

# WORKPLACE LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION: THE VIEWS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS IN LUCENA CITY ON REFLECTIVE PRACTICES, PEER COLLABORATION, AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

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## Abstract

*This study examined workplace learning and professional identity formation by exploring the views and lived experiences of basic education teachers in relation to reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement. A qualitative research approach was employed, specifically Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) following Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin (2009), which focuses on the interpretative exploration of participants' experiences. The participants comprised 12 basic education teachers from the Department of Education (DepEd) in Lucena City, with equal representation from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and two teachers selected per grade level. The study was conducted at selected elementary schools in Lucena City. The findings revealed that reflective practice enhances teachers' self-awareness and informs instructional decision-making, while peer collaboration promotes shared learning, emotional support, and continuous professional growth. Instructional improvement emerged as a transformative outcome, enabling teachers to refine their teaching strategies and increase learner engagement. Workplace learning was found to be influenced by personal values, institutional structures, and socio-cultural contexts, although it is often constrained by time limitations, workload demands, and limited resources. Despite these challenges, these factors collectively contribute to the development of teacher competence, resilience, and collaborative practices, ultimately leading to improved teaching effectiveness and positive learner outcomes across different career stages. It is recommended to strengthen reflective practices, reduce workload demands, and enhance collaboration through mentoring, structured peer activities, and the cultivation of an inclusive professional culture. Additionally, providing adequate resources, technology, and training is essential to support instructional improvement. Encouraging teacher engagement in innovation is also vital. Future studies may examine the long-term impacts of workplace learning across diverse educational contexts.*

**Keywords:** collaboration, experience, improvement, practice, workplace

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## INTRODUCTION

The quality of teaching plays a central role in shaping the educational experience and fostering the holistic development of learners, ultimately preparing them for lifelong learning and future societal roles. However, a persistent global challenge in education is ensuring that classrooms are consistently staffed with qualified and competent teachers (Sen, 2010). In the Philippines, this issue is particularly pronounced, as many educators enter the profession without formal training in education. Wintersgill (2006) noted that non-education graduates are often assigned to teach subjects beyond their areas of expertise, despite being certified in only one field. Furthermore, a growing trend shows that some college graduates complete only the minimum required 18 units in education to qualify for teaching positions, raising concerns about the adequacy of their preparation.

From a knowledge-gap perspective, while teacher identity formation has been extensively examined in pre-service education, there remains limited empirical research on how in-service basic education teachers develop their professional identity through workplace learning processes such as reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement. Existing studies on early-career teachers suggest that school climate—particularly institutional support and organizational structures—plays a crucial role in shaping professional identity, which may strengthen, shift, or experience tension over time.

Moreover, the problem is compounded by the fact that professional development programs often fail to integrate identity work explicitly: professional growth is frequently framed in terms of skills acquisition or curriculum reform, rather than as a holistic process involving self-awareness, values, and relational dimensions. Yet research shows that when teachers engage in authentic, justice-oriented professional learning experiences that include reflective dialogue and collegial support, these experiences can transform their instructional practices and their sense of self as educators. Similarly, research in special education has shown that professional identity positively predicts professional development and is mediated by self-efficacy and social support.

In contexts such as Philippines, where master teachers engage in mentoring, peer feedback, and reflective dialogue as part of their leadership roles, their identities evolve through these relational practices rather than top-down mandates. In lieu of these issues and concerns DepEd remains committed in improving the quality of education through its alignment with national initiatives, such as the Eight-Point Socioeconomic Agenda and the MATATAG Education Agenda. These frameworks aim to produce competent, job-ready citizens with the necessary competencies for lifelong learning. A key part of this is enhancing both teacher pedagogies and student academic performance.

In recent research, teacher professional identity is recognized as a critical factor in effective teaching (Tsui, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005). Boomer (1998) emphasizes that teachers are the driving force behind the classroom learning process, and if they lack awareness of their professional identity, this can negatively impact student outcomes. Developing a strong sense of professional identity benefits not only classroom performance but also supports teachers' ongoing professional growth (Vinz, 1996). Becoming an effective teacher is a continuous process, requiring constant self-reflection on one's teaching identity.

In relation to teachers' workplaces and professional identity formation, examining this area is essential as it provides critical insights into how educators develop, adapt, and sustain their professional roles within complex and evolving educational environments. Understanding these dynamics helps identify key factors that influence teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and effectiveness, including reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement. Moreover, such research highlights how teachers negotiate personal values, professional expectations, and societal demands, which ultimately shape their professional identity and inform their teaching practices. By exploring these dimensions, educational institutions can design more responsive professional development programs, inform evidence-based policy decisions, and cultivate environments that support teachers' growth and well-being, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for learners.

This research highlights the importance of reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional

improvement in enhancing teaching and learning. By reflecting on the teachers' methods and outcomes, they can identify areas for growth and develop more effective strategies (Schon, 1983). Wherein peer collaboration fosters a supportive environment where educators can share expertise, address challenges, and co-create knowledge (Vangrieken et al., 2015). Meanwhile, data-driven decision-making and evidenced-based practices optimize student learning (Hattie, 2009). By prioritizing these areas, schools can cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, benefiting both teachers and students. This integrated approach promotes sustainable professional development that may offer multiple opportunities for teachers and improved classroom performance of learners.

By focusing on the lived experiences of basic education teachers in Lucena City, this research can illuminate how reflection and collaboration in the workplace contribute to teacher professional development, identity coherence, and instructional improvement. Finally, addressing this problem is urgently needed in the education sector because a strong professional identity is linked to ongoing teacher commitment, resilience, and capacity for pedagogical innovation. Without understanding how identity is formed and evolves through workplace practices, policy makers and school leaders risk designing professional development that misses the relational and identity-driven dimensions of teacher's growth.

### **Purpose of the Research**

This study explored the views and lived experiences of basic education teachers in the Division of Lucena City on workplace learning and professional identity formation in relation to reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement.

Generally, the study sought to answer this question: How do basic education teachers make sense of their views and lived experiences of workplace learning, particularly in relation to reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement, and how do these experiences shape their professional identity?

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City experience and make sense of reflective practices in their work, including the challenges, enablers, and impacts on their personal and professional growth?
2. How do basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City experience and interpret peer collaboration with colleagues, and how does this collaboration influence their professional learning, shared practices, and professional identity?
3. How do basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City experience and interpret instructional improvement through workplace learning, including the challenges, innovations, and their influence on their evolving professional identity?
4. How do basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City understand their workplace learning experiences through reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement and how do these shape their professional identity?

### **Significance of the Research**

Teachers are key players as stewards of the teaching and learning process in the educational arena. They play crucial roles in the success and failure of each learner in the school community. Thus, this study is believed to benefit the following:

**Teachers.** Teachers may become aware of the various self-directed learning that could lead them to achieve their highest potentials as steward of the teaching and learning process. By this, they will be able to determine their roles and functions with sense of accountability and professionalism in school and how they can support and help their school head in ensuring the improvement of learning outcomes of their learners.

**Pupils.** As the prime recipient of the educational services, they will benefit of these in the system through effective, efficient and competent teachers who manage the development and effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

**School Administrators.** This study may serve as a guide in using the most effective and efficient ways of manning the school environment and system of teachers' promotion. The result of this study will provide valuable information to school administrators that are faced with the challenges of administering innovations and changes for their teachers. It will provide clear insights in understanding the capacity of their teachers to stay strong and be focused on difficulties, challenging tasks, and responsibilities. As they can respond effectively to any difficulty, educational managers will be able to develop an easier, more relaxed and more productive approach in managing and supervising teachers' improvement and accountability. It will further help them to improve job functions and to attain physical and mental well-being that could lead to the over-all quality of management. Furthermore, it will help them provide valuable information to come up with an alternative solution and effective approach in establishing a strong understanding on the weakness and strength of their teachers as leader that provides proper technical assistance in the academe.

**Education Program Supervisors (EPS) and the Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDS).** Upon knowing teachers views and lived experiences in terms of reflective practices, collaboration in the workplace of teachers in providing instructional improvement and professional identity, these supervisors can provide technical assistance to the teachers based on their improvement needs using the teacher's development plan for career progression.

**Human Resource Training and Development (HRTD).** The department of Education HRTD can utilize the result of this study as a point of reference for promoting teachers in accordance with the career progression policy of the Department of Education.

**Curriculum Implementation Division (CID).** By revealing the reflective practices, peer collaboration, and ongoing instructional improvement of basic education teachers, the insights in the study will guide the division in strengthening curriculum implementation through targeted coaching, learning action cells, and capacity -building programs. Ultimately, it offers evidence-based direction to improve instructional delivery and ensure effective translation of curriculum standards into responsive teaching practices.

**School Governance and Operations Division (SGOD).** The insights in the study guide the division in designing relevant professional development programs, peer mentoring systems, and reflective practice frameworks that elevate teacher competence and overall school performance.

**Parents and Community.** As strong partners in the educational system, they will be able to understand the behavior and various teaching skills of the teachers regardless of their position for a systematic coordination between the school and community.

**Future Researchers.** Since education is a continuous process, future researchers may find this study useful and relevant to their study to be conducted. This study may be used by future researchers whose research interest is also in line with the present study as a reference material and a guide in the conduct of a study like the previously conducted one.

**Researcher herself** will become more familiar with the views and lived experiences of teachers under reflective learning practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement in terms of workplace environment and professional identity formation. This is a way she could gather relevant information as researcher of the institution. This will make her a better to best future administrator that are able to understand teachers beyond the box of teaching and learning process.

**Practical and Political.** In the 21<sup>st</sup> century era the higher education institutions in the country are increasingly being made to account for their contribution to national development, this study also assumes significance. Nevertheless, the findings of this study may be used to inform the whole Division of Lucena on how to identify excellent performer teachers that are qualified to received promotion through career progression based on their capability, effectivity and efficiency, as well as to recognize the weaknesses and strengths of teachers so that Department of Education will organize trainings for the continued development of our dear teachers. With these, teachers will be aware of their own professional status and be more competent to strive to achieved more than they are expected, so that they become accountable for the increase of national development in terms of Education.

The results of this research may contribute not only to the development of an effective and efficient teaching force and supervision of learning institutions but also to the improvement of the quality of life in the school community redounding to the benefits of the different stakeholders of the academic community.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design/Research Instrument/Data Gathering Procedures**

This study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), to explore the research problem. IPA is well-suited to interpret the meaning, structure, and essence of individual lived experiences related to a particular phenomenon. It acknowledges that perceptions are shaped by personal contexts and constructions of reality, allowing for a rich, nuanced understanding of participants' perspectives. As an inductive approach, IPA begins with the phenomenon itself rather than predefined theories, making it ideal for exploring the subjective experiences of basic education teachers in elementary school.

Furthermore, the selection of the twelve (12) participants is considered sufficient for this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study. According to IPA methodology, small and relatively homogeneous samples are appropriate to allow for detailed and idiographic exploration of participants lived experiences. In this study, the participants have been teaching in the same school context for more than 3 years and some of which are for decades. Which means they have long-term exposure to similar workplace learning conditions and have experienced the same phenomenon of reflective practice, peer collaboration and instructional improvement within their professional environment. This shared context strengthens the appropriateness of the sample, as it allows the researcher to explore both the commonalities and subtle individual variations in how these experiences contribute basic education teacher identity formation.

The research instrument is a researcher-devised in-depth interview guide consisting of fourteen (14) main questions and thirty-two (32) follow-up questions, designed to explore a variety of insights and perspectives, and organized into six (6) parts. The first part gathers personal information to establish camaraderie with the informants. The second part examines basic education teachers' views and lived experiences related to reflective practices. The third part explores their experiences in peer collaboration, particularly the influence of collegial support and shared practices as components of professional learning and identity formation. The fourth part delves into instructional improvement, including the challenges and tensions teachers experience in sustaining instructional innovation within their teaching context. The fifth part investigates the integration of basic education teachers' experiences with the main variables of the study (reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement) in relation to the personal, institutional, or cultural views that shape their interpretations of workplace learning and professional identity formation. The final part of the instrument includes a concluding reflection, in which participants narrate their journey of becoming professionals through workplace learning.

To collect data, the study used a structured interview protocol, designed to elicit the participants' backgrounds, personal views and lived experiences. According to Park (2012), structured interviews are commonly used in identity research to capture respondents' educational and socio-cultural backgrounds, particularly in the field of education. The interview was conducted using the validated interview guide and was audio-recorded for capturing verbatim responses from the participants. During the interview, the researcher took notes to document any non-verbal cues and other related insights observed. These structured interviews guided the discussions toward the participants' views and experiences on workplace learning and professional identity formation of basic education teachers in Lucena City.

Once all the approvals of the concerned offices were obtained, the researcher contacted the potential participants of the study through a school memorandum followed by a focus group discussion to officially invite them and give a brief discussion on the purpose of the study. Upon obtaining the consent of the participants, the researcher scheduled in- depth interviews at a time and place that is convenient to the participants. Using the following procedures, the researcher collected rich information and nuanced data that

captures the complexities and depth of basic education teachers' views and lived experiences in the workplace learning and their professional identity formation in terms of reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of the study were 12 elementary basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City. They served as the participants of the study. Respondents were equally selected from key stage 1 and key stage 2 learning level. Each key stage was equally represented, with a total of two basic education teachers per grade level.

### **Sampling Design and Procedures**

The research used purposive sampling to recruit a small homogeneous sample of 12 elementary basic education teachers who have experienced the same specific phenomenon. The procedure involves selecting participants based on their ability to provide rich, detailed accounts of the phenomenon, often through structured interviews, and analyzing each case individually to understand their unique views and lived experiences of basic education teachers in Lucena City. These elementary basic education teachers have been in teaching profession for three years, while some are teaching for decades. Therefore, a small sample of (12) basic education teachers' participants is justified as it is sufficient to generate rich, meaningful, and comparable narratives necessary to constructing a nuanced understanding of workplace learning and professional identity formation.

### **Research Locale/Study Site**

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools within the Division of Lucena City. The school environments selected were those that would be most likely to attain intensive data and information to which the researcher could easily retrieve and validate.

### **Research Paradigm/Conceptual Framework**

The study consists of the basic education teachers in the Division of Lucena City, who served as the main participants and contextual foundation of the research. These teachers are the primary sources of data and lived experiences concerning workplace learning and professional identity formation. They brought with them diverse background, varying lengths of teaching experience, and different career stages that provided a rich understanding of the teaching profession within the division. Moreover, their current practices in reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement serve as valuable inputs in exploring how teachers learn, grow, and develop professionally. Their perceptions and lived experiences form the groundwork for understanding how basic education teachers' learning and identity formation unfold within real educational settings, thereby setting the foundation for the entire research process.

