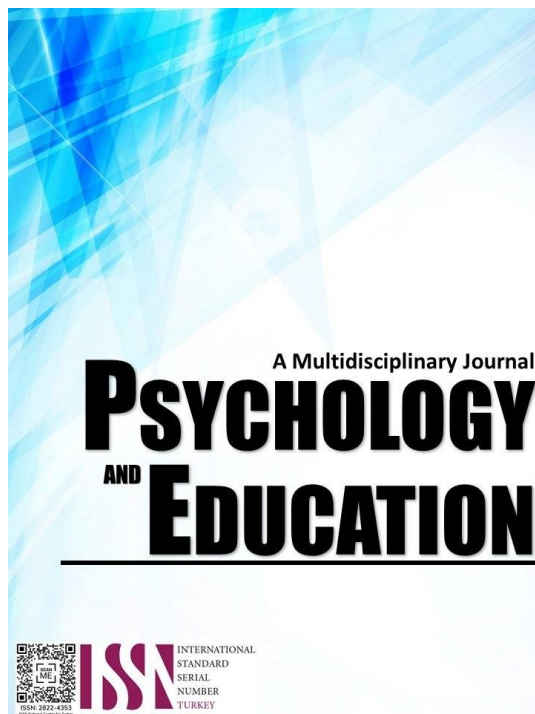


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Teachers' Assessment on Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS): Basis for Action Plan

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Abstract

This study was purposely conducted in the four (4) public elementary schools in Lanao del Norte Division specifically in the Municipality of Kauswagan for school year 2020-2021 to the selected elementary teachers' assessment on the sufficiency and effectiveness of Most Essentials Learning Competencies (MELCs). Specifically, it sought to identify the demographic profile of the teachers (respondents) to correlate with their perceptions of the utilization, sufficiency, and effectiveness of MELCs. Seventy-three (73) respondents were utilized in this study. Data from the respondents were gathered through an authentic questionnaire patterned from the Department of Education (DepEd). The data were treated using weighted mean, frequency, and percentage, weighted mean and standard deviation, and point biserial correlation. Descriptive and correlation design was used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents and to determine the relationship between respondents' demographics and the utilization, sufficiency, and effectiveness of MELCs. A major finding of this study showed that the respondents found out that MELCs were both sufficient and effective. There was no significant relationship between the demographic profile and the sufficiency of Most Essentials Learning Competencies (MELCs) hence, it was not rejected. It was recommended in this study that teachers should attend seminars, training, and workshops regularly to keep abreast with the latest trends in teaching techniques.

Keywords: *teachers' assessment, Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS), action plan*

Introduction

The most recent public health emergency of global concern was the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The disease (COVID-19) started in Wuhan, China. The pandemic spread rapidly all over the world. The world stopped and many economies collapsed. Businesses, companies, and all other establishments came to a halt. Not only did many businesses close but most importantly, schools, universities, and colleges were suspended to mitigate the spread of the virus. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippines was one of the Asian countries which were affected. The said health crisis became a huge problem most importantly to the education sector.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020) has observed that "most governments around the world have temporarily halted educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic" (p.12). These nationwide closures were impacting over 60% of the world's student population. Several other countries have implemented localized closures affecting millions of additional learners.

The Department of Education (DepEd), issued DepEd Order No. 12, s.2020 "Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021 In Light of The Covid-19 Public Health Emergency" and DepEd Order No. 14, s.2020 "Guidelines on the Required Health Standards in Basic Education Offices and Schools" instructing schools to come up with the continuity of education despite the pandemic. This is the Department's response to the challenges posed by COVID 19 in the field of basic education. The Department of Education released a DepEd Order No. 18, s, 2020 "Policy Guidelines for the Provision of Learning resources in the implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan". With the Basic Education -Learning Continuity Plan implemented in schools, the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) to be used nationwide by field implementers for the school year 2020-2021. The release of the MELCs was not just a response to addressing the challenges of the current pandemic but also part of the department's long-term response to the call of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). This developed resilient education systems, most especially during emergencies. The department stressed that the review of the K to 12 curriculum remains ongoing. Thus, the experience with MELCs for this school year would be used to inform and enrich the curriculum review. MAPEH subject was cited as an example to compare the learning competencies of the K to 12 curricula and the MELCs wherein there were One Hundred Thirty-Three (133) learning Competencies in the k to 12 curriculum and only Fifty Four (54) learning competencies in MELCs. The MELCs will enable the Department to focus instruction on the most essential and indispensable competencies. The learners must acquire these, as the bureau anticipated challenges in learning delivery. The copy of Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) was provided by the Department of Education as the primary reference for all Schools. The Schools Division and Regional Offices would determine and implement learning delivery approaches that were suited to the local context and delivery of learners. They would adapt to the challenges posed by Covid- 19. DepEd has made it clear that MELCs do not diminish the standards set by the full K to 12 curriculum guides.

