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COHERENCE BETWEEN DEVELOPED COMPETENCIES VERSUS NEEDED COMPETENCIES OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS OF CENTRAL MINDANAO UNIVERSITY

Aprell L. Abellana^{1*}, Denis A. Tan², Jean A. Aquino³, Ma. Vivienne J. Segumpan⁴

^{1,2,3,4} *Central Mindanao University, College of Education, Musuan, Maramag, Bukidnon, Philippines.*

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Corresponding author: Aprell L. Abellana

ABSTRACT

Pre-service teachers' pedagogical competencies were examined using the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) and a mixed methods design that combined survey data with interviews and a focus group discussion. Pre-service teachers rated themselves as competent in all seven PPST domains, indicating readiness to assume beginning teaching roles in basic lesson planning, classroom facilitation, assessment, and professional conduct, while still seeing the need to improve more complex and context-specific skills. They reported particular difficulties in teaching learners with disabilities and those in difficult situations, in managing actual classes beyond simulated settings, and in handling subjects outside their specialization. Cooperating teachers, in contrast, rated pre-service teachers at advanced or highly competent levels, especially in curriculum and planning, learning environment, assessment and reporting, and personal growth and professional development, showing confidence in their classroom performance and professional behavior. Both groups, however, gave relatively lower, though still positive, ratings in the Diversity of Learners domain and in community linkages and parent engagement. Qualitative findings related these weaker areas to extensive online learning during the pandemic, limited exposure to real classroom environments, and mismatches between pre-service teachers' specialization and assigned teaching loads. The findings suggest that pre-service teachers are generally ready for entry-level teaching, but their competencies can be strengthened through more inclusive and community-based practicum experiences and focused mentoring aligned with PPST domains.

KEYWORDS: Pre-service teachers, Pedagogical competence, Philippine, Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), Cooperating teachers' evaluation, Teacher education programs

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education institutions hold a pivotal obligation for cultivating future educators capable of addressing the intricate academic and socio-emotional requirements of students (Darling Hammond et al., 2017; OECD, 2020). In the Philippines, this obligation is delineated by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which articulate explicit expectations for novice educators across seven domains: content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development (Department of Education DepEdDepEd, 2017). It has become increasingly imperative to ensure that pre-service teachers meet these criteria due to swift transformations in curriculum, technology, learner diversity, and the enduring impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and teacher training (OECD, 2020).

At Central Mindanao University, pre-service teachers engage in organized coursework, field research, and practical teaching at basic education schools that act as cooperating institutions (Magnaye, 2022). These experiences aim to enhance their proficiency across all PPST domains and to equip them for the realities of classroom practice; however, uncertainties persist regarding the extent to which these intended competencies are genuinely cultivated and how they are perceived and interpreted by pivotal participants in the training process (Absolor, 2023; Shaukat, 2021). An outstanding issue is the alignment between the competencies that pre-service teachers perceive they possess and those recognized by cooperating teachers, who evaluate their performance in real school environments; discrepancies between self-assessment and external appraisal may indicate areas requiring enhancement in teacher education programs, especially in converting theoretical training into practical classroom application (Brown & Green, 2022; Smith & Jones, 2020; Taylor & Richardson, 2021).

Moreover, new research emphasizes that effective teaching relies not solely on professional knowledge and abilities but also on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2016; MacCann et al., 2020). Pre-service teachers must effectively manage stress, regulate emotions, sympathize with students, maintain motivation, and cultivate positive connections with colleagues and parents, all while fulfilling curricular and evaluation requirements (Jennings et al., 2017). Most current studies either concentrate solely on

pedagogical competence or consider emotional intelligence as an independent construct, with few research investigating the relationship between these two domains in the context of pre-service teacher education (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Yin et al., 2020). There is a deficiency of localized evidence about how emotional intelligence facilitates or hinders the development and exhibition of PPST-aligned competencies among Filipino pre-service teachers, especially in regional universities like CMU (Magnaye, 2022; Shaukat, 2021).