It involves two interrelated theoretical components – Workplace Learning (Andragogy) and Professional Identity Formation (Constructivism) through which the basic education teachers in the Division of Lucena City experiences are explored and analyzed. Workplace learning, grounded in the principles of andragogy, focuses on how adult educators acquire knowledge and skills in their professional environments. This includes reflective practices that encourage self-assessment and critical reflection on teaching and learning processes, peer collaboration that promotes sharing of experiences, co-planning, and mentoring, and instructional improvement that enhances teaching effectiveness through feedback and continuous learning. On the other hand, Professional Identity Formation, guided by constructivism theory, highlights how basic education teachers construct and evolve their professional identities through personal experiences and social interactions in their work settings. This process also involves reflective practices that build self-awareness and shape teaching philosophies, peer collaboration that fosters identity through social learning, and instructional improvement that aligns professional identity with pedagogical competence. The bidirectional interaction



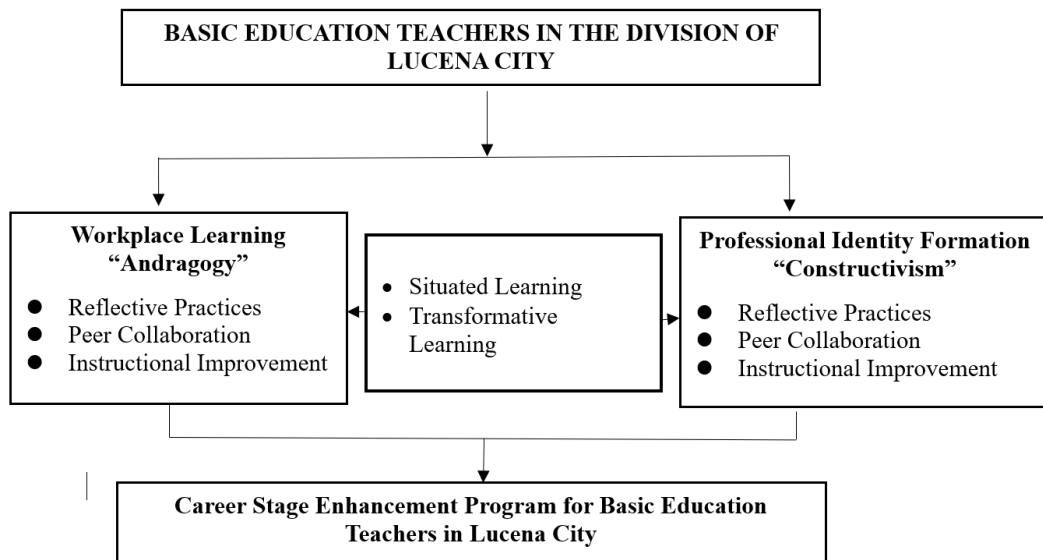
between workplace learning and professional identity formation signifies that basic education teachers' workplace experiences influence their evolving identities, while their professional identities, in turn, shape how they approach learning and instructional improvement. This process encapsulates the basic education teachers' lived experiences as they engage in reflective, collaborative, and instructional enhancement practices.

The output of the study is the development of a Career Stage Enhancement Program for Basic Education Teachers in Lucena City. This program aims to support basic education teachers' continuous professional growth and development across various career stages. It seeks to strengthen the culture of reflection and collaboration among educators, promote instructional improvement, and nurture sustained professional identity formation. The enhancement program was better equipped to engage in meaningful professional learning and identity development that contributes to their overall effectiveness and satisfaction in the teaching profession.

In summary, the figure below shows a summary of flow that demonstrates a cyclical and interdependent relationship between basic education teachers' experiences and professional growth. Focuses on the teacher's lived realities; the process explores how workplace learning and professional identity formation interact through reflection, collaboration, and instructional improvement. The output produces a career enhancement program that supports sustained basic education teacher development. This conceptual framework underscores that basic education teacher's workplace learning experiences (andragogy) play a vital role in shaping their professional identities (constructivism), and these identities, in turn, influence how they continue to learn and improve their professional communities.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework of the Study*



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the views and lived experiences of selected basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City. A total of eight (8) superordinate themes were generated from the responses of the participants of the study, namely: structured reflective practice systems, evolution of reflective practice, instructional improvement and learner-centered practices, professional growth and identity formation, meaning-making of reflective practice, challenges in reflective practice, enablers of reflective practice, and impact on personal and professional growth.

Furthermore, each superordinate theme consisted of different subthemes. Under the superordinate themes structured and reflective practice systems, the four (4) subthemes were institutionalized reflective activities, observation and feedback mechanisms, collaborative professional spaces, and data driven reflection, next, for the superordinate theme evolution of reflective practice, the four (4) subthemes were compliance-driven beginnings, translation to meaningful practice, habitual and embedded practice, and reflective mindset development, third, for the superordinate theme instructional improvement and learner-centered practices, the four (4) subthemes were instructional adjustments, differentiated and inclusive teaching, use of interactive strategies, and improved learner outcomes, then, for superordinate theme professional growth and identity formation, the four (4) subthemes were development of teaching competence, increased confidence and empowerment, openness to feedback, and lifelong learning orientation.

Following this, for superordinate theme *meaning-making of reflective practice*, the four (4) subthemes were reflection as self-evaluation, *reflection as a growth tool*, *reflection as a mindset and habit*, and *reflection as moral/professional responsibility*, subsequently, for the superordinate theme challenges in reflective practice, the four (4) subthemes were *time constraints and workload*, *administrative burden*, *difficulty in objectivity*, and *resource and contextual limitations*.

Meanwhile, for the superordinate theme enablers of reflective practice, the four (4) subthemes were *supportive leadership*, *collaborative peer support*, *structured reflective platforms*, and *access to feedback and data*, finally, for the superordinate theme impact on personal and professional growth, the four (4) subthemes were *enhanced self-awareness*, *improved decision-making*, *adaptability and flexibility*, and *commitment to quality education*.

The first superordinate theme generated from the response of the participants of the study is initially structured through institutionalized systems where participants' statements revealed that reflective practice initially emerges as a compliance-driven activity embedded in Department of Education requirements such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, classroom observations, and documentation process.

As one of the participants (P1) expounded that:

*"Reflective practices implemented in our school include regular Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions..."*

These structured activities are further strengthened through feedback process, where Participant P2 rendered that:

*"We practice regular reflection through post-lesson reflection, peer collaboration, and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions. These help us evaluate what strategies worked well and what needs improvement".*

Additionally, participant P1, interpreted reflection as informed by evidence-based practices. She said analyzing assessment data and student outputs helped me become more intentional, when she stated that:

*"Instead of simply recording the scores, I took time to review each item, analyze common errors, and identify patterns in their misconceptions".*

Moreover, reflection is strengthened through data-driven processes, such as analyzing students' assessments and outputs, which help teachers become more intentional in their instructional decision making. Highlighting the role of data -driven reflection in improving instruction. Over time, basic education teachers reinterpret reflection as a meaningful and intentional professional tool. This is supported by Murrat et al., 2020, who stated that workplace learning is a valuable opportunity.



Reflection is perceived as both formal requirement and personal habit as expressed by participant P1, shared that:

*“I see reflective practices as both a formal requirement and a personal habit. As a teacher, reflection is often required in lesson planning, classroom observations, performance evaluations, and professional development activities, making it an important part of institutional expectations.”*

However, with continued engagement, basic education teachers begin to develop deeper reflective thinking, with one participant (P2) noted:

*“For me, as a basic education teacher, reflective practice means taking time to think carefully about my teaching—what worked well, what didn’t, and how I can improve. It is about being honest with myself and being open to change for the benefit of my learners.”*

This progression leads to realization of reflection as part of their daily teaching activities, where participants (P1) shared that:

*“When reflection becomes part of my daily routine, it shifts from being a task to a meaningful process that supports my professional growth and enhances student learning outcomes.”*

And ultimately becomes a professional mindset, as stated by participant (P4) said:

*“After reflecting on low student participation, I shifted from pure lecture to collaborative learning strategies. I incorporated group discussions and project-based tasks. I realized that students learn better when they are actively involved. This changed my belief that control of the classroom must always be teacher centered.”*

This shift suggests that reflection is not static but developmental, evolving from surface-level compliance to deeper critical engagement rather than being confined to a fixed process. Basic education teachers may initially engage in reflection as a requirement, but over time they internalize its value, transforming it into a sustained habit and professional mindset. This interpretation aligns with the constructivist theory of Jean Piaget, which posits that knowledge is actively constructed through experience, as teachers continually reconstruct their understanding through processes of assimilation and accommodation.

Furthermore, reflective practice contributes significantly to basic education teachers’ professional growth and identity formation. Basic education teachers’ acknowledged improvements in their competence, as expressed by participant R6 that:

*“As a beginning teacher, reflection was more of a requirement for me. Over time, it became a meaningful process that helped me improve my strategies and classroom management skills.”*

Similarly, participant P1 expounded that:

*“These reflective practices have strengthened my professional growth, improved my confidence as an educator, and deepened my commitment to continuous improvement for the benefit of my learners.”*

Reflection also promotes openness to feedback, as per participant P3 experienced that:

*“Over time, I have developed greater openness to feedback and have become more intentional in adjusting my instructional approaches to better respond to learners’ needs.”*

and fosters a lifelong learning orientation interpreted by participant P1, she said:

*“Now, reflective practice is embedded in my daily teaching routine. It has made me more flexible, learner-centered, and responsive to the needs of my students. Most importantly, it has strengthened my commitment to continuous improvement and lifelong learning as an educator”*

These participants’ interpretations of their experiences highlight how reflective practice shapes teachers into more competent, confident, and growth-oriented professionals. The findings align with the constructivist theory of Jean Piaget, which posits that knowledge is actively constructed through experience,

as basic education teachers reconstruct their understanding through assimilation (initial compliance) and accommodation (deeper meaning-making). Similarly, David A. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle is evident as teachers move from concrete teaching experiences to reflection, conceptualization, and improved instructional practice. From a social perspective, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991) Communities of Practice framework explains how reflection is shaped within collaborative spaces such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, where shared dialogue enables teachers to co-construct meaning.

Thus, reflective practice is both individually constructed and socially mediated, suggesting that institutional structures are not merely constraints but also serve as enabling conditions that teachers reinterpret and personalize over time. This is supported by DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016, which introduced LACs as mechanisms for collaborative professional learning, and DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, which reinforces LACs as a cornerstone for strengthening teaching standards and enhancing professional competence in Philippine basic education. Supporting this, Culajara (2023) found that School Learning Action Cells (SLACs) function as cost-efficient platforms where teachers identify instructional needs, exchange practices, and collaboratively reskill.

Furthermore, the sixth subtheme that was generated from the responses of the participants of the study was the challenges in reflective practice, despite its recognized benefits, basic education teachers consistently highlight time constraints, heavy workload, and administrative burden as major barriers to reflective practice as interpreted by participants (P1, P2, P3, and P4).

This was supported by participant P1 when she stated that:

*"When engaging in reflective practice, I have experienced challenges such as time constraints due to heavy workloads, which sometimes limit the depth and consistency of my reflections, as well as the difficulty of being fully objective when evaluating my own teaching practices. Balancing lesson preparation, assessments, and other responsibilities can also make it challenging to set aside dedicated time for meaningful reflection."*

While administrative responsibilities further limit reflection based on the statement shared by participant P4, mentioned that:

*"One major challenge is time constraint due to administrative tasks and heavy workload. Sometimes reflection is rushed because of deadlines."*

Basic education teachers also face difficulty in maintaining objectivity, as reflected in participant P1 statement that:

*"As well as the difficulty of being fully objective when evaluating my own teaching practices."*

Along with resources limitations such as expressed by participant P12, he stated that:

*"One of the challenges I have experienced in engaging in reflective practice is the limited time and resources allotted for the preparation."*

These constraints highlight the tension between institutional expectations and meaningful reflective engagement. As a result, reflection is sometimes reduced to a routine or rushed task, limiting its depth and authenticity. This reflects duality in which reflection exists simultaneously as a bureaucratic requirement and a transformative professional practice. Such tension is supported by Bonton (2009), who argues that reflective practices in institutional contexts are often constrained by documentation demands and systematic pressures, leading to superficial engagement. In addition, Tayag (2020), found that teachers' engagement in reflective and collaborative practices is often limited by workload, time constraints, and administrative demands. In similar vein, Toquero (2020), highlights how educators experienced role overload, documentation pressure, and rapid adaptation, which impacted reflective teaching practices.

However, Nguyen et al. (2021) found that mandated reflective tasks in professional contexts often lead to engage in surface-level reflection, as the focus shifts toward completing requirements rather than critically examining practice. Similarly, Admiraal et al. (2021) emphasized that institutional structures can unintentionally constrain reflective depth when reflection is treated as a standardized output rather than a

developmental process.

These findings suggest that reflective practice cannot thrive on structure alone; without sufficient time, space, and cognitive freedom, it risks becoming performative rather than transformative. Similarly, Lui et al. (2022) noted that heavy workloads and administrative demands often render reflection rushed or procedural, thereby limiting opportunities for deep professional inquiry. This supports the view that reflective practice can become routinized and lose its intended purpose in the teaching–learning process.

Therefore, while institutional systems are designed to promote reflection, they may inadvertently constrain its meaningful enactment and impact on learning goals. Moreover, participants interpreted reflective practice as an ongoing process of self-evaluation that gradually evolves into a habit, a mindset, and ultimately a professional and moral responsibility.