The guidelines mentioned above were not exempted from imperfections. These Alternative Delivery modes (ADM) of education gaps varied from internet issues, lack of paper for the printing of Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) for the modular delivery of education, and lack of knowledge in computer usage among teachers. Another problem was that the teachers found it hard to connect with their learners about their lessons because of the Most Essentials Learning Competencies (MELCs) used in modular lessons. These were only some of the observable gaps in implementing the ADM in the Philippines which also holds and is observable in the District of Kauswagan,

Lanao del Norte.

In the same manner, the researcher would like to determine the teachers' assessment of Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) in selected schools in the Kauswagan District. Furthermore, the study would also delve into the effectiveness and sufficiency of the MELCs utilization. Specifically, this study hoped to capture the basis for strengthening the provision of technical assistance to address the challenges encountered by the teachers. The study was conducted in Kauswagan District, Lanao Del Norte Division in School Year 2020-2021.

Research Questions

This study assessed the assessment of teachers of the Most Essential Learning Competencies: Basis for an Action plan in the Kauswagan District. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. age,
 - 1.2. sex,
 - 1.3. years of teaching experience,
 - 1.4. modalities, and
 - 1.5. platforms used to communicate with the learners?
2. What is the assessment of the teachers on the MELCs in terms of:
 - 2.1. coverage,
 - 2.2. progression, and
 - 2.3. learners' performance?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the assessment of teachers on the Most Essentials Learning Competencies?
4. What action plan can be designed based on the findings of the study?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed descriptive and correlation design. This was descriptive since the study tried to describe the demographic profile, assessment of the teachers of MELCs in terms of coverage, progression, and learners. This was also a correlation design since the study determined the relationship between demographic profile and the utilization of MELCs, sufficiency, and its effectiveness.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were seventy-three (73) public elementary schools teachers in the school year 2020-2021 in the four (4) selected elementary schools in Kauswagan Municipality. The four (4) schools were chosen on the account of the accessibility of transportation and situated along the highway. These teachers were specifically selected as the respondents since the researcher of this study was teaching in the same municipality who could benefit from the perception of these respondents.

Table 1. *List of Selected Teachers in Kauswagan*

<i>Name of school</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>
Libertad Elementary School	21
Tacub Elementary School	15
Jose Balazo Memorial Elementary School	14
Kauswagan Central Elementary School	22
Total	73 Respondents

Instruments

This study modified a questionnaire developed by the Department of Education. The instrument and other data were deemed very vital to know the perception levels of the teachers.

Before the questionnaire was finalized, it was submitted to the adviser for suggestions and comments for improvement. Then it was tested for validity by a statistician who is a faculty member of St. Peter's College. After validation of the instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot testing to thirty (30) teachers of Marcela T. Mabanta National High School where the researcher is currently employed.

The questionnaire was divided into two (2) parts. Part 1 included the demographic profile of the respondents. Part 2 asked questions about the sufficiency and effectiveness of MELCs in the teaching and learning process.

The scoring range of the questionnaire used four (4) Likert scales as follows: four (4) for highly sufficient; three (3) for sufficient; two (2) for insufficient; and one (1) not sufficient.

Procedure

The researcher administered the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire in selected schools in the Kauswagan District. To facilitate the gathering of data, permissions to conduct the study were obtained from the school's division superintendent, principal, and teachers. All the communications were signed by the concerned personalities including the competent authorities of St. Peter's College.

As part of the health protocol, physical distancing in the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires was observed at all times. The researcher explained the importance and mechanics of how to answer some parts of it. Confidentiality of their answers was assured by the researcher to the respondents.

The responses of the respondents in the questionnaire included data in their demographic profile, the sufficiency of the MELCs, and learners' performance.

In procuring the data on the demographic profile of the respondents, the researcher asked them to fill out part one (I) of the questionnaire which contained the information of the respondents' sex, age, years of teaching experience, modalities commonly employed by teachers, and platforms used to communicate with the learners.

To gather data on the respondents' assessment of MELCs in terms of coverage, progression, and learners, the respondents were asked to rate assigned perceptions on sufficiency on the scale of four (4) for highly sufficient; three (3) for sufficient; two (2) for insufficient; and one (1) not sufficient.

