

Informal Learning Work Context and Professional Identity of Senior High School Teachers in Davao Del Norte Division

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Abstract: Beyond the structured workshops and formal training sessions lies a powerful, often overlooked, realm of professional growth: the daily, informal learning that happens in the hallways, faculty rooms, and classrooms of our schools. This study delves into this organic learning ecosystem, investigating the vital relationship between the informal learning work context and the professional identity of senior high school teachers in the Davao del Norte Division.

We sought to understand not just the prevalence of these informal exchanges but their profound connection to how teachers view themselves and their role in the profession. Through a descriptive-correlational survey of 115 public senior high school teachers, selected to represent a diverse cross-section of experiences, the data painted a clear picture. Results revealed that teachers operate within an extensive informal learning work context and, in parallel, exhibit an extensive, well-developed professional identity.

Crucially, statistical analysis confirmed a significant positive relationship between these two variables. Every domain of informal learning—from spontaneous conversations with colleagues to self-directed experimentation with new teaching methods—was found to be intrinsically linked to the strengthening of a teacher's sense of purpose, competence, and belonging. This led to the definitive rejection of the null hypothesis.

These findings culminate in a compelling recommendation: for school heads and DepEd officials to move beyond merely acknowledging informal learning and to instead actively cultivate and optimize these natural learning environments. By intentionally designing schools as collaborative ecosystems, we can powerfully intensify the professional identity of every teacher, which is the very foundation of educational excellence.

Keywords: *Informal Learning Work Context, Professional Identity, Teacher Collaboration, Descriptive Correlation, Davao Del Norte Division, Philippines.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The journey of a teacher is one of continuous evolution. While formal professional development is crucial, the moments that often shape us most profoundly happen informally: a quick piece of advice from a mentor in the corridor, a shared lesson plan over coffee, or reflecting on a challenging day. In the vibrant and complex environment of public senior high schools in Davao del Norte, these unstructured learning experiences are the daily threads that weave the fabric of a teacher's professional life.

This study is founded on the belief that who a teacher is—their professional identity—is deeply intertwined with the informal learning context their school provides. It posits that the culture of collaboration, mentorship, and shared problem-solving within a school does more than just transmit skills; it fundamentally shapes a teacher's sense of efficacy, purpose, and belonging within the profession. By systematically exploring this relationship, this research aims to provide educational leaders with a deeper understanding of how to foster school environments that naturally nurture not only more knowledgeable teachers but more confident and connected

professionals, ultimately enriching the entire learning community.

II. METHODS

To capture the subtle yet significant nature of informal learning, this study engaged the experts themselves: the teachers. A cohort of 115 senior high school teachers from across the public schools of Davao del Norte Division was selected through a randomized probability sampling method, ensuring their collective voice was both representative and unbiased.

These educators provided their insights through standardized survey instruments, carefully designed to measure two core constructs: the richness of their school's informal learning work context (including peer collaboration, self-reflection, and experimentation) and the strength of their own professional identity (encompassing their values, beliefs, and sense of efficacy as an educator). The data collected was then subjected to rigorous statistical analysis. Mean scores were calculated to establish the overall status and prevalence of each variable, while Product-Moment Correlation was employed to uncover the strength and direction of the relationship between them, revealing how deeply intertwined they truly are.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings offer a powerful affirmation of the collaborative spirit within Davao del Norte's senior high schools. The analysis revealed that teachers benefit from an extensive informal learning work context, meaning they frequently engage in valuable, unplanned learning with their colleagues. Concurrently, they demonstrated an extensive professional identity, indicating a strong, positive sense of self within their teaching role.

More importantly, the analysis revealed a significant and positive correlation between these two factors. This means that in schools where informal learning thrives—where teachers feel comfortable sharing ideas, asking for help, and reflecting together—teachers also report a stronger, more secure professional identity. This relationship held true across all domains of informal learning, suggesting that every conversation, every shared success, and every collaboratively solved problem contributes to building a teacher's confidence and sense of belonging.

This powerful link suggests that a school's culture is not just a backdrop for learning; it is an active agent in professional formation. When teachers are part of a supportive, open, and collaborative community, they internalize a positive identity as capable and valued members of the profession. They are less likely to experience isolation and more likely to innovate and persist through challenges. Therefore, investing in the informal learning context is not a soft benefit; it is a strategic imperative

for building a resilient, effective, and committed teaching workforce. School leaders are encouraged to consciously design policies and foster a school climate that prioritizes time for interaction, celebrates collaborative problem-solving, and values the immense professional learning that happens every day outside the formal training room.

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