In terms of meaning making superordinate themes, basic education teachers viewed reflective practice as multifaceted process that goes beyond technical evaluation. Reflection as self-assessment was described by participant R1 when she said that:

*“To me, reflective practice as a basic education teacher means the continuous process of thoughtfully examining my teaching experiences, strategies, and student outcomes to improve my professional performance and learner results. It involves looking back at what happened in the classroom, identifying what worked well and what needs improvement, and making intentional adjustments to enhance instruction”*

and as a tool for growth, where participant P2 said that:

*“It also means learning from my daily experiences in the classroom. Instead of repeating the same methods every year, I adjust my strategies based on my pupils’ needs, performance, and behavior. In simple terms, reflective practice helps me become a more effective and responsive teacher.”*

Over time, it becomes internalized according to participant P3, stated that:

*“To me, reflective practice is the ongoing process of examining my teaching decisions, student outcomes, and classroom interactions with the goal of continuous improvement. It is both a mindset and a habit that keeps my teaching responsive, learner-centered, and purposeful”*

and even viewed as a moral and professional responsibility, as one participant (P7) expressed that:

*“It is your soul, your conscience. The outcome of the learning process will be a lot better when you’re guided by these practices. Beyond professional requirements, it becomes a personal habit as what I’ve mention above, it’s your teaching soul and conscience”*

This illustrated that reflection is deeply embedded in basic education teachers’ values and professional identity. This indicates that reflection extends beyond a technical process and becomes integral to the formation of teachers’ professional identity. These findings align with the Transformative Learning theory, which emphasizes that adult learning involves critical reflection leading to perspective transformation. Through reflection, teachers do not only improve their instructional practices but also redefine their beliefs, values, and sense of self as an educator. Furthermore, this is supported by Beijaard et al. (2004), who assert that professional identity is dynamic and continuously shaped through experience and reflection. In accordance with this, reflective practice strengthens teachers’ professional identity by promoting self-awareness and continuous learning (Yuan, 2020; Flores & Day, 2021). In the Philippine context, reflective engagements have been shown to reinforce teachers’ sense of purpose and professional growth despite institutional demands (Tayag, 2020; Sarmiento & Barrot, 2021). In this sense, reflection becomes most powerful when it shifts from simply evaluating actions to fostering deeper awareness of professional growth and identity development.

In addition, the data demonstrate that reflective practice leads to concrete instructional improvements in the teaching–learning process, including revising lesson plans, implementing interactive strategies, applying differentiated instruction, and responding to diverse learner needs. Through reflection, basic

education teachers shift toward more learner-centered approaches, resulting in enhanced student engagement and performance. This finding is supported by studies indicating that reflective teaching strengthens instructional decision-making and promotes adaptive, learner-centered pedagogy (Farrell, 2021; Dautova, 2020). In the Philippine context, professional development initiatives such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions further enable teachers to translate reflective insights into improved classroom practices and learner outcomes (Culajara, 2023).

Additionally, reflective practice also influences instructional improvement and learner centered teaching. Teachers reported making intentional instructional adjustments, such as mentioned by participant P1, she said:

*“One example of how reflective practice led to change in my teaching was when I noticed that some of my students were not fully participating during discussions and were performing below expectations in assessments. After reflecting on my lessons and analyzing their results, I realized that most of my activities were teacher-centered and did not provide enough opportunities for active learner engagement. Through discussions with colleagues during a collaborative meeting, I gained ideas on incorporating more student-centered strategies such as group work, differentiated tasks, and formative assessments. I applied these adjustments in my classroom, and I observed increased participation, improved understanding, and better performance. This experience changed my belief that effective teaching is not only about delivering content but also about creating interactive, inclusive, and learner-focused learning environments”*

And modifying instruction to address learner diversity, as seen in the table above, participant P8. According to her:

*“I noticed that my learners who struggles academically often displayed signs of frustration or low self-esteem. I realized that I was focusing primarily on content mastery with less attention to their emotional readiness. As a result, I began integrating short SEL activities such as gratitude sharing, goal-setting, and simple reflection. This experience strengthened my belief that emotional well-being directly influences academic success”*

The use of innovative and interactive strategies further enhances learning, when one participant (P2) shared that:

*“One moment I remember was when I taught division and more than half of my pupils failed the quiz. I realized I focused too much on explaining on the board and not enough on using concrete materials. The next day, I used bottle caps as counters and let them work in groups. Their understanding and participation improved a lot. That experience reminded me that effective teaching is about how well pupils understand, not just how well I explain”*

As a result, these reflective practices lead to improved learner outcomes, where according to participant P1, she observed that:

*“Noticeable improvement in learner engagement and performance”*  
*Demonstrating the practical impact of reflection on teaching effectiveness”*

In accordance with this, Kolb’s experiential learning theory stated that reflection leads to active experimentation and continuous improvement in practice. Recent studies further support that reflective practice enables basic education teachers to translate experiences into improved instructional strategies and learner achievement (Darling et al., 2020; OECD, 2020). Additionally, Mendoza (2000) highlights that teachers’ commitment is a key factor influencing teaching effectiveness, which is evident as basic education teachers use reflection to refine their instructional strategies. According to DepEd 2022; Salazar & Ormilla, 2021 reflective teaching strengthens instructional responsiveness and learner-centered practices in the classroom.

These findings suggest that reflective practice is not merely cognitive but hands-on oriented, as its value lies in how insights are translated into improved classroom practices that directly impact student

learning.

The seventh superordinate theme that was generated from the responses of the participants emphasized that reflective practice is strengthened by enabling conditions such as supportive leadership, collaborative peer culture, LAC/SLAC sessions, and access to feedback and data. These factors transform reflection into shared professional activity rather than isolated task. This aligns with Vangrieken et al., 2022 highlighting that collaborative professional learning environments enhance reflective practice.

Several enabling factors support the sustainability of reflective practice. Supportive leadership play crucial role, as interpreted by participant P1, expounded that:

*“Supportive leadership that promotes a culture of openness, constructive feedback, and continuous improvement is also essential in sustaining reflective practice as part of the school’s professional culture.”*

While peer collaboration enhances reflection through shared insights as experienced by participant P2, shared that:

*“The enablers are supportive colleagues, LAC sessions, and student outputs, which help me evaluate my teaching and make improvements”*

Structured platforms such as LAC sessions also promote reflection, as expressed by participant P4, mentioned that:

*“SLAC sessions and mentoring programs also encourage meaningful reflection.”*

And access to feedback and data further guides reflective process, as indicated in the responses given by participant P1, she shared that:

*“Several factors have enabled me to engage effectively in reflective practice, including support from school leaders and colleagues through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, constructive feedback from classroom observations, access to student assessment data, and opportunities for professional development. These enablers have strengthened my growth mindset and helped me continuously improve my instructional strategies and overall teaching performance.”*

These enablers highlight the importance of supportive professional environment in fostering reflective practice. This is consistent with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) perspective that learning occurs within communities of practice, where collaboration fosters knowledge construction and learning occurs through social participation. Recent studies affirm that collaborative professional environments enhance teachers’ reflective practices and instructional improvement (Vangrieken et al., 2022; Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2018). Similarly, Knowles’ theory of andragogy emphasizes that adult learners thrive in environments that are relevant, collaborative, and grounded in experience. Contemporary research supports this, showing that teachers learning is most effective when embedded in practice-based, collegial, and responsive to the context of educational field (Darlings et al., 2020).

These findings indicate that reflection becomes more meaningful and sustainable when supported by strong professional community, suggesting that it should be collectively nurtured rather than individually imposed. In accordance with this, the Philippine Department of Education (2022) highlights that collaborative platforms such as LAC and SLAC sessions promote shared reflection, peer support, and continuous professional development among teachers; Culajara, 2023).

Lastly, superordinate themes about impact on personal and professional growth of basic education teachers interpret that reflective practice leads to increased self-awareness, improved decision-making, greater adaptability, and a stronger commitment to teaching. Teachers develop enhanced self-awareness, as per mentioned by participant P8, shared that:

*“It helps me become more self-aware, adaptable, and responsive to learners’ needs. It strengthens my instructional decisions and builds my confidence, because when I want to be able to give the best for them, I continuously look for ways to address their needs.”*

And improve their decision-making through evidence-based approaches, such as mentioned by



participant P10 interpreted that:

*“It means intentionally examining my decisions, lessons, and interactions to improve continuously as a teacher. They help me recognize strengths, address weaknesses, and make evidence-based adjustments to improve student learning.”*

They also become more adaptable, as one participant (P1) shared her experienced that:

*“As I gained more teaching experience, I began to see reflection as a powerful tool for professional growth. I became more analytical in examining student data, identifying learning gaps, and connecting outcomes to my teaching strategies. This experience changed my belief that effective teaching is not only about delivering content but also about creating interactive, inclusive, and learner-focused learning environments.”*

And strengthen their commitment to quality education, as reflected on the statements given by participant P1, interpreted that:

*“Reflective practices also encourage me to seek feedback, collaborate with colleagues, and use assessment data to guide my teaching. As a result, I become more confident, responsive, and committed to delivering quality education and fostering meaningful learning experiences for my students.”*

These outcomes demonstrate that reflective practice is not merely a professional requirement but a transformative process that shapes basic education teachers into reflective, adaptive, and learner-centered educators. As noted by Beatrice Avalos (2021), reflective teaching enhances instructional adaptability, professional agency, and pedagogical responsiveness. These outcomes reflect professional empowerment and the development of a lifelong learning orientation, aligning with the goals of the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028 to enhance the quality of education. Moreover, reflective practice has a direct impact on learners, as teachers report improvements in student engagement, participation, and academic performance through revised lesson plans, interactive strategies, and targeted interventions. This is supported by Amy B. M. Tsui (2007) and Manka M. Varghese et al. (2005), who emphasize the critical role of teacher identity in effective teaching. Thus, the value of reflective practice extends beyond teacher development, creating a ripple effect that enhances overall learner outcomes and classroom experiences. In addition, Bernardo et al. (2022) confirmed that reflective teaching practices in public schools contribute to improved learner engagement and instructional effectiveness.

Finally, the findings indicate that reflective practice is shaped by a dynamic interplay between structure and agency. Institutional systems—such as policies, evaluation frameworks, and workload demands—provide the structural context, while teachers’ personal meaning-making, commitment, and reflective mindset represent their agency. This aligns with Geert Kelchtermans (2021), who emphasizes that professional practice is influenced by both institutional constraints and teacher autonomy. Basic education teachers navigate these conditions to construct reflection as both a professional requirement and a personal journey. This suggests that reflective practice becomes truly transformative when teachers move beyond compliance and actively redefine its purpose based on their experiences and professional goals. In this way, reflection emerges as a negotiated practice shaped by both external structures and internal motivations.

Overall, the views and lived experiences of basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City, as interpreted by the participants, indicate that reflective practice is a developmental, socially situated, and transformative process. While initially shaped by institutional structures, it evolves into a deeply personal and professional practice that enhances teaching effectiveness, strengthens professional identity, and improves learner outcomes despite systemic constraints.



**Table 1***Thematic Analysis of Basic Education Teachers' Views and Lived Experiences in Reflective Practices*

| <b>Superordinate Theme</b>                                      | <b>Subtheme</b>                         | <b>Verbatim Extract (Participant Quote)</b>                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Structured Reflective Practice Systems                          | Institutionalized Reflective Activities | "Reflective practices implemented in our school include regular Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions" (P1) |
|                                                                 | Observation and Feedback mechanisms     | "Classroom observations followed by post-conference discussions and provide constructive feedback" (P1)   |
|                                                                 | Collaborative Professional Spaces       | "We also share experiences and strategies in Learning Action Cell (LAC) session" (P2)                     |
|                                                                 | Data- Driven Reflection                 | "Analyzing assessment data and student outputs helped me become more intentional" (P1)                    |
| Evolution of Reflective Practice<br>"Compliance to Intentional" | Compliance-Driven Beginnings            | "At first, reflection was simply a requirement" (P1)                                                      |
|                                                                 | Transitions to Meaningful Practice      | "Over time, I learned to reflect more deeply" (P2)                                                        |
|                                                                 | Habitual and Embedded Practice          | "Now, reflective practice is embedded in my daily teaching routine" (P1)                                  |
|                                                                 | Reflective Mindset Development          | "It has shifted from a task to a habit" (P4)                                                              |
| Instructional Improvement and Learner -Centered Practices       | Instructional Adjustments               | "I revised my lesson plans and incorporated more interactive activities" (P1)                             |
|                                                                 | Differentiated and Inclusive Teaching   | "I need to modify my activities for them to cope with the lesson" (P8)                                    |
|                                                                 | Use of Interactive Strategies           | "I used bottle caps as counters and their understanding improved" (P2)                                    |
|                                                                 | Improved Learner Outcomes               | "I observed noticeable improvement in learner engagement and performance" (P1)                            |
| Professional Growth and identity Formation                      | Development of Teaching Competence      | "It helped me improve my strategies and classroom management skills" (P6)                                 |
|                                                                 | Increased Confidence and Empowerment    | "It strengthened my confidence as an educator" (P1)                                                       |
|                                                                 | Openness to Feedback                    | "I developed greater openness to feedback" (P3)                                                           |
|                                                                 | Lifelong Learning Orientation           | "It strengthened my commitment to continuous improvement" (P1)                                            |
| Meaning making of Reflective Practice                           | Reflection as Self-Evaluation           | "It is the continuous process of examining my teaching experiences" (P1)                                  |
|                                                                 | Reflection as a Growth Tool             | "It helps me become a more effective and responsive                                                       |

|                                            |                                                 |                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                            |                                                 | teacher" (P2)                                                      |
|                                            | Reflection as Mindset and Habit                 | "It is both a mindset and a habit" (P3)                            |
|                                            | Reflection as Moral/Professional Responsibility | "It is your soul, your conscience" (P7)                            |
| Challenges in Reflective Practice          | Time constraints and Workload                   | "Time constraints due to heavy workloads" (P1)                     |
|                                            | Administrative Burden                           | "Excessive administrative tasks make reflection rushed." (P4)      |
|                                            | Difficulty in Objectivity                       | "Difficulty of being fully objective" (P1)                         |
|                                            | Resource and Contextual Limitations             | "Limited time and resources" (P12)                                 |
| Enablers of Reflective Practice            | Supportive Leadership                           | "Support from school leaders strengthened my growth mindset." (P1) |
|                                            | Collaborative Peer Support                      | "Supportive colleagues help me evaluate my teaching" (P2)          |
|                                            | Structured Reflective Platforms                 | "LAC sessions encourage meaningful reflection" (P4)                |
|                                            | Access to Feedback and Data                     | "Access to student assessment data" (P1)                           |
| Impact on Personal and Professional Growth | Enhanced Self-Awareness                         | "It helps me become more self-aware" (P8)                          |
|                                            | Improved Decision-Making                        | "Make evidence-based adjustments" (P10)                            |
|                                            | Adaptability and Flexibility                    | "I became more flexible and learner-centered" (P1)                 |
|                                            | Commitment to Quality Education                 | "Committed to delivering quality education" (P1)                   |