Data Analysis

Data were tabulated and interpreted to acquire the actual information needed.

The following statistical techniques were employed to answer the different problems presented; Weighted Mean, Frequency and Percentage, Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation, and Point-Biserial Correlation.

Weighted Mean was used to determine the average value of the modalities commonly employed and the platforms/ mechanism based on the frequency of use in communicating with learners. While the frequency and percentage were utilized to determine the demographic profile of the teachers in terms of age, sex, and years of teaching experience.

Also, weighted mean and standard deviation were used to determine the effects of MELCs in the teaching-learning process and the sufficiency of MELCs on the coverage, progression, and learners. And lastly, Point Biserial correlation was employed to determine the relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the utilization of the MELCs.

Results and Discussion

This section provides information about the effectiveness and sufficiency of using MELCs. These data are shown in tabular and graphical representations for easier study and comprehension. This chapter uses relevant studies and literature to facilitate real conversations.

Problem 1: What are the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and years of teaching experience?

Table 2. *Age of the Respondents*

<i>Age (in years)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
20-25	2	2.7
26-30	8	11.0
31-35	15	20.5
36-40	14	19.2
41-45	6	8.2
46-50	12	16.4
51-55	5	6.8
56-60	7	9.6
61-above	4	5.5
Total	73	100.0

Table 2 reveals that a very high number of the respondents were at the age between 31-35 years old as denoted by 20.5%. This suggested that a high majority of the respondents were at their prime age based on the prime age (24- 54 years old) of workers described in Guel Encyclopedia of Small Business.

The above-mentioned statement was supported by Cariño (2018), teachers aged 22-40 were observed to be more computer literate, creative, and more adept in using technology and gadgets in teaching.

This implication assured an authentic perception of the sufficiency, utilization, and effectiveness of MELCs in the teaching and learning process.

Table 3. *Sex of the Respondents*

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Male	7	9.6
Female	66	90.4
Total	73	100.0

The data in table 3 present that the number of females outnumbered the number of males. Noticed in the table of the graph, 66 out of 73 or 90.4% were females which were 7 or 9.6% were males. These findings connoted that in the existing school system of the four (4) respondents' schools, the number of female teachers got the highest percentage among male teachers. This connotation supported the idea of Regalado (2017) that the heavier bulk of perception of this study was generated from the female teachers.

Table 4. *Number of Years of Teaching of the Respondents*

<i>Number of Years of Teaching</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
1-5	10	13.7
6-10	24	32.9
11-15	13	17.8
16-20	7	9.6
21-25	6	8.2
26-30	10	13.7
31-above	3	4.1
Total	73	100.0

The distribution of respondents according to years of teaching experience is shown in Table 4. The data in Table 4 showed that the majority of respondents had teaching experience, as indicated by the distribution of responses: 24 or 32.9% for those in the range of 6 to 10 years, 13 or 17.8% for those in the range of 11 to 15 years, 7 or 9.6% for those in the range of 16 to 20, 6 or 8.2% for those in the range of 21 to 25 years, 10 or 13.7% for those in the range of 26 to 30 years, and 3 or 4.1% for those in the range of experience beyond 31 years. This result implied that the bulk of research participants were seasoned educators with a track record of providing high-quality training. This notion was reiterated in the study of human behavior, focusing on experience by Rice (2010).

Rice asserted that instructors with over 20 years of expertise outperformed those with no experience at all. However, they were not much more effective than those six (6) years and above teaching experience. From Rice's statement, it was inferred that a significant number of study participants had already disclosed their level of learning, which created a second verified generation of perspective on the study's main topic.

Table 5. *Modalities Commonly Employed*

<i>Modalities</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Self-Learning Module (SLM)	4.87	1
Online Learning	2.66	3
Audio-Video Lesson	3.67	2
TV-based Instruction	2.38	4
Radio-based Instruction	1.40	5

The current survey revealed which modalities were most frequently used, including the Self-Learning Module (SLM). This was ranked first, followed by audio-video, online learning, TV-based, and radio-based. In that order, the rankings were as follows.

