

Professional and Instructional Gains of English Teachers Enrolled in Master of Arts Major in English

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Abstract: This study explored the perceived impact and gains of enrollment in Master of Arts – Major in English on the professional growth and instructional practices of English teachers. The respondents of this study were the 13 English teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts program (Major in English) at PHINMA Araullo University, selected through purposive sampling. Using a qualitative research design and comprehensive interviews, data were gathered. Through a thematic analysis, the findings revealed that most respondents were young professionals aged 26-30 years old, with 6-10 years of teaching experience, primarily in public schools. The findings indicate that the MA program has a significant contribution to the professional and instructional development of the teachers. Professionally, it served as valuable credentials for promotions, leadership roles, and career advancement while strengthening their research competency and leadership skills through enhanced communication, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving skills allowing them to engage in school initiatives and mentoring roles. While improving self-efficacy in handling instructional and classroom challenges. Instructionally, respondents gained new teaching strategies through the utilization of differentiated, inquiry-based, technology-integrated, and learner-centered instruction; lesson preparation skills improved through better alignment of learning outcomes and curriculum standards; assessment and evaluation techniques were enhanced through improved assessment literacy; and classroom management skills were improved through understanding the diversity of the learners. The study concluded that enrollment in the program enhances English teachers' professional growth, instructional effectiveness, and overall teaching competence, and it is recommended that teachers should be encouraged and supported to pursue graduate studies.

Keyword: Professional Gains, Instructional Gains, Enrollment in Graduate School, English Teacher, Teaching Competency, Pedagogical Skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring the quality of teaching and learning process is strongly determined by teachers' skills and expertise. In context of Philippine education, it has been proven that Filipino teachers' performance has a crucial influence to the students' learning outcome and overall development (Roy & Swargiary, 2024). When the students resonate with the educators' approaches and methodologies it leads to better academic performance. Given these influences and contributions, it calls for the educators' continuous professional growth.

Teachers as frontliners of education, must not only possess effective pedagogical skills but it is also important for them to be responsive on the evolving educational needs of their learners. One way to keep up with these changes is to adapt and enroll in advanced studies particularly in Master's Degree Programs. With the help of these programs, it will allow them to hone their skills and become more expert educator on their respective fields to best impact their students.

While Graduate Schools in general support teachers socioeconomic and academic growth it is also crucial for them to consider a program that has a direct impact and benefits on their instructional contexts. In this light, the Master of Arts (MA) Major in English serves as a targeted pathway that directly aligns English Language Teachers with their subject knowledge and teaching expertise. Moreover, the Master of Arts, Major in English is a graduate program that specializes in English language teaching (ELT). This program offers an in-depth study of language acquisition, pedagogical strategies, and curriculum development suited to teaching the English language. (Enverga University, 2026). With its focus on language, pedagogy, and curriculum development, the effectiveness of this program goes beyond the academic benefits and offers more meaningful gains for the teachers. These gains can be manifested in two key areas: professional development and instructional improvement.

The opportunities for professional development in enrolling in the MA Major in English is transformative. It builds their professional credibility and research competence. This allows them to contribute to the field of education through evidence- and research-based practices. Through this, it aids teachers in expanding professional networks and dedication to lifelong learning which thereby positioning themselves for long-term growth and success in the teaching profession. Moreover, it can be seen as an investment that unlocks many opportunities. One of which is leadership roles; such opportunities are challenging to attain without postgraduate studies. It also opens career prospects that enhance employability, potentially leading to the tangible benefit of increased compensation, improving socioeconomic status (Britton et al., 2020). Ultimately, it is a meaningful factor that strengthens their overall teaching competence and professional development.

Enrolling in a Master of Arts – Major in English also leads to meaningful teachers' instructional improvement by equipping them with advanced language teaching strategies, which enables them to effectively facilitate learners' macro skills – viewing, reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Grounded in research-based practices and language acquisition theories, educators develop their abilities in terms of teaching strategies that cater to diverse learning needs by employing innovative methodologies; improve their ability to deliver grammar and vocabulary instruction in a more contextualized and meaningful way; design effective assessment methods; and craft responsive curriculum design. As a result of the integration of research-based practices and language theories, it enables teachers to make more informed instructional decisions and gain a deeper understanding of the content. Hence, better learners' engagement and overall learning outcomes.