Moreover, prior research at CMU and other institutions has predominantly utilized either exclusively quantitative or exclusively qualitative methodologies in examining pre-service teacher competence (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative surveys yield valuable summaries of competency levels but fail to encompass the lived experiences, limitations, and interpretations of individuals engaged in pre-service training, whereas qualitative accounts present detailed narratives yet are frequently constrained in scope and unable to reveal patterns across broader populations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An integrated approach is necessary that combines quantitative assessments of competence and emotional intelligence with the insights of pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers, and other academic mentors, in accordance with the mixed methods principles of complementarity and triangulation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Collectively, these deficiencies indicate the necessity for a comprehensive investigation that (1) assesses the competency levels attained by pre-service teachers within the PPST domains, (2) evaluates their emotional intelligence, (3) analyzes the correlation between these two domains, and (4) contrasts and enhances these findings through the perspectives of both pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers. This research aims to establish a solid foundation for enhancing the curriculum, practicum frameworks, and mentoring systems at Central Mindanao University and its partner schools, ensuring that future educators are both technically proficient and emotionally equipped to address the challenges of modern classrooms (Darling Hammond et al., 2017; DepEd, 2017; OECD, 2020).

1.1. Research Objectives

This study examined the coherence between the competencies developed by pre-service teachers of Central Mindanao University's College of Education and the competencies needed for effective teaching for School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the level of competence developed by pre-service teachers as viewed by their cooperating teachers across the seven PPST domains.
2. Correlate pedagogical competence and emotional intelligence of the pre-service teachers.
3. Describe the level of competence developed by pre-service teachers as perceived by both the pre-service teachers and their cooperating teachers.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

The study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, starting with quantitative survey research and progressing to qualitative inquiry to clarify and enrich the statistical findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2019). The quantitative component employed descriptive and correlational methods to assess pre-service teachers' competency levels across the seven PPST domains and link them to emotional intelligence. The qualitative component included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to investigate contextual factors that influenced these competence profiles (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019; Krueger & Casey, 2018). This methodology enabled the triangulation of viewpoints from pre-service and cooperating teachers, resulting in a thorough picture of competence development (Fetters et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2017).

2.2. Locale of the Study

The study was carried out at Central Mindanao University in Musuan, Maramag, Bukidnon, as well as DepEd collaborating schools in Bukidnon, Malaybalay City, and Valencia City, who hosted CMU pre-service teachers during their internships. These locations provided a variety of socio-cultural and classroom settings that matched typical public basic education environments in the province (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020).

2.3. Participants of the Study

The research comprised of 219 fourth-year pre-service teachers from the College of Education at Central Mindanao University who had finished their internship during the academic year 2024–2025. Their grade range (1.0 to 1.75) signified consistently robust academic achievement, enabling the program to concentrate on competence enhancement rather than academic remediation. Cooperating teachers were chosen using purposive sampling, considering their mentorship experience, professional license, and graduate degrees (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A minimum of five years of experience as cooperating

teachers, a valid professional license, and at least a Master's degree was mandated to guarantee elevated levels of pedagogical proficiency and evaluative expertise. These criteria established them as reliable informants able to deliver nuanced evaluations of pre-service teacher competencies and provide substantial qualitative insights to interpret the quantitative results.

2.4. Research Instrumentation

To address the research objectives, the study utilized a set of complementary instruments designed to capture pre-service teachers' PPST-aligned competencies, their emotional intelligence, and the contextual factors influencing their competence development.

- **PPST-Based Competence Questionnaire.**

A structured questionnaire anchored on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), consisting of 37 indicators distributed across seven domains, rated on a five-point Likert scale (1.00-1.80 = Not Competent; 1.81-2.60 = Less Competent; 2.61-3.40 = Moderately Competent; 3.41-4.20 = Competent; 4.21-5.00 = Highly Competent).

- **Emotional Intelligence Scale.**

An adapted emotional intelligence instrument measuring five dimensions (self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social skills) using a five-point Likert scale (1.00-1.80 = Very Low EI; 1.81-2.60 = Low EI; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate EI; 3.41-4.20 = High EI; 4.21-5.00 = Very High EI). This was administered only to pre-service teachers (MacCann et al., 2020; Zeidner et al., 2020).

- **Qualitative Protocols.**

Semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion protocols were developed to elicit reflections, experiences, and explanations from pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers regarding competence development, challenges faced, and factors influencing performance across PPST domains (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019; Krueger & Casey, 2018).

