leave their positions. The following statements of participants corroborated these findings:

*"The support provided by NEAP not only enhances the quality of teaching but also ensures that these improvements are sustainable and evolving with educational trends and technologies. This alignment maximizes the impact of my teaching on student learning and outcomes, making the educational process more effective and efficient." (T-A)*

*"If support is provided, it will continue to help the students think critically because Science is a subject that requires critical thinking." (T-B)*

*"Thanks to the Department of Education's support, we attend training, not only for our own benefit but also to enhance our students in new ways." (MT-A)*

*"Constant professional development of teachers has brought new perspectives to teachers. Once hesitant to change are now applying what they have learned. A temporary mindset occurs when one is not adaptable to change. A dedicated teacher would always approve of the latest teaching strategies, when beneficial to the students." (MT-A)*

*"Teachers who engage in continuous professional development are likely to maintain mindset shifts." (MT-B)*

*"Continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to keep them updated with the latest NEAP strategies and educational trends. (P-A)*

*Adequate provision of resources such as training materials, access to technology, and funding for professional development. \*Establishing systems for regular monitoring and feedback." (S-A)*

*"Majority of the schools have been observed to evolve after NEAP involvement." (S-A)*

A study by Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2009) found that investments in educators' professional growth led to benefits for both teachers and their students. These opportunities for professional development historically encouraged collaboration among educators (Avalos, 2011; Fischer et al., 2018; Kennedy, 2006; Postholm, 2012; Sancar et al., 2021). Throughout their careers, educators have engaged in an ongoing process of acquiring and refining knowledge, skills, and attitudes that ultimately support student learning.

*"As a Lisqap scholar under NEAP, I am pursuing a Master of Arts in Mathematics Education with a specialization in secondary teaching. This program has enriched my teaching repertoire with various innovative strategies and approaches to teaching mathematics creatively." (T-A)*

In the past, a focus emerged on understanding how educators grow professionally and the conditions that fostered this growth (Korthagen, 2017). This recognition led the Department of Education (DepED) to implement professional development (PD) programs for educators. These programs included graduate degree scholarship opportunities, with some focus on teachers specializing in their subject areas and others designed for non-majors transitioning into teaching careers.

### **HIGHLIGHT EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE NEAP IMPACTS ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP**

NEAP positively influenced teaching practices, empowered school leaders, and contributed to improved learning outcomes. Previously, educators were updated on the latest teaching methodologies, educational trends, and best practices through enhanced professional development (PD) opportunities. Participation in NEAP-accredited courses and workshops ultimately led to better teaching and more effective school management for teachers and leaders. With access to developmentally sequenced teaching and learning processes, educators were able to model exemplary practices and enhance their existing teaching methods.

### **MENTORSHIP, PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION, AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) serve as a valuable platform for educators to explore, share, and connect. Sessions like PLCs, classroom observations, benchmarking against other teachers' classrooms, and showcasing student work were all methods enthusiastic and passionate educators used to refine their craft. These educators weren't just focused on improvement; they also aimed to upskill and relearn throughout their careers. Notably, research by Anderson & Taner (2023) found that expert teachers extensively reflected on their practice, frequently helped colleagues, and continuously learned throughout their careers. The interview data from the study supported these findings by Anderson & Taner (2023).

*"This ongoing assistance ensured that I could continue to refine my skills, troubleshoot challenges, and stay updated on best practices. Ultimately, the positive impact of the NEAP takeaway was evident in the improved learning experiences of my students." (T-A)*

*"Engaging fellow educators in discussions and brainstorming sessions allows us to collectively reflect on the relevance of NEAP programming to our teaching contexts." (T-A)*

*"My co-teacher's positive annotations and suggestions offer a new perception of applying the processes. It makes learning wonderful." (T-B)*

*"By sharing experiences, exchanging ideas, and identifying common challenges, we can collaboratively identify opportunities for improvement and advocate for changes that better meet our needs." (MT-B)*

*"Education is a continuous movement. We continue to learn from one another." (P-A)*

*"A school principal recounted how a master teacher, guided new teachers in implementing innovative instructional strategies." (S-A)*

Many educators yearned for connections with their peers. Collaboration was identified as a learning skill ([Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015]), an interpersonal skill ([National Research Council, 2011]), a way of working ([ATC21S, 2014]), and a way each person thinks ([Enyedy & Stevens, 2014]). Opportunities to collaborate with colleagues benefitted students because they provided more balanced instruction and consistency among educators. Conscious and deliberate efforts to listen to others' experiences fostered openness ([Marshall et al, 2021]). School Heads often juggled the affairs of the school. Therefore, mentoring teachers such as master teachers could assist and guide other teachers. Mentorship, as a result, promoted rapid learning ([Stanulis & Floden, 2009]). Novice teachers could have had direct access to mentoring teachers who could have shared their knowledge, thus reducing the time to acquire necessary information. Educators who continually sought change played a pivotal role in making this progress possible, in the hope that it had positively impacted everyone's lives.

