



Teachers Preparedness on Implementation of Merit Selection Plan: Basis for Professional Development Program Educators

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Article History:

Received: August 31, 2023

Revised: January 20, 2024

Accepted: January 24, 2024

Published: February 01, 2024

Keywords:

Career Advancement,
Professionalism,
Teacher Development

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Abstract: The study described teachers' demographic profile and preparedness for the Merit Selection Plan. It also determined if differences exist among their demographic profile. This employed quantitative research design with 44 elementary teachers from eight schools in the Cagayancillo District, Palawan, Philippines. The research utilizes frequency and percentage to describe the teachers' profile and weighted mean for their preparedness. Independent t-tests and a series of one-way ANOVA were used to determine the differences in the teachers' preparedness for the Merit Selection Plan based on their profiles. Notably, respondents consider physical and financial challenges in their preparedness. They exhibit high readiness for career advancement, engage in frequent classroom observations, and adeptly integrate learnings from training and seminars to enhance productivity. However, the study reveals no significant difference in the teachers' preparedness for the Merit Selection Plan considering their profile. This finding will inform decision-making processes and contribute to the ongoing discourse on teacher preparedness and professional development.

INTRODUCTION

As the demand for more profound and intricate student learning has heightened, educators, researchers, and policymakers are adopting a more systematic approach to enhance teachers' learning across various stages ranging from recruitment, preparation, and support to mentoring and leadership opportunities. Cultivating sophisticated teaching methods is imperative to foster 21st-century student competencies, encompassing deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, collaboration, and self-direction (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018). Consequently, teachers require opportunities to learn and refine the pedagogies necessary for imparting these skills (Bertrand & Namukasa, 2020; Maghfiroh & Wilujeng, 2023; Ramadhani & Nurita, 2022). The training and re-training of teachers are vital to ensure the quality of education and teaching (Paschal & Mkulu, 2020). Teachers' positive sense of status is linked to various aspects of quality education, including continuous professional development, research engagement, collaboration, and decision-making (Hargreaves & Flutter, 2013). The connection between professional promotion and improved lifestyles

emphasizes the role of career development (Gallop & Gagg, 2007). Verger et al. (2013) identify challenges to quality public education, such as de-professionalization due to policy changes, emphasizing the need for government support in professional and career development. The barriers to teachers pursuing postgraduate studies are examined, including age, workstation, financial status, and workloads, influencing their professional development and position. Professional development is necessary to enhance the teaching labor force's quality and achieve education standards. The impact of teacher preparation on upgrading positions, as outlined in the Department of Education Memorandum Order No. 080, s. 2021 is discussed. The necessity of continuing professional development is reiterated, addressing the challenges faced by Filipino teachers and linking them to quality education improvements. The broader benefits of acquiring a master's degree for teachers, including improved language skills and the ability to mentor others, are explored, aligning with the positive influence of teachers' education on students' academic performance (Ladd & Sorenson, 2017). The review underscores the multifaceted significance of continuous professional development in advancing individual teachers and education quality.

Aligned with the National Competency Based Teacher Standards, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers complements ongoing initiatives to improve teacher quality from pre-service education to in-service training. It delineates teacher quality in the K to 12 Curriculum through well-defined domains, strands, and indicators, providing benchmarks for professional learning, competent practice, and practical engagement (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). These standards explicitly articulate what teachers should know, be able to do, and value to achieve competence, enhance student learning outcomes, and ultimately deliver quality education. Grounded in teaching philosophies of learner-centeredness, lifelong learning, and inclusivity, these standards serve as a public statement of professional accountability, guiding teachers in self-reflection (DepEd Order 42, 2017). The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers summarizes teacher quality in the country, outlining expectations for increasing knowledge, practice, and professional engagement levels. Simultaneously, it allows for the evolving understanding of teachers, applied with growing sophistication across a broader and more complex range of teaching and learning situations. While the provided information highlights the alignment of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers with the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards, it does not explicitly detail a study on the development and implementation of training in the Philippines or the resulting impact on children's understanding of education. However, it outlines the standards that guide teacher quality, emphasizing the importance of pre-service education and in-service training. The standards aim to improve competence, enhance student learning outcomes, and deliver quality education grounded in learner-centeredness, lifelong learning, and inclusivity principles. The Temphasizes the role of these standards in shaping teacher professionalism and fostering self-reflection. A more in-depth study and examination of relevant research literature would be necessary to ascertain the specific details of training development and its impact on children's understanding of education in the Philippines (Alegado, 2018).