All instruments were validated by experts in teacher education and subjected to pilot testing before full deployment (Taherdoost, 2016).

2.5. Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining institutional permissions from CMU's Research Ethics Committee (REC) and formal clearances from university and DepEd division authorities, quantitative data were collected via

paper-based and online administration of PPST-based questionnaires to pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers (American Educational Research Association, 2011; British Educational Research Association, 2018). Data were collected during the final weeks of the practice teaching session (December 2024-January 2026) to ensure that participants had enough experience to assess competencies (Ali & Kahoot, 2022).

Purposive sampling was used during the qualitative phase of this study to guarantee that participants had direct, relevant, and extensive experience with the topic under inquiry.

Overall, purposive sampling was the best technique since it allowed the study to collect data from participants who were both informed and directly involved in the teaching-learning processes fundamental to the research topics. This verified that the participant characteristics were deep, relevant, and aligned with the study's aims.

2.6. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in alignment with the sequential explanatory mixed methods design, beginning with quantitative procedures to describe and model pre-service teachers' PPST-based competencies and emotional intelligence, followed by qualitative thematic analysis to explain and deepen the observed statistical patterns.

2.6.1. Quantitative Analysis.

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, qualitative descriptors) were computed for each PPST domain and emotional intelligence dimension using SPSS version 26. Independent samples t-tests compared mean competence ratings between pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers. Pearson correlation analysis examined relationships between pedagogical competence and emotional intelligence dimensions, and multiple linear regression analysis identified emotional intelligence dimensions that significantly predicted pedagogical competence (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020).

2.6.2. Qualitative Analysis.

Interview and focus group discussion transcripts were analyzed using manual thematic coding. Initial codes were generated inductively from the data, then organized into broader themes representing factors influencing competence development, challenges encountered, and areas needing strengthening. Themes were validated through peer debriefing among the research team and member checking with selected participants (Saldaña, 2021; Lincoln et al., 2018).

2.6.3. Mixed Methods Integration.

Integration occurred at the interpretation stage, where qualitative themes were connected to and used to elaborate the quantitative findings. Qualitative data provided explanations for quantitative patterns, such as why certain PPST domains received lower ratings or why variability existed in competence assessments (Fetters et al., 2019; Morse, 2016).

2.7. Ethical Considerations

Before collecting data, the CMU Research Ethics Committee (REC) issued a permit on the conduct of the study. All processes were approved and permissions were obtained from the university and DepEd division authorities. Participants were given informed consent forms that explained the study's goal, risks, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the possibility to withdraw. Pseudonyms were employed in qualitative reports to safeguard participants' privacy. Data were securely saved in password-protected files available only to the study team, and results were reported honestly, with no fabrication or data manipulation (Emanuel et al., 2016).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Cooperating Teachers' Ratings of Pre-Service Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

Cooperating teachers assessed pre-service teachers at an overall advanced/highly competent level across the seven PPST domains ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.13$), reflecting substantial confidence in their preparedness for initial teaching roles. The highest domain scores were observed in Personal Growth and Professional Development ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.61$), Curriculum and Planning ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.63$), and Learning Environment ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.66$). The Diversity of Learners attained the lowest, yet still advanced, rating ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.73$). In the domain of Curriculum and Planning, cooperating teachers assigned the highest evaluations to pre-service teachers' abilities in selecting, developing, and utilizing diverse teaching and learning resources, including ICT, as well as in soliciting guidance on strategies to enhance teaching practice, in alignment with research on technology integration and planning proficiency (Magulod, 2017; Gadian & Alon, 2024). In Personal Growth and Professional Development, the greatest ratings were observed in exhibiting behaviors that maintain the dignity of teaching through a caring attitude, respect, and integrity, aligning with the literature on professional values and teacher identity (Schön, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Table 1: Cooperating teacher assessment of pre-service teacher competence