## **IDENTIFY GAPS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN NEAP DESIGN, DELIVERY, AND POLICY ALIGNMENT**

NEAP, like any organization, identified the importance of recognizing the discrepancies between its current state and its desired future. This facilitated a gap analysis, which in turn helped pinpoint areas needing improvement. This analysis led to the creation of an action plan aimed at bridging those gaps. While NEAP had previously delivered improved services, educators were now consistently meeting high-quality standards. In essence, performance had become paramount. NEAP's continued regression was proving highly detrimental. The sooner gaps were identified and addressed, the better. Therefore, a renewed focus on gap analysis could promote better policy outcomes and serve the public interest. It could also address weaknesses and ensure effective policy implementation.

## **INTERACTIVE GROUP DIALOGUE**

Previously, researchers explored how talk between educators and students could function as a platform for expressing learning. Lefstein (2008) and Maybin (2006) suggested that such talk is a way to negotiate identity. Additionally, Hennesy, Wegerif, and Ahmed (2020) highlighted linguistic ethnography as a valuable methodological approach, revealing how communication shapes our understanding of the world around us. As quoted by the participants' views:

*"Identifying outdated policies or leadership mental models that may be hampering NEAP innovation requires careful examination of current practices and organizational culture."* (T-A)

*"Contextualize training content to align with local realities, student demographics, and curriculum requirements."* (T-A)

*"Establish clear communication pathways. Regularly share updates, program details, and expectations through official channels (e.g., emails, newsletters, webinars)."* (MT-B)

*"Teachers may be given an avenue to express their needs. Teachers may also be given options as to what courses they will be trained in so that they can cater to what they only need."* (MT-A)

*"Create a feedback loop where teachers can express their needs, challenges, and suggestions."* (MT-B)

*"I can only suggest to NEAP to create workshops or trainings to address burn-out and stress management."* (P-A)

## **NEED FOR RESEARCH-BASED LEARNING**

Research-based learning challenged educators to reconsider their role in professional development. It emerged as an important aspect of professional education, and its widespread adoption transcended mere knowledge acquisition. This enhanced the relevance of PD programs to educator effectiveness (Brew, 2013). Brew also recognized the value of research-based learning in fostering student independence and provided a sound framework for curriculum design.

*“NEAP could support educators in conducting action research projects to investigate and address specific challenges or areas for improvement in their teaching practice.” (T-A)*

*“When teachers are expected to cover the lesson in one setting, even if the discussion goes beyond the time required in the class program. Hence, comprehension skill is still overlooked.” (MT-A)*

*“Overloaded Curriculum- Teachers are expected to cover a vast curriculum within limited time frames.” (MT-B)*

*“Existing Practices: The existing teaching methods and school culture play crucial roles. School heads needed to immerse teachers in NEAP ideas so that there is a smooth transition and acceptance from the current, towards ideal practices.” (S-A)*

In response to calls from educators to re-evaluate aspects of existing practices, the DepED launched the Sulong Edukalidad movement in 2020. This initiative aimed to upskill and reskill educators through a revamped professional development (PD) program (DepED, 2020). The program, as noted by Gatchalian (2021), effectively bridged the gap between pre-service and in-service teacher education.

This emphasis on professional development placed educators in a calibration process designed to strengthen their teaching skills. Recognizing teachers as catalysts for national development, the program underscored their vital role in long-term and sustainable nation-building. By empowering teachers, the initiative aimed to equip them to nurture and develop future generations of learners.

*“NEAP could organize interactive workshops and webinars focused on practical strategies and tools for implementing innovative teaching methodologies.” (T-A)*

*“Neap should amplify the use of HOTS questions.” (T-B)*

*“In the co-creation process for developing National Educators’ Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) content and delivery, several key stakeholders should be involved to strategically enhance academic excellence. Teachers and school leaders are at the forefront of education. Their insights, experiences, and needs are invaluable. Teachers and leaders should participate in needs assessments to identify gaps, challenges, and areas for improvement.” (MT-B)*

Giami and Obiechina (2019) argued that strong leadership is crucial for planning, organizing, and directing the operations of an educational enterprise, ultimately benefiting the entire education system. Therefore, McIntyre's (2005) study advocated for clear and actionable research findings to be communicated to decision-makers. This collaboration between researchers and educators, as emphasized by all levels of school and practice, was deemed essential. Quartz et al. (2017) further highlighted that understanding the root causes of identified problems is vital for local predictions and planning.

Moreover, open communication was identified as a key factor in bridging the gap. Bates and Morgan (2018) suggested that educational leaders and professional development (PD) facilitators could leverage a wider range of offerings by actively listening to teachers' challenges and interests.

