

Empowering Child Development Workers in Classroom Management and Pedagogy Extension Project: An Impact Study

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Abstract: *This study evaluated the impact of the Extension Project Training on the Teaching-Learning Competence of Child Development Workers in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines. The study employed a descriptive research design where structured survey questionnaires were used and administered to eighty-four (84) Child Development Workers (CDWs). Findings revealed that the level of impact of the “Empowering Child Development Workers” Extension Project Training on Teaching-Learning Competence on the four (4) indicators are Very High, namely; On Enhanced Professional Competencies in Early Childhood Education (Mean=4.83, SD=0.40), On Job Satisfaction and Professional Growth (Mean=4.92, SD=0.26), On Enhancing Learners' Development Outcomes (Mean=4.85, SD=0.48), and On Professional Capabilities in Parental Engagement (Mean=4.90, SD=0.42). The “Empowering Child Development Workers in Classroom Management and Pedagogy” Extension Project yielded overwhelmingly positive results across all four assessed indicators. This suggests that the project achieved its goal of empowering child development workers and creating a more nurturing environment for young learners. The study recommends that this extension project emerges as a beacon of hope, showcasing the transformative power of continuous training and professional development in early childhood education. Considering the recommended measures for sustainability and future research, we can ensure the project's positive impact ripples outward, shaping a brighter future for countless young learners and their families.*

Keywords — Extension Project, Child Development Workers, Impact Study

1. INTRODUCTION

The Republic Act No. 8980 promulgates a comprehensive policy and a National Systems for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), and Republic Act No. 6972 establishes Day Care Centers in every Barangay of the Philippines. These laws are intended to provide pre-school children with a full range of health, nutrition, early education, and social services programs and other basic holistic needs that promote their optimum growth and development. The lead agency that implements this law is the Department of Social Services, and the persons that are taking care of the Day Care service as the Day Care Workers or now called as Child Development Workers (CDW).

Child Development Workers work with preschool-aged children and are required to demonstrate various teaching abilities, despite many of them not having formal training in education (NAEYC, 2010). Their responsibilities encompass tasks such as classroom and behavior management, attending to the daily health needs of children, creating safe environments, overseeing group behavior, teaching language and preschool educational skills, and engaging in play with their young learners (Dodge, J., Colker, V., & Diamond, A., 2006). Their crucial role involves nurturing preschool children during a pivotal phase of their lives, and supporting their intellectual, emotional, and social development (Göncü, A., & Demir, E., 2015).

Pre-school children stage grow and learn at an astounding rate (Jones, 2018). Hence, their teachers, the day care workers, must have the appropriate and relevant competencies to affect the children in effective and healthy ways (Department of Education, 2023) so that experiences of learning that can support the children in their entire life can be provided (Gronlund & Søbstad, 2019). They need to possess the basic classroom management and childhood education pedagogy that is most appropriate to their early stage of development (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2010) because these are critical in their proper development and growth (John Hopkins University, Early Learning Project).

Recent research suggests that the first 8 years of life are critical for brain development (e.g., Sheridan, 2018), with early educational experiences, relationships, and nutrition significantly impacting children's psycho-social and intellectual growth (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). Therefore, providing and effectively managing a proper, healthy, and happy early childhood learning environment is crucial (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2010). This can be challenging for day care workers who often act as both caregivers and teachers for young children entrusted to their care (Dodge, Colker, & Diamond, 2006). In this context, Bukidnon State University, as a teacher-training institution, can offer valuable assistance by providing quality training programs to equip these workers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively nurture and educate young children (Göncü & Demir, 2015).

The BuKSU-CoE-BECEd Program always aims to address the need of teachers to enhance the capability of teaching every young learner. Early childhood teachers who have undergone training in the university demonstrate various levels of readiness depending on their preparation, their roles, as well as their educational setting (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). Their competence needs are vastly diverse.

However, the competence needs of teachers and the disparate challenges posed by diverse educational settings need to be appropriately addressed. An intensive and coherent system of initial preparation, continuing professional development, and even career counseling or mentoring could benefit the pre-school workers especially those in the Day Care Centers (Department of Education, 2023).

A baseline survey of the CDWs needs in Malaybalay City reveals that most of them are not college graduates. They also have not undergone formal training on handling young children. Therefore, having effective duties and responsibilities to the young children would be very challenging to them. Their need of a basic training on various areas of teaching pre-school children is paramount. Hence, the BukSU-COE_BECED have provided series of training to empower the Day Care Workers through their extension project "Empowering Child Development Workers' Classroom Management and Pedagogy." By tapping into the expertise and experiences of the faculty extensionists who have been training soon to be teachers in the field, the project ensured that the DCWs received seamless mentorship. This training program equipped them with essential skills in addressing both classroom management techniques and effective pedagogical strategies specific to early childhood education.