PPST Domain	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	4.34	0.68	Advanced Competence
Learning Environment	4.43	0.66	Advanced Competence
Diversity of Learners	4.23	0.73	Advanced Competence
Curriculum and Planning	4.48	0.63	Advanced Competence
Assessment and Reporting	4.34	0.68	Advanced Competence
Community Linkages	4.39	0.54	Advanced Competence
Personal Growth	4.56	0.61	Advanced Competence
Overall Competence	4.40	0.13	Advanced Competence

3.2. Pre-Service Teachers' Self-Ratings of Pedagogical Competence

Pre-service teachers rated themselves as competent across all seven PPST domains (overall M = 3.98, SD = 0.78), indicating perceived readiness for beginning teaching roles. Highest ratings were observed in Learning Environment and Personal Growth and Professional Development (both M = 4.08), reflecting confidence in creating supportive classroom climates and commitment to continuous professional growth. Lowest, though still competent, ratings appeared in Diversity of Learners (M = 3.86, SD = 0.83), suggesting less confidence in addressing complex learner diversity, especially learners with disabilities, those in difficult circumstances, and those requiring specialized support (Li et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025).

Within Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, pre-service teachers reported particular difficulties in teaching learners with disabilities and those in difficult situations, managing actual classes beyond simulated settings, and handling subjects outside their specialization. In Assessment and Reporting,

lower confidence appeared in using assessment data as feedback for instructional improvement and communicating learner progress to diverse stakeholders. The Diversity of Learners domain showed highest variability (SD = 0.83), with pre-service teachers rating themselves lower on using strategies responsive to learners with disabilities, giftedness, and talents, and understanding special educational needs of learners in difficult circumstances (Li et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025).

Independent samples t-tests revealed statistically significant differences between pre-service teacher self-assessments and cooperating teacher assessments across all seven PPST domains (p < .001), with cooperating teachers consistently rating pre-service teachers higher. The largest discrepancies appeared in Curriculum and Planning (mean difference = 0.47), Personal Growth and Professional Development (mean difference = 0.48), and Learning Environment (mean difference = 0.35), suggesting potential gaps between self-perception and external evaluation (Klassen & Kim, 2019).

Table 2: Pre-service teacher self-assessed competence across PPST domains

PPST Domain	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	3.92	0.74	Competent
Learning Environment	4.08	0.75	Competent
Diversity of Learners	3.86	0.83	Competent
Curriculum and Planning	4.01	0.77	Competent
Assessment and Reporting	3.93	0.76	Competent
Community Linkages	3.97	0.80	Competent
Personal Growth	4.08	0.78	Competent
Overall Competence	3.98	0.78	Competent

3.3. Pedagogical Competence and Emotional Intelligence of Pre-Service Teachers

Emotional intelligence exhibited a moderate and significant correlation with pedagogical skill (r = 0.543, p < .001). All five measures of emotional

intelligence had significant positive correlations with pedagogical skill, as illustrated in Table 3. This trend aligns with previous research connecting emotional intelligence to teaching efficacy and classroom dynamics (MacCann et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2020; Miao et al., 2018).

Table 3: Correlation between emotional intelligence dimensions and pedagogical competence

Emotional Intelligence Dimension	r	p-value	Interpretation
Self-awareness	0.383	< .001	Moderate, positive
Managing emotions	0.425	< .001	Moderate, positive
Motivating oneself	0.494	< .001	Moderate, positive
Empathy	0.378	< .001	Moderate, positive
Social skills	0.442	< .001	Moderate, positive
Overall Emotional Intelligence	0.543	< .001	Moderate, positive

Multiple regression analysis indicated that self-motivation and social skills strongly predicted pedagogical competency, as shown in Table 4. The two dimensions collectively explained 29.8% of the variance in pedagogical competence ($R^2 = 0.298$, $F(5, 144) = 12.18$, $p < .001$). These findings corroborate

global evidence that the motivational and social aspects of emotional intelligence are essential for maintaining instructional quality and professional engagement (Chan et al., 2022; Gutiérrez-Moret et al., 2023).

