

# **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SCHOOL'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO THEIR DEMOGRAPHICS AT NO. 26 BASIC EDUCATION HIGH SCHOOL IN MANDALAY, MYANMAR**

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of this study was to compare the significant differences in the teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development according to their demographics: age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar.

The participants of this study were 96 teachers from No. 26 Basic Education High School at Mandalay, Myanmar during the academic year 2015-2016. This study was designed as quantitative and comparative study. Data was gathered using the research instrument, 5 Likert scaled questionnaire that consisted of two parts; Part I investigated the participants' demographics and Part II compared the teachers' perceptions. The data collected from the survey was analyzed by descriptive statistics; Frequency & Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation and comparative analysis; One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

The transformed data of this study showed that teachers from No. 26 Basic Education High School, Mandalay had "positive" perceptions towards their school's development activities. However, the comparative analysis described that there were no significant differences in the teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development according to their demographics: age, and grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar.

Though the findings revealed no significant differences, it gave some ideas to create a professional development encompassing teachers' multiple viewpoints in order to professionally organized learning environment where teachers' wants, needs meet and it will make the students learn successfully.

**Keywords:** Demographic Profile (gender, age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience), Teachers' Perception, School's Professional Development, No. 26 Basic Education High School.

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## Introduction

In today's knowledge society, quality education has been a critical topic for every nation's development. Talking about education, schooling lies at a very essential role, as it is a process of changing people's behaviors and to develop morality and personality. When we consider about quality education, it cannot be successful itself, or be recognized, without the teachers because in reality teachers are the people who will determine lessons to be introduced, attempted, and included in the classroom (Lucilio, 2009).

At the same time, many questions upraise regarding to teachers' competence when considering about the quality education. Teachers might have received initial teacher education before entering into their career or might have learnt from their career experience. However, such teachers' personal experience alone is not sufficient for today's learners' development. Therefore, standards of teaching and learning need to improve continuously to ensure that the learners can be successful in the future (Organization for Economics and Co-operation Development, 2009b).

As the quality of teacher is the most important determinant of student performance, school are now increasing emphasis on improving the capacities of teachers in order to improve student learning. A growing numbers of researcher assumed that improving teacher knowledge and teaching skills is required to increase students' learning outcomes. Therefore, in most of the developed countries, school leaders upgrade teachers' quality through professional development programs in continuing way. As professional development in schools is critical for country's improvement and educational reform, the way teachers see on its impacts also better to be studied. Therefore, schools should prepare to invest their efforts in effective professional development program for teachers and provide effective evaluation in order to organized professional development activities or programs which is, beneficial and significant for teachers' needs.

Local context of this study, in Myanmar, education is highly regarded as an essential part of life for every citizen. In Myanmar, the Ministry of Education mainly provides education with the vision: *To create an education system that will generate a learning society able to face the challenges of the Knowledge Age* (Ministry of Education, 2012). According to the Ministry of education, Myanmar education can be categorized into - the basic education and the higher education. All governmental basic education schools are named in the format of - No. (x), Basic Education (Primary/Middle/High) School, (Township name), (Division/District). For tertiary educational, government provides all of the universities and institutes in Myanmar.

Concerning with teacher professional development, most of the teachers in public high schools receive initial teacher education before they enter their profession. However, to combat the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning demands, Myanmar education system has not well prepared the teachers' quality in substantial way, for all types of schoolings (Kavinda, 2014). Similarly, there are not many in-service teachers' continuing development or training at both public and private Myanmar schools. No matter reformation of education has been considered as crucial in order to transform a democratic nation, research and evaluation regarding to teachers' professional development concerns is still very limited.

According to Lowden (2003) study, evaluation of professional development in schools is essential to the improvement of teacher knowledge, skills, instructional pedagogy and student achievement. Therefore, this researcher chose a transparent public high school, No. 26 BEHS, Mandalay that is currently providing in-service teacher development and appreciated to conduct this study to identify teachers' perceptions, which will be helpful for their teachers' development.

### **Objectives**

The following are research questions for this study.

1. What are the demographic profiles of the teachers including gender, age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar?
3. Are there any significant differences of the teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development according to their demographics: age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar?