The Self-Learning Module (SLM) was utilized by the majority of teachers, according to this ranking. Individualized education was provided by the SLMs, enabling learners to utilize either print or digital formats. This was relevant when considering the student as well as additional learning tools such as textbooks, activity sheets, study guides, and other study materials. Learners used a computer, tablet PC, or smartphone to access electronic copies of course materials. E-learning resources, including offline E-books, can be delivered via CDs, DVDs, USB storage, and computer-based apps. The duty of keeping an eye on the students' progress fell to the teacher. The teacher may be contacted by the students by phone, email, text message, instant messaging, etc. to request assistance. When it is feasible, teachers ought to visit students at home who require support or remediation. To act as para-teachers, anyone in the family or other community members was required. Depending on the COVID-19 constraints and the unique circumstances of the students in the school or community, schools may choose to implement one or more of the following learning delivery modalities.

Table 6. *Platforms/Mechanisms Based on the Frequency of Use in Communicating with Learners*

<i>Platforms</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>
SMS (Text Messaging)	4.23	1
Phone Call	3.96	2
Online Messaging (e.g. Messenger, FB Viber, WhatsApp, etc.)	3.52	3
Printed/Handwritten Letter	2.26	4
Others	1.03	5

The data in Table 6 shows the different platforms/ mechanisms on how to communicate with the learners. SMS (Text Messaging) was in rank 1 as the highest and the "Others" ranked 5 as lowest. Different systems and apps may support different sorts of distance learning. According to Ajayi et al. (2019), it may be known as blended learning, e-learning, or mobile learning. Distance learning did not include any in-person interaction with an instructor or study peers. Students completed their independent study at home. The pace and duration of the lessons varied based on the availability and needs of each student.

Online learning's instructional resources were necessary for distance learning. There were likely some misunderstandings between the two for this reason. Additionally, online distance learning provided an option for study. Distance education was thus a subset of online education.

All of these strategies had one thing in common: they all used remote delivery (Means et al., 2010). The main goal of remote delivery was to make it easier for students to share information, which allowed for constant contact and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, remote distribution might continue to support conventional learning tools, making it compatible with other teaching modalities and technology from earlier learning experiences. In this study, the Department of Education used strategies to continue holding lessons after the COVID-19 epidemic temporarily halted instruction. According to study participants, they communicated with pupils via SMS regarding their courses. This implied that students were still having access to education and that the teachers were still active in education delivery. The latter could use mobile phones to ensure a smooth flow of communication between them and the learners.

Problem 2: What is the assessment of the teachers of the MELCs in terms of coverage, progression, and learners?

Table 7. *Sufficiency of MELCs on the Coverage, Progression, and Learners*

Indicators	Mean \pm SD	Description
1. The MELCs in my learning area per quarter can be covered.	3.62 \pm 0.49	Highly Sufficient
2. The MELCs consider the prerequisite knowledge and skills which are emphasized in the lower grade levels.	3.70 \pm 0.46	Highly Sufficient
3. The MELCs are aligned with the content standards in the grade level.	3.75 \pm 0.43	Highly Sufficient
4. The MELCs are aligned with the performance standards in the grade level.	3.59 \pm 0.50	Highly Sufficient
5. The MELCs are aligned with the grade-level standards.	3.68 \pm 0.47	Highly Sufficient
6. The MELCs give me time to promote mastery of the knowledge and skills among learners.	3.56 \pm 0.50	Highly Sufficient
7. The MELCs reflect the learning of 21st Century skills (e.g. learning and innovation, information media and technology, life and career skill, and communication).	3.68 \pm 0.47	Highly Sufficient
8. The knowledge and skills contained in the MELCs prepare the learners for the next grade level.	3.68 \pm 0.47	Highly Sufficient
9. The MELCs allow me to plan for and meet the individual learners' needs and interests.	3.70 \pm 0.46	Highly Sufficient
10. There are important learning competencies in the K to 12 Curriculum guide that were not included in the MELCs.	3.58 \pm 0.58	Highly Sufficient
11. Some MELCs cover broad topics that need unpacking and sub-tasking.	3.58 \pm 0.52	Highly Sufficient
12. Some MELCs are too specific that can no longer be translated into learning objectives.	3.56 \pm 0.55	Highly Sufficient
Total Measure	3.64 \pm 0.28	Highly Sufficient

Note: 1.00-1.49 Not Sufficient; 1.50-2.49 Insufficient; 2.50-3.49 Sufficient; 3.50-4.00 Highly Sufficient

The data in table 7 discloses that the respondents perceived in the level Highly Sufficient two (2) indicators of the sufficiency of MELCs. These MELCs fell under the required knowledge and skill emphasis in the lower grade levels (S2), and MELCs gave me the opportunity to plan and cater to the requirements and interests of each unique student (S9). Both were in the mean of 3.70. As deemed from the finding, the possibility was that many respondents belonged to the level of High Sufficiency because the mean of MELCs under the prerequisite knowledge and skills which were emphasized in the lower grade level (S2). It was in far with MELCs that allowed them to plan for and meet the individual learner's needs and interests (S9). This possibility that the same person checked both or rated both under high was feasible. The notion "MELCs under the prerequisite knowledge and skills which were emphasized in the lower grade level" may indicate that many respondents believed that MELCs offered prerequisite knowledge and skills.