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis predicting pedagogical competence from emotional intelligence dimensions

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p-value
Constant	1.245	0.182	–	6.846	< .001
Self-awareness	0.052	0.041	0.071	1.268	.207
Managing emotions	0.067	0.039	0.103	1.718	.088
Motivating oneself	0.211	0.045	0.366	4.689	< .001
Empathy	0.039	0.038	0.058	1.026	.307
Social skills	0.154	0.043	0.266	3.581	< .001

3.4. Qualitative Data Analysis

Two sets of quantitative data were examined: firstly, the perceived competence of pre-service teachers across the seven domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST); secondly, the evaluation of cooperating teachers regarding the competence of pre-service teachers in the seven PPST domains. Each quantitative dataset is accompanied by a qualitative analysis to enhance comprehension of the statistical findings. Two primary inquiries were posed. To assess perceived competence, researchers

inquire whether students identify any constraints that prevent them from rating themselves more favorably. The researchers were interested in whether the pre-service teachers had potential for further progress, given the good ratings provided by the cooperating teachers.

3.5. Competence of Pre-Service Teachers

Three themes emerged after the in-depth interview for further understanding on pre-service teachers' perceived competence as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Sample Responses of Pre-Service Teachers when asked "What experiences or limitations do you think contributed to your current competence level in this area?"

Theme	Extracts
The "online" effect	We were taught online part of the calculus in third year there was Calculus 3 back then ..so I knew we have limited foundation when face-to-face returned our profs assumed that we knew already we couldn't also tell them that we don't know so we just proceed with the lesson.
Preparation prior to deployment	We wish we have more experience teaching "the real students" and not our classmates so we would be that confident of the real world.
In-campus experience of teaching minor subjects	I am not really confident to teach Math since I have a different major, what I did? I studied so hard and ask my friends to explain to me everything.

The quantitative results demonstrate that pre-service teachers exhibit proficiency in all PPST domains, with an overall mean score of 3.98. This indicates that they have the essential abilities and attributes anticipated of novice teachers and feel well equipped for the duties of the profession. Nonetheless, despite this favorable result, the competence level did not attain the "highly competent" category, necessitating an investigation into the reasons that may have affected their self-evaluation.

Based on the qualitative data, a significant element influencing the perceived competency of students is the new typical way of instruction via virtual platforms. The final cohort to experience exclusively online instruction in their inaugural year received

courses in a format that restricted interaction, modeling, and prompt feedback. Students indicated that online delivery limited the profundity of knowledge transfer, especially in skill-based or practice-oriented disciplines. This aligns with studies indicating that online learning during the pandemic resulted in deficiencies in pedagogical preparedness and diminished prospects for genuine participation (Izhar et al., 2021; Salarvand, 2023; Leka et al., 2022; Elsayary et al., 2023; Hafeez et al., 2020; Adedoyin et al., 2020).

The pandemic's impact resulted in constrained mobility and diminished field exposure during their initial training years. Microteaching and demonstration teaching were performed solely within the university, utilizing classmates as

simulated learners. While this largely mimics the reality of lesson delivery, it fails to present students with the complexities of an actual classroom environment, such as learner variety, unforeseen instructional problems, and classroom management issues. John Dewey's experiential learning posits that information is most effectively attained through practical engagement. Genuine field experiences are essential for cultivating confidence, adaptive knowledge, and professional identity in pre-service teachers. This corresponds with research highlighting the necessity of providing pre-service teachers with genuine application experiences, supplemented by feedback, to adequately prepare them for their teaching roles (Cleaver, S et al., 2020; Korthagen, 2010).

An further problem arose from the assignment of pre-service instructors to instruct minor courses beyond their area of expertise. A considerable number of participants perceived this as inconsistent with their training and preparation. Despite successfully instructing these subjects via self-study

and collaborative teaching, they recognized that this circumstance influenced their perceived competency. Instructing material outside one's area of expertise has been demonstrated to affect teacher confidence, instructional quality, and perceived self-efficacy (Gasó, 2025; Perez, 2024). Despite perceiving themselves as competent, the additional cognitive and emotional burden led to a more restrained self-evaluation.

Collectively, these characteristics demonstrate that competency is not merely the result of formal education but is significantly influenced by context, modality, exposure, and the congruence between training and actual teaching responsibilities. The qualitative findings substantiate the quantitative results by elucidating the reasons skill levels, albeit satisfactory, did not attain the highest category. This reinforces the assertion that teacher preparation programs must account for both curriculum design and the learning contexts and conditions in which competencies are cultivated.