### **Literature Review**

In the course of this study, the researcher set out objectives that helped out in the identification of the teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay. In meeting these objectives, the researcher utilized the model, developed by a Professor of Educational Psychology in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky, Thomas R. Guskey's *Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation*.

In Guseky's (2000) professional development evaluation model, five critical stages or levels of respondents' information were considered. These levels were adopted from Kirkpatrick (1959, as cited in Guskey, 2000, p. 78), which was widely applied in business and industry. The five levels of this model are as follow.

*Level (1) Participants' Reactions:* The first level of professional development evaluation focuses on teachers' reactions to their professional development experience. Primarily, this level is concerned with the teachers' satisfaction on schools' development programs. The questions address at this level were on whether or not teachers engaged. Teachers' feedback at this level is designed for professional development specialists to modify the design and delivery of programs or activities in better ways (Guskey, 2000).

*Level (2) Participants' Learning:* The second level focuses on measuring the acquisition of new knowledge or skills that teacher attained. This section serves to validate the relationship between what was intended and what was achieved in terms of professional development.

*Level (3) Organization Support and Change:* At level 3, the focus moved to the entire school organization. This level provides questions that helped analyze organizational support and change in a specific school or district. These include exploring the teacher perceptions regarding to organizational characteristics that

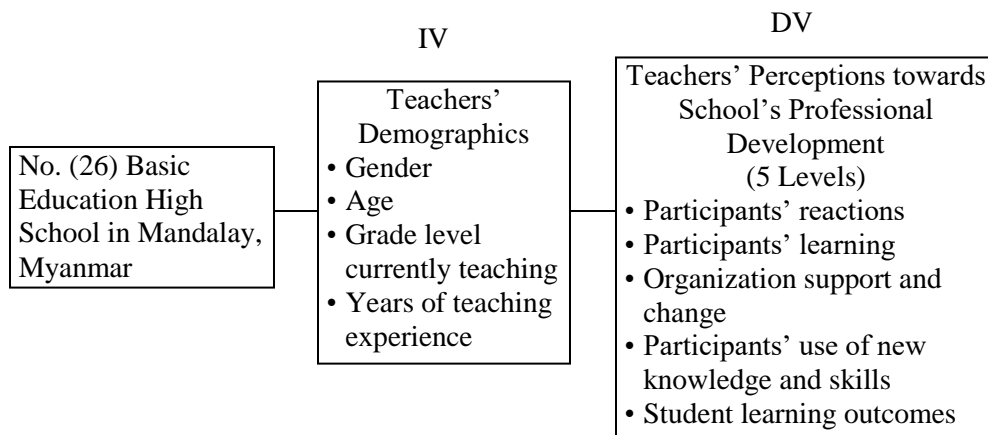
could lead them change: how supportive the school policies are, the strength of leadership in the school, quantity of resources, and the climate and culture in the school.

*Level (4) Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skill:* For Level four, Guskey (2000) turned his attention to whether/how participants apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in the class. Participants will be asked whether they felt the new knowledge and skills would lead change in their teaching practice and whether they felt new teaching practices acquired during their training help students attain knowledge and skills that would result in increased student achievement.

*Level (5) Student Learning Outcomes:* Level five is addressing the main goal of professional development in education, because it impacts on student learning outcomes. Improvements in student learning are possible only when professional development activities focus specifically on learning and learners. This level allows professional development leaders to set high expectations and help establish more precise criteria for success (Guskey, 2000).

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual frameworks of this study framework was based on the research objectives set for this study. The dependent variable of this study included the *Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation*, whereas, the independent variables were the demographics of teachers: gender, age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience. The two groups of variables were summarized in the framework that follows.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of The Study**

**Method/Procedure**

This main purpose of this research was to compare teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development according to their demographics: gender, age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience at No. 26 Basis Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar. However, according to the findings, (see Table 1) the number of female teachers (94) outnumbered the male teachers (2).

Therefore, one of the demographics, gender, which was mentioned in Objective 1 was excluded in Objective 3 in term of not meaningful to compare since female has already dominated male perceptions.

