

Institutional Support Towards Career Achievement: Lived Experiences of Key Stage 1 Teachers

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Abstract: This study explored the lived experiences of key stage 1 teachers regarding the institutional support they receive. Recognizing that key stage 1 teachers play a critical role in foundational education, the study aimed to uncover the challenges they face, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the insights they can offer to improve support systems. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion using an interview guide. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to generate key themes across participants' narratives. Findings revealed five primary challenges: inadequate access to professional development opportunities, lack of instructional resources, limited administrative and peer support, unclear career progression pathways, and high workload with minimal institutional recognition. To cope, teachers engaged in attending external training independently, creating and recycling low-cost materials, seeking peer support, self-initiating career planning, and practicing time management with personal boundaries. Insights emphasized the need for responsive institutional support, the role of collaboration, the possibility of growth despite limitations, the importance of clear career direction, and recognition to sustain morale. The study implies a need for more targeted, responsive, and structured institutional support for key stage 1 teachers. Policies and practices at the school and national levels must address gaps in resources, professional development, recognition, and career advancement to promote teacher effectiveness and well-being.

Keywords: Key Stage 1 Teachers, Institutional Support, Career Development, Qualitative Research, Phenomenology, Coping Mechanisms.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Institutional support affected teachers' careers and job satisfaction. Support like training, mentoring, and help from school leaders made a big difference in how well teachers did and how they felt about their work. Learning about what key stage 1 teachers experienced helped create better ways to support them.

Many countries face challenges in supporting key stage 1 teachers, such as limited access to training, low funding, and weak institutional backing. These issues lead to low job satisfaction, high turnover, and reduced education quality. In Europe and the Philippines, similar problems exist, with educators struggling to grow professionally due to lack of resources and clear career paths. In Davao City, local challenges like limited training and support further affect teachers' growth.

This study aimed to understand how key stage 1 teachers experience institutional support and how it affects their career growth and job satisfaction. It looked at areas like training and administrative help to find what works well and what needs improvement. The results will help create better

support strategies and provide useful insights for those involved in education.

➤ *This Study Was Guided by the Following Research Questions. the Research Questions Focused on Experiences, Coping Mechanisms, and Insights Related to Institutional Support for Educators:*

- What are the experiences of key stage 1 teachers on the provision of institutional support?
- What coping mechanisms do key stage 1 teachers employ to deal with these challenges?
- What insights can key stage 1 teachers gain from their experiences?

The literature review showed that teacher career development depended on strong support systems, including mentorship, ongoing training, and clear career pathways, which improved skills, job satisfaction, and retention. Supportive work environments, professional networks, and teacher autonomy also played key roles by encouraging collaboration and giving teachers more control over their practices.

This study was based on Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura and Career Development Theory by Donald Super. Bandura's theory emphasized that teachers grow professionally through observing and interacting with others, highlighting the value of mentorship and collaboration. Super's theory explained how people move through different career stages and how support can help at each phase.

II. METHOD

This study used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore key stage 1 teachers' experiences with institutional support. Rooted in the work of Husserl and Heidegger, phenomenology focuses on understanding individuals lived experiences from their own perspectives. This method was ideal for capturing the personal meanings educators attach to institutional support and how it affects their career growth, offering deep insights that quantitative methods could not provide.

The study was guided by four key philosophical assumptions: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. It assumed that reality was shaped by individual experiences (ontology) and that knowledge was gained by interpreting peoples lived experiences (epistemology). The researcher recognized that their own values could influence the study (axiology) and practiced reflexivity to remain aware of biases. A qualitative approach was used (methodology), including interviews and case studies, to deeply explore how early childhood educators experienced and understood institutional support in their careers.

The researcher adopted a qualitative assumption that knowledge is subjective and formed through individuals lived experiences, aligning with the interpretivist paradigm. This perspective emphasized understanding early grade educators' experiences within their personal and social contexts, recognizing that such experiences could not be fully captured through quantitative methods. To explore these perspectives, the researcher used in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, aiming to uncover the meanings educators attach to institutional support. The study also prioritized diverse participant voices, using a flexible design to reflect the complexity of human experiences, ultimately seeking a well-

rounded understanding of how institutional support influenced educators' career development.

The study involved ten key stage 1 teachers from Buhangin West District, chosen through purposive sampling to provide rich insights into their experiences with institutional support. Participants had to have at least two years of teaching experience at the school to ensure they had meaningful exposure to the support systems in place.

The study used an interview guide as its main research instrument to explore elementary teachers' experiences with institutional support and career development. It included open-ended questions to encourage detailed, personal responses and allowed for follow-up probing.