Table 6: Sample Responses of Cooperating Teachers when asked "Are there any domains in which the pre-service teachers still needs improvement? Please explain"

Themes	Answer
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	They prepare their lessons well, but some of them tend to memorize what they say, so when asked by their students not really what they have prepared the tendency is they have trouble providing answers. They will try their best to maneuver the discussion. then eventually I had to intervene and help... CT 6
Diversity of Learners	They need to be flexible. We noticed sometimes their strategies are fixed to this one set of student, they are good, but sometimes they need to know the kind of students so they know how to strategize. CT 1

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Pre-Service Teacher Readiness and Areas for Growth

Findings reveal that pre-service teachers at Central Mindanao University have robust foundational preparedness for initial teaching positions, particularly excelling in curriculum design, classroom management, and commitment to professional growth. The elevated competence ratings of cooperating teachers in most PPST domains indicate that practicum experiences successfully convert theoretical training into tangible classroom practice, aligning with recent studies from the Philippines and Southeast Asia that report generally high pedagogical competence among teacher education graduates (Millenes & Gaid, 2021; Magulod, 2017; Gadian & Alon, 2024).

The remarkable proficiency in Curriculum and Planning illustrates pre-service teachers' capacity to choose and incorporate ICT resources, synchronize learning outcomes with competencies, and solicit feedback for instructional enhancement through systematic lesson design and reflective planning methodologies (Darling-Hammond, 2017). This

research corroborates findings that intentional curriculum design experiences, collaborative planning, and supervised feedback cycles enhance pre-service teachers' planning skill and adaptive expertise.

Likewise, elevated ratings in Personal Growth and Professional Development underscore the program's effectiveness in fostering professional identity, ethical temperament, and dedication to lifelong learning. Pre-service teachers' expression of learner-centered teaching philosophies and exhibited professional values—such as caring, respect, and integrity—enhances their prospects for enduring career advancement and resilience in challenging educational environments (Schön, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Modern teacher education research underscores that these dispositions are essential for sustained effective teaching, enhancing both instructional quality and teacher retention.

Nevertheless, ongoing issues in the Diversity of Learners area expose significant deficiencies that necessitate systematic intervention. Both self-assessments and evaluations by cooperating teachers revealed a lack of confidence and inconsistent proficiency in instructing learners with disabilities,

meeting the requirements of students in challenging situations, and applying inclusive teaching methods. This pattern reflects global research indicating that pre-service teachers frequently exhibit favorable attitudes towards inclusion but lack the requisite specialized knowledge and practical abilities for differentiated education and tailored support (Li et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025).

Qualitative findings offer a contextual elucidation for this disparity. The extensive online learning necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic markedly diminished pre-service teachers' engagement with varied classroom settings and genuine inclusive practices, aligning with recent evaluations of teacher preparation during the pandemic (Baloran, 2020; Kim & Asbury, 2020; La Velle et al., 2020; Seifert & Loughran, 2024). Pandemic-era cohorts encountered diminished in-person connection with peers, reduced opportunity to watch seasoned educators handling behavioral and learning variety, and constrained practice with adaptive instructional methodologies. This emphasizes the enduring effects of pandemic disruptions on teacher training and reinforces the necessity for improved field-based experiences centered on inclusive education.

Mismatches between specialization and teaching assignments limited pre-service teachers' capacity to exhibit pedagogical content knowledge, especially for content-specific teaching strategies and the development of higher-order thinking skills. When pre-service teachers instructed outside their primary discipline, apprehensions regarding subject accuracy eclipsed pedagogical factors, constraining potential for nuanced instructional decision-making and adaptive teaching (Hobbs, 2013; du Plessis, 2019). This discovery highlights the significance of appropriate placement alignment and indicates that administrative limitations in collaborating schools may unintentionally undermine the quality of practicum experiences.

4.2. Emotional Intelligence and Pedagogical Competence

The moderate positive correlation between emotional intelligence and pedagogical competence, with self-motivation and social skills as significant predictors, aligns with contemporary research on teacher effectiveness. Teachers who demonstrate high levels of intrinsic motivation are more likely to engage in reflective planning, implement evidence-based strategies, and persist through instructional challenges (Chan et al., 2022; Gutiérrez-Moret et al., 2023). Similarly, social skills enable teachers to build positive relationships with students, collaborate effectively with colleagues, and communicate clearly with parents and administrators—capacities fundamental to classroom management and student

engagement (Miao et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2020).

