

# PERCEIVED BARRIERS AND CONCERNS IN THE PERFORMANCE OF MASTER TEACHERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

Nida A. Ayonan<sup>1</sup> & Husna T. Lumapenet<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Master Teacher, Department of Education, Matalam Central Elementary School, Matalam, North Cotabato, Philippines

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor V, Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology, Doroluman, Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines

## ABSTRACT

*This qualitative, phenomenological study explored the lived experiences, barriers, and concerns of master teachers in relation to their professional performance in the North Cotabato Division of the Department of Education (DepEd), Philippines. A total of 25 participants, including master teachers, novice teachers, and school heads, were purposively selected based on their direct involvement with master teacher roles. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), providing rich, in-depth insights into participants' experiences. The collected data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and ethical clearance, were rigorously followed throughout the study. The findings revealed several key challenges that master teachers face, including difficulties in adapting the curriculum to diverse learner needs, managing time effectively while balancing leadership and mentoring roles, and maintaining classroom order in increasingly diverse educational settings. Moreover, gaps in professional development, particularly in leadership, technology, and diversity, were identified, along with a lack of formal mentorship and administrative support. These factors contribute to stress, burnout, and reduced performance, underscoring the mismatch between the high expectations placed on master teachers and the support available to them.*

*The study also highlighted critical areas where master teachers require additional resources and support, such as specialized training, stronger administrative backing, and better access to technological resources. The allocation of adequate time for lesson planning, mentoring, and leadership responsibilities is essential to prevent overload. Furthermore, fostering opportunities for collaboration, peer mentoring, and recognition are vital for sustaining motivation and preventing burnout.*

*To improve master teachers' performance, the study recommended targeted interventions, including specialized workshops, collaborative learning opportunities, and leadership development programs. Technology integration training and personalized coaching or mentorship were also emphasized as vital for supporting professional growth. Recognizing and rewarding master teachers for their contributions would enhance their motivation and strengthen their leadership roles, ultimately improving instructional effectiveness and job satisfaction.*

**Keyword:** - Barriers and Concerns, Performance, and Master Teachers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Master teachers are expected to demonstrate exemplary teaching practices, provide mentorship to peers, and lead instructional improvement within their schools. However, despite their crucial roles, they often face numerous barriers and concerns that hinder their effectiveness. These challenges may stem from structural, administrative, or personal constraints, impacting their ability to fulfill both teaching and leadership responsibilities.

As the educational landscape continues to evolve in the 21st century, understanding the lived experiences of master teachers becomes vital in supporting their professional roles.

According to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2020), high-quality professional development must extend beyond content mastery to include leadership training, classroom management, and instructional improvement. Master teachers are at the forefront of these expectations, yet many lack access to the necessary resources and support systems. The integration of new technologies, curriculum reforms, and rising accountability measures have further complicated their work, often leading to role overload and professional stress (Allen, Wang, & Neitzel, 2021).

Moreover, administrative challenges such as heavy workloads, insufficient recognition, and limited time for collaboration and mentoring are frequently cited concerns among master teachers. Day, Gu, and Sammons (2022) emphasized that for teacher leaders to thrive, school administrators must provide appropriate support, including workload adjustments and recognition of contributions. Without such support, the effectiveness of master teachers may be compromised, affecting the broader educational community they are meant to influence.

Recent research also points to the growing importance of peer collaboration and emotional well-being. Brown and Green (2023) highlight that sustained professional growth among master teachers requires structured opportunities for mentoring, access to updated instructional tools, and consistent emotional support. These elements are crucial for maintaining motivation and preventing burnout in demanding school environments.

Given these complexities, this study seeks to explore the perceived barriers and concerns in the performance of master teachers through a phenomenological lens, aiming to capture their lived experiences and provide insights that can inform policy and practice. By focusing on their voices, the study aspires to contribute to the development of supportive structures that enable master teachers to perform their multifaceted roles effectively.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences, barriers, and concerns of master teachers in relation to their professional performance. The research was conducted in North Cotabato Division of DepEd, Philippines. A total of 25 participants including master teachers, novice teachers, and school heads were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct experience with master teacher roles. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), which allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' insights. Sessions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Ethical standards were strictly followed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and ethical clearance from the institution's review board.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Emerging Themes on the Challenges Faced by Master Teachers

The results in table 1 revealed that the challenges faced by master teachers are strongly related to curriculum implementation, teacher leadership, classroom management, and professional development. These themes were consistently echoed across multiple respondents, indicating the multifaceted nature of the roles and responsibilities assigned to master teachers.