The Department of Education issues the enclosed Merit Selection Plan, establishing a competency-based Agency Merit Selection Plan to ensure the Department hires and retains suitable individuals at all governance levels. The plan strictly adheres to merit, fitness, competence, equal opportunity, transparency, and accountability principles. The guidelines encompass basic principles, policies, general procedures, and roles governing the Department's recruitment, selection, and placement system, guiding personnel and stakeholders in appointing individuals in teaching, school administration, related teaching, and non-teaching roles. DepEd Order 007, s. 2023 delineates recruitment, selection, and appointment guidelines, emphasizing the principles of merit, fitness, competence, equal opportunity, transparency, and accountability under the DepEd Merit Selection Plan. Specific guidelines are crucial to placing the right people in the correct positions at the right time, ensuring the organization can respond to 21st-century challenges and opportunities while delivering quality, accessible, relevant, and liberating primary education. The attached Merit Selection Plan, issued by the Department, establishes a competency-based framework for selecting and retaining suitable individuals across all levels of governance. This plan follows the principles of merit, fitness, competence, equal opportunity, transparency, and accountability. It provides comprehensive guidelines governing the Department's recruitment, selection, and placement processes, applicable to teaching, school administration, related teaching, and non-teaching roles. DepEd Order 007, s. 2023 further details these guidelines, emphasizing the importance of merit-based principles in the DepEd Merit Selection Plan. The specificity of these guidelines ensures that the right individuals are placed in the correct positions, enabling the organization to effectively address 21st-century challenges and opportunities while delivering high-quality, accessible, relevant, and liberating primary education.

The critical need for effective professional development in the education landscape underscores the urgency of this research. Inadequate teacher training and preparation can lead to a cascade of detrimental effects, impacting the quality of instruction, student learning outcomes, and overall educational excellence (Day & Sachs, 2004). Without a clear understanding of the key features contributing to successful professional development, policymakers, and educational managers may inadvertently perpetuate ineffective initiatives, hindering teacher growth and adaptation to dynamic educational environments. The urgency lies in rectifying this knowledge gap to ensure teachers receive targeted and impactful professional development opportunities (de Vries et al., 2013). Failing to address this urgency may result in a continuous cycle of suboptimal teaching practices, limiting the potential for positive change and innovation within the education system. This research aims to provide timely insights to inform the development of policies and practices conducive to robust teacher learning and improved educational outcomes. The primary objective of this study is to illuminate the key features of professional development, hoping that this analysis will inform policymakers and educational managers responsible for designing, planning, and implementing adequate opportunities for teacher learning. We aim to provide policymakers with a research-based understanding of PD types that lead to professional learning, instructional improvement, and more profound teacher preparation. By examining the nature of effective professional development,

policymakers and practitioners can evaluate the needs of the teachers' systems and consider how the Merit Selection Plan can better support teachers' learning opportunities. This research study aims to determine the teacher's preparedness for Merit Selection Plan and how they develop the teacher's program for future development.

METHOD

The quantitative research design was employed. This study described the demographic profile of the respondents with their preparedness for the Merit Selection Plan. This study determined if there is a significant demographic profile difference in the teachers' preparedness for the Merit Selection Plan following the recommendations. Respondents of the study were 44 elementary teachers from 8 schools within the district of Cagayancillo in the province of Palawan, Philippines. The participants may respond to the questions using purposive sampling based on their availability, willingness, and voluntarism. The participants may freely complete the survey questionnaire and sign a consent form while their personal information and school details will strictly be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. The primary method employed for data collection in this study involved using a researcher-designed questionnaire. The procedural steps for data gathering were meticulously planned. Initially, a formal request letter seeking authorization to conduct the study was sent to the district principal and individual school principals or school heads within the Cagayancillo district. Once approvals were obtained, the researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to the identified respondents. Subsequently, the researchers collected the completed questionnaires, ensuring that all questions were answered comprehensively. The first part of the questionnaire gathered the teachers' demographic profile concerning age, gender, civil status, years in service, highest educational attainment, and plantilla position. This was pre-tested to the teachers in inter-island for the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The second part gathered about the Teachers' preparedness for the Merit Selection Plan, education, training and seminars, teachers' class observation, and application of Learning and Development.