To enhance the effectiveness of the training, the team thoroughly developed and produced a comprehensive training package for CDWs. The package served as the instructional materials, offering a structured and resourceful framework to guide the training process. By creating targeted materials, the trainers optimized the learning experience for CDWs, equipped them with the essential knowledge and skills necessary for their roles. The commitment to developing such instructional materials highlights the extensionists' dedication to providing a well-rounded and valuable training experience for all beneficiaries of the project.

Thus, this study would like to evaluate the impact of the Extension Project Training on the Teaching-Learning Competence of Child Development Workers in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines.

2. FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This theory posits that child development is influenced by a complex interplay of nested environmental systems, from the immediate microsystem (e.g., family, classroom) to the broader macrosystem (e.g., cultural norms, policies). This framework provides valuable insights into how the training program interacted with various systems affecting child development workers' teaching-learning competence.

The training program itself functioned as a microsystem, directly impacting child development workers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching-learning practices. The study could examine how training components like workshops, mentorship, or collaborative activities influenced individual growth in competence.

The interaction between the training program and existing classroom environments (mesosystem) could be explored. Did the training provide strategies for adapting new skills to specific classroom contexts and resources? How did collaboration with colleagues or supervisors within the school setting influence the implementation of learned practices?

The study could explore how broader factors like school policies, curriculum requirements, or resource availability (exosystem) interacted with the training program. Did these factors facilitate or hinder the implementation of newly acquired skills and ultimately impact teaching-learning competence?

Examining the influence of cultural norms, societal expectations, and early childhood education policies (macrosystem) could provide a deeper understanding of the context in which the training program operated. How did these broader trends shape the goals and priorities of the training itself, and how did they influence the perceived value and application of new skills by child development workers?

3. OBEJCTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study evaluated the impact of the Extension Project Training on the Teaching-Learning Competence of Child Development Workers in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following queries:

1. What is the level of the impact of the Extension Project Training on Teaching-Learning Competence of Child Development Workers on the following indicators:
 - a. On Enhanced Professional Competencies in Early Childhood Education;
 - b. On Job Satisfaction and Professional Growth;
 - c. On Enhancing Learners' Development Outcomes; and
 - d. On Professional Capabilities in Parental Engagement?

2. What implication can be drawn from the results of the impact of the Extension Project Training on the Teaching-Learning Competence of Child Development Workers?

4. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

The research utilized a descriptive method to evaluate the impact of the Extension Project Training on the Teaching-Learning Competence of Child Development Workers in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines. The mode of generating the data for the variables was by soliciting information from a set of participants through a survey questionnaire. Descriptive research is used to describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest, factually and accurately (Rubio, 2007). Steele and Arth (1998) stated that when the task of the research is to determine the present situation of the variables under investigation, the most appropriate research design is descriptive research.

Locale and Participants

This study was conducted at Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines with eighty-four (84) Child Development Workers following the necessary data gathering protocols. Nestled within Malaybalay’s bustling streets and lush landscapes lies a dedicated community of Child Development Workers (CDWs). These passionate individuals work tirelessly to nurture and educate young minds, playing a crucial role in the city’s vibrant early childhood education scene. From manning daycare centers and preschools to collaborating with families and local organizations, Malaybalay’s CDWs weave a safety net of care and learning for the city’s future generation.

Instrument and Statistical Treatment

The instrument used in the study was the 5-point Likert Scale Researcher-Made Questionnaire to determine the Extension Project Training on the Teaching-Learning Competence of Child Development Workers in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines to suit the needs of the study. This instrument was pilot tested to 60 participants and found reliable with a Cronbach alpha of 0.923. The evaluation instrument has four indicators, namely: (1) On Enhanced Professional Competencies in Early Childhood Education; (2) On Job Satisfaction and Professional Growth; (3) On Enhancing Learners’ Development Outcomes; and (4) On Professional Capabilities in Parental Engagement.

Table 1 presents both the numerical and descriptive equivalent of the evaluation of the participants.