Table 2 shows the elementary basic education teachers' views and lived experience on peer collaboration. A total of six (6) superordinate themes were generated from the responses of the participants of the study namely: *structured and informal peer collaboration practices, peer collaboration as a supportive and inclusive professional culture, and instructional practice, motivation, confidence, and professional growth, formation of professional identity through collaboration, and reciprocity and contribution to collegial support.*

Furthermore, each superordinate theme consists of different subthemes. Under the superordinate theme structured and informal peer collaboration practices, the five (5) subthemes were *formal collaboration structures, collaborative planning and instructional design, peer observation and feedback systems, team teaching and curriculum alignment, and informal collegial exchanges.* Next, for superordinate theme peer collaboration as supportive and inclusive professional culture, the five (5) subthemes were *sense of belonging and teamwork, emotional and professional support, shared responsibility and collective accountability, reduced isolation in teaching, and trust, camaraderie, and collegial relationships.* Then, for superordinate theme enhancement of professional learning and instructional practice, the six (6) subthemes were *acquisition of new teaching strategies, reflective practice and instructional improvement, innovation in teaching approaches, improved classroom management and pedagogy, problem-solving through collaboration, and curriculum adaptation and learner-centered strategies.*

Following this, for superordinate theme motivation, confidence, and professional growth, the six (6) subthemes were *increased motivation through collaboration, confidence building through feedback,*

*encouragement to try new strategies, professional energy and encouragement, reduced teaching stress, and career and professional development orientation.* Meanwhile, for superordinate theme formation of professional identity through collaboration, the six (6) subthemes were *identity as collaborative and reflective teacher, identity as lifelong learner, identity as member of professional learning community, identity as contributor/resource person, identity as adaptable and innovative educator, and identity shaped by shared responsibility.*

Lastly, for superordinate theme reciprocity and contribution to collegial support, the five (5) subthemes were *sharing of resources and strategies, role as supportive colleague, contribution to collective learning, perceived positively by colleagues, and mutual growth through collaboration.*

Based on the participants interpretation of their experiences, peer collaboration is both structured and informal, occurring through institutional mechanism such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, SLAC meetings, team teaching, peer observation, and collaborative lesson planning, as well as through spontaneous interactions during breaks and informal discussions. This is supported by Hargreaves and O' Connor (2018) emphasizing that teacher collaboration operates across formal and informal spaces within every school practice, contributing to continuous professional learning and instructional improvement. At the same time, informal collaboration such as spontaneous conversations during breaks and collegial exchanges has been identified as an essential dimension of teacher learning, as it fosters trust, shared meaning making, and immediate problem-solving in the teaching and learning process (Ronfeldt et al., 2015). Elementary basic education teachers described engagement in formal collaboration through LAC sessions, meeting, and training, as one participant (P1) noted that:

*"Teachers regularly collaborate during Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, grade-level meetings, and informal discussions to share teaching strategies, classroom experiences, and instructional materials."*

This collaboration extends to instructional design, where according to participant P1, teachers are:

*"We work together in lesson planning, developing assessment tools, and analyzing student performance data to ensure consistency and alignment with learning standards."*

As well as through peer observation and feedback systems, participant P1 shared that:

*"Peer observations and constructive feedback are also practiced, allowing us to learn from one another's strengths and improve our teaching approaches. Overall, collaboration in our school fosters a supportive professional culture focused on continuous improvement and student success."*

Additionally, superordinate theme peer collaboration as supportive and inclusive professional culture reflects the participants responses, which indicate that collaborative practices such as team teaching and curriculum alignment further strengthen shared instructional responsibility, while informal exchanges which was supported by participant P11 statements, stated that:

*"In our school, peer collaboration usually happens through informal discussions, team planning, and sharing of materials and strategies. We often exchange ideas during breaks, meetings, and LAC sessions, especially when we encounter challenges in our classes. Teachers also support each other by giving suggestions, sharing lesson plans, and discussing student concerns, which helps create a supportive and collaborative working environment."*

Collaboration is highlighted as a normalized professional routine rather than an isolated activity, naturally integrated into basic education teachers' daily work in the teaching-learning process. Its interpretation as shared instructional work is further reinforced by teachers' descriptions of co-developing lesson plans, designing assessment tools, and jointly analyzing learner data—indicating that collaboration is deeply embedded in instructional decision-making. This is supported by Basil Bernstein (2022), who emphasizes that teachers co-construct knowledge through collaborative professional engagement, as well as by Wendy L. Bedwell et al. (2012) and Heisawn Jeong et al. (2017), who distinguish collaboration as a deeper

form of joint intellectual engagement rather than mere coordination. Recent research further confirms that teacher collaboration functions as a knowledge-building process (Katrien Vangrieken et al., 2022).

Reflecting on these findings, it is evident that basic education teachers are not merely participants in structured systems but active contributors to a collective professional practice that promotes 21st-century skills such as communication, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving (Simon Buckingham Shum & Ruth Crick, 2016; Esther Van Laar et al., 2017). In addition, Linda Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasize that collaborative teaching practices are strongly associated with improved pedagogical innovation. These insights suggest that collaboration functions as a mechanism for instructional alignment and professional learning, where knowledge is continuously refined through shared practice and reflective exchange.

Furthermore, under Superordinate Theme 2, Subtheme 5 indicates that peer collaboration is experienced by elementary basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City as an emotionally supportive and inclusive professional culture that fosters belonging, trust, and reduced professional isolation. Participants emphasized that collaboration provides both emotional and professional support. As expressed by Participant P1:

*“When I engage in professional dialogue or share my work with colleagues, I feel both motivated and supported. It gives me a sense of belonging because I know that I am part of a team that values collaboration and continuous improvement.”*

The same is true with participant P2, who mentioned that:

*“I feel supported and motivated when engaging in professional dialogue with my colleagues. Sharing my work and hearing their experiences gives me new ideas and perspectives. It also creates a sense of teamwork, knowing we are all working together to improve our teaching and help our pupils succeed.”*

It also promotes shared responsibility, according to participant P4, expressed that:

*“Activities include peer observation, team teaching, curriculum mapping, and joint preparation of assessment tools. We also conduct case discussions about learners with special needs. Collaborative action research is sometimes initiated. These activities promote shared accountability”*

Importantly, collaboration reduces professional isolation as reflected on the statement given by participant P4, shared that:

*“I feel motivated and supported when engaging in professional dialogue. Sharing work allows me to receive constructive feedback. It reduces feelings of isolation in teaching. It also builds trust and camaraderie among colleagues.”*

While also strengthening trust and collegial relationships, as it was also mentioned by participant P4, stated that:

*“It builds trust and camaraderie among colleagues”*

These views and experiences highlight collaboration not only as a professional requirement but also as an emotional anchor that sustains teacher engagement and well-being. This aligns with findings by Katrien Vangrieken et al. (2015), who argue that collaborative environments foster trust, mutual respect, and shared responsibility—key elements in sustaining professional learning communities. In a similar vein, Andy Hargreaves and Michael O'Connor (2021) emphasize that teacher collaboration is strongly associated with reduced burnout and improved well-being through emotional and professional support systems. Reflectively, this suggests that collaboration functions as a protective factor against teacher isolation and burnout, enabling educators to navigate challenges through shared support. The sense of belonging expressed by participants indicates that collaboration fosters relational safety, allowing teachers to openly share challenges, seek feedback, and engage in continuous improvement without fear of judgment.

Furthermore, Superordinate Theme 3, as interpreted by elementary basic education teachers, highlights peer collaboration as a powerful driver of professional learning and instructional improvement. Through shared experiences, teachers gain new instructional strategies, refine classroom management skills,

and adopt more learner-centered approaches, enabling them to implement differentiated instruction that responds to diverse learner needs. Participants reported that they acquire new teaching strategies and enhance their pedagogical practices through collaborative engagement. As expressed by Participant P1:

*“Collaboration with my colleagues positively affects both my motivation and teaching practice by providing encouragement, shared learning, and practical support. Through discussions, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and informal exchanges of ideas, I gain new strategies and perspectives that help me improve my lesson delivery, assessment methods, and classroom management. Hearing different experiences and best practices inspires me to try innovative approaches and continuously refine my instruction.”*

Through reflective exchanges, collaboration supports instructional improvement, as per participant P1 expressed that:

*“Peer collaboration helps me gain new perspectives, reflect on my practices, and develop more effective instructional approaches.”*

It also encourages innovation according to the statement of participant P1, when she stated that:

*“Additionally, collaboration has strengthened my confidence and motivation, as the support and shared expertise within the team encourage continuous learning and innovation in my professional practice.”*

And improves classroom management and engagement as stated by participant P2, shared that:

*“Peer collaboration has contributed to my professional growth by exposing me to new teaching strategies, helping me reflect on my own practices, and providing constructive feedback. Through discussions, shared experiences, and observing colleagues, I’ve learned better ways to manage my classroom, design lessons, and engage my pupils, which has made me a more effective teacher.”*

Moreover, collaboration serves as a problem-solving mechanism based on participant P11, stated that:

*“Collaboration with my colleagues increases my motivation because it gives me new ideas, encouragement, and practical solutions to classroom challenges. It helps me improve my teaching practice by exposing me to different strategies and approaches, which I can adapt to suit my students’ needs. Working together also makes teaching less stressful and more meaningful.”*

These findings reinforce the role of collaboration in addressing authentic classroom concerns. The narratives of elementary basic education teachers demonstrate that collaboration functions as a site of experiential learning, where educators adapt and integrate new pedagogical approaches into their practice. This aligns with the Communities of Practice theory of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), which conceptualizes learning as socially situated and developed through participation in shared activities. Moreover, Dautova (2020) emphasizes that structured collaborative cycles of reflection and feedback enhance instructional competence, a finding further supported by global evidence from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020), which shows that collaborative inquiry and reflective dialogue promote pedagogical innovation and improve teaching processes.

Reflectively, these insights suggest that teachers are not passive recipients of knowledge but active constructors of pedagogical understanding. Collaboration thus becomes a dynamic space where instructional innovation is cultivated, enabling teachers to respond effectively to classroom challenges while continuously improving teaching quality and learner outcomes.

In addition, Superordinate Theme 4—focusing on motivation, confidence, and professional growth—indicates that peer collaboration significantly enhances teachers’ motivation, confidence, and overall professional development. Elementary basic education teachers expressed that collaboration strengthens their motivation, as reflected in Participant P1’s statement:

*“Overall, working with colleagues fosters a professional learning community that motivates*

*me to grow and enhances the quality of my teaching.”*

Further, participant P1 also shared that:

*“Collaboration also strengthens my confidence, as I feel supported in addressing challenges and implementing improvements”*

Which supports the notion that collaboration builds confidence through supportive feedback. Observing peers also encourages experimentation, as per mentioned by participant P2, shared that:

*“Collaboration with colleagues boosts my motivation and improves my teaching practice. By sharing ideas and strategies, I gain new approaches to lessons and classroom management. Seeing how others handle challenges inspires me to try different methods, and the support from peers makes me more confident and committed to helping my pupils succeed.”*

Teachers further described their experienced emotions, as per participant P12 expressed that:

*“When I engage in peer collaboration, I feel supported, encouraged, and professionally energized and challenged at the same time.”*

In similar vein, experiencing reduced stress was experienced by participant P11, stated that:

*“Working together also makes teaching less stressful and more meaningful.”*

These lived experiences of basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City highlight how collaboration positively influences both the emotional and professional dimensions of teaching. Teacher views and lived experiences indicate that collaboration functions as an effective catalyst that strengthens teachers’ commitment to their teaching profession. This is aligned with Andersen (2025), who highlights that collaborative environments promote adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges.

Introspectively, it is evident that collaboration not only enhances technical teaching skills but also strengthens teachers’ psychological readiness to innovate and persist in their roles as elementary basic education teachers. The encouragement derived from peer interactions builds confidence and reduces teaching-related stress, suggesting that motivation is socially constructed within professional relationships rather than solely individually generated.

Moreover, the superordinate theme on the formation of professional identity through collaboration indicates that elementary basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City construct and reconstruct their professional identities through sustained engagement in peer collaboration. Through shared practices, teachers increasingly view themselves as collaborative and reflective practitioners, as expressed by Participant P6:

*“Shared practices shape my identity as a collaborative and reflective teacher.”*

Engagement with peers fosters a lifelong learning orientation, with teachers viewing themselves as per participant P2 stated that:

*“Engaging with my peers makes me view myself as a continually learning and growing teacher. Their feedback and shared experiences help me recognize my strengths and identify areas to improve, boosting my confidence and motivating me to become more effective in supporting my pupils.”*

And as members of a professional learning community, participant P5 shared that:

*“It is a way of learning from each other’s experiences to improve teaching effectiveness. Through collaboration, I learned classroom management techniques and strategies aligned with MATATAG implementation. It helped me see myself as part of a professional learning community rather than working alone.”*

Elementary basic education teachers also recognize their role as contributors, with one of the participants (P8) noted that:

*“I see myself as a supportive team member who shares resources, listens to concerns, and contributes ideas during discussions”*

While others highlight adaptability and shared responsibility, emphasizing by participant P1, stated that:



*“Through activities such as co-planning lessons, engaging in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, observing peers, and exchanging feedback, I develop a stronger sense of teamwork and professional responsibility. These experiences help me recognize that teaching is not an isolated task, but a shared effort aimed at improving student learning outcomes.”*

These findings suggest that collaboration not only enhances practice but also transforms how teachers perceive their professional roles. These identities emerge through participation in shared practices such as co-planning, peer feedback, and instructional reflection. According to Rodrigues-Silva et al., 2024 that structured reflective learning experiences can enhance teachers’ reflective thinking, sociocultural learning and overall professional development of identity.

Thoughtfully, these findings suggest that professional identity is not static but evolves through social interaction and shared professional experiences. Elementary basic education teachers in Lucena City also expressed a growing sense of becoming resource persons and active contributors, reflecting a shift from individual practice to collective agency. This transformation reinforces the view that collaboration shapes not only what teachers do, but who they become as professionals committed to continuous improvement and learner success.