A majority of the participants emphasized that curriculum implementation presents a significant challenge, especially as master teachers strive to adapt learning content to meet the diverse needs of students while staying current with evolving educational trends. Respondents noted that flexibility in delivering curriculum and aligning it with student interests and learning goals is essential. As Respondent 9 shared, "*Curriculum itself often dictates what content must be covered, but effective implementation allows for flexibility to incorporate student interests.*"

Teacher leadership also emerged as a frequent theme. Many master teachers are expected to lead by example, mentor peers, and model best practices. These responsibilities, however, can be taxing when combined with their own teaching and administrative duties. Respondent 4 noted, "*These challenges span across all areas—curriculum implementation becomes difficult when master teachers are stretched thin and unable to provide adequate support.*" This underscores the need for effective time and workload management strategies.

Additionally, professional development was highlighted as both a necessity and a challenge. Teachers expressed the importance of ongoing training to enhance their knowledge, instructional strategies, and leadership capabilities. As Respondent 8 emphasized, "*Staying up-to-date with curriculum and pedagogy is essential for professional development. Master teachers need access to opportunities to keep their skills sharp.*"

Although mentioned slightly less frequently, classroom management was still recognized as a crucial aspect. Respondents pointed out the increasing difficulty of maintaining student engagement and discipline in increasingly diverse classroom environments. Respondent 10 shared, "Classroom management remains challenging due to the increasing diversity of students and the need to maintain engagement." This complexity adds to the already demanding role of a master teacher.

The participants emphasized the interconnected nature of these challenges, highlighting that they are not isolated but instead overlap significantly. The balancing act between teaching, mentoring, curriculum planning, and leadership roles often requires adaptability, time management, and resilience. Respondent 13 summed this up well, stating, "Time management, such as balancing teaching, mentoring, and administrative duties, impacts curriculum implementation, teacher leadership, classroom management, and professional development."

These findings are supported by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2022), who emphasized that effective teacher professional development must address not only content knowledge but also leadership, instructional skills, and classroom management. This holistic approach helps educators navigate the complex demands of modern education.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2022), effective professional development supports teachers not just in content mastery, but also in developing leadership skills and improving instructional practices. The challenges experienced by master teachers—balancing roles, managing classrooms, implementing curricula, and pursuing professional growth—reflect the complex realities of 21st-century teaching demands.

**Table 1.** Challenges faced by master teachers.

Emerging Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
Curriculum Implementation	<i>General</i>	Challenges involve adapting curriculum to meet diverse learner needs, staying current with trends, and delivering content effectively.
Teacher Leadership	<i>General</i>	Master teachers balance leadership roles and mentoring responsibilities, often stretched thin due to time constraints and expectations.
Professional Development	<i>General</i>	Ongoing training is essential for skill enhancement, staying updated with pedagogy, and supporting fellow teachers effectively.
Classroom Management	<i>Typical</i>	Increasing student diversity and maintaining engagement are pressing challenges in managing classrooms effectively.
Interconnected Nature of Roles	<i>Typical</i>	Challenges are not isolated—they overlap and require flexibility, time management, and resilience from master teachers.
General	50% and above of the responses	
Typical	25% of the responses	
Variant	24% of the responses	

### Gaps in Training, Mentorship, and Administrative Support Affecting the Performance of Master Teachers

Table 2 presents an insightful thematic analysis of the gaps in training, mentorship, and administrative support impacting master teachers' effectiveness and well-being. Based on the responses of the respondents, several *typical* and *variant* themes have been identified, illustrating the challenges master teachers face in fulfilling their roles.

A typical theme that emerged across the responses is the lack of specialized and advanced training for master teachers. Many respondents indicated that master teachers often do not receive adequate professional development in areas critical for their role, such as leadership, technology integration, and handling diverse student needs. As one respondent (R6) noted, "In training gaps, there is a lack of specialized training, insufficient technology training, limited training on diverse student needs. These gaps can significantly impact performance." Another respondent (R8) emphasized the need for more high-level training in specific areas: "Master teachers require more high-level training in different aspects of learning," indicating that without such targeted professional development, their capacity to excel in their role is limited.