The same statistics suggested that the respondents had a very optimistic view on the sufficiency of the MELCs. The high mean of the indication "MELCs were aligned with the content standards in the grade level (S3)" served as the foundation for this conclusion.

The overall total measure of the indicators was 3.64 \pm 0.28 placing it on the level Highly Sufficient. This overall total measure 3.64 \pm 0.28 and descriptive Highly Sufficient signified that all respondents had seen that MELCs were sufficient on the coverage, progression, and for learners. As perceived, the belief of many teachers on the indicators scale placed them on high sufficiency. This validated the outcome of the measurement.

Problem 3: Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the sufficiency of the Most Essentials Learning Competencies (MELCs)?

Using a Point-Biserial Correlation analysis, Table 8 shows the association between the demographic profile and the sufficiency of MELCs. The findings showed that the respondents' assessed sufficiency of the MELCs was not substantially connected with their age, sex, or years of teaching experience, as indicated by the corresponding p-values that were more than the 0.05 level of significance. These results indicated that the respondents' perception of the sufficiency of MELCs did not differ across their age differences, sex, and several years of teaching. Therefore, the null hypothesis—that there is no meaningful correlation between the demographic profile

and the MELCs' sufficiency—was not rejected.

Table 8. Relationship Between the Demographic Profile and the Sufficiency of the MELCs

Demographic Profile	Sufficiency of MELCs			Remarks
	<i>M ± SD</i>	<i>r-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	
Age				
20-30	3.68±0.26	0.049	0.678	Not significant
31-40	3.64±0.34	0.010	0.936	Not significant
41-50	3.67±0.23	0.054	0.651	Not significant
51-above	3.58±0.25	--	--	
Sex				
Female	3.62±0.29	-0.198	0.094	Not significant
Male	3.81±0.13	--	--	
Years of Teaching				
1-5	3.67±0.24	0.038	0.752	Not significant
6-10	3.64±0.29	-0.013	0.916	Not significant
11-15	3.58±0.34	-0.106	0.372	Not significant
16-20	3.82±0.27	0.212	0.072	Not significant
21-25	3.74±0.25	0.103	0.387	Not significant
26-above	3.55±0.23	--	--	

Note: rc-reference category (based on Point-Biserial Correlation not significant ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$))

Problem 4: What action plan can be designed based on the findings of the study?

The study's findings demonstrated that using the Most Essentials Learning Competencies in the teaching process was more than adequate. Accordingly, it was best to formulate an action plan that capacitated them towards utilization and effective use of MELCs. The action plan was focused on the MAPEH subject since the researcher is teaching in this learning area.

Conclusions

Based on the findings in the previous chapter of this study, the researcher inferred that teachers' assessment of the MELCs was effective and highly sufficient. Therefore, the researcher would propose an action plan to further maximize the utilization of the MELCs in not only one subject but also to other subjects taught in school. Further, the researcher concluded that middle-aged teachers could be empowered and guided with the utilization of the MELCs. Hence, with the guidance of the more experienced and knowledgeable teachers in teaching techniques and strategies in the teaching process.

In the light of the findings and conclusion of this study, the following are the recommendations.

The school administration should encourage to implementation of professional development programs for teachers. In these developmental programs, teachers can become more knowledgeable about their field of specification, qualities, and other needs. Enroll for a Master's Degree to gain specialized knowledge to advance in their field. Conduct Learning Action Cell (LAC) that will successfully address the needs of the teachers to assess the learners.

Teachers should attend seminars, training, and workshops regularly especially on teaching reading to keep abreast with the latest trends in the English language and teaching reading.

Parents should consider the importance of working with the children's teacher. Timely monitoring of assignments most especially the reading assignments of the learners must be encouraged. Indeed, there should be constant communication among the parents, teachers, school administrators, and even the school itself to monitor and supervise the learning progress of the learners.

Learners should indulge themselves in various reading materials. Their initiative to read and study without being told must be highly appreciated. They must be equipped with self-discipline, perseverance, and determination to be able to read well and comprehend whatever they read. The constant practice would also help them achieve this practice. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect.

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