Finally, Superordinate Theme 6, which centers on reciprocity and collegial support, indicates that peer collaboration is characterized by mutual exchange, where teachers both contribute to and benefit from shared professional practices. Participants described actively sharing resources and instructional strategies, as illustrated by Participant P6:

*“I share instructional materials and strategies that work in my classroom and offer encouragement when needed.”*

Further, participant P4, stated that:

*“I see myself as a supportive and cooperative colleague. I share instructional materials and strategies that have worked in my classroom. I also offer feedback when requested. I try to encourage a culture of openness and continuous learning.”*

Which support the notion that teachers view themselves as supportive colleagues. They also contribute to a positive learning environments, when participant P1 expressed that:

*“By being open to sharing resources, experiences, and best practices, I help create a supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable exchanging insights.”*

And are recognized by peers as collaborative and willing to share, when participants P2 shared that:

*“I think my contributions are viewed positively by my colleagues. They see me as supportive, cooperative, and willing to share ideas that help improve teaching practices and student learning. My active participation in discussions and LAC sessions shows that I’m committed to our collective growth as educators.”*

This reciprocal exchange fosters mutual growth with teacher acknowledgment based on participant P7 experiences, stated that:

*“Shared experiences really are given to both sharers and receivers”*

Therefore, these findings highlight that peer collaboration is dynamic, reciprocal, and transformative process that strengthens both individual and collective professional development. This mutual exchange reflects a culture of shared responsibility, where teaching expertise is distributed across the professional community. According to Bernstein (2022), such collaborative exchange strengthens collective learning and enhances teaching effectiveness through co-construction of knowledge.

Reflectively, these findings indicate that teachers perceive themselves not only as beneficiaries of collaboration but also as active contributors to the professional growth and development of their colleagues. This reciprocity strengthens collegial relationships and fosters a culture of trust, openness, and continuous improvement, wherein both individual and collective capacities are developed simultaneously.

Taken as a whole, peer collaboration among elementary basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City emerges as a multidimensional experience that integrates structured professional practices, emotional

support, instructional enhancement, and identity formation. It operates as a community of practice, where teachers collectively construct knowledge, support one another emotionally, and refine pedagogical strategies within the teaching–learning process.

Therefore, collaboration is not merely an institutional requirement but a transformative professional experience that sustains teacher motivation, strengthens professional identity, and ultimately enhances student learning outcomes. This is supported by Collie et al. (2022), who emphasize that collegial relationships in schools promote teacher resilience by providing psychological security and effective coping mechanisms in addressing teaching-related challenges.

**Table 2**

*Thematic Analysis of Basic Education Teachers' Views and Lived Experiences in Peer Collaboration*

| Superordinate Theme                                                   | Subtheme                                                     | Verbatim Extract (Participant Quote)                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Structured and Informal Peer Collaboration Practices                  | Formal Collaboration Structures (LAC, SLAC, InSeT, Meetings) | “Teachers regularly collaborate during Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, grade-level meetings, and informal discussions” (P1) |
|                                                                       | Collaborative Planning and Instructional Design              | “We work together in lesson planning, developing assessment tools, and analyzing student performance data” (P1)                  |
|                                                                       | Peer Observation and Feedback Systems                        | “Peer observations and constructive feedback are also practiced” (P1)                                                            |
|                                                                       | Team Teaching and Curriculum Alignment                       | “Activities include peer observation, team teaching, curriculum mapping, and joint preparation of assessment tools” (P4)         |
| Peer Collaboration as a Supportive and Inclusive professional Culture | Informal Collegial Exchanges                                 | “We often exchange ideas during breaks, meetings, and LAC sessions” (P11)                                                        |
|                                                                       | Sense of Belonging and Teamwork                              | “It gives me a sense of belonging because I know that I am part of a team” (P1)                                                  |
|                                                                       | Emotional and Professional support                           | “I feel supported and motivated when engaging in professional dialogue” (P2)                                                     |
|                                                                       | Shared Responsibility and Collective Accountability          | “These activities promote shared accountability” (P4)                                                                            |
|                                                                       | Reduced Isolation in Teaching                                | “It reduces feelings of isolation in teaching” (P4)                                                                              |
| Enhancement of Professional Learning and Instructional Practice       | Trust, Camaraderie, and Collegial Relationships              | “It also builds trust and camaraderie among colleagues” (P4)                                                                     |
|                                                                       | Acquisition of New Teaching Strategies                       | “I gain new strategies and perspectives that help me improve my lesson delivery” (P1)                                            |
|                                                                       | Reflective Practice and Instructional Improvement            | “Sharing ideas helps me enhance my teaching strategies and address classroom challenges” (P1)                                    |

|                                                          |                                                                                  |                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Motivation, Confidence, and Professional Growth          | Innovation in Teaching Approaches                                                | “Collaboration inspires me to try innovative approaches” (P1)                                             |
|                                                          | Improved Classroom Management and Pedagogy                                       | “I’ve learned better ways to manage my classroom, design lessons, and engage my pupils” (P2)              |
|                                                          | Problem Solving through Collaboration Curriculum and Learner-centered Strategies | “It gives me practical solutions to classroom challenges” (P11)                                           |
|                                                          | Increased Motivation through Collaboration                                       | “Collaboration motivates me to grow and enhances the quality of my teaching” (P1)                         |
|                                                          | Confidence Building through Feedback                                             | “It strengthens my confidence, as I feel supported in addressing challenges” (P1)                         |
|                                                          | Encouragement to Try New Strategies                                              | “Seeing how others handle challenges inspires me to try different methods” (P2)                           |
| Formation of Professional Identity through Collaboration | Professional Energy and Encouragement                                            | “I feel supported, encouraged, and professionally energized” (P12)                                        |
|                                                          | Reduced Teaching Stress                                                          | “Working together also makes teaching less stressful and more meaningful” (P11)                           |
|                                                          | Career and Professional Development Orientation                                  | “It is important for my career growth and professional development” (P7)                                  |
|                                                          | Identity as Collaborative and Reflective Teacher                                 | “Shared practices shape my identity as a collaborative and reflective teacher” (P6)                       |
|                                                          | Identity as Lifelong Learners                                                    | “Engaging with my peers makes me view myself as a continually learning and growing teacher” (P2)          |
|                                                          | Identity as member of Professional Learning Community                            | “It helped me see myself as part of a professional learning community” (5)                                |
| Reciprocity and Contribution to Collegial Support        | Identity as Contributor or Resources Person                                      | “I realized that I could also be a resource person to others” (P8)                                        |
|                                                          | Identity as Adaptable and Innovative Educator                                    | “Participating in shared practices strengthens my identity as a collaborative and adaptable teacher” (P9) |
|                                                          | Identity Shaped by Shared Responsibility                                         | “Teaching is not an isolated task but a shared effort” (P1)                                               |
|                                                          | Sharing of Resources and Strategies                                              | “I share instructional materials and strategies that work in my classroom” (P6)                           |
|                                                          | Role as Supportive Colleague                                                     | “I see myself as a supportive and cooperative colleague” (P4)                                             |
|                                                          | Contribution to Collective Learning                                              | “I help create a supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable exchanging insights” (P1)        |
|                                                          | Perceived positively by                                                          | “They see me as supportive, cooperative, and willing to                                                   |

|                                     |                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Colleagues                          | share ideas” (P2)                                                        |
| Mutual Growth through Collaboration | “Shared experiences really are given to both sharers and receivers” (P7) |

Table 3 presents the views and lived experiences of basic education teachers on workplace learning through instructional improvement. A total of seven (7) superordinate themes were generated from the responses of the participants of the study namely: *workplace learning as a foundation for instructional improvement, enhancement of instructional practices and student learning, innovation in teaching practices through workplace learning, challenges and tensions in sustaining instructional innovation, support systems and enablers of instructional improvement, development of professional identity through instructional improvement, and interconnectedness of reflection, collaboration, and instructional growth.*

Furthermore, under Superordinate Theme workplace learning as a foundation for instructional improvement, the three (3) subthemes were *structured professional learning, collaborative and experiential learning, and reflective and continuous learning process.* Next, for Superordinate Theme enhancement of instructional practices and student learning, the four (4) subthemes were *adaptation of learner -centered and differentiated strategies, improved student engagement and participation, data-driven and responsive teaching, and contextualized and innovative teaching approaches.* Then, for superordinate theme innovation in teaching practices through workplace learning, the three (3) subthemes were *integration of technology and interpretative strategies, use of varied instructional approaches, and curriculum alignment and responsiveness.*

Following this, for superordinate theme challenges and tensions in sustaining instructional innovation, the five (5) subthemes were *limited resources and materials, time constraints and workload demand, student readiness and resistance to change, institutional and policy-related constraints, and emotional tension and self-doubt in change process.* Subsequently, for the superordinate theme support systems and enablers of instructional improvement, the three (3) subthemes were *supportive leadership and school culture, access to resources and training opportunities, and collaboration and peer support.* Meanwhile, for the superordinate theme development of professional identity through instructional improvement, the three (3) subthemes were *identity as reflective and lifelong learner, increased confidence and competence, identity as adaptive, innovative, and learner-centered educator, and values formation.*

Finally, for superordinate theme interconnectedness of reflection, collaboration, and instructional growth, the three (3) subthemes were *reflective practice as driver of improvement, collaboration as support for innovation, and continuous improvement as professional journey.*

The participants revealed that workplace learning serves as the foundational mechanism through which teachers experience instructional improvement. Elementary basic education teachers’ narratives highlight that structured learning opportunities such as LAC, SLAC, INSET, mentoring and peer observation provide essential avenues for reflection, collaboration, and skill enhancement.

Further, participant P1, stated that:

*“The types of workplace learning that have been most helpful in enhancing my instruction include Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, mentoring, peer observation, and in-service training. LAC sessions have been particularly valuable because they provide opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, share teaching strategies, and discuss learner performance and classroom challenges. Mentoring has also supported my professional growth by giving me guidance, feedback, and practical advice from more experienced educators. Peer observation allows me to learn effective techniques from my colleagues while reflecting on my own teaching practices. In-service training further strengthens my instructional skills by introducing updated methodologies, assessment strategies, and curriculum-related developments. Together, these workplace learning experiences have significantly improved my teaching effectiveness and confidence as an educator.”*

While participant P2, stated that:

*“The workplace learning that has been most helpful in enhancing my instruction includes Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, peer observation, and in-service training. LAC sessions allow me to discuss strategies and challenges with colleagues, peer observations help me learn new teaching methods in practice, and in-service training provides updated techniques and approaches that I can apply in the classroom.”*

Additionally, it was expressed by participant P3, stated that:

*“Mentoring, peer observation, in-service training, and SLACs have been most helpful. They give me practical strategies, fresh ideas, and feedback that improve my teaching.”*

These experiences highlight that learning is both structured and experiential, as elementary basic education teachers not only participate in formal programs but also learn through observation and interaction with one participant (P11) shared that:

*“Watching how my colleagues teach gives me new ideas, strategies, and ways to engage students that I can apply in my own classroom. It also helps me reflect on my own teaching style and find areas where I can improve, making my lessons more effective and responsive to my learners’ needs.”*

At the same time, workplace learning is sustained through reflection, as basic education teachers continuously evaluate and adapt their practices, as seen in the statement of participant P2, stated that:

*“Workplace training plays a key role in improving my instruction by introducing new teaching strategies, techniques, and tools that I can apply in the classroom. It helps me stay updated, reflect on my current practices, and adapt lessons to better meet my pupils’ needs, ultimately making my teaching more effective and engaging.”*

These findings align with a systematic review of professional development programs (2013–2023), which revealed that most initiatives center on Learning Action Cells (LACs), focusing on pedagogy, technology integration, and content knowledge in alignment with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. Supporting this, Culajara (2023) emphasized that School Learning Action Cells (SLACs) function as cost-efficient platforms where basic education teachers identify instructional needs and collaboratively reskill.

Furthermore, the superordinate theme on the enhancement of instructional practices and student learning indicates that workplace-based collaboration significantly improves both teaching practices and learner outcomes. Elementary basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City reported adopting more learner-centered and differentiated strategies, as illustrated by Participant P1:

*“One time I improved my teaching practice was after participating in a professional development activity focused on differentiated instruction and learner-centered strategies during a Learning Action Cell (LAC) session. Before this, most of my lessons followed a traditional approach, where I delivered the content and provided individual practice. After learning new strategies, I began incorporating learner-centered strategies.”*

Similarly, participant P3, shared that:

*“During an in-service training on differentiated instruction, I learned how to adjust activities for different learning levels. After applying it, my students became more engaged, and even struggling learners showed better understanding.”*

These instructional shifts led to noticeable improvements in engagement and participation of teachers, as per participant P2 observed that:

*“During a Learning Action Cell (LAC) session, I learned strategies for teaching division using hands-on materials and group activities. I applied these techniques in my classroom, and my pupils understood the concept much better and participated more actively. This experience showed me how professional development can directly improve my teaching practice”*

Similarly, participant P11, shared that:

*“One time, during a peer observation, I noticed a colleague using interactive group activities to help students understand a difficult math concept. I realized that my lessons relied too much on lecture, so I tried incorporating similar group work and hands-on activities. The students became more engaged, participated more, and understood the lesson better. That experience showed me how observing others can directly improve my teaching practices.”*

In addition, teachers demonstrated responsiveness by using data-driven strategies such as exit tickets, where participant P4 shared that:

*“After attending a training on formative assessment, I incorporated exit tickets and quick checks for understanding. This allowed me to adjust lessons immediately based on student responses. I noticed improved student engagement and performance. The training directly influenced my daily instructional decisions.”*

Further, participant P10, expounded that:

*“After training on contextualized materials and teaching strategies, I integrated more local examples and varied learning activities into my lessons, increasing student engagement. It updates my knowledge, introduces new strategies, and helps me adapt to curriculum changes.”*

Indicating that workplace learning directly informs responsive and effective teaching practices. These findings suggest that workplace learning enables teachers to align instruction with learners’ diverse needs, ultimately improving teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. In the same context, according to Seno et al., 2024, effective instructional supervision can lead to enhanced teacher and student performance. However, according to Semiao, 2023 revealed that there are varying levels of teacher awareness about diversity, reflecting differences in knowledge, experiences, and sensitivity. Some teachers demonstrate a deeper understanding and ability to address diversity, while others show more limited awareness.