A significant concern raised in the responses is the lack of formal mentoring or coaching. Many master teachers do not have mentors to guide them in leadership or instructional roles, which hampers their ability to develop professionally. As R4 stated, "Master teachers often receive little formal mentoring or coaching. They may

not have access to their mentors to guide them in these new roles.” Another respondent (R7) observed, “Master teachers need mentoring to help guide them in their leadership responsibilities, but many are left to navigate these challenges on their own.” This lack of structured mentorship contributes to the feeling of isolation and limits opportunities for professional growth and leadership development.

Many respondents noted that administrative support is often inadequate, leading to burnout and reduced effectiveness. One respondent (R10) shared that master teachers often lack recognition and resources: “Administrative support is often lacking, with master teachers not receiving enough recognition, time, or resources to balance their dual roles effectively. These gaps can lead to burnout and hinder their ability to perform at their best.” Similarly, R1 highlighted the issue of limited resources: “Master teachers require assistance such as laptops, printers, and bond paper to complete their reports. They also require financial support from the school to attend seminars and training.” The lack of necessary resources and support not only places undue stress on master teachers but also undermines their ability to effectively fulfill their teaching, mentoring, and leadership responsibilities.

The cumulative effect of gaps in training, mentorship, and administrative support is the impact on master teachers’ performance and well-being. Several respondents pointed out that these deficiencies lead to burnout, stress, and difficulty balancing multiple roles. As R11 succinctly stated, “The burnout master teachers may experience due to heavy workloads is a significant issue. These gaps are crucial to ensuring that master teachers can effectively fulfill their critical roles in improving teaching and learning.” Another respondent (R12) highlighted the broader effects: “The gaps in training, mentorship, and administrative support can significantly impact the performance of master teachers. Without tailored professional development, meaningful mentorship, and adequate administrative backing, even the most experienced teachers may struggle to maintain their effectiveness and well-being.”

A variant theme identified in the analysis is the need for targeted, role-specific support. Respondents emphasized the importance of providing professional development that is tailored to the unique responsibilities of master teachers. As R6 suggested, “Master teachers need professional development tailored to their roles, such as culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed practice, and technology integration.” This tailored support would better equip master teachers to handle the diverse challenges they face. Similarly, R12 called for leadership training and innovative teaching strategies: “Targeted interventions such as leadership training, innovative teaching strategies, collaborative time, and support for time management could help master teachers thrive in their roles.”

Another variant theme highlighted the misalignment between expectations and support. Respondents pointed out that the high expectations for master teachers often do not align with the available structural support, leading to performance challenges. R13 stated, “The gap between expectations and support can create stress and hinder their ability to perform at their best across all roles. More targeted support, such as administrative assistance, time for collaboration, and professional development opportunities tailored to their leadership roles, would help align expectations with the resources provided.” This misalignment is especially problematic given that master teachers are expected to be leaders and mentors, in addition to fulfilling their teaching duties.

The themes outlined in Table 2 provide a comprehensive view of the challenges faced by master teachers due to gaps in training, mentorship, and administrative support. Respondents agree that closing these gaps through targeted, role-specific professional development, structured mentorship programs, and improved administrative backing is essential for enhancing the effectiveness and well-being of master teachers. Addressing these needs will not only support the master teachers themselves but also benefit the broader educational environment by strengthening teaching practices, improving student outcomes, and fostering a sustainable culture of growth and collaboration within schools.

Table 2. Gaps in training, mentorship, and administrative support affecting the performance of master teachers.

Emerging Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
Training Gaps	Typical	Many master teachers lack access to specialized, advanced, or relevant training (e.g., leadership, technology, diversity). This limits professional growth and expertise.
Mentorship Gaps	Typical	There is a lack of formal mentoring or coaching, and in many cases, master teachers themselves have no mentors to guide them in leadership or instructional roles.
Administrative Support Deficiencies	Typical	Administrators may be unaware of or fail to meet master teachers’ needs. Lack of recognition, time, or resources contributes to stress and limits effectiveness.

Emerging Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
Impact on Performance and Well-being	Typical	The absence of support contributes to burnout, stress, reduced effectiveness, and difficulty balancing multiple roles.
Need for Targeted and Ongoing Support	Variant	Master teachers need professional development tailored to their roles (e.g., culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed practice, technology integration).
Misalignment Between Expectations and Support	Variant	High expectations for master teachers are often not matched with sufficient structural support, training, or time allocations, leading to performance challenges.
General	50% and above of the responses	
Typical	25% of the responses	
Variant	24% of the responses	

### Specific Resources and Types of Support Needed by Master Teachers

The table highlights essential resources and support that master teachers need to optimize their roles and effectiveness. These resources cover several domains including professional development, administrative support, technology, time management, and recognition, each of which plays a pivotal role in their growth and success.