These findings suggest that teacher education programs should explicitly integrate emotional intelligence development into curriculum and practicum experiences. Recent meta-analytic evidence confirms that emotionally intelligent teachers experience lower burnout, higher job satisfaction, and greater teaching effectiveness (MacCann et al., 2020; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Training in emotion regulation, self-awareness, empathy, and social competence can strengthen pre-service teachers' capacity to navigate the interpersonal and emotional demands of classroom teaching (Gutiérrez-Moret et al., 2023).

4.3. Qualitative Perspectives on Pre-Service Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions elucidated contextual explanations for the quantitative trends and underscored convergence perspectives of pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers.

The cooperating teachers assessed the pre-service teachers as very proficient, with an average rating of 4.40, signifying that the PSTs exhibit the requisite talents and skills across all PPST categories. This aligns with other research that demonstrate the excellent competency of pre-service individuals in the field (Afalla & Febilico, 2020; Rubio & Saenz, 2023).

It is important to emphasize that pre-service teachers have been adequately prepared—mentally, physically, and cognitively—before their deployment. However, they are not anticipated to achieve perfection in teaching, as they have yet to encounter and engage with the realities of interacting with students and other members of the school community. Consequently, the competency of the pre-service teacher is regarded as emergent and perpetually evolves through genuine teaching experiences. This favorable assessment confirms their preparedness for the teaching profession, yet it also prompts a critical inquiry: Is there still potential for enhancement as these novice educators enter actual classroom settings?

The collaborating educators recognized two critical domains for ongoing enhancement: (1) content expertise and pedagogical strategies, and (2) comprehension of learner variety. Their response indicates that while PSTs fulfill the anticipated requirements, they would gain from enhanced subject matter expertise and more sophisticated educational techniques.

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers emphasizes the importance of mastering content knowledge. Research undertaken by Kadarisma et al. (2019) and Asbolor (2023) has demonstrated the significance of pedagogical and content knowledge in

effective teaching and learning contexts.

Likewise, the necessity to enhance PSTs' capacity to manage learner diversity mirrors overarching developments in modern classrooms. Inclusive education is emphasized in SDG 30 of the UN, resulting in a more heterogeneous learning environment. It is evident that prospective educators recognize the diverse learning needs of pupils and establish an unbiased learning environment. Palei (2024) asserts that the effective implementation of inclusive education requires instructors to have a diversified array of competences designed to meet the varied requirements of learners.

These insights indicate that elevated competence ratings do not signify the absence of developmental requirements. They emphasize the necessity of ongoing mentoring, focused support, and organized chances for practical experience to assist pre-service teachers in enhancing the areas highlighted by their cooperating teachers. This aligns with research supporting comprehensive induction programs and prolonged practicum experiences to reconcile theoretical training with classroom realities.

4.4. Discrepancies Between Self-Assessment and External Assessment

Careful interpretation is necessary due to the notable discrepancies between cooperating teacher assessments and pre-service teacher self-assessments. A positive sign of reflective capacity necessary for professional development, pre-service teachers consistently rated themselves lower in all domains, which may indicate critical self-awareness and realistic recognition of gaps between current abilities and ideal teaching standards (Schön, 1983; Klassen & Kim, 2019). It might also be a reflection of new instructors' increased awareness of their own shortcomings and uncertainties, especially when contrasting themselves with more seasoned educators.

On the other hand, collaborating teachers' consistently higher ratings might place more emphasis on observable behaviors, effort, and development in comparison to initial teacher expectations than on the complex pedagogical reasoning needed for long-term successful instruction. According to research, mentor teachers tend to overlook deeper aspects of pedagogical thinking and adaptive expertise that are primarily developed through extended practice in favor of surface-level competencies that are easily observable during practicum, such as lesson delivery, classroom demeanor, and resource preparation (Gadian & Alon, 2024).