In line with this, there are studies that often examine the impact and the general benefits of enrolling in graduate school as a teacher across different majors. On the other hand, despite the recognized gains of graduate studies for teachers, it is limited and difficult to find a body of research that particularly focuses on the professional and instructional gains of English Teachers enrolled in a Master of Arts Major in English. This only implies that there are needs in further studies to explore and better understand the specific gains and experiences of English teachers taking the Master of Arts Major in English.

With the aforementioned information, it has been decided by the researcher that a study understanding professional and instructional gains of English teachers enrolled in Master of Arts Major in English should be conducted as it serves as a valuable insight and to guide the institution and policymakers in designing programs that would better support English Teachers and as a result, will improve learning outcomes of English language instruction.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Design

This study applied a qualitative research design. This design is appropriate for this study as it seeks to explore and understand the lived experiences and personal perspectives of the participants during their enrollment in graduate studies. According to Muzari, Nevers, and Shonhiwa (2022), qualitative research design is a multi-perspective approach that stresses the social realities of individuals to make sense of the surrounding circumstances. The ultimate goal of qualitative research is to have in-depth insights into natural settings and real-life practices. This study aimed to determine the professional and instructional gains of English teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts in English program. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How may the sociodemographic profile of the Teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts Major in English be described in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age;
 - 1.2 Sex;
 - 1.3 Number of Years in Teaching; and
 - 1.4 School Currently Teaching;

2. What professional gains do English teachers perceive as a result of their enrollment in the MA Major in English program in terms of their:

2.1 Career advancement;

2.2 Leadership Skills;

2.3 Research Skills; and

2.4 Self-efficacy?

3. What instructional gains do English teachers perceive as a result of their enrollment in the MA Major in English program in terms of their:

3.1 Teaching strategies;

3.2 Lesson Preparation;

3.3 Evaluation and Assessment Techniques; and

3.4 Classroom Management?

4. What are the implications of teachers' enrollment in graduate studies on their teaching competence?

B. Participants

The participants of this study were the 13 English Teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts, Major in English for the Academic Year 2026-2027, specifically second-year students currently enrolled in Thesis Seminar, Thesis Writing, and Capstone at PHINMA Araullo University. Selecting participants at this enrollment stage allows the researcher to capture more information-rich narratives, as they have taken the majority of the subjects and requirements in the said program. The participants were chosen through a purposive sampling method in accordance with the objectives of the study, allowing the researcher to intentionally select the participants who have direct experience with the phenomena, in this case, professional and instructional gains.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Subject Enrolled	No. of Participants
Thesis Seminar Students	8
Thesis Writing Students	4
Capstone Student/s	1
Total:	13

C. Instruments

The study employed a researcher-made interview guide based on the professional and instructional gains of English teachers enrolled in a Master of Arts major in English. This instrument consists of two parts. Part I elicits the socio-demographic profile of the participants, while Part II comprises interview guide questions using open-ended questions to capture the participants' lived experiences, focusing on the professional and instructional gains they have acquired during their enrollment in the said program.

D. Data Analysis

After retrieving the data from the participants, the researcher applied Thematic Analysis to describe and interpret the responses and adopt a semantic approach to be grounded and focus on the insights expressed by the participants. Lochmiller (2021) described Thematic Analysis as a straightforward method and useful tool in qualitative data to reveal recurring patterns and interpret the meaning of the underlying data. Consequently, the researcher was able to formulate new conceptual or theoretical understanding. It used procedural framework developed by Braun and Clarke – Braun and Clarke Thematic Analysis – as it specifically addresses the professional and instructional gains they have acquired. It is ideal for the study with its goal to determine and interpret patterns within data (Terry et. al, 2021). This approach followed a framework that has six phases: (1) familiarizing the data with the help of the transcripts, (2) generating initial codes across data, (3) searching for themes by grouping the codes, (4) reviewing themes to ensure alignment within the data set, (5) defining and naming themes, (6) producing the final report.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the study presents and discusses the results by interpreting the gathered data on the participants' profiles, their perceived professional and instructional gains, and implications on their overall teaching competency.

A. Profile of the Participants

The sample population in this study consists of 13 respondents, with the majority being female (76.9%). Most of the respondents are also aged 26 to 30 years old (61.5%). While in number of years of teaching, the teachers were relatively balanced across categories. Nevertheless, the largest proportion are teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience (30.8%). In terms of the school of employment they are currently teaching in, most of the respondents are in public schools (53.8%) at present. The demographic profile of the sample population in this study suggests that the respondents were predominantly female and actively engaged in the teaching profession. In relation to this are the respondents' ages, ranging from 26-30 years old, reflecting that they are young professionals who are currently in the early to middle stages of their career. In this regard, their teaching experience was distributed across categories wherein most of them also have 6-10 years of service in teaching, showing that they have diverse professional backgrounds and a solid foundation of teaching competencies.