One of the primary resources required by master teachers is continuous, high-level professional development and training. Many respondents emphasized the need for specialized training in areas such as leadership, curriculum development, and technology integration. As R1 stated, "*Master teachers need specialized training to not only manage their classrooms effectively but also to mentor others and lead instructional initiatives within the school.*" R4 echoed this sentiment, adding that "*access to advanced leadership training is essential for master teachers to be effective in their mentoring roles and to guide their colleagues with the latest pedagogical strategies.*" This need for professional development is supported by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2020), who stress the importance of high-quality professional development for fostering continuous teacher growth and ensuring educators remain responsive to evolving student needs.

Administrative support is another crucial area for master teachers. Many respondents pointed out the lack of recognition and the heavy workload that often prevents master teachers from fully engaging in leadership and mentoring roles. R9 shared, "*Sometimes, the administrative support is lacking. We need more time to mentor other teachers, but our teaching loads don't allow that.*" Similarly, R11 emphasized the need for more autonomy, stating, "*I feel that if I had more recognition and a reduction in my teaching load, I would have more time to develop leadership strategies and guide my fellow teachers more effectively.*" The importance of administrative support aligns with Day, Gu, and Sammons (2022), who argue that school leaders must provide adequate backing to help master teachers thrive in their leadership capacities and fulfill their mentoring duties effectively.

Technology and material resources also surfaced as significant needs for master teachers. Respondents emphasized that having access to updated instructional materials and digital tools is essential for effective teaching and mentoring. R8 noted, "*I often have to make do with outdated materials or work without the necessary digital tools, which hampers my ability to engage students and provide effective professional development for others.*" As Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) point out, the integration of digital tools in the classroom not only enhances student engagement but also supports collaborative teaching and mentoring, making these tools indispensable for modern educators.

Another recurrent theme was the need for adequate time for lesson planning, mentoring, and collaboration. As R10 stated, "*It's hard to focus on mentoring my colleagues when I am overwhelmed with the daily demands of teaching. Having designated time for leadership and collaboration would make a huge difference.*" R13 also stressed the importance of time management, saying, "*If we had more time to plan lessons together and mentor one another, we could improve our teaching practices and help others do the same.*" This feedback is consistent with Allen, Wang, and Neitzel (2021), who emphasize that balanced workloads are crucial for preventing burnout and enabling master teachers to effectively lead and mentor their peers.

Respondents also highlighted the need for increased collaboration and mentoring opportunities. Master teachers benefit greatly from opportunities to work together, share ideas, and mentor their colleagues. R7 suggested, "*Collaboration with other schools could help us exchange best practices and develop more effective teaching*

strategies." R6 emphasized the value of mentorship, stating, "I would love more mentoring opportunities with experienced leaders who can guide me through the leadership challenges I face." These comments resonate with Day et al. (2022), who argue that fostering collaboration among educators enhances instructional quality and creates a supportive network for professional growth.

Finally, respondents emphasized the importance of recognition and emotional support to sustain master teachers' motivation and prevent burnout. As R14 shared, "Master teachers often work tirelessly without much recognition, and that can lead to burnout. We need acknowledgment and emotional support from our administrators to keep us motivated." R12 also pointed out, "It's crucial to have space for self-care, especially when juggling multiple responsibilities. If our well-being is taken care of, we can perform better and mentor others more effectively." This aligns with the research of Day et al. (2022), who highlight the importance of recognizing the well-being of educators to ensure they remain engaged and motivated in their roles.

The responses from master teachers indicate that a combination of professional development, administrative support, adequate resources, time management, collaboration opportunities, and recognition are critical for their effectiveness. Addressing these areas would help master teachers meet the demands of their roles while fostering

Table 3. Specific resources and types of support needed by master teachers.