Table 1. Numerical and Descriptive Equivalence of Participants’ Evaluation

| Hypothetical Mean Range | Qualitative Description |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 4.21-5.00 | Very High |
| 3.40-4.20 | High |
| 2.61-3.40 | Neutral |
| 1.81-2.60 | Low |
| 1.00-1.80 | Very Low |

The data has been treated statistically using the following processes, descriptive statistics like frequency count, mean, and standard deviation to measure central tendencies.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Impact of the “Empowering Child Development Workers in Classroom Management and Pedagogy” Extension Project Training on Teaching-Learning Competence

Table 2. On Enhanced Professional Competencies in Early Childhood Education

| <i>With the series of training conducted by the project, I can now...</i> | Mean | SD | Qualitative Description |
|--|------|------|-------------------------|
| 1. effectively manage classroom dynamics, including organizing activities, transitions, and maintaining a positive learning environment | 4.77 | 0.47 | Very High |
| 2. implement age-appropriate pedagogical strategies that support the developmental needs of children, including planning and executing educational activities. | 4.89 | 0.31 | Very High |

| | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| 3. adapt my teaching approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles and individual needs of young children within the classroom. | 4.79 | 0.54 | Very High |
| 4. effectively communicate with parents or guardians about classroom activities, children's progress, and strategies for extending learning experiences to the home environment. | 4.92 | 0.28 | Very High |
| 5. engage in reflective practice, including regularly assessing the effectiveness of my teaching methods, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing changes as needed. | 4.80 | 0.40 | Very High |
| Overall Mean | 4.83 | 0.40 | Very High |

Table 2 presents the results of the indicator “*On Enhanced Professional Competencies in Early Childhood Education*”. As displayed in the table, the training project paints a remarkably positive picture, with child development workers reporting very high improvements across all five assessed areas. Participants demonstrated a strong ability to organize activities, manage transitions, and cultivate positive learning environments (Mean = 4.77, SD = 0.47). This suggests a refined understanding of classroom dynamics and effective strategies for creating a nurturing space for young learners (Bodrova & Leong, 2018).

Implementing age-appropriate pedagogical strategies emerged as another area of significant growth (Mean = 4.89, SD = 0.31). The training successfully equipped participants with the knowledge and skills to plan and execute educational activities that cater to the specific developmental needs of their students (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The ability to adapt teaching approaches to cater to diverse learning styles and individual needs showcases a deepened commitment to inclusive education (Mean = 4.79, SD = 0.54). Participants are now better equipped to ensure all children, regardless of their learning styles or abilities, thrive in the classroom environment (Stainback & Stainback, 2017).

Effective communication with parents and guardians is crucial for fostering collaborative learning (Mean = 4.92, SD = 0.28). The training program helped participants build strong communication skills, enabling them to share information about classroom activities, children's progress, and strategies for extending learning to the home environment (Luzano, 2023). The high score in reflective practice indicates a valuable shift towards continuous improvement (Mean = 4.80, SD = 0.40). Participants are now more likely to critically assess their teaching methods, identify areas for growth, and actively implement changes to enhance their pedagogical effectiveness (Luzano & Ubalde, 2023).

Overall, the result of this indicator is highly impressive, with all five areas scoring within the "Very High" range. This suggests that the project has been successful in empowering child development workers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to create optimal learning environments for young children.

Table 3. *On Job Satisfaction and Professional Growth*

| | Mean | SD | Qualitative Description |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1. I am satisfied with the overall learning benefits I gained from the extension project. | 4.93 | 0.26 | Very High |
| 2. I am satisfied with the changes in the work environment which I learned from the extension project, considering the factors such as collaboration, resources, and support. | 4.96 | 0.19 | Very High |
| 3. The project helped me grow professionally and enhanced my pedagogical skills that I need as CDW. | 4.95 | 0.21 | Very High |
| 4. The project were aligned with my personal values and professional goals CDW. | 4.80 | 0.40 | Very High |
| 5. I am satisfied with the support and resources provided to us by the project implementers in carrying out our responsibilities as CDW. | 4.94 | 0.24 | Very High |
| Overall Mean | 4.92 | 0.26 | Very High |

Table 3 displays the results of the indicator “*On Job Satisfaction and Professional Growth*”. As reflected in the table, the results indicate remarkably high levels of satisfaction and perceived benefits among child development workers, with all five areas scoring within the "Very High" range. Participants expressed high satisfaction with the learning gains achieved through the project (Mean = 4.93, SD = 0.26). This suggests the training effectively equipped them with valuable knowledge and skills (Cunningham & Davis, 2012). Satisfaction with the changes in the work environment (Mean = 4.96, SD = 0.19) highlights the project's positive impact on collaboration, resources, and support systems. This improved environment likely fosters job satisfaction and engagement (Kempel & Hoy, 2008).