The respondents of this study were all of the teachers, a total of 96 teachers who are currently working in the academic year 2015-2016 at Mandalay No. 26 High School. This research was designed as a quantitative and comparative study. Lowden's (2003) Questionnaire based on Guskey's (2000) *Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation* was adopted as the research instrument for data collection. This researcher used descriptive statistics and comparative method (One-way ANOVA) to determine the research objectives.

The research questionnaires include two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was questioning the demographics of teachers including gender, age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience. The second part was designed to evaluate the teachers' perception towards school's professional development and to compare their perception according to their selected demographics through five levels – (1) Participants' reaction, (2) Participants' learning, (3) Organization support and change, (4) Participants' use of new knowledge and skills and (5) Student learning outcomes. This questionnaire was validated by the first researcher Lowden (2003) who run a pilot study and approved by juries and curriculum committee members.

In Williams (2014) study, overall Cronbach's alpha was .84, which indicates strong reliability. Therefore, this researcher used this questionnaire for her study and the overall Cronbach's Alpha for all 5-evaluation of the questionnaire in this study was .768, which was regarded as reliable.

To collect research data from the respondents, a proper way of data gathering process was followed. First of all, the researcher made an appointment with the principal from No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar to request permission for the implementation of this study. Then this researcher set a schedule to deliver the questionnaires to the teachers of No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar. With the help of the school principal, the survey questionnaires were distributed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2015 and collected on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2015 with 100 percentage valid return.

## **Findings/Results**

### *Findings for Research Objective One*

Research objective one was to identify the demographic profiles of teachers including gender, age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar. Therefore, frequency and percentage were used to present the teachers' demographics.

#### (1) Gender

The result for the first demographic factor, gender, showed that 4.2% of the respondents were males and 95.8% were females. Therefore, the numbers of female teachers were more than that of male teachers.

**(2) Age**

The age of respondents was grouped into three groups: Below 40 years, 40 – 50 years and 51 years and above. The result pointed out that 25% of respondents were below the age of 40 years, 27.1% of teachers were 40 – 50 years, and 47.9% were 51 years and above teachers. According to the research finding, there was the biggest proportion of teachers who were age of 51 and above while teachers of below 40 years were the smallest.

**(3) Grade Level Currently Teaching**

In term of teachers' current grade level of teaching, 20.8% of respondents were teaching at Primary form Grade 1 to 5 while 33.3% were at Lower Secondary from Grade 6 to 9 and 45.8% were at Upper Secondary from Grade 10-11. The result showed that the least number of teachers were teaching at Primary and the most teachers were teaching at Upper Secondary.

**(4) Years of teaching experience**

Out of 96 teachers, 32 teachers (33.3%) had 15 years and below of teaching experience, 13 teachers (13.5%) had 16 – 25 years of teaching experience, 33 teachers (34.4%) had 26 – 30 years of teaching experience and 18 teachers (18.8%) had 31 years and above of teaching experience. The research finding revealed that there was the biggest number of teachers who had 26 – 30 years of teaching experience while teachers with 16 – 25 years of teaching experience were the least.

*Findings for Research Objective Two*

At the same time, table 12 showed detailed information about total mean scores of teachers' perceptions for each evaluation level. The total mean scores of Level 1 - Participants' Reactions were 3.94, Level 2 - Participants' Learning were 3.92, Level 3 - Organizations Support and Change were 3.90, Level 4 - Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills were 4.03 and Level 5 - Students Learning Outcomes were 4.13.

Among 5 evaluation levels, the highest mean score 4.13 was found in Level 5, which indicated that teachers agreed with the concept of teachers' professional learning has positive impacts on students' learning achievement. In the meantime, the lowest mean score 3.90 was found in Level 3, which indicated that teachers had low perceptions regarding to organizational or school supports that could lead them change.