Emerging Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
Professional Development and Training	Typical	Master teachers need continuous access to high-level, advanced, and specialized training across diverse areas like leadership, curriculum, and pedagogy.
Administrative and Leadership Support	Typical	Stronger administrative backing is required, including reduced teaching loads, recognition, and autonomy in leadership roles.
Technology and Material Resources	Typical	Master teachers require tools such as laptops, printers, bond paper, and up-to-date instructional materials and digital platforms to support their teaching and mentoring.
Time Allocation and Workload Adjustment	Typical	Adequate time should be allocated for lesson planning, mentoring, collaboration, and leadership duties to prevent overload and improve effectiveness.
Collaboration and Mentoring Opportunities	Variant	Opportunities to collaborate across schools, mentor peers, and access networks of practice help master teachers enhance instructional quality and professional growth.
Recognition, Well-being, and Motivation	Variant	Master teachers benefit from being acknowledged, emotionally supported, and given space for wellness and self-care to sustain engagement and avoid burnout.
General	50% and above of the responses	
Typical	25% of the responses	
Variant	24% of the responses	

### Specific areas requiring more attention for master teachers to enhance their performance

The responses from the participants reveal several key areas that require targeted attention to enhance the performance of master teachers. One significant theme that emerged is the need for teaching strategies and innovation. Respondents emphasized the importance of refining instructional techniques to better meet the diverse needs of students. This includes utilizing differentiated teaching strategies, simplifying complex topics, and effectively integrating digital tools into the teaching process. For instance, one teacher noted, "We need to move beyond traditional methods and embrace more interactive approaches that cater to different learning styles" (Respondent 3). Such innovation is essential not only for engaging students but also for ensuring that teaching methods remain relevant in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

Another consistent theme was collaboration and peer engagement. Many respondents highlighted the value of fostering collaborative environments where teachers can engage in joint planning, team teaching, and open communication. Respondent 7 stressed the importance of *"sharing resources and teaching strategies with colleagues to improve the quality of instruction across the board."* This collaborative approach can enhance instructional practices and create a stronger sense of community among educators, which in turn promotes a culture of shared learning and continuous improvement.

In addition to teaching strategies and collaboration, respondents noted that leadership and mentoring skills were essential areas for development. Master teachers often play leadership roles within schools, mentoring new teachers and guiding their peers. Effective leadership is particularly important for managing conflict, leading change, and fostering a positive school culture. One respondent shared, *"We must be able to support and guide new teachers, helping them navigate challenges and develop their own teaching practices"* (Respondent 5). The need for targeted development in these leadership and mentoring skills reflects the growing expectations placed on master teachers to not only excel in the classroom but also contribute to the professional growth of others.

The importance of cultural and student-centered approaches was also highlighted by several respondents. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, it is critical for master teachers to understand students' varying cultural backgrounds and personalize instruction to meet their individual needs. Respondent 9 observed, *"When we relate lessons to students' lives and cultures, they are more engaged and can better grasp the concepts being taught."* This culturally responsive teaching is crucial for fostering inclusivity and improving student engagement and learning outcomes, particularly in diverse classroom settings.

Another significant theme that emerged was the integration of technology into teaching and leadership. Master teachers must not only be proficient in using educational technology to enhance instructional effectiveness but also to manage their leadership roles and administrative duties. One teacher explained, *"We need continuous professional development on using educational technology to enhance our teaching practices and to manage our responsibilities more efficiently"* (Respondent 2). This aligns with the growing emphasis on technology integration in education, as it can streamline processes, enhance student engagement, and support teachers in their multifaceted roles.

Finally, respondents emphasized the need for time management and role balancing. Master teachers are often tasked with multiple responsibilities, including teaching, mentoring, and administrative duties, which can create significant challenges in maintaining performance across all areas. One respondent remarked, *"With so many responsibilities, it's hard to maintain a high level of performance in all areas. Time management support could make a huge difference"* (Respondent 6). Structured support in this area could help master teachers balance their instructional duties with leadership roles more effectively, ensuring they are able to meet the demands of both their students and peers.

Recent literature supports these findings, particularly the study by Brown and Green (2023), which emphasizes the evolving role of master teachers in the 21st century. Their research underscores the importance of adaptive teaching strategies, collaboration, leadership development, and the integration of technology. They also point out the necessity for master teachers to balance teaching, leadership, and mentoring responsibilities effectively. This aligns with the responses from the participants in this study, who identified similar areas of professional growth. The findings of Brown and Green (2023) further highlight the need for continuous professional development in these critical areas, which is vital for both the teachers' growth and the overall improvement of the educational environment.