In addition, superordinate themes about innovation in teaching practices through workplace learning revealed that instructional improvement is experienced by elementary basic education teachers in Lucena City as an innovative and adaptive process, where teachers actively experiment with diverse strategies. Participants highlighted the integration of technology and interactive strategies, mentioned by participant P6, shared that:

*“One innovation is integrating technology and interactive games in reading lessons.”*

Similarly with participant P10, stated that:

*“Use of digital tools, project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and collaborative activities.”*

Teachers also utilized varied instructional methods such as CPA, debates, and group work, which according to participant P12, mentioned that:

*“A time when my teaching practice has improved was after I attended an online seminar on Math remediation where the use of the CPA method was introduced. Upon its use, my learners’ performance somehow improved.”*

Similarly with participants P9, shared that:

*“After attending an INSET on learner-centered strategies, I implemented structured debates on national issues. This improved learners’ critical thinking and participation.”*

Importantly, these innovations remain aligned with curriculum frameworks, as mentioned by participant P5 and P9, shared that:

*“It updates our strategies and aligns teaching with curriculum changes like MATATAG.”*

*“Workplace training equips me with updated content knowledge and effective teaching strategies aligned with MELCs.”*

This supports the notion that instructional innovation is both creative and structured, and is aimed at improving student outcomes while maintaining educational standards. In accordance with this, OECD (2020)



stated that effective instructional innovation requires balancing creativity and curriculum alignment, ensuring that innovations remain anchored on learning standards while improving learner's outcomes.

Despite its benefits, superordinate theme four (4) about challenges and tensions in sustaining instructional innovation emerged, which interpreted as instructional improvement is accompanied by significant challenges. Elementary basic education teachers reported constraints such as limited resources which is noted from participant P6, shared that:

*"However, limited resources sometimes restrict creativity."*

Additionally, participant P4, stated that:

*"Challenges include limited technology resources and varying student readiness levels. Time constraints also affect preparation."*

Student readiness also emerged as a concern with learners sometimes resistant to new approaches, as per mentioned by participant P2 experienced that:

*"One moment of tension I experienced was when I tried to introduce group-based activities for a math lesson. Some pupils were resistant—they were used to individual work and became distracted or off-task"*

Additionally, institutional constraints and emotional tensions were evident, with teachers expressing uncertainty, based on participant P1, she shared that:

*"There were moments of tension when I tried to change or improve my instruction, especially when introducing new strategies that differed from traditional methods. At times, I felt unsure whether the new approach would effectively meet curriculum expectations or improve student outcomes. I also experienced internal conflict when adjusting long-established teaching routines, as change required extra preparation, flexibility, and willingness to step out of my comfort zone. Additionally, there were instances when students needed time to adapt to new learning activities, which initially affected classroom flow."*

Further, participant P4, stated that:

*"I also experienced self-doubt when initial results were not immediate."*

These findings reveal the complex realities that elementary basic education teachers navigate in the teaching–learning process as they attempt to innovate within constrained environments. They also suggest that frequent policy changes, instructional innovations, and newly introduced programs within the Department of Education, while intended to improve educational quality, may inadvertently hinder meaningful learning when not carefully aligned with classroom realities.

Based on the participants' views and experiences, systems within the teaching–learning process should be systematically evaluated to determine which practices should be sustained and which should be refined to better address students' learning gaps. This is supported by Fernandez (2024), who found that teacher resilience and sustained professional development are strengthened when programs are aligned with classroom realities and promote collaborative inquiry.

Moreover, elementary basic education teachers experience emotional tensions—such as self-doubt and uncertainty—when implementing new practices. This aligns with Chandrasekaran et al. (2004), who identified workplace barriers including workload, attitudes, and limited engagement. These findings are further supported by Tayag (2020), who noted that participation in professional learning communities is often constrained by workload, hierarchical structures, and insufficient institutional support.

Furthermore, support systems play a crucial role in enabling instructional improvement. Basic education teachers emphasized this point, as reflected in Participant P1's statement:

*"Supportive leadership encourages creativity, collaboration, and professional growth by providing guidance, constructive feedback, and opportunities for professional development."*

Additionally, participant P6, shared that:

*"School culture encourages teamwork, which supports professional learning"*

Similarly, participant P1 is guided by the same experience when she said:

*“Overall, a supportive school culture plays a crucial role in empowering teachers to try new methods and continuously improve their instructional practices.”*

Along with these, access to resources and training further strengthens their capacity, as participant P4, stated that:

*“Workplace training provides updated knowledge and relevant strategies. It ensures alignment with curriculum standards and policies. Training builds my competence and confidence. It serves as a foundation for innovation and refinement of practice.”*

Collaboration also remains a key enabler, as per participant P1, shared that:

*“I continue to refine my practices through reflection, collaboration with colleagues, and ongoing professional development to ensure that new strategies are effectively integrated into my teaching.”*

And that shared experiences benefit both sharers and receivers, when participant P7 said:

*“As I’ve said, there’s always room for improvement no matter how knowledgeable you are. Shared experiences really are given to both sharers and receivers.”*

These enabling conditions create an environment where basic education teachers feel supported to experiment, reflect, and grow professionally. Elementary basic education teachers engage in continuous instructional improvement; their professional identity also evolves. According to Seno et al., 2024 effective instructional supervision can lead to enhanced teacher and student performance. Many participants described seeing themselves as reflective and lifelong learners, based on the shared experiences of participant P1, stated that:

*“Now, I see myself not only as an instructor but as a reflective practitioner who actively contributes to a learning community and strives for excellence in supporting learners’ holistic development.”*

Similarly, participant P11, shared that:

*“As I’ve improved my instruction over time, my sense of being a professional teacher has grown stronger. I feel more confident in planning lessons, managing the classroom, and adapting strategies to meet my students’ needs. I also see myself as a continuous learner who reflects, collaborates, and actively seeks ways to grow, which makes me take my role as a teacher more seriously and intentionally.”*

This process enhances their confidence and competence, as per participant P10, stated that:

*“I became more confident and intentional in my teaching, viewing myself as someone who can innovate and lead.”*

At the same time, they develop identities as adaptive, innovative, and learner-centered educators, when participant P1, shared that:

*“I have come to understand that being a professional teacher involves ongoing self-improvement, ethical responsibility, adaptability, and commitment to student success.”*

Values such as patience, empathy, and resilience are also strengthened, as participant P11, stated that:

*“Becoming a better teacher to me means more than just improving lesson plans or classroom strategies. It’s about growing as an educator who is patient, adaptable, and understanding of my students’ needs.”*

These findings indicate that instructional improvement is deeply connected to both skill development and values formation. They are supported by Katrien Vangrieken et al. (2017), who highlight the importance of shared capabilities in strengthening teacher competence and adaptability. Similarly, Sopa et al. (2020) and Sumarsi and Rizal (2021) found that organizational support enhances teacher commitment and engagement, underscoring the role of supportive environments in sustaining instructional improvement. In the context of Finland, for example, the education system is grounded in a building discourse rooted in social-democratic

traditions that emphasize not only academic performance but also societal values, collective responsibility, and teacher professionalism (Paulsen, 2024).

Finally, the superordinate theme on the interconnectedness of reflection, collaboration, and instructional improvement reveals that instructional development is sustained through these interrelated processes, forming a continuous professional learning journey. In line with this, Beatrice Avalos (2020) emphasizes that teacher learning is ongoing, with reflection, collaboration, and classroom practice reinforcing one another in professional growth. As further illustrated by Participant P6:

*“Reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement are interconnected. Reflection helps identify areas for growth, collaboration provides support, and improvement strengthens teaching quality.”*

While collaboration provides the necessary support and shared expertise to implement change, it also sustains continuous instructional improvement. This is supported by Culajara (2023), who noted that collaborative professional learning systems enhance teaching practice through shared reflection and ongoing instructional adjustments. Similarly, Dilay and Ramos (2023) highlight that collaborative learning, reflective practice, and instructional modification form a sustained cycle of professional development. In the same vein, Antiola and Fernal (2024) affirm that School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) programs significantly enhance instructional competence through continuous reflection and peer collaboration, demonstrating a sustained cycle of professional growth. This, in turn, leads to an ongoing process of improvement, as illustrated by Participant P7:

*“Some activities just can’t be pushed through in just one period, and the pupils need to adjust more. So, it is better to change the strategy and approach in bringing that. Thus, differentiated instructions help a lot.”*

In addition, participant P12, mentioned that:

*“Instructional improvement and professional identity are closely connected because improving instruction is not just a technical process; it is a personal and professional journey that continuously shapes our identity as teachers.”*

Therefore, the data illustrate that instructional improvement is not a one-time outcome but an ongoing, dynamic process shaped by experience, interaction, and continuous learning. This is supported by Fernandez (2024), who found that teacher resilience and sustained professional development are strengthened when programs align with classroom realities and promote collaborative inquiry. Furthermore, Mercado and Villenas (2024) emphasized that both institutional and personal factors drive adult learning and professional growth.

In summary, instructional improvement through workplace learning is a multidimensional and transformative process shaped by collaborative practices, reflective engagement, and institutional conditions. Although elementary basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City face structural and emotional challenges, they demonstrate resilience and adaptability, supported by leadership, collaboration, and professional development opportunities. This process not only enhances teaching effectiveness and student learning but also strengthens teachers’ professional identity as reflective, innovative, and learner-centered educators. Ultimately, instructional improvement is not merely a technical enhancement but a deeply personal and professional journey grounded in continuous learning and transformation within the teaching–learning process. These findings align with the Department of Education Philippines (2020) policy framework for professional development, which promotes sustained school-based collaboration as a key avenue for improving teachers’ skills and educational quality.

**Table 3**

*Thematic Analysis of Basic Education Teachers' Views and Lived Experiences of Workplace Learning through Instructional Improvement*

| <b>Superordinate Theme</b>                                       | <b>Subtheme</b>                                                                  | <b>Verbatim Extract (Participant Quote)</b>                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Workplace Learning as a Foundation for Instructional Improvement | Structured Professional Learning (LAC, SLAC, InSeT, Mentoring, Peer Observation) | "The types of workplace learning include LAC sessions, mentoring, peer observation, and in-service training" (P1)                         |
|                                                                  |                                                                                  | "LAC sessions allow me to discuss strategies and challenges with colleagues" (P2)                                                         |
|                                                                  |                                                                                  | "Mentoring, peer observation, in-service training, and SLACs have been most helpful" (P3)                                                 |
|                                                                  | Collaborative and Experiential Learning                                          | "Peer observation allows me to learn effective techniques while reflecting on my own teaching practices" (R1)                             |
|                                                                  |                                                                                  | "Watching how my colleagues teach gives me new ideas" (P11)                                                                               |
|                                                                  | Reflective and Continuous Learning Processes                                     | "These training opportunities help me reflect on my current practices" (P1)<br>"It helps me stay updated, reflect and adapt lessons" (P2) |
| Enhancement of Instructional Practices and Student Learning      | Adoption of Learner-centered and Differentiated Strategies                       | "I began incorporating learner-centered strategies" (P1)                                                                                  |
|                                                                  |                                                                                  | "I learned how to adjust activities for different learning levels" (P3)                                                                   |
|                                                                  | Improved Student Engagement and Participation                                    | "My pupils understood the concept much better and participated more actively" (P2)                                                        |
|                                                                  |                                                                                  | "Students became more engaged and understood the lesson better" (P11)                                                                     |
| Innovation in Teaching Practices through Workplace Learning      | Data-driven and Responsive Teaching                                              | "I incorporated exit tickets to adjust lessons immediately" (P4)                                                                          |
|                                                                  | Contextualized and Innovative Teaching Approaches                                | "I integrated more local examples increasing student engagement" (P10)                                                                    |
|                                                                  | Integration of Technology and Interactive Strategies                             | "One innovation is integrating technology and interactive games" (P6)                                                                     |
|                                                                  |                                                                                  | "Use of digital tools, project-based learning, and collaborative activities" (P10)                                                        |
|                                                                  | Use of Varied Instructional Approaches (CPA, Group Work,                         | "Use of the CPA method learners' performance improved" (P12)                                                                              |

|                                                                        |                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Challenges and Tensions in sustaining Instructional Innovation         | Debates)                                                         | “I implemented structured debates improved learners’ critical thinking” (P9)                                                                        |
|                                                                        | Curriculum Alignment and Responsiveness (MATATAG, MELCs)         | “It aligns teaching with curriculum changes like MATATAG” (P5)<br>“Aligned with MELCs” (P9)                                                         |
|                                                                        | Limited Resources and Materials                                  | “Limited resources sometimes restrict creativity” (P6)<br>“Lack of materials or technology” (P3)                                                    |
|                                                                        | Time Constraints and Workload Demands                            | “Limited time for preparation” (P1)<br>“Time constraints affect preparation” (P4)                                                                   |
|                                                                        | Student Readiness and Resistance to Change                       | “Some pupils were resistant used to individual work” (P2)<br>“Students take time to adjust to new methods” (P11)                                    |
|                                                                        | Institutional and Policy- related Constraints                    | “Restrictive policies may reduce opportunities for innovation” (P1)                                                                                 |
|                                                                        | Emotional Tension and Self-doubt in Change Process               | “I felt unsure whether the new approach would be effective” (P1)<br>“I experienced self-doubt when initial results were not immediate” (P4)         |
| Support Systems and Enablers of Instructional Improvement              | Supportive Leadership and School Culture                         | “Supportive leadership encourages creativity and collaboration” (P1)<br>“School culture encourages teamwork” (P6)                                   |
|                                                                        | Access to Resources and Training Opportunities                   | “Access to adequate resources enables engaging instructional approaches” (P1)<br>“Training builds my competence and confidence” (P4)                |
|                                                                        | Collaboration and Peer Support                                   | “Collaboration with colleagues ensures strategies are effectively integrated” (P1)<br>“Shared experiences given to both sharers and receivers” (P7) |
| Development of professional Identity through Instructional Improvement | Identity as Reflective and Lifelong Learner                      | “I now see myself as a reflective practitioner” (P1)<br>“I see myself as a continuous learner” (P11)                                                |
|                                                                        | Increased Confidence and Competence                              | “It strengthened my confidence and accountability” (P1)<br>“I became more confident and intentional in my teaching” (P10)                           |
|                                                                        | Identity as adaptive, Innovative, and Learner- centered educator | “Being a professional teacher involves adaptability and commitment” (P1)<br>“It means being reflective, innovative, and learner centered” (10)      |

|                                                                           |                                                  |                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interconnectedness of Reflection, Collaboration, and Instructional Growth | Values formation (Patience, Empathy, Commitment) | “Developing patience, empathy, integrity, and resilience” (P1)<br>“It means being patient, adaptable, and understanding” (P11) |
|                                                                           | Reflective Practice as Driver of Improvement     | “Reflection helps identify areas for growth” (P6)                                                                              |
|                                                                           | Collaboration as support for Innovation          | “Collaboration provides support” (P6)                                                                                          |
|                                                                           | Continuous Improvement as Professional Journey   | “There’s always room for improvement” (P7)<br>“Improving instruction is a personal and professional journey” (P12)             |

Table 3 illustrates that basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City engage in workplace learning as an interconnected and cyclical process in which reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement continuously inform and reinforce one another. From the participants’ responses, seven superordinate themes emerged: (1) the interconnected cycle of reflective practice, collaboration, and instructional improvement; (2) workplace learning as experiential and contextualized practice; (3) the development of professional identity as reflective and lifelong learners; (4) growth in confidence, competence, and adaptability; (5) values formation and professional commitment; (6) the influence of personal, institutional, and cultural contexts; and (7) professional identity formation as a transformative journey.