**Table 1: Number and Percentage of Demographic Profiles of Teachers**

Demographic Profiles	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	2	4.2
	Female	94	95.8
	Total	96	100
Age	Below 40 Years	24	25.0
	40 – 50 Years	26	27.1
	51 Years And Above	46	47.9
	Total	96	100

**Table 1: Number and Percentage of Demographic Profiles of Teachers**

Demographic Profiles	Category	Number	Percentage
Grade Level Currently Teaching	Grade 1 – 5 (Primary)	20	20.8
	Grade 6 – 9 (Lower Secondary)	32	33.3
	Grade 10 – 11 (Upper Secondary)	44	45.8
	Total	96	100
Years of Teaching Experience	15 Years And Below	32	33.3
	16 – 25 Years	13	13.5
	26 – 30 Years	33	34.4
	30 Years And Above	18	18.8
	Total	96	100

**Table 2: Summary of Teachers' Perceptions Towards School's Professional Development at No. 26 Basic Education High School, Mandalay, Myanmar**

Evaluating School's Professional Development	N	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Level 1	96	3.94	0.65	Positive
Level 2	96	3.92	0.57	Positive
Level 3	96	3.90	0.63	Positive
Level 4	96	4.03	0.45	Positive
Level 5	96	4.13	0.52	Positive
Total	96	3.98	0.41	Positive

*Findings for Research Objective Three*

One-way ANOVA was utilized to analyze and compare means for this objective. There were three main demographics comparing teachers' perceptions on their school's professional development program. This researcher set up the research hypothesis, "There is a significant difference in the teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar according to their demographics, age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience". According to the findings of data analysis of this study in the below table 3, 4 and 5, the probability significant value between teachers' perceptions and age was .779, the significant value between teachers' perceptions and grade level currently teaching was .099 and the significant value between teachers' perceptions and years of teaching experience was .491. This means the significant value of age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience were bigger than .05 level of significance. Therefore, these results were interpreted as there were no significant differences of teachers' perceptions towards their school's professional development according to their age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar

**Table 3: Teachers' Perceptions Towards School's Professional Development According to Age**

Age	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.085	2	.043	.250	.779

**Table 3: Teachers' Perceptions Towards School's Professional Development According to Age**

Age	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Within Groups	15.830	93	.170		
Total	15.916	95			

**Table 4: Teachers' Perceptions Towards School's Professional Development According to Grade Level Currently Teaching**

Grade Level Currently Teaching	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.772	2	.386	2.370	.099
Within Groups	15.144	93	.163		
Total	15.916	95			

**Table 5: Teachers' Perceptions towards School's Professional Development According to Years of Teaching Experience**

Years of Teaching Experience	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.410	3	.137	.812	.491
Within Groups	15.505	92	.169		
Total	15.916	95			

## Discussion

### *Demographic Profiles of Teachers*

#### (1) Gender

In this study, the research findings showed that the number of female teachers exceeded the number of male teachers at No. 26 Basic Education High School, Mandalay, Myanmar. To support this study this researcher made an informal discussion with an educator from one of the township level MOE offices in Mandalay (personal communication, July, 2015). According to his service experience as an educator at Upper Myanmar public basic education sub sector, he assumed two main reasons. The very first reason might be Myanmar culture, as teaching seemed to be an occupation more suited with female than male in Myanmar society. Generally, people in Myanmar thought that female were more patient, kind and teaching was a graceful prestigious job for female. Findings of Kavinda (2014) also indicated that female teachers had higher competency than male teachers. So, it can be assumed more female chose teaching as profession than male teachers in Myanmar. Secondly, majority of the male population in Myanmar was considered as the breadwinner of their family. In Myanmar, although teaching is a noble job, the earning wouldn't meet the ends for a family to survive well. Therefore, this could be another reason most of the male chose a well-paid job rather than teaching profession unless they passionate in teaching.



## (2) Age

According to data findings from this study, the majority of teachers were in the age of 51 years and above (47.9%) followed by the teachers in the age of 40- 50 years (27.1%) at No. 26 Basic Education High School, Mandalay. The data showed that only one third of the teacher population (25.0%) was the younger generation of teachers in the age of below 40 years. Similarly, Kavinda (2014) also stated his findings that most teachers in public Myanmar High schools were old and this could generally be the nature of public high schools in Myanmar. Teachers in Myanmar public high schools were promoted by their in-service years and their content knowledge of subject area they concerned. Therefore, as a high school, there might be more number of older teachers than the younger ones. In addition, for the matter of the inadequacy of skilled teachers, some teachers work till to the retired age, 60 years, although they may have over 30 years of teaching experience (personal communication, July, 2015).