The gathered data was analyzed using jamovi software, where data cleaning and assumption checking were also conducted (Pentang, 2021). Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were utilized to summarize the teachers' demographic profile, encompassing age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, plantilla position, and years in service. This facilitated a clear presentation of the participant's characteristics. Moving on to the second question regarding teachers' preparation for the Merit Selection Plan, mean and weighted mean calculations were employed. These measures provided valuable insights into the average levels of preparedness across distinct facets: education, training and seminars, teacher class observation, and application of learning and development. To ascertain significant profile differences in teachers' preparedness for the Merit Selection Plan, independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were employed. These inferential statistical tests allowed for a nuanced examination of potential variations in preparedness scores based on demographic factors such as age, sex, and educational attainment. This methodological blend ensures a

comprehensive analysis, offering a detailed portrayal of the teachers' demographic makeup and a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing their preparedness for the Merit Selection Plan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, data can be seen that shows the actual situation of the personal demographic characteristics of research respondents, as seen from differences in insight regarding the composition of the participant group. In the world of education or in an education system, students will definitely have diversity. Diversity is a requirement for a teacher to create an educational process that can continue to run well, effectively and efficiently. The differences in demographic characteristics can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Personal demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
21-30	12	27.27
31-40	9	20.45
41-50	13	29.55
51-above	10	22.73
Sex		
Male	9	20.45
Female	35	79.55
Civil Status		
Single	14	31.82
Married	29	65.91
Widow	1	2.72
Separated	0	0
Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor of Elementary Education	36	81.82
Master of Arts in Education (Units)	7	15.91
Master of Arts in Education (CarMA)	1	2.27
Length of Teaching Experience		
1-4 years	12	27.27
5-8 years	6	13.64
9-12 years	5	11.37
13-16 years	17	38.63
17 years and above	4	9.09
Plantilla Position		
Teacher I	31	70.45
Teacher II	7	15.91
Teacher III	3	6.82
Master Teacher I	2	4.55
Master Teacher II	1	2.27

Table 1 presents a comprehensive snapshot of the personal demographic characteristics of the study's respondents, offering nuanced insights into the composition of the participant group. The age distribution indicates a varied representation, with a notable presence in the 41-50 age range, comprising nearly 30% of the respondents. The gender distribution underscores a significant predominance of female participants,

constituting approximately 80% of the sample. Regarding civil status, most participants are married, reflecting the stability and commitment often associated with this demographic (65.91%). Researchers also conducted an analysis regarding teacher readiness to face the achievement selection plan. Data on teacher readiness in academic achievement selection can be seen in table 2

Table 2. Teachers’ preparedness for the merit selection plan.