Another notable finding is that the majority of the respondents are also teaching in public schools at present, indicating that this study is largely informed by public school teachers within standardized curricula. This context is significant because their earned units or completion of the MA degree influenced the promotion requirements under the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) program for higher teaching ranks in public schools, particularly in Department of Education.

B. Professional Gains as a Result of Enrollment in the Master of Arts Program

Career Advancement

The majority of responses from the English teachers showed that their enrollment in the MA program has a positive contribution to their career advancement. Although the gains in this area varied, some experienced direct career progression through promotions, other responses helped them secure employment on the job market, such as gaining entry as Teacher I in DepEd.

In most cases, enrollment in the MA program relates to job advancement or chances for promotion, which was reflected in the responses of the teachers in this study. Several of the respondents have reported that their career opportunities were supported by their enhanced qualifications through graduate studies, showing how the MA program has strengthened their academic credentials to qualify for higher positions, gain additional points, and for promotional ranking. This suggests that the MA program was perceived as an important investment in the educational field.

On the other hand, there are also respondents who did not experience any career advancement yet, such as promotions, financial incentives, or other career opportunities despite their enrollment in the program. Nevertheless, these respondents have acknowledged that the MA program may serve as a foundation for their future career-related opportunities.

The responses only show that the MA program has provided many career-related opportunities for the majority of the respondents through promotions, leadership roles, and improved qualifications. However, the impact on enrollees' career advancement is not uniform, as some of the English Teachers are still waiting for tangible outcomes in their careers as a result of their enrollment in the MA program.

Leadership Skills

The responses of the teachers in this area reveal that the MA program has played a significant role in improving their leadership skill through the program equipping them with the knowledge, confidence, and competencies needed to guide and mentor their students and colleagues, and even lead school initiatives. Some respondents gained additional responsibilities within their institution or department.

It is notable that there is a recurring theme across their responses in this area, wherein they were able to gain essential leadership skills such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, decision-making, and interpersonal skills. There are also several respondents who highlighted how the program has helped them to have more structured and evidence-based leadership practices. This enables the teachers to become more engaged in goal-setting and collaborative planning.

The answers of the English teachers in this study indicate that their enrollment in the MA program has equipped them with the essential leadership competencies – knowledge, skills, and confidence to guide others and to meaningfully contribute within their schools.

Research Skills

Research competence is an essential skill an English Teacher should possess in order to ensure that the profession remains relevant and evidence-based. In line with this, the enrollees of the MA program are expected to have a comprehensive understanding and skills in research in order to successfully conduct their thesis as one of their final requirements in the program.

According to the responses of the teachers, the MA program has been a big help in developing and enhancing their research skills. It can be seen that there is a recurring theme that emerges from their responses in this area – from identifying research problems and formulating research questions to selecting appropriate methodologies, gathering data, analyzing findings, and drawing evidence-based conclusions. Most of them reported that their enrollment has also enabled them to become more systematic and scholarly in their approach to research, which means that they can now conduct research with more accuracy. This shows that the MA program has provided them with foundational skills, practices, and principles for academic and professional growth.

It is also worth mentioning that the respondents were able to improve their analytical and critical thinking skills, particularly in interpreting qualitative and quantitative data, assessing the validity and relevance of research findings, identifying reliable sources, and applying theoretical frameworks. Moreover, there are also several respondents who broadened their knowledge when it comes to understanding research ethics, academic writing standards, and technical requirements, which in turn made them more meticulous, accurate, and responsible researchers. These responses only reveal that their enrollment in the MA program has enhanced their research literacy while promoting adherence to scholarly standards.

With that being said, the MA program has served as an avenue wherein English teachers will be able to develop their research skills to conduct, evaluate, and apply research in educational settings. This aspect of their professional gains is not only beneficial to them, but also to the improvement of the education field.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is usually one of the overlooked benefits of taking the MA program, yet it plays a significant role in the development of English teachers to ensure that they perform tasks effectively. Across the participants' experiences in this study, it is consistently reported that the respondents have gained confidence in executing teaching responsibilities and overcoming professional challenges, particularly in managing classroom demands, implementing instructional strategies, conducting assessments, and handling various teaching responsibilities. The study reveals that they were capable of doing this because of the acquired skills and experiences in the MA program. As a result, these teachers have increased their teaching performance and instructional effectiveness.