## (3) Grade Level Currently Teaching

From the research findings, it can be seen vividly that majority of teachers were teaching at Upper Secondary (44 teachers) and Lower Secondary (32 teachers) while very small number of teachers were teaching at Primary level (20 teachers). One of the reasons might be that in lower primary from Grade 1 to 3, one teacher took care of the whole class teaching all round subjects. But then in Upper Primary from Grade 4 to 5, mostly there might be one or two teacher for each subject. Moreover, through researcher observation on students list at No. 26 Basic Education High School (academic year 2015-2016), there were fewer classes in Primary than in Secondary levels. Another reason would be that both Secondary levels had subject teachers for each class level and there were more classes in Secondary level as more students were in Secondary than in Primary.

## (4) Years of Teaching Experience

According to the finding, this study found that most teachers (34.4%) had 26 – 30 years of teaching experience, followed by 15 years and below of teaching experience (33.3%), then 31 years and above of teaching experience (18.8%) and the least was 16 – 25 years of teaching experience (13.5%). Generally, in Myanmar, a teacher with about 15 years of teaching experience could be assumed as an experienced teacher. Therefore, based on the findings it could be considered that there were many experienced teachers at No. 26 Basic Education High School Mandalay, Myanmar as they were trained and promoted by their in-service years of teaching experience. Surprisingly, there were a few numbers of teacher who had 31 years and above teaching experience. These teachers might be working as public teachers since their young age and some of them seemed to be retired soon. It could be assumed that a lot of older teachers were probably not so updated in teaching knowledge compared with less experienced younger ones. However, they were expert in teaching for their own subject areas and efficient in using of their teaching methods as they had many years of teaching experience (Huyen, 2003 & Kavinda, 2014).

### *Teachers' Perceptions towards School's Professional Development*

#### Level (1) Participants' reaction

According to the findings, evaluation Level (1) of teachers' reaction or enjoyment towards their school development program was interpreted as teachers had positive perspectives for their school development program at No. 26 Basic Education High School. In the previous study, Lowden (2003) stated that teachers felt non-threatening, the instructor was also knowledgeable and it was generally a positive experience, however, there was very low teachers' reaction on time convenience and meeting their needs. In this study, although teachers felt they had positive experience and their needs had met, they had low satisfaction for time convenience and the instructor's effectiveness, which was quite similar with Williams (2014).

#### Level (2) Participants' learning

This evaluation level investigated what the participants actually gained lead to any changes in their knowledge and skills through professional learning experience.

In the previous study of Lowden (2003), the teachers felt that they had learnt new knowledge, skills and concepts connected to their prior knowledge. Williams (2014) also presented that teachers in her study learnt not only the new knowledge and skill but also the theory behind the practice because of professional development. In this study, although teachers considered that they learnt more practical instructional strategies and new concepts connected to their prior knowledge, they considered they did not gain much of new knowledge and skills or theory behind the practice. Therefore, this could be assumed that topics for professional development might be less relevant or similar training might be set up repeatedly.

#### Level (3) Organization support and change

Overall, finding from this study indicated that teachers at No. 26 Basic Education High School Mandalay received school support and resources that would lead positive changes in school. They thought school development program had positive impact on the school, its culture and climate with the highest scores, which was similar to both previous researchers, Lowden (2003) and Williams (2014). However, in this study teachers responded that they had no ideas upon school's stipend or in-service credit. In a contrary, findings of Lowden (2003) and Williams (2014) who conducted their studies in United States of America showed that teachers' professional experience leads to in-service credit or stipend. Therefore, this researcher assumed that public schools in Myanmar might not have this practice because most of the schools do not usually employ evaluation so that it might be less possible to give credit or stipend for skillful teachers' performance.