Statement	WM	DI
Teachers’ Preparedness in Education	2.49	P
Teachers develop new personal and professional skills, like independence, self motivation, and time management, to proceed Masteral Degrees.	2.65	P
Consider the signal or far-flung area to proceed with Learning in Education.	2.90	P
The teacher attends a mind-body program discussing the continuous learning process.	2.03	LP
Take into consideration the physical and financial challenges.	3.35	P
Teachers put more personal effort into the learning process and engage independently to complete the academic requirements of an MA or PhD.	1.52	NP
Teachers Preparedness in Training and Seminars	4.68	VMP
Keep a positive attitude on the teachers’ training and seminars at school, district, division, regional, and national levels.	4.94	VMP
They prepare for career advancement.	5.00	VMP
Teachers attend training programs, allowing them to learn new methods, strategies, skills, and tools for continuous professional development.	4.00	MP
Teachers can foster improved levels of engagement among participants as everyone unites under one platform	4.71	VMP
Teachers make a world of difference and can share insights and demonstrate the product’s abilities.	4.74	VMP
Teachers’ Preparedness in Class Observation	2.48	LP
Classroom observations, when done right: Improve a teacher’s ability to teach and, as a result, improve student outcomes.	1.55	NP
Treat every lesson like it is being observed.	2.58	LP
Observation allows monitoring and evaluating a process or output and documenting evidence.	3.00	P
Decide how many observations to be done and the frequency of those observations throughout the year.	1.65	LP
Observing each classroom six to ten times per year for each teacher provides the opportunity for six to ten one-on-one conversations focused on teaching in that classroom.	3.65	MP
Teacher Preparedness in Application of Learning and Development	4.65	VMP
Learning and Development programs are crucial for employers looking to succeed at scale.	4.90	VMP
Providing training can also increase productivity.	4.06	MP
Integrate all learnings in training and seminars attended.	5.00	VMP
Nurturing the employee’s individual development while enhancing business performance.	5.00	VMP
Learning and development are essential for the present and future of an organization.	4.29	VMP

The research data shown in Table 2 provides a picture of teacher readiness to face the achievement selection plan. The data shows the level of teacher readiness in recognizing and overcoming potential obstacles and the potential need for improvement

regarding the level of commitment and independent involvement of teachers in fulfilling the academic requirements of master's or PhD programs. Although teachers demonstrated commendable readiness in facing physical and financial challenges, there remains room for improvement in other dimensions of readiness, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach to teachers' ongoing professional development and academic endeavours. Then, the researchers also obtained data regarding differences in the demographic profile of teacher readiness towards achievement selection plans, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Difference between the respondent's demographic profile and the merit selection preparedness.

Dimension	Profile	t/F-statistic	p-value	Result
Education	Age	1.408	0.312	Not Significant
	Gender	0.275	0.785	Not Significant
	Civil Status	1.219	0.314	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	2.441	0.146	Not Significant
	Teaching Experience	4.784	0.028	Significant
Training and Seminars	Plantilla Position	0.887	0.482	Not Significant
	Age	0.285	0.835	Not Significant
	Gender	1.173	0.250	Not Significant
	Civil Status	1.760	0.510	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	1.944	0.200	Not Significant
Teacher Class Observation	Teaching Experience	0.711	0.607	Not Significant
	Plantilla Position	0.459	0.717	Not Significant
	Age	0.184	0.905	Not Significant
	Gender	2.187	0.037	Not Significant
	Civil Status	1.176	0.405	Not Significant
Application of Learning Development	Educational Attainment	1.285	0.331	Not Significant
	Teaching Experience	1.131	0.407	Not Significant
	Plantilla Position	1.053	0.407	Not Significant
	Age	3.508	0.066	Not Significant
	Gender	-0.209	0.836	Not Significant
Application of Learning Development	Civil Status	1.265	0.825	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	0.123	0.886	Not Significant
	Teaching Experience	0.126	0.968	Not Significant
	Plantilla Position	1.220	0.354	Not Significant

The data shown in Table 3 explains the differences between the demographic profiles of respondents and students' selection readiness. The data obtained shows a series of Independent Sample T-tests and one-way ANOVA tests, which were carried out to determine significant differences in profiles of teachers' readiness to face achievement selection. The data shows a significant difference between training and seminars in terms of education, favouring those who have obtained a master's degree or unit. Meanwhile, age, gender, civil status, education level and position do not affect teacher readiness. Moreover, the entire demographic profile does not influence teacher preparation regarding training and seminars, teacher classroom observations, and implementation of learning development.