The researcher collected data using in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs), guided by an interview guide. IDIs provided detailed, individual insights through one-on-one conversations, while FGDs captured shared experiences and group perspectives.

The researcher followed a systematic process to analyze data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. First, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to accurately capture participants' responses. The researcher then familiarized themselves with the data by repeatedly reading the transcripts and noting initial patterns. Coding was conducted to organize the data into meaningful categories, either manually or using qualitative software. These codes were then grouped into broader themes through thematic analysis, ensuring clarity and relevance to the research objectives. Finally, the researcher synthesized the findings into a coherent narrative, contextualized within existing literature, and validated the results through member checking to ensure credibility and reliability.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings showed that key stage 1 teachers faced challenges such as limited access to relevant professional development, lack of instructional materials, minimal support from administrators and peers, unclear career advancement paths, and heavy workloads without proper recognition. These issues affected their motivation, job satisfaction, and professional growth.

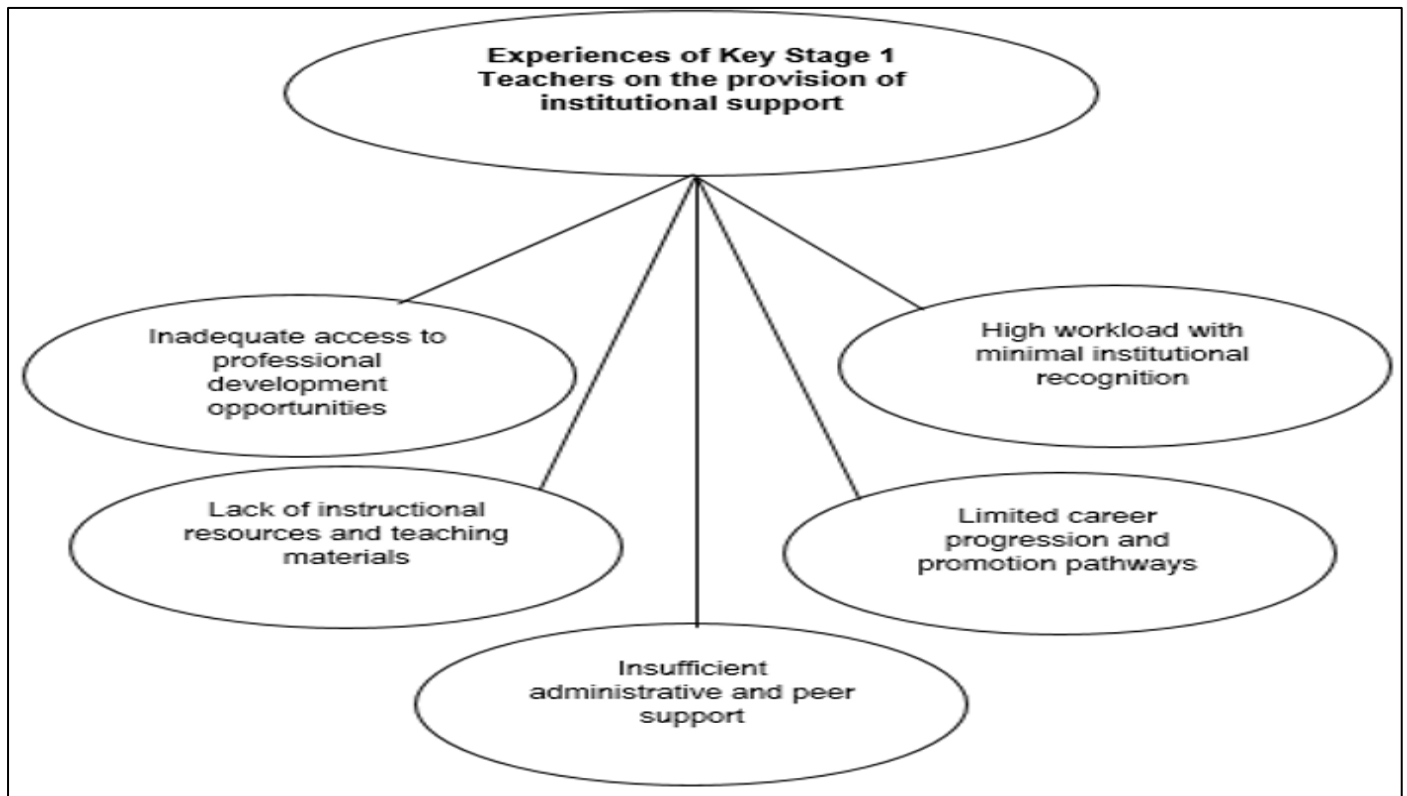


Fig 1 Experiences of Key Stage 1 Teachers on the Provision of Institutional Support

To cope with institutional challenges, key stage 1 teachers used strategies such as attending external training, creating low-cost teaching materials, and seeking support from colleagues. They also engaged in self-directed career

planning, practiced time management, and set personal boundaries to maintain their well-being and professional growth.