One of the notable themes in this area is the teacher's development of their adaptability, resilience, and preparedness in addressing educational challenges. As we all know, learners are diverse; hence, the teachers have shared how the MA program has broadened to cater to the diversity of the learners, particularly in addressing their diversity in behavior. Moreover, it has also been revealed that the MA program has provided them with a strong foundation in terms of curriculum development, assessment, classroom management, and educational leadership. These gains have resulted in teachers' increased preparedness when it comes to managing classroom situations, emerging challenges, and professional responsibilities, and this time facing them with greater confidence. The study reveals that the MA program develops their confidence, competence, adaptability, reflective practice, and empowerment, hence enhancing their self-efficacy as a result of their enrollment.

C. Instructional Gains as a Result of Enrollment in the Master of Arts Program

Teaching Strategies

Change is the only constant in our society. In the context of education, there have been countless changes and innovations that have happened over the years, along with globalization. With that being said, it would be crucial for teachers to continuously be updated with information, practices, and teaching strategies to be relevant and to connect with the learners, and the best way to do this is through enrollment in graduate schools.

This study suggested that English teachers' enrollment in the MA program has significantly improved their pedagogical knowledge through exposure to innovative and learner-centered approaches, hence improving their overall teaching strategies. This can be seen in one of the recurring themes of their responses, in which it was reported that they have gained insights into differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, inquiry-based teaching, cooperative learning strategies, translanguaging, and universal learning design. These new teaching strategies have not only helped them in creating an engaging and positive learning environment, but also cater to the diversity of the learners' needs as well. Additionally, these contemporary approaches refine their instructional practices.

Another notable theme in the answers is the integration of technology in teaching, wherein many of the respondents have increased their competence in utilizing digital tools and ICT-based activities during instruction, including Canva, Google Slides, Google Classroom, Kahoot, and other gamified-based tools. This resulted in an increase in students' motivation, participation, and engagement, which makes the learning process more meaningful. It was also revealed that the majority of the respondents have an increased use of learner-centered instruction and evidence-based teaching practices that promote active student participation, collaboration, critical thinking, and inquiry, moving beyond traditional teacher-centered approaches.

This study shows the MA program enriched English teachers' classroom performance by equipping them with diverse, innovative, and learner-centered teaching strategies. As a result, they have created a supportive learning environment and effective instruction.

Lesson Preparation

The responses of the teachers in this study suggested that enrollment in the MA program improves the teachers' lesson preparation skills, as it promotes systematic and learner-centered planning practices. One of the prominent themes in this study is that teachers improved their abilities in aligning lessons with curriculum standards, learning objectives, and desired outcomes. These gained skills enabled the English teachers to organize content that is coherent with instructional goals, learning activities, and assessments. In line with this, the respondents also reported that the program has exposed them to theories and evidence-based practices that helped them to refine their lesson planning/preparation approaches. As a result, they were able to strengthen their organizing skills in sequencing lessons, managing instructional time, and preparing effective assessments. Although one of the respondents was unable to apply this gain due to the absence of teaching opportunities, the majority of the respondents had an overall result of improved lesson preparation skills.

The findings of the study suggests that the MA program strengthens teachers' competencies in curriculum alignment, instructional planning, material selection, and learner-centered design that makes a more effective and purposeful teaching and learning process.

Evaluation and Assessment Techniques

One of the recurring themes across the respondents' answers in this area is that through their enrollment in the MA program, they have developed a strong competency in designing effective, meaningful, and outcomes-based assessments. Along with this, the teachers reported that they were able to better align the assessments and evaluation with curriculum standards, learning objectives, and learners' needs; in this way, they can ensure that their assessment practices and tools are a valid indicator of students' achievements. As a result of designing more targeted assessment tools, they can now accurately measure students' overall learning outcomes. These instructional gains in their evaluation and assessment techniques show the importance of assessment literacy in the teaching and learning process.

It is also highlighted by several respondents that through the program they were exposed to various assessment approaches, in which they highlighted gaining knowledge and skills in utilizing diagnostic, formative, summative, alternative, authentic, performance-based, and competency-based assessments. They have also given an emphasis on proper and increased use of rubrics, peer evaluation, performance tasks, and authentic assessment activities. Through the mentioned assessment techniques, the teachers were able to shift from traditional assessment methods into a more learner-centered approach that allows them to better accommodate the educational needs of the diverse learners and provide comprehensive evidence of the students' learning. Furthermore, the responses also indicated that the teachers became more skilled in providing constructive feedback, interpreting students' performance, and making more informed instructional decisions.