Respondent's Demographic Profile

In this study, the demographic data of respondents presents a comprehensive picture of the personal demographic characteristics of research respondents, which offers different

insights into the composition of the participant group. The age distribution indicates a varied representation, with a notable presence in the 41-50 age range, comprising nearly 30% of the respondents. The gender distribution underscores a significant predominance of female participants, constituting approximately 80% of the sample. Regarding civil status, most participants are married, reflecting the stability and commitment often associated with this demographic (65.91%). The educational background of the teacher-respondents reveals a clear emphasis on bachelor's level education, with over 80% holding a Bachelor of Elementary Education degree. The length of teaching experience exhibits diversity, with a substantial portion of participants having accumulated 13-16 years of teaching experience, indicating a cohort of educators with a considerable tenure in the profession. The distribution of plantilla positions illustrates that the majority hold the position of Teacher I, followed by Teacher II and Teacher III, indicating a hierarchical structure within the participant group. This detailed breakdown of demographic characteristics highlights the diversity of the respondent pool. It sets the stage for understanding the potential influence of these characteristics on the teachers' preparedness for merit selection, as explored in subsequent analyses.

How Teachers Prepare for the Merit Selection Plan

In assessing teachers' preparedness in education based on the provided statements and their respective mean ratings, it is evident that consideration of physical and financial challenges received the highest mean rating of 3.35. This suggests a notable level of preparedness among teachers in acknowledging and addressing the potential obstacles related to both physical and financial aspects in the pursuit of advanced degrees. Teachers actively recognize the significance of these challenges, demonstrating a proactive approach to overcoming hurdles that may arise during their academic endeavors. The higher mean rating indicates a heightened awareness and preparedness in dealing with the practical aspects that can impact the educational journey. However, it is essential to note that while this aspect of preparedness stands out, there are other areas, such as personal effort and engagement in the learning process, where the mean rating is notably lower at 1.52. This indicates a potential need for improvement regarding teachers' perceived level of commitment and independent involvement in fulfilling the academic requirements of Master's or PhD programs. While teachers exhibit a commendable preparedness in addressing physical and financial challenges, there is room for enhancement in other dimensions of readiness, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach to teachers' continuous professional development and academic pursuits.

Teachers demonstrate exceptional preparedness in training and seminars, as reflected in the mean ratings of the provided statements. The highest mean rating of 5.00 is assigned to the statement emphasizing teachers' proactive preparation for career advancement. This perfect score underscores an outstanding level of readiness among educators, indicating a collective commitment to plan and pursue opportunities for professional growth actively. Still, the commitment to continuous professional development is evident in teachers' active participation in training programs (Mean = 4.00). While slightly lower than the previous statements, this score still highlights a strong

engagement in learning new methods, strategies, skills, and tools, showcasing a dedication to staying updated in the field. The highest mean ratings collectively depict a teaching community that is exceptionally well-prepared, optimistic, and actively engaged in professional development (Capulso et al., 2021). The commitment to career advancement, positive attitudes, and active participation in training and seminars underscores teachers' dedication to continually enhancing their skills and contributing to the overall improvement of education.

The weighted mean ratings provide a comprehensive glimpse into teachers' perceived preparedness across various domains. In terms of education, teachers seem inclined to develop new skills for advanced degrees, focusing on addressing physical and financial challenges. However, independent engagement for academic requirements receives a comparatively lower endorsement. Training and seminars emerge as a strength, as teachers express a positive attitude, a robust commitment to career advancement, and a keen interest in continuous professional development. Classroom observation garners mixed responses, with solid support for its positive impact on teaching ability and student outcomes but slightly lower enthusiasm for consistent observation practices. In learning and development applications, teachers showcase a solid commitment to integrating acquired knowledge from training and seminars into their professional practice, highlighting a recognition of its critical role in individual growth and overall organizational success. These nuanced findings provide valuable insights for educational institutions and policymakers, pointing to areas of strength and potential improvement in teachers' preparedness across different facets of their professional development. Consideration of these insights can inform targeted interventions and strategies to enhance overall teacher effectiveness and satisfaction.

Examining the provided statements regarding teachers' preparedness in in-class observation reveals diverse levels of emphasis or concurrence with each point. The statement garnering the highest mean rating, indicative of robust support, underscores the notion that "Observing each classroom six to ten times per year for each teacher provides the opportunity for six to ten one-on-one conversations focused on teaching in that classroom" (Mean = 3.65). This underscores a shared belief in the significance of frequent observations as a catalyst for meaningful one-on-one discussions centered on refining teaching practices. Conversely, the statement earning the lowest mean rating signifies a comparatively lower degree of agreement or significance: "Decide how many observations to be done and the frequency of those observations throughout the year" (Mean = 1.65). This implies the presence of reservations or challenges related to determining observation frequency, potentially reflecting divergent opinions or concerns within class observation. Despite a unanimous agreement on the advantages of regular classroom observations for fostering meaningful discussions, there appears to be less consensus on the explicit importance of determining observation frequency, perhaps attributable to practical or logistical considerations.