#### Level (4) Participants' use of new knowledge and skills

At Level 4, teachers in this study responded that they practiced the new instructional strategies, made some changes in their teaching and noticed their positive changes in their teaching. But the findings also revealed that teachers did not usually carried out new teaching strategies. According to this researcher personal schooling experience and observation, class size of Myanmar public high schools were oversized classes

with about over 40 students. Therefore, sometimes it would be difficult for teachers to apply the new teaching strategies exactly they had learnt from development activities. Moreover, some of the pedagogical practice could be adapted to Myanmar context while some might be challenging, as they may need particular resources or class environment. For these reasons, this researcher assumed that it would be better to choose and coach the teaching strategies, which could fit well for the context of the school.

#### Level (5) Student learning outcomes

In this study, teachers believed that their professional development experience had positive impact on student learning. Teachers indicated that overall students' achievement was increased and they gained confidence as they felt they were improved. Teacher classroom management seemed to be improved more as students seemed more engaged in their learning. Meanwhile, Lowden (2003) and Williams (2014) stated their finding in evaluation Level (5) was positive. However, teachers in this study responded lowest for student achievement on state or district assessment and classroom assessment, which was similar in Lowden (2003). This could be inferred that there are three National Examination in Basic Education system. At the end of Primary (Grade-5), Lower Secondary (Grade-9) and Upper Secondary (Grade-11), students usually sit the state or district wide National Examination (UNESCO-IBE, 2010). Therefore, teachers from other grade levels might not have very high perceptions on the increase of student achievement in state or district assessment.

#### *Comparison of The Teachers' Perceptions towards School's Professional Development According to Their Demographics*

In this study, researcher compared the teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development according to their demographics: age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience.

From the result of testing the research hypothesis, the probability significant score of comparing teachers' perceptions by their age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience are greater than 0.05. Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected which means there were no significant differences in the teachers' perceptions towards school's professional development according to their demographics: age, grade level currently teaching and years of teaching experience at No. 26 Basic Education High School in Mandalay, Myanmar in the academic year 2015-2016. As this study compared teachers' perception of school development program according to their selected demographics, this researcher assumed that there might be some factors that seemed to manipulate the teachers' perceptions.

One of the factors might be the age of teachers. Based on the findings, there were significantly bigger numbers of older generation teachers than that of younger generation who were in the age of below 40 years. This was seemed to be the nature of Myanmar public high school for having more old generation teacher and some old teachers might be working though they were old enough to retired. According to this researcher personal experience and observation, most of the old teachers in Myanmar may less likely to aware of the nature and value of research. Some might just work

for their family survival. Therefore, majority may give so called responses without taking proper determination and it may affect this study result.

Another possible factor might be the years of teaching experience. This could be because findings showed that more teachers are old, teaching in higher-grade levels with many years of teaching experience. Therefore, this might be assumed that most of them were very experience and it could be difficult to follow the new strategies that were delivered in professional development activities. Their attitudes might be rooted in what they used to believe and might have tendency of difficulty to change and reveal their own perceptions.

The previous researcher Williams (2014) also conducted a dissertation study of “Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Development Experiences” based on the Guskey’s evaluation work by using Lowden’s (2003) questionnaires. William addressed three primary research objectives and major concern was to explore whether there were significant differences regarding how teacher perceived their professional development experiences based on three selected demographics such as years of experience, elementary teachers from Title I vs. Non-Title I schools and teaching position (elementary, secondary, or auxiliary). She used Independent Samples t-test for her objective 1 and 2, and One-way ANOVA for her objective 3. However, her transformed data indicated that there were no significant differences for all of her research objectives.

While two of these comparative research data showed no significant difference between the selected demographics, Lowden (2003) stated that there was a significant positive relationship between Guskey’s evaluation model and the way teachers’ perception about their development experience and their performance changes. The strongest correlation was found between how participants evaluated their use of new knowledge and skills (Level 4) and how far their development experience impact on students’ achievement (Level 5).

Though this study found no significant differences in the teachers’ perceptions towards school’s professional development according to their selected demographics, all of the responses indicated positive teachers’ perceptions. Therefore, this researcher considered that teachers had better to participate more in researching to know the value of research and should aware that result could support their future needs through their responses in survey.

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