Table 4. Specific areas require more attention for master teachers to enhance their performance.

Emerging Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
Teaching Strategies and Innovation	Typical	Master teachers need to refine instructional techniques, use differentiated strategies, subtask complex topics, and effectively integrate digital tools into teaching.
Collaboration and Peer Engagement	Typical	Strengthening collaboration through joint planning, team teaching, and open communication can foster shared learning and instructional improvement.
Leadership and Mentoring Skills	Typical	Focused development in leadership—especially in guiding peers, managing conflict, and leading change—is essential for fulfilling their expanded responsibilities.

Emerging Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
Cultural and Student-Centered Approaches	<i>Variant</i>	Understanding diverse student backgrounds and personalizing instruction to meet their unique needs enhances both inclusivity and learning outcomes.
Technology Integration	<i>Variant</i>	Proficiency in using educational technology is necessary for both instructional effectiveness and leadership in modern teaching environments.
Time Management and Role Balancing	<i>Variant</i>	More structured support is needed to help master teachers balance mentoring roles with classroom duties and administrative demands effectively.
General	50% and above of the responses	
Typical	25% of the responses	
Variant	24% of the responses	

### Effective interventions or professional development opportunities to improve master teacher performance

The responses from the participants on effective interventions or professional development opportunities for improving master teacher performance reveal a variety of strategies that are crucial for fostering professional growth. These interventions cover areas ranging from targeted training to mentorship programs and recognition initiatives.

One of the most commonly mentioned interventions is targeted training and workshops. Respondents highlighted the importance of specialized seminars, workshops, and hands-on training that focus on key areas such as instructional strategies, leadership development, and differentiated instruction. This type of professional development is seen as essential for master teachers to stay updated with modern teaching methods and leadership practices. *For example, one respondent shared, "Specialized training in areas like differentiated instruction and leadership development would help us perform our roles more effectively" (Respondent 4).*

Collaborative learning and peer support were also frequently cited as valuable opportunities for professional growth. Respondents emphasized the benefits of peer observation, co-teaching, group reflection, and collaborative lesson planning. These practices promote mutual learning and create a professional synergy that enhances teaching effectiveness. *One respondent noted, "When we collaborate, we not only share resources but also refine our teaching strategies through real-time feedback and mutual reflection" (Respondent 8).* The collaborative nature of these activities fosters a sense of community among educators, which is vital for professional development.

In addition to collaboration, the theme of leadership development programs was commonly mentioned. Respondents indicated that coaching in areas such as communication, mentorship, conflict resolution, and school-wide leadership would enhance their ability to guide and support peers. *One teacher commented, "Developing our leadership skills, especially in conflict resolution and mentorship, would help us better serve our colleagues and contribute to a positive school environment" (Respondent 6).* Master teachers are expected to take on leadership roles, and these programs help build their confidence and effectiveness in fulfilling those responsibilities.

Another important intervention is technology integration training. With the increasing reliance on digital tools for both teaching and administrative tasks, many respondents recognized the need for training in platforms like Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and various educational technology tools. This training is essential for master teachers to stay current with digital teaching methods and improve their ability to manage online learning environments. *One respondent remarked, "Technology training is vital for keeping up with the demands of modern teaching, both in the classroom and for managing school-wide reporting" (Respondent 2).*

Respondents also noted the value of mentorship and coaching structures. Pairing master teachers with experienced leaders for personalized coaching or mentorship can help guide their development and reinforce their leadership responsibilities. *As one respondent explained, "Having a mentor to guide us through challenges and offer insights into leadership could make a big difference in our effectiveness as master teachers" (Respondent 5).* Such structures provide continuous support and help master teachers refine their leadership skills while navigating complex classroom and school dynamics.

Additionally, recognition and incentives were considered important for motivating master teachers and acknowledging their contributions. Respondents suggested that formal recognition through awards or incentives could reinforce the value of continuous professional development. *One teacher shared, "Being recognized for our efforts in professional development would not only motivate us but also highlight the importance of lifelong learning" (Respondent 7).*



Finally, student-centered and reflective practices were highlighted as key areas for professional development. Respondents pointed out that focusing on innovative and reflective practices, such as action research, culturally responsive teaching, and student engagement strategies, would support deeper impacts on student learning. *One respondent reflected, "Incorporating action research and focusing on student-centered strategies would not only improve our teaching but also benefit the students in a more meaningful way" (Respondent 9).*

These responses align with existing literature on effective professional development for teachers, which emphasizes the importance of targeted training, collaborative learning, leadership development, and the integration of technology. As teachers increasingly face complex challenges in diverse and dynamic classrooms, professional development programs that combine these elements will be crucial for enhancing their effectiveness.