These responses suggest that it is not only beneficial for the learners but for the teachers as well, as it can also be used to have more informed instruction and improved learning outcomes. As the teachers' competencies improved, they also contributed to more purposeful teaching practices – viewing assessment not merely as a tool but a crucial part of the instructional process.

Classroom Management

The implication from the responses in the present study implies that enrollment in the MA program has a positive contribution to the respondents' classroom management skills, as it equipped them with research-based, reflective, and learner-centered approaches that enable them to manage both students' behavior and classroom challenges. Many of the respondents have reported that gaining a deeper understanding of students' behavior and their diversity enabled them to shift from reactive to proactive practices, which resulted in a more inclusive and supportive learning environment as well.

Another one of the recurring themes that was identified is the enhancement of the teachers' interpersonal skills. The program helps them to become more patient, open-minded, and responsive to students' needs. Additionally, they improved their skills in active listening, effective questioning techniques, pacing, timing, and constructive communication, allowing them to create a productive classroom interaction. The program also exposes them to collaborative learning that promotes reflective practices, enabling them to consider multiple perspectives and adapt to various strategies in classroom situations. These gained skills of the respondents enable them to create positive teacher and student relationships.

Moreover, a common theme from the responses, that they become more confident in handling classroom challenges. This is rooted in their strong foundations of educational theories, psychology, and evidence-based practices. Through these learned concepts, they realize that they can become more capable in managing student behavior, addressing classroom concerns, and maintaining a conducive learning atmosphere. While one respondent noted limited improvement due to the absence of current teaching responsibilities, the majority of the respondents highlighted their gained skills in classroom management.

D. Implication of Enrollment in the MA Program on Overall Teaching Competence

The enrollment on the MA program had a significant implication on the overall teaching competence of the English teachers which are the respondents on this case. The findings of the study also reveals that the program also contributed to their development to become effective, competent, and reflective educators. Another notable finding is the enhanced pedagogical knowledge, teaching methodologies, research capabilities, and utilization of evidenced-based practices. The respondent's enrollment on the program has improved their professional skills particularly in communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and reflective practice. Lastly, it has boosted their confident to address classroom challenges and make informed instructional decisions.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusions

1. The Master of Art Major in English program attract educators who are already established in the teaching profession and actively seeking for continuous professional growth, enhanced competencies, and career advancement. The strong representation of public-school teachers in the program, graduate education is perceived by the public education sector as an avenue for professional and instructional development.
2. The Master of Arts Major in English program contributes to the holistic professional growth of English teachers through enhancing career prospects, leadership skills, research competence, and self-efficacy. Through their enrollment in this graduate education, they were able to acquire advanced knowledge and competencies that allows them to assume greater responsibilities, engage in evidence-based practice, and perform their roles with increased confidence and effectiveness. These gains develop them in order to be competent, reflective, and professionally empowered educators.
3. The Master of Arts Major in English program serves an important avenue for improving instructional quality and effectiveness in the classroom of the English teachers. It strengthens their use of innovative, learner-centered teaching strategies, improves lesson preparation, and develops more effective assessment practices. These gains enable them to make informed pedagogical decisions, respond to learners' educational needs, and foster positive learning experiences.
4. The Master of Arts Major in English program has a significant implication on the overall teaching competence of English teachers. It strengthens their professional knowledge, instructional skills, research capabilities, and reflective practices, enabling them to make informed instructional decisions, address classroom challenges, and continuously improve their teaching.

B. Recommendations

1. English teachers are encouraged to continuously pursue graduate education and engaged in advanced studies as a means of professional development. Through this they can further increase professional growth – expanding career opportunities, strengthening their instructional practices, and sustaining their commitment to lifelong learning and excellence in the teaching profession.
2. Higher education institutions or graduate schools that offers Master of Arts Major in English program should ensure effectiveness of the program by continuously evaluating curriculum and learning experiences of the enrollees. This will lead to teachers' development of leadership skills, research competence, self-efficacy, and other professional competencies necessary for career advancement and professional growth.
3. The school administrators are advised to provide platforms or opportunities for English teachers to apply and share their gained instructional skills and knowledge mentoring, professional learning communities, and school-based initiatives that promote innovative, learner-centered, and evidence-based teaching practices.
4. The higher education institutions offering Master's Programs should establish a tracking feedback system, this will allow them to regularly assess how the Master of Art's Major in English program influences the graduates' teaching competence. The findings of this study can also be used to further enhanced the program to ensure its relevance.

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