In assessing the mean scores of teacher preparedness in the application of learning and development, the provided data reveals a spectrum ranging from the highest to lowest mean values. The items that emphasize the integration of all learnings from training and

seminars attended stand out with a perfect score of 5.00, indicating a highly favorable perception among respondents. This suggests a strong consensus regarding the importance of synthesizing knowledge acquired in various educational settings, reflecting positively on the efficacy of training and seminar programs. Additionally, items 4 and 5 also boast high mean scores of 5.00, affirming the significance of nurturing individual employee development to enhance overall business performance. On the other end of the spectrum, item 2 registers a comparatively lower mean score of 4.06, signaling a relatively less enthusiastic response to the notion that providing training can increase productivity. While still above a moderate level, this lower mean suggests a divergence in opinions or perhaps a perceived need for improvement in how training is linked to productivity gains. Overall, the data underscores the consensus on the crucial role of learning and development while shedding light on specific areas that may warrant further attention or refinement.

Demographic Profile of Teacher Readiness in the Merit Selection Plan

The results indicate a notable and statistically significant difference in preparedness concerning training and seminars based on the teachers' level of education. Specifically, those who have earned degrees or units in masters exhibit a higher level of preparedness in this aspect compared to their counterparts. This implies that advanced educational attainment, particularly at the master's level, positively influences teachers' readiness for training and seminars. This suggests that additional academic qualifications contribute to their professional preparedness in this domain. Indeed, improving the quality of education resonates with the need to professionalize teachers (Rohini & Pentang, 2023).

On the other hand, the study found no significant impact of age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and plantilla position on teachers' overall preparedness. This suggests that age, gender, marital status, educational background, and official position within the school structure do not play a discernible role in influencing teachers' overall readiness for merit selection. Moreover, the analysis extends to specific aspects of preparedness, such as training and seminars, teacher class observation, and application of learning development. The study found no demographic profile significantly affects teachers' preparedness in these areas. This implies that, regardless of age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and plantilla position, teachers exhibit a consistent level of preparedness in these dimensions.

CONCLUSION

Examining the respondents' demographic profiles provides a comprehensive understanding of the composition of the participant group. The age distribution showcases a diverse representation, suggesting a mix of experienced and mid-career educators. The significant predominance of female participants reflects the gender distribution within the teaching profession. Furthermore, most being married and holding bachelor's degrees in elementary education indicates a stable and academically focused background. The varied length of teaching experience implies a cohort of educators with considerable tenure in the profession. The hierarchical distribution of plantilla positions reveals the organizational structure within the participant group. The study reveals varying levels of emphasis across

domains. While there is a moderate inclination towards developing new skills for advanced degrees and addressing physical and financial challenges, the endorsement for mind-body programs is comparatively lower. Training and seminars stand out as a strength, with teachers expressing a positive attitude, a robust commitment to career advancement, and a keen interest in continuous professional development. Classroom observation receives mixed responses, with solid support for its positive impact but slightly lower enthusiasm for consistent practices. Teachers firmly commit to integrating knowledge in learning and development applications, emphasizing its critical role in individual growth and organizational success. These insights provide valuable guidance for enhancing teacher effectiveness and satisfaction. The findings underscore the impact of educational attainment on teachers' readiness, with those possessing master's degrees or units exhibiting heightened preparedness, particularly in the domain of training and seminars. This suggests a positive correlation between advanced academic qualifications and a heightened inclination toward professional development opportunities. Intriguingly, age, gender, civil status, educational background, and official position within the educational hierarchy were not found to significantly influence overall preparedness or preparedness in specific dimensions such as training and seminars, teacher class observation, and application of learning development. These results indicate consistency in teachers' readiness across diverse demographic profiles.

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