Recent studies highlight the significance of professional development programs that focus on both instructional skills and leadership capabilities. For instance, a study by Smith and Johnson (2024) found that master teachers who participated in targeted workshops and peer collaboration sessions showed significant improvements in their teaching practices and leadership abilities. These programs not only enhanced teaching effectiveness but also empowered teachers to take on more leadership roles within their schools. Furthermore, the integration of technology training and mentorship structures was identified as key factors in helping teachers navigate modern educational challenges. Smith and Johnson (2024) also emphasized that recognizing and rewarding teacher efforts through incentives can greatly contribute to motivation and long-term professional growth.

Table 5. Effective interventions or professional development opportunities to improve master teacher performance.

Emerging Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
Targeted Training and Workshops	Typical	Specialized seminars, workshops, and hands-on training focusing on instructional strategies, leadership development, and differentiated instruction are key for growth.
Collaborative Learning and Peer Support	Typical	Opportunities like peer observation, co-teaching, group reflection, and collaborative lesson planning promote mutual learning and professional synergy.
Leadership Development Programs	Typical	Coaching in communication, mentorship, conflict resolution, and school-wide leadership strengthens the master teacher’s influence and confidence in guiding peers.
Technology Integration Training	Variant	Training on platforms like Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and edtech tools equips master teachers to stay current with digital teaching and reporting tools.
Mentorship and Coaching Structures	Variant	Pairing master teachers with experienced leaders for personalized coaching or mentorship can guide their development and reinforce leadership responsibilities.
Recognition and Incentives	Variant	Acknowledging contributions through awards or incentives boosts motivation and highlights the value of continuous professional development.
Student-Centered and Reflective Practices	Variant	Focusing on innovative and reflective practices such as action research, culturally responsive teaching, and student engagement strategies supports deeper impact.

General 50% and above of the responses  
 Typical 25% of the responses  
 Variant 24% of the responses

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores the complex challenges faced by master teachers in the North Cotabato Division of DepEd, Philippines, revealing that their professional performance is influenced by a combination of factors related to their roles in curriculum development, mentoring, and leadership. The findings highlight the critical barriers of inadequate training, lack of formal mentorship, and insufficient administrative support, which directly impact their

ability to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. Master teachers are required to balance multiple, often conflicting roles, which results in significant stress, burnout, and reduced effectiveness.

The study emphasizes the need for comprehensive and targeted interventions to address the gaps in professional development, particularly in specialized areas such as leadership, technology, and diversity. There is a clear demand for continuous access to advanced training opportunities and the provision of resources that support both pedagogical skills and leadership capabilities. Furthermore, strong administrative support, including reduced teaching loads and recognition for their efforts, is essential to reduce the pressures that master teachers face and enhance their overall well-being.

It is evident from the findings that master teachers also require more time for lesson planning, mentoring, and leadership duties to avoid overload and ensure sustained performance. Collaboration and peer mentoring opportunities should be prioritized, as they foster professional growth, shared learning, and instructional improvement.

Finally, the study concludes that to improve the performance and well-being of master teachers, a comprehensive approach that includes specialized training, leadership development programs, and targeted support systems is necessary. Additionally, the creation of a supportive and collaborative environment, alongside adequate recognition for their contributions, will ensure that master teachers can continue to thrive in their multifaceted roles and make significant contributions to educational quality in their respective schools.

## 5. REFERENCES

- Allen, K. P., Wang, Y., & Neitzel, C. (2021). Supporting teacher leadership and reducing burnout: The role of time and workload balance. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 105, 103423. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103423>
- Brown, A. L., & Green, T. D. (2023). *Master teachers in the 21st century: Leadership, collaboration, and adaptive pedagogy*. *Educational Leadership Review*, 24(2), 34–50.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2020). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development-report>
- Day, C., Gu, Q., & Sammons, P. (2022). The impact of leadership on teacher professional development and motivation: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Educational Change*, 23(1), 45–65. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-021-09441-w>
- Smith, J. A., & Johnson, R. M. (2024). Empowering master teachers through professional development and peer collaboration. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, 15(1), 12–28.