Each superordinate theme comprises specific subthemes. Under the interconnected cycle of reflective practice, collaboration, and instructional improvement, four subthemes were identified: the cyclical process of reflection, collaboration, and application; reflection as a foundation for improvement; collaboration as a source of strategies and support; and instructional improvement as the application of learning.

The theme of workplace learning as experiential and contextualized practice includes three subthemes: learning through real classroom challenges, learning through peer interaction, and learning through application and outcomes. Similarly, the development of professional identity as reflective and lifelong learners consists of three subthemes: identity as a reflective practitioner, identity as a lifelong learner, and identity shaped by continuous growth.

The theme of growth in confidence, competence, and adaptability encompasses three subthemes: increased confidence and self-efficacy, development of adaptability and responsiveness, and strengthened teaching effectiveness. Values formation and professional commitment include commitment to student-centered teaching, the development of resilience and perseverance, and a sense of professional responsibility and purpose. The influence of personal, institutional, and cultural contexts comprises four subthemes: personal beliefs shaping learning engagement, school culture promoting collaboration, leadership and policy as enabling structures, and community and background shaping identity. Finally, the theme of professional identity formation as a transformative journey includes identity shaped through experience and reflection, continuous transformation and growth, and identity as an adaptive, collaborative, and innovative educator.

Focusing on the superordinate theme of the interconnected cycle of reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement, participants’ responses reveal that elementary basic education teachers’ engagement in workplace learning is largely grounded in intrinsic motivation and strong personal values, such as a commitment to lifelong learning, passion for teaching, empathy, patience, and dedication to learners’ success. Teachers consistently expressed a desire to improve themselves and support their learners, which motivates their active participation in reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement.



These findings are consistent with Nazareth et al. (2026), who reported that teachers are driven by intrinsic motivation rooted in moral responsibility, personal fulfillment, and commitment to lifelong learning, leading to active engagement in professional development and learner-centered practices. Similarly, Adlaon et al. (2024) found that motivated elementary teachers demonstrate sustained passion, commitment, and effort to improve teaching strategies, thereby enhancing student learning and engagement. This is further supported by Soliman (2020), who affirmed that teacher engagement in the Philippines is significantly influenced by intrinsic motivation and collegial support.

This is supported, when participant P1, shared that:

*"In my teaching experience, reflective practices, peer collaboration, and efforts to improve instruction are closely interconnected and work together to support my professional growth. The insights I gather from reflection and collaboration guide me in making meaningful adjustments to my teaching practices, ensuring that my efforts to improve instruction are purposeful and evidence based. Together, these elements create a continuous cycle of learning, implementation, reflection, and enhancement, ultimately strengthening my effectiveness as a basic education teacher."*

Similarly with participant P3, stated that:

*"In my teaching experience, reflection, collaboration, and instructional improvement work as one continuous process."*

This interpretation highlighting that professional growth is not linear but iterative. Reflection serves as the foundation of this cycle, enabling teachers to critically examine their practices, wherein participant P1 said that:

*"Reflective practice allows me to evaluate my lessons, analyze student performance, and identify areas that need improvement."*

This reflective insight is strengthened through collaboration, where participant P1 shared that:

*"Through peer collaboration, such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and professional discussions, I gain new ideas, feedback, and strategies that help refine my instructional approaches"*

Further, supported by participants P2, when she stated that:

*"In my teaching experience, reflective practices, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement all work together to make me a more effective teacher. Reflection helps me evaluate what works and what doesn't in my lessons. Collaborating with peers through LAC sessions and discussions gives me new ideas and feedback to try. Applying these insights leads to better teaching strategies, more engaging lessons, and improved learning outcomes for my pupils."*

These findings demonstrate that learning is sustained through a dynamic interplay of thinking, sharing, and application. Workplace learning is experienced by elementary basic education teachers as deeply experiential and contextual, grounded in real classroom challenges and everyday teaching situations. This is supported by Schmid (2023), who affirms that teacher workplace learning is embedded in daily classroom activities, where teachers continuously learn by addressing authentic instructional challenges through reflection and action. Likewise, Kyndt et al. (2024) emphasize that informal workplace learning is ongoing, self-directed, and integrated into everyday professional practice.

A superordinate theme that emerged from participants' responses is workplace learning as experiential and contextualized practice. Participants described instructional adjustments as arising directly from learners' needs and classroom realities. As shared by Participant P1:

*"One meaningful situation occurred when I noticed that several students were struggling with a particular lesson, as reflected in their assessment results. Through reflective practice, I reviewed my lesson plan and realized that my instructional strategies needed"*

*more interactive and differentiated activities to address varied learning needs. I then discussed the concern during a peer collaboration session, where my colleagues shared effective techniques such as group activities, scaffolded tasks, and formative assessment strategies. With their input, I revised my instructional approach and implemented the suggested improvements in my classroom."*

Further, participant P2 supported this when she shared her experienced, stated that:

*"A meaningful situation was when I noticed my Grade 3 pupils were struggling with division. Through reflective practice, I realized my usual board explanations weren't enough. During a peer collaboration session in LAC, colleagues suggested using hands-on materials and group activities. I applied these strategies in class, which improved understanding and participation. This experience showed me how reflection, collaboration, and instructional improvement work together to enhance learning and strengthened my confidence as a teacher."*

These experiences are enriched through peer interaction, as per participant P1, shared that:

*"I discussed concern during a peer collaboration session, where my colleagues shared effective techniques such as group activities, scaffolded tasks, and formative assessment strategies. With their input, I revised my instructional approach and implemented the suggested improvements in my classroom."*

Additionally, participant P3, shared that:

*"Through LAC discussions and informal talks with colleagues, I gain practical strategies that help me adjust my teaching. These combined efforts allow me to improve my methods, make lessons more learner-centered, and enhance student outcomes."*

The effectiveness of this experiential learning is evident in improved outcomes which according to participant P1, shared that:

*"As a result, student engagement increased, and their performance improved. This experience demonstrated how reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement work together to create meaningful changes in my teaching and support better learning outcomes"*

Similarly, participant P3 guided by the same experience when she said:

*"When some learners struggled in MAPEH skill-based activities, I reflected on my approach and sought suggestions from colleagues during a LAC session. I then applied more hands-on, collaborative, and performance-based strategies. As a result, learner participation and skill mastery improved. This experience showed me the value of reflection and teamwork in improving instruction."*

These findings demonstrate that learning is sustained through a

Further, participant P1, shared that:

*"I now see myself not only as an instructor but as a lifelong learner dedicated to continuous development and meaningful contribution to my school community."*

Additionally, participant P4 mentioned that she viewed herself as:

*"I view teaching as dynamic and evolving. These practices strengthen my professional confidence. They affirm my commitment to growth and excellence."*

This identity is reinforced through continuous growth, when participant P7 recognized that:

*"There's always room for improvement"*

Such perspectives highlight that professional identity of elementary basic education teachers is not fixed but continuously shaped by reflective experiences and ongoing learning. Meanwhile, DepEd learning continuity plan emphasizes that teacher should be contextualized, school-based, and responsive to real classroom challenges, especially through flexible and experience-based approaches (DepEd, 2020).

Participants described reflection as the point for identifying instructional gaps, collaboration as a

source of ideas and support, and instructional improvement as the application of learning.

Further, participant P10 explained that:

*“Reflection helps identify needs, collaboration offers solutions, and instructional improvement puts ideas into action. In reviewing the lessons, I reflected on lessons, collaborated with peers, and improved instruction based on feedback.”*

This is supported by Protassova and Mikelsone (2021), who highlight that collaborative reflection strengthens shared professional identity and enhances instructional effectiveness. In this study, the integration of reflection, collaboration, and instructional improvement fosters teachers’ identities as lifelong learners and adaptive professionals committed to continuous growth.

In addition, a superordinate theme that emerged from the participants’ responses is the growth of confidence, competence, and adaptability. The data further reveal that a collaborative school culture and social interaction play a crucial role in strengthening workplace learning. Elementary basic education teachers in Lucena City emphasized that teamwork, peer discussions, mentoring, and open communication deepen reflection and improve instructional practice. As noted by Participant P1,

*“A culture that values teamwork and open communication strengthens my willingness to share ideas and learn from colleagues.”*

This finding reinforces the UNESCO (2015) assertion that teachers who value diversity and collaboration are more likely to adopt effective and inclusive teaching strategies. Similarly, Mehmet Şişman (2011) emphasized that a supportive school environment promotes teachers’ academic, emotional, and professional satisfaction. Through collaborative engagement, teachers develop a socially constructed professional identity, viewing themselves as members of a collective learning community rather than isolated practitioners. This is further supported by Protassova and Mikelsone (2021), who found that peer engagement and collective reflection reinforce both instructional improvement and shared professional identity, ultimately contributing to increased confidence, competence, and adaptability.

Further, participant P1, expressed that:

*“The insights I gather from reflection and collaboration guide me in making meaningful adjustments to my teaching practices, ensuring that my efforts to improve instruction are purposeful and evidence based. Together, these elements create a continuous cycle of learning, implementation, reflection, and enhancement, ultimately strengthening my effectiveness as a basic education teacher.”*

Similarly, participant P2 mentioned that:

*“These combined experiences shape my growth by making me more reflective, adaptable, and confident. Reflection helps me evaluate and improve my lessons, collaboration exposes me to new ideas and strategies, and applying these improvements strengthens my teaching practice.”*

They also emphasized the importance of responsiveness, which participant P1 experienced that:

*“My background, upbringing, and school community context have greatly influenced my role as a basic education teacher by shaping my values, perspectives, and approach to teaching. Growing up in a supportive environment that emphasized discipline, respect, and the importance of education instilled in me a strong sense of responsibility and a desire to help others learn and grow. My experiences within my school community, including observing dedicated teachers and participating in collaborative learning activities, taught me the value of teamwork, empathy, and adaptability in addressing diverse learner needs.”*

This was supported by participant P3 when she stated that:

*“My journey started with a passion for helping others learn. During my early teaching years, I focused on mastering classroom management and lesson delivery. Over time, through trainings, mentoring, and actual classroom experiences, I became more confident and learner-centered in my approach. Each challenge helped me grow into a more*

*reflective and adaptable teacher.*”

As a result, they become more effective practitioners, when participant P11 affirmed to experienced that:

*“If I had to describe my professional growth in a few words, I’d say: reflection, collaboration, adaptability, and continuous learning. These themes capture how I’ve learned from experiences, worked with colleagues, adjusted my teaching strategies, and kept growing as a basic education teacher.”*

These findings suggest that workplace learning not only builds teachers’ skills but also strengthens their sense of self-efficacy. Semiao (2023) supports this view, emphasizing that awareness of learner diversity is essential for effective instructional design and inclusive practice. Similarly, the UNESCO (2015) underscores that recognizing learner diversity enhances teaching effectiveness and responsiveness. As teachers implement innovative strategies, they further develop a professional identity as adaptive and learner-centered educators committed to improving student outcomes.

In addition, a superordinate theme on values formation and professional commitment emerged from the participants’ responses. The data indicate that workplace learning fosters the development of core professional values and a strong sense of commitment. Basic education teachers emphasized their dedication to student-centered teaching and their evolving sense of professional responsibility, as reflected in Participant P1’s statement:

*“Together, these experiences strengthen my commitment to excellence, deepen my professional identity, and support my ongoing development as a reflective, collaborative, and learner-centered educator dedicated to improving student outcomes. Overall, effective policies and leadership styles foster a culture of continuous improvement, making workplace learning more meaningful and impactful in my professional development.”*

Similarly, when participant P2 mentioned that:

*“Now, after 15 years of teaching Grade 3, I feel more reflective, confident, and adaptable. I understand the importance of tailoring lessons to my pupils’ needs, using innovative strategies, and continuously learning from both my experiences and my colleagues. This journey has shaped not only my teaching skills but also my identity as a committed and lifelong learner in the profession. I would describe my professional growth with the themes: learning by doing, patience, perseverance, collaboration, and celebrating small successes. These reflect how I’ve grown through hands-on experience, overcoming challenges, working with others, and appreciating every step of my students’ progress.”*

They also highlighted the development of resilience and perseverance based on experienced of participant P4, she shared that:

*“They foster resilience, adaptability, and collaboration. I become more open to change and innovation. Continuous engagement in these practices strengthens my competence. They guide my long-term professional development.”*

Further, participant P7, stated that:

*“It fills the gap of my flaws and provides opportunity for growth despite challenges”*

This reinforces teaching as a value-driven profession grounded in purpose and responsibility, as per participant P1, shared that:

*“Teachers remaining committed to excellence... and improving student outcomes”*

This reflects the findings of Kyndt et al. (2016), who emphasized that professional development is embedded in everyday workplace experiences that continuously shape professional identity. Through reflection and collaboration, teachers develop confidence, resilience, and adaptability, thereby reinforcing their commitment to lifelong learning. Over time, elementary basic education teachers construct a professional identity characterized by growth, competence, and a commitment to excellence, with each experience contributing to ongoing transformation. Similarly, Murray et al. (2020) highlighted that workplace

learning remains a valuable yet challenging space for professional development.

Moreover, the superordinate theme on the influence of personal, institutional, and cultural contexts indicates that workplace learning is shaped by multiple interconnected factors. This is supported by Orlando and Ventayen (2021), who noted that teachers' beliefs, institutional policies, and cultural expectations significantly influence workplace learning and instructional adaptation. Likewise, Garcia and Revano (2022) identified school culture, leadership, and personal motivation as key drivers of workplace learning.