## **UNDERSTAND MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES**

The Quality Assurance and Monitoring and Evaluation (QAME) Framework for the NEAP Core Program championed a philosophy of professional learning that was evidence-informed, standards-based, and results-driven. In keeping with this approach, the NEAP had previously adopted the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model for its evaluation strategy. This choice was likely due to the model's simplicity and relevance in informing improvements to existing training programs.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

In education, written work served as the cornerstone of assessment in formal education systems. Educators use it to gauge students' academic preparedness, track their learning progress, and assess their skill development. However, other assessment methods, such as portfolios, presentations, and projects, also found their place in the system. In this study, participants recounted that, when implementing the NEAP, they verified its application in classrooms by stating the following:

*"They showcase their abilities through performance output and written tasks." (T-A)*

*"Formative & Summative Assessments and Diagnostic Tests are still in." (MT-A)*

*"Several tools and assessments can be utilized such as Diagnostic Test and Formative Assessment." (MT-B)*

*"Mayroontayongginagamitna rubrics." (P-A)*

## **PROVIDE FEEDBACK**

Aside from monitoring the progress of the students through implementing NEAP ideas, educators among themselves also had feedback giving and receiving. They produced transferable knowledge (Cartwright et al, 2020) both to students and their colleagues. They shared that:

*"Feedback has highlighted the value of sessions that address current challenges in teaching and learning, incorporate evidence-based practices, and provide practical strategies that can be easily implemented in the classroom." (T-A)*

*"Teachers have expressed a preference for workshops and activities that promote active learning, collaboration, and reflection, rather than passive lectures or presentations." (T-A)*

*"I only give feedback on myself and with my co-workers. We do the sharing of ideas during LAC sessions to improve ourselves." (T-B)*

*"Regular feedback from teachers ensures that NEAP content remains responsive and practical." (MT-B)*

Furthermore, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) emerged as a critical process for organizations to assess the effectiveness, progress, and impact of their professional development programs. In the case of NEAP, this approach provided educators with a comprehensive range of programs, including training sessions, seminars, workshops, and scholarships. These initiatives all aimed to support both career development for educators and student growth. (June et al., 2020) previously highlighted that well-designed M&E findings can be used to evaluate the program's contributions to policy reform and ultimately drive more transformative change. (Metz & Louison, 2018) further emphasized that successful implementation begins with identifying the most suitable interventions. This process involves weighing the available options against their expected effects to ensure they align with local needs, priorities, and existing programs.

## **4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), DepED's training arm, actively pursued intensifying the professional development of educators in the country. It addressed the need for professional competence, management, and leadership excellence within the educational community through three key components: training and development, program development, and research and development.

The experiences of the six participants (previously interviewed) confirmed that their satisfaction with NEAP programs reached a high level. Their fruitful participation in NEAP training, seminars, workshops, courses, and scholarships gave them a brighter perspective. They saw that teaching could still be improved, teaching strategies could be refined, and students could have the best experiences even in classrooms. This resulted in students showing off their abilities and celebrating their success. Leaders also reached out to schools more smoothly, feeling happy about the successful transfer of knowledge from training to classrooms. The program's effectiveness was proven by students' contributions to society, demonstrating the positive impact of education on their well-being.

The impact of NEAP on teaching, learning, and leadership was best exemplified by the competitions attended by students and coaches. The current implementation of ideas could be modeled after the approaches and knowledge inspired by NEAP. However, the simplest way to highlight these cases was the progress educators saw and experienced in their classrooms and schools. For school and division leaders, the technical assistance they extended to teachers, especially the "Pakigtambo" initiative, stretched out their support to teachers and school heads. This fostered a sense of community, where everyone looked out for one another as a family focused on the students, who were at the center of this innovation and change.

This study identified areas for further improvement. It constituted a separate part of a larger research project undertaken by Marshall et al. (2021). The gaps and challenges identified could be the subject of further intellectual discourse. Consequently, the following recommendations emerged from this study:

- a. Careful examination of the current practices and outdated policies.
- b. Address the issues of overloaded curriculum.
- c. Provide adequate sources of teaching and learning materials such as books, technology, and supplies)
- d. Provide stress management activities
- e. Support research-related activities
- f. Establish clear communication pathways. Share updates regularly.
- g. Create a feedback loop so that teachers can express their needs and provide suggestions to improve teaching from the field.
- h. Regular feedback from teachers ensures that NEAP content remains responsive and practical. Real-life struggles are best captured by people who have concrete experiences in the field.
- i. Organize interactive workshops and webinars focused on practical strategies and tools for implementing innovative teaching methodologies.

Furthermore, based on the feedback of study participants, the NEAP Design appeared promising for their specific class structures and student demographics. It is important to note, however, that the scope of the study focused on the initial integration of NEAP within the school environment, with limited exploration of its sustained positive effects on participants.

## **CONSENT**

As per international standards or university standards, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

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