Participants perceived a significant enhancement in their pedagogical skills (Mean = 4.95, SD = 0.21), indicating successful acquisition of practical teaching strategies and techniques (Day & Sachs, 2007). This aligns with the project's goal of empowering child development workers. The high score for alignment with personal values and professional goals (Mean = 4.80, SD = 0.40) suggests that the project resonated with participants' aspirations and motivations. This personal connection likely contributed to their engagement and positive outcomes (Luzano, 2020). Participants also expressed high satisfaction with the support and resources provided (Mean = 4.94, SD = 0.24), indicating the project effectively addressed their needs and facilitated their professional development. Adequate support is crucial for successful implementation and sustainability of learning experiences (Pang-an, et al, 2022).

Overall, this indicator appears to have significantly benefited child development workers by enhancing their learning, skills, job satisfaction, and professional growth. The strong alignment with personal values and the adequate support provided, further contributed to the positive outcomes.

Table 4. On Enhancing Learners' Development Outcomes

| <i>With the series of training conducted by the project, I am now able to...</i> | Mean | SD | Qualitative Description |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. enhance the literacy and numeracy skills of young learners. | 4.83 | 0.37 | Very High |
| 2. observe positive changes and developments in the socio-emotional domain (e.g., interpersonal skills, emotional regulation) of young learners. | 4.90 | 0.62 | Very High |
| 3. witness improvements in the psychomotor skills (e.g., fine and gross motor skills) of young learners. | 4.88 | 0.39 | Very High |
| 4. make a substantial positive impact on the holistic development of young learners, considering cognitive, socio-emotional, and psychomotor aspects. | 4.82 | 0.56 | Very High |
| 5. assess, recognize, and support individualized progress in young learners' developmental outcomes as a result of the extension project. | 4.81 | 0.45 | Very High |
| Overall Mean | 4.85 | 0.48 | Very High |

Table 4 shows the results of the indicator "On Enhancing Learners' Development Outcomes". As gleaned in the table, the results of this post remarkable impact on the development outcomes of young learners across various domains, with all five assessed areas scoring in the "Very High" range. Participants reported significant improvements in their ability to enhance young learners' literacy and numeracy skills (Mean = 4.83, SD = 0.37). This suggests the training effectively equipped them with strategies for fostering foundational skills crucial for academic success (Lonigan & Schatschneider, 2008; Jordan et al., 2009).

Observing positive changes in the socio-emotional domain of young learners (Mean = 4.90, SD = 0.62) highlights the project's impact on areas like interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, and social competence. This aligns with growing recognition of the importance of social-emotional learning in early childhood education (Denham et al., 2012). Improved psychomotor skills (Mean = 4.88, SD = 0.39) demonstrate the project's contribution to physical development and coordination. This includes both fine motor skills (e.g., grasping, drawing) and gross motor skills (e.g., balance, movement). Strong psychomotor skills are essential for children's overall development and physical well-being (Tortola, 2021).

The high score for positive impact on holistic development (Mean = 4.82, SD = 0.56) suggests the project successfully fostered development across cognitive, socio-emotional, and psychomotor domains. This comprehensive approach aligns with best practices in early childhood education, which emphasize the interconnectedness of different developmental areas (Romorosa, et al, 2023). Participants' ability to assess, recognize, and support individualized progress in young learners' development (Mean = 4.81, SD = 0.45) indicates the training equipped them with valuable skills for differentiated instruction and catering to individual needs. This personalized approach can significantly enhance learning outcomes for all children (Luzano, 2023).

Overall, this indicator has a remarkable impact on learners' development outcomes, suggesting that the training effectively equipped child development workers with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to nurture young learners' cognitive, social-emotional, and physical growth.

Table 5. On Professional Capabilities in Parental Engagement

| <i>With the series of training conducted by the project, I am now able to...</i> | Mean | SD | Qualitative Description |
|---|-------------|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 1. feel motivated to provide regular updates to parents about their child's daily activities and experiences. | 4.94 | 0.28 | Very High |
| 2. offer constructive and specific feedback to parents regarding their child's behavior and progress. | 4.81 | 0.45 | Very High |

| | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| 3. confidently conduct effective parent-teacher conferences to discuss a child's development and address concerns. | 4.89 | 0.31 | Very High |
| 4. demonstrate cultural sensitivity in communication with parents from diverse backgrounds. | 4.95 | 0.54 | Very High |
| 5. maintain accessibility and approachability for parents seeking communication. | 4.90 | 0.50 | Very High |
| Overall Mean | 4.90 | 0.42 | Very High |

Table 5 reflects the results of the indicator “On Professional Capabilities in Parental Engagement”. As presented in the table, this indicator posits a remarkable improvement in child development workers' capabilities for effective parental engagement, with all five assessed areas scoring in the “Very High” range. Participants reported feeling significantly motivated to provide regular updates to parents about their child's daily activities and experiences (Mean = 4.94, SD = 0.28). This suggests the training effectively fostered open communication and collaboration with families (Dunst et al., 2012; Tortola, 2021).