Important factors for teacher education programs are highlighted by this assessment gap. Self-assessment is still essential for encouraging reflective

practice and professional autonomy, even though external validation from cooperating teachers offers insightful perspectives on classroom preparedness. Programs should also discuss how to understand evaluation disparities so that pre-service teachers can keep a critical attitude toward their evolving practice while adjusting their self-perceptions versus outside feedback.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION PRACTICE

The results point to a number of empirically supported strategies for enhancing teacher preparation at Central Mindanao University and other comparable regional establishments. First and foremost, improved field experiences that are especially focused on inclusive education are crucial. In addition to explicit mentoring in Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, and tailored support strategies, this includes structured placements in special education classrooms, schools serving indigenous communities, and contexts with high learner diversity (Li et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). Long-term, supervised exposure to diverse students has been shown to improve pre-service teachers' inclusive efficacy and practical competency.

Second, in order to maximize placement alignment, university supervisors and cooperating school administrators must prepare jointly to overcome specialization-assignment mismatches. Compensatory supports, such as co-teaching arrangements, content coaching, and additional resources, might lessen detrimental effects on pedagogical growth when perfect matching is not feasible (Hobbs, 2013; du Plessis, 2019).

Third, more real-world assessment experiences during practicum are necessary to improve assessment literacy development. According to Xu and Brown (2016) and Pastore and Andrade (2019), pre-service teachers should take part in comprehensive assessment cycles, which include creating instruments, conducting tests, analyzing outcomes, giving feedback, and using data to guide future instructional decisions. Gaps in formative assessment procedures can be filled by collaborating teachers and university supervisors facilitating guided reflection on assessment-instruction links.

Fourth, programs should use identified strengths in professional development and curriculum planning as a foundation for correcting weaker competencies. For instance, links between planning competency and inclusive practice can be strengthened by specifically incorporating inclusive education topics into practicum requirements and lesson planning coursework. Similarly, this priority can be maintained throughout teacher preparation and the early phases of a teacher's career by

incorporating diversity-focused professional development goals into frameworks for personal growth (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Fifth, pre-service teachers' capacity for emotion regulation, empathy, and social competence can be strengthened by explicitly incorporating emotional intelligence training into teacher education curricula. It has been demonstrated that organized professional development in these areas improves student results, job satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness (Gutiérrez-Moret et al., 2023; Miao et al., 2018).

6. CONCLUSION(S)

Based on the findings of the research, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The CMU pre-service teachers have achieved an overall advanced level of competence across the PPST domains, demonstrating readiness for entry-level teaching. However, the relatively lower and more variable ratings in addressing learner diversity especially learners with disabilities, those in difficult circumstances, and indigenous learners emphasize the need to further strengthen inclusive, field-based preparation in these specialized areas.
2. Pedagogical competence showed a positive, moderate association with overall emotional intelligence among CMU pre-service teachers. Those with higher emotional intelligence tended to report stronger teaching competence. Motivating oneself and social skills emerged as key emotional intelligence dimensions that support the development of effective teaching practices.
3. Pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers both describe CMU pre-service teachers' competencies as generally strong and aligned with PPST expectations, especially in curriculum

planning, learning environment, and professional growth. Pre-service teachers, however, rate themselves more cautiously and report difficulties in addressing learner diversity, managing complex classroom situations, and teaching outside their specialization.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the conclusions of the research, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The College of Education and partner DepEd divisions may consider designing more focused inclusive practicum opportunities. These could involve guided placements in classes serving learners with disabilities, those in difficult circumstances, and indigenous learners, supported by mentoring that highlights concrete inclusive strategies.
2. Teacher educators and Student Teaching supervisors may consider embedding focused emotional intelligence activities in existing courses and fieldwork. These can include short goal-setting and reflection tasks for self-motivation, and structured group work or role-play to strengthen social skills and classroom interaction.
3. Program heads and cooperating school mentors may consider organizing regular group discussions and coaching sessions with pre-service teachers. These can use concrete cases on learner diversity, challenging classroom situations, and off-specialization teaching, where mentors first demonstrate specific strategies such as sample lesson segments, questioning techniques, or behavior interventions and then guide pre-service teachers in practicing and refining these approaches in a supportive setting.

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