Further, participant P2, shared that:

*"Every pupil can learn and succeed, and a collaborative environment motivates me to participate"*

Similarly, participant R1 is guided by the same belief when she said:

*"I'm committed to lifelong learning it encourages me to remain open"*

At the same time, school culture and leadership play enabling roles which expressed by participant P2. According to her:

*"A collaborative environment...motivates me to participate and supportive leaders encourage experimentation"*

Finally, community and personal background also shaped identity, based on the experienced of participant P1, mentioned that:

*"Because I value integrity and responsibility, I strive to engage actively in professional development activities and apply what I learn to improve my teaching practice."*

Additionally, participant P3 shared that:

*"Growing up in a simple community taught me the value of hard work, respect, and perseverance. Because of this, I understand the struggles of learners who come from similar backgrounds. It makes me more patient, compassionate, and committed to creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment where every child feels valued and capable."*

These findings suggest that workplace learning is not isolated but deeply embedded within broader social and cultural contexts. As emphasized by Protassova et al. (2021), reflection enables teachers to connect their past, present, and future professional experiences, resulting in continuous identity development.

Accordingly, the superordinate theme of professional identity formation as a transformative journey indicates that elementary basic education teachers' identities are shaped and continually reconstructed through their lived experiences in the teaching-learning process. Participants articulated their views and experiences, as reflected in Participant P1's statement:

*"These experiences have collectively shaped continuous journey"*

Similarly, participant P3 experienced that:

*"Reflection helped me become more confident and learner-centered"*

They viewed their development as continuous transformation, according to participant P4, when she stated that:

*"My journey is a continuous process."*

This was supported by participant P8 when she stated that:

*"Siguro po mam, dati, kapag bago ka kasi sa pagtuturo sa iyo lahat ibinibigay ang mga challenging students at dun nasubok ang kakayahan at puso ko sa pagtuturo. Hindi po sya madali kasi pakiramdam mo halos lahat ng student's mo hindi talaga nakikinig at sobrang diverse ng kakayahan pati na ang behaviors. Syempre iisip at iisip ka ng paraan kung paano sila matututo. Siguro po, Yun yung naging foundation ko na dahil nagsimula ako sa sobrang hirap talaga, mas umisip ako ng umisip ng paraan kung paano ko sila matutulungan. Nagkaroon ng maraming challenges, pero Yun ang mga bagay na bumuo sa kung ano na ako ngayon bilang guro. Sabi nga po, experience is the best teacher. Sa tulong din po ng mga colleagues na supportive at sa mga mentors na mababait, mas nagkaroon pa*

*ako ng mas maraming kaalaman. Through years of teaching, training, reflection and collaboration, I gained confidence and competence.*

*Translation:*

*“(Perhaps, ma’am, in the past, when you are new to teaching, you are often given the most challenging students. That was where my ability and heart for teaching were truly tested. It was not easy because it often felt like most of the students were not really listening, and their abilities and behaviors were very diverse. Of course, you keep thinking of ways on how they can learn.”*

*“I believe that became my foundation. Because I started with very difficult situations, I kept thinking of more ways on how I could help them. There were many challenges, but those were the things that shaped who I am now as a teacher. As they say, experience is the best teacher.”*

*“With the help of supportive colleagues and kind mentors, I gained even more knowledge. Through years of teaching, training, reflection, and collaboration, I gained confidence and competence.”*

Through this process, basic education teachers construct identities, according to participant P1, shared that:

*“As reflective, collaborative, and learner-centered educators”*

Similarly, participant P11, stated that:

*“Today, I see myself not just as someone delivering lessons, but as a continuous learner, collaborator, and guide who aims to make a positive impact on my students’ lives.”*

Overall, the data underscore that workplace learning is a holistic and evolving process that integrates reflection, peer collaboration, and practice, ultimately shaping teachers into adaptive, committed, and transformative professionals within the teaching–learning process. This is supported by Pennington and Lewis (2025), who emphasize that professional learning fosters reflection, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

In this context, the development of a career enhancement program for teachers is essential to strengthen reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement. Such a program should be grounded in teachers’ developmental needs, including the challenges they encounter and the enabling conditions that support their growth. The Department of Education Philippines Performance Management and Evaluation System (PMES) and related studies highlight that structured, reflective, and collaborative professional development is critical for improving teachers’ competencies and performance within the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) system (Department of Education, 2017).



**Table 4**

*Thematic Analysis of Basic Education Teachers' Views and Lived Experiences on Workplace Learning through Reflective Practices, Peer Collaboration, and Instructional Improvement*

| Superordinate Theme                                                                       | Subtheme                                                   | Verbatim Extract (Participant Quote)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interconnected Cycle of Reflective Practice, Collaboration, and Instructional Improvement | Cyclical Process of Reflection, Collaboration, Application | <p>“Together, these elements create a continuous cycle of learning, implementation, reflection, and enhancement” (P1)</p> <p>“These elements create a cycle of continuous growth and professional development” (P2)</p> <p>“Reflection, collaboration, and instructional improvement work as one continuous process” (P3)</p> |
|                                                                                           | Reflection as Foundation for Improvement                   | <p>“Reflective practice allows me to evaluate my lessons and identify areas that need improvement” (P1)</p> <p>“Reflection helps me evaluate what works and what doesn’t” (P2)</p>                                                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                           | Collaboration as Source of Strategies and Support          | <p>“Through peer collaboration I gain new ideas, feedback, and strategies” (P1)</p> <p>“Collaborating with peers gives me new ideas and feedback to try” (P2)</p>                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                                                                           | Instructional Improvement as Application of Learning       | <p>“The insights guide me in making meaningful adjustments” (P1)</p> <p>“Applying these insights leads to better teaching strategies” (P2)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Workplace Learning as Experiential and Contextual Practice                                | Learning through Real Classroom Challenges                 | <p>“I noticed that several students were struggling I revised my instructional approach” (P1)</p> <p>“When pupils struggled with division I applied hands-on materials and group activities” (P2)</p>                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                           | Learning through Peer Interaction (LAC, Collaboration)     | <p>“I discussed the concern during a peer collaboration session” (P1)</p> <p>“Through LAC discussions I gain practical strategies” (P3)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                                                                           | Learning through Application and Outcomes                  | <p>“Student engagement increased, and their performance improved” (P1)</p> <p>“Learner participation and skill mastery improved” (P3)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Development of Professional Identity as Reflective and                                    | Identity as Reflective Practitioner                        | <p>“I now see myself as someone who continuously evaluates and improves” (P1)</p> <p>“They help me see myself as a reflective educator” (P8)</p>                                                                                                                                                                              |

|                                                             |                                                   |                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lifelong Learner                                            | Identity as Lifelong Learner                      | <p>“I now see myself as a lifelong learner” (P1)</p> <p>“I view teaching as dynamic and evolving” (P4)</p>                                              |
|                                                             | Identity Shaped by Continuous Growth              | <p>“They make me see teaching as continuous learning” (P5)</p> <p>“There’s always room for improvement” (7)</p>                                         |
| Growth in Confidence, Competence, and Adaptability          | Increased Confidence and Self-efficacy            | <p>“These experiences strengthen my professional confidence” (P1)</p> <p>“They make me more reflective, adaptable, and confident” (P2)</p>              |
|                                                             | Development of Adaptability and Responsiveness    | <p>“It requires adaptability, innovation, and commitment” (P1)</p> <p>“They build my responsiveness to learners’ needs” (P3)</p>                        |
|                                                             | Strengthening Teaching Effectiveness              | <p>“Makes me more effective, adaptable, and confident as a teacher” (P11)</p>                                                                           |
|                                                             | Commitment to Student – centered Teaching         | <p>“Dedicated to continuous development and meaningful contribution” (P1)</p> <p>“Reinforce my role in shaping pupils’ learning” (P2)</p>               |
| Values Formation and Professional Commitment                | Development of Resilience and Perseverance        | <p>“They foster resilience, adaptability, and collaboration” (P4)</p> <p>“It fills the gap of my flaws and provides opportunity for growth” (P7)</p>    |
|                                                             | Professional Responsibility and Purpose           | <p>“Committed to excellence and improving student outcomes” (P1)</p>                                                                                    |
| Influence of Personal, Institutional, and Cultural Contexts | Personal Beliefs Shaping Learning Engagement      | <p>“My belief in lifelong learning encourages me to remain open” (P1)</p> <p>“I believe every pupil can learn and succeed” (P2)</p>                     |
|                                                             | School Culture Promoting Collaboration            | <p>“A collaborative environment motivates me to participate” (P2)</p> <p>“A culture that values collaboration encourages active participation” (P8)</p> |
|                                                             | Leadership and Policy as Enabling Structures      | <p>“Supportive leaders encourage experimentation” (P2)</p> <p>“Clear policies provide direction for improvement” (P4)</p>                               |
|                                                             | Community and Background Shaping Identity         | <p>“Growing up instilled responsibility and desire to help others learn” (P1)</p> <p>“It makes me more patient, compassionate, and committed” (P3)</p>  |
|                                                             | Identity Shaped through Experience and Reflection | <p>“These experiences have collectively shaped my continuous journey” (P1)</p>                                                                          |
| Professional Identity Formation as a                        |                                                   |                                                                                                                                                         |

|                        |                                                              |                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Transformative Journey |                                                              | “Through reflection I became more confident and learner-centered” (P3)                                                              |
|                        | Continuous Transformation and Growth                         | “My journey is ‘continuous transformation’” (P4)<br>“Continuous growth because every experience contributed to my development” (P8) |
|                        | Identity as Adaptive, Collaborative, and Innovative Educator | “Reflective, collaborative, and learner-centered educator” (P1)<br>“A continuous learner, collaborator, and guide” (P11)            |

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings gathered, the following are the conclusions:

### Reflective Practices

Basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City experience reflective practice as both an institutional requirement and a meaningful personal process of self-evaluation and growth. While structured mechanisms such as LAC/SLAC sessions, IPCRF, and classroom observations support reflection, these are often constrained by time limitations, workload demands, and compliance-related pressures. Despite these challenges, teachers actively engage in reflection to improve instructional practices, enhance self-awareness, and promote better learner outcomes. Supportive leadership, mentoring, and a collaborative school culture further strengthen reflection as a shared professional practice. Overall, reflective practice becomes transformative, fostering instructional improvement and cultivating a growth-oriented professional identity.

### Peer Collaboration

The findings indicate that basic education teachers in DepEd Lucena City experience peer collaboration as a supportive and co-constructive process that enhances professional learning and teaching practice. Through LAC/SLAC sessions, peer observations, and collaborative planning—often characterized as collaborative expertise—teachers exchange strategies that improve instructional effectiveness and strengthen professional confidence. Collaboration also provides essential emotional support by fostering trust, a sense of belonging, and professional security. Despite challenges such as time constraints and uneven participation, collaborative practices are sustained through institutional support and a collegial school culture. Overall, peer collaboration strengthens teachers’ professional identity by promoting shared responsibility, continuous learning, and a sustained commitment to improved student outcomes.

### Instructional Improvement

The findings indicate that instructional improvement is a dynamic and adaptive process shaped by reflective practice and peer collaboration. Teachers implement strategies such as differentiated instruction, technology integration, and learner-centered approaches based on insights gained from their experiences and professional interactions. Despite challenges—including large class sizes, limited resources, and heavy workloads—teachers continue to innovate through resilience, creativity, and a strong commitment to their profession. Institutional support and collaborative learning opportunities further strengthen their capacity for sustained instructional growth. Overall, instructional improvement enhances learners’ engagement and academic outcomes while shaping teachers into competent, innovative, and learner-centered professionals.

### Integration of Workplace Learning and Professional Identity

The integration of reflective practice, peer collaboration, and instructional improvement among basic education teachers demonstrates that workplace learning is an interconnected and continuous cycle of professional growth. These experiences are deeply grounded in teachers' personal values, supported by institutional systems, and shaped by broader cultural and community contexts. Through reflective practice, teachers construct meaning from their experiences; through collaboration, they expand their knowledge and refine their pedagogical approaches; and through application, they translate learning into improved instructional practices. This cyclical process highlights the dynamic nature of teacher learning, where each component reinforces and sustains the others.

Despite persistent challenges such as workload demands, limited resources, and systemic constraints, basic education teachers consistently exhibit resilience, adaptability, and a strong commitment to their profession. These qualities enable them to navigate complexities in the teaching-learning process while continuously striving for improvement. Moreover, workplace learning fosters the development of a strong professional identity, as teachers increasingly view themselves as reflective practitioners, collaborative colleagues, and agents of change in their educational contexts.

Overall, workplace learning emerges as a holistic and transformative process that not only enhances teaching effectiveness but also shapes teachers into reflective, collaborative, adaptive, culturally responsive, and lifelong learning professionals. This transformation ultimately contributes to improved learner engagement, meaningful learning experiences, and sustained educational outcomes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen workplace learning and enhance teaching effectiveness:

It is recommended that the Department of Education Philippines and school leaders strengthen the implementation of reflective practices by providing adequate time, reducing administrative workload, and ensuring that LAC/SLAC sessions, IPCRF processes, and classroom observations are designed for meaningful professional growth rather than mere compliance. Policies should prioritize the quality of reflection over documentation requirements, while school leaders consistently provide technical assistance, constructive feedback, and mentoring to sustain teachers' reflective development and instructional improvement.

School heads are encouraged to cultivate a more collaborative school culture by promoting structured and inclusive peer collaboration activities such as peer observation, team teaching, mentoring programs, and collaborative lesson planning. These initiatives should ensure equitable participation among teachers and foster trust, openness, and shared responsibility, thereby enhancing both instructional practices and teacher confidence.

To improve instructional effectiveness, the Department of Education Philippines and school administrators should ensure the provision of adequate learning resources, instructional materials, and access to technology that support innovative teaching strategies. Continuous professional development programs should also emphasize differentiated instruction, learner-centered approaches, and technology integration to enable teachers to address diverse learner needs and overcome classroom challenges.

Teachers are encouraged to sustain and deepen their engagement in reflective practice and peer collaboration as essential mechanisms for continuous instructional improvement. Through active participation in professional learning communities and the consistent application of innovative strategies, teachers can further enhance learner engagement, academic performance, and their own professional identity as adaptive and lifelong learners.

Future researchers are encouraged to examine the long-term impact of reflective practice and peer collaboration on student achievement, teacher well-being, and institutional performance. Comparative studies across different school divisions and educational levels are also recommended to better understand variations in workplace learning practices and to identify strategies for optimizing these practices across diverse educational contexts.

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