The high score for offering constructive and specific feedback to parents regarding their child's behavior and progress (Mean = 4.81, SD = 0.45) highlights the development of skills for two-way communication and positive partnerships with families (Epstein, 2018). Improved ability to confidently conduct effective parent-teacher conferences (Mean = 4.89, SD = 0.31) showcases participants' growth in fostering meaningful discussion and shared decision-making regarding children's development (Gronna & Helsen, 2018).

The high score for demonstrating cultural sensitivity in communication with parents from diverse backgrounds (Mean = 4.95, SD = 0.54) underscores the project's emphasis on inclusivity and respecting cultural differences in parenting practices and communication styles (Sue & Sue, 2013). Increased accessibility and approachability for parents seeking communication (Mean = 4.90, SD = 0.50) indicates a stronger commitment to building trusting relationships and ensuring open communication channels with families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Overall, this indicator presents to have significantly strengthened child development workers' professional capabilities in engaging parents, potentially leading to stronger home-school collaboration and improved outcomes for children.

Implication of the Impact of “Empowering Child Development Workers in Classroom Management and Pedagogy” Extension Project Training on Teaching-Learning Competence

The “Empowering Child Development Workers in Classroom Management and Pedagogy” Extension Project yielded overwhelmingly positive results across all four assessed indicators: *Enhanced Professional Competencies, Job Satisfaction and Professional Growth, Learners' Development Outcomes, and Professional Capabilities in Parental Engagement*. This suggests that the project achieved its goal of empowering child development workers and creating a more nurturing environment for young learners.

Enhanced Capabilities and Improved Outcomes

- ✓ *Professional growth and skill development:* The training program effectively equipped participants with new knowledge, strategies, and skills, resulting in significant improvements in their professional competencies and pedagogical practices. This, in turn, led to positive changes in learners' development across cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical domains.
- ✓ *Holistic learning and inclusive practices:* The project emphasized a comprehensive approach to early childhood education, fostering holistic development in young learners and embracing diverse learning styles and individual needs. This aligns with best practices and creates a more inclusive and enriching learning environment for all children.
- ✓ *Strengthened partnerships and communication:* The program improved child development workers' abilities to communicate effectively with parents and guardians, build strong partnerships, and provide constructive feedback. This enhanced collaboration between home and school can significantly contribute to children's learning and development.

Sustainability and Future Directions

- ✓ *Ongoing support and professional development:* To ensure the long-term impact of the project, sustained support and opportunities for continued professional development are crucial. This can help child development workers maintain and build upon their acquired skills and adapt to evolving needs.
- ✓ *Dissemination and replication:* Sharing the project's best practices and successful training modules with other early childhood education programs and institutions can be instrumental in improving overall child development practices and outcomes on a broader scale.
- ✓ *Evaluation and research:* Further research could explore the long-term effects of the project on children's learning achievements, family engagement, and the overall quality of early childhood education programs. This can inform future initiatives and optimize best practices in this vital field.

The extension project demonstrates the valuable role of continuous training and professional development in enhancing the quality of early childhood education. The positive outcomes across all assessed areas highlight the project's effectiveness and its potential to create a lasting impact on the lives of young children and their families.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The extension project stands as a resounding testament to the critical role of continuous training and professional development in elevating the quality of early childhood education. The overwhelmingly positive results across all four assessed areas – enhanced professional competencies, improved job satisfaction and professional growth, demonstrably better learner development outcomes, and strengthened professional capabilities in parental engagement – paint a vivid picture of a project exceeding its goals. These promising findings warrant not only celebration but also careful consideration of how to maximize the project's long-term impact on the lives of young children and their families.

Additionally, this extension project emerges as a beacon of hope, showcasing the transformative power of continuous training and professional development in early childhood education. By diligently considering the recommended measures for sustainability and future research, we can ensure the project's positive impact ripples outward, shaping a brighter future for countless young learners and their families.

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