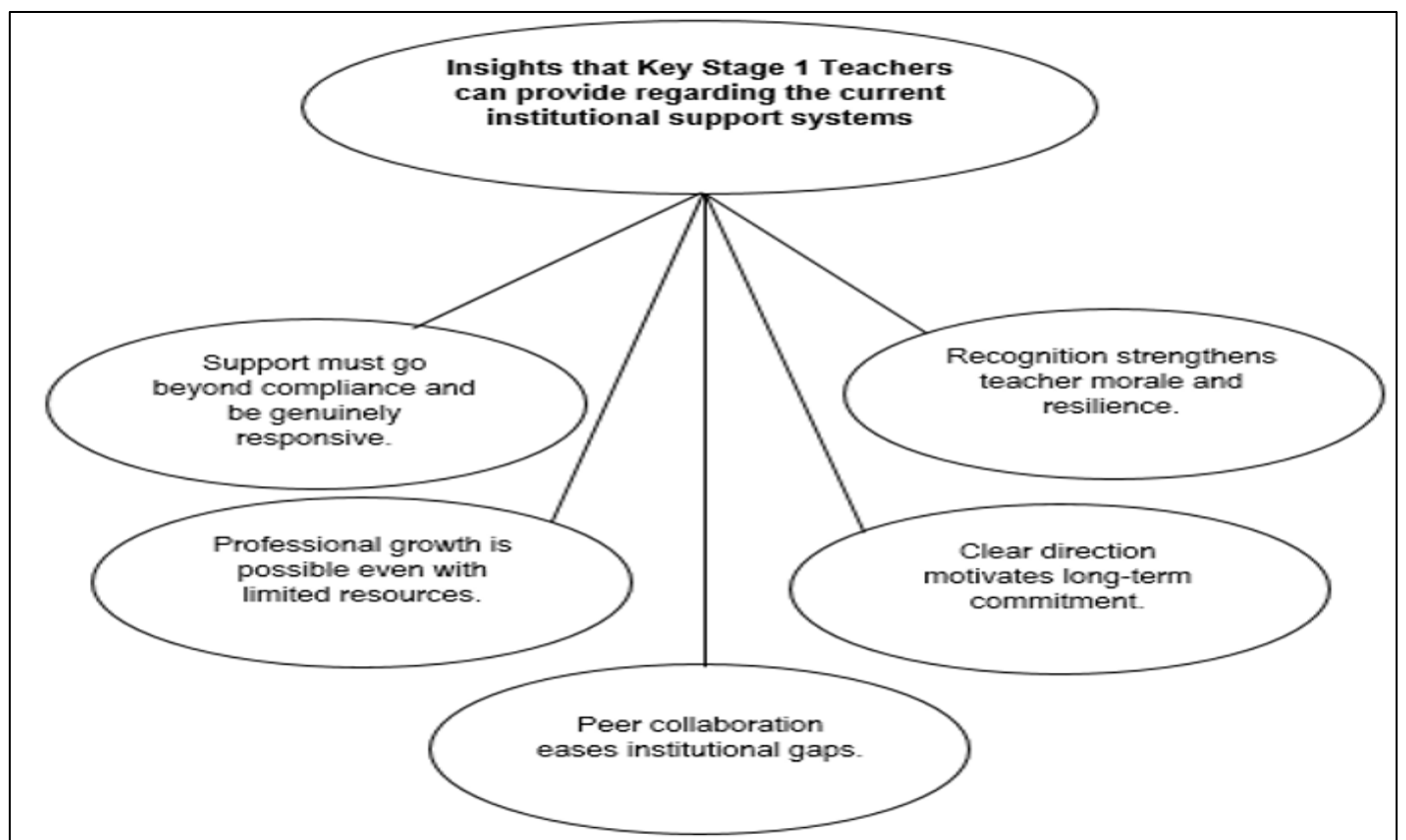


Fig 2 Insights that Key Stage 1 Teachers Can Provide Regarding the Current Institutional Support Systems

Key stage 1 teachers emphasized that institutional support should be responsive to their actual needs, not just policy compliance. They highlighted the importance of creativity, peer collaboration, and clear career direction in

overcoming resource gaps. They also noted that even small forms of recognition significantly boost morale and strengthen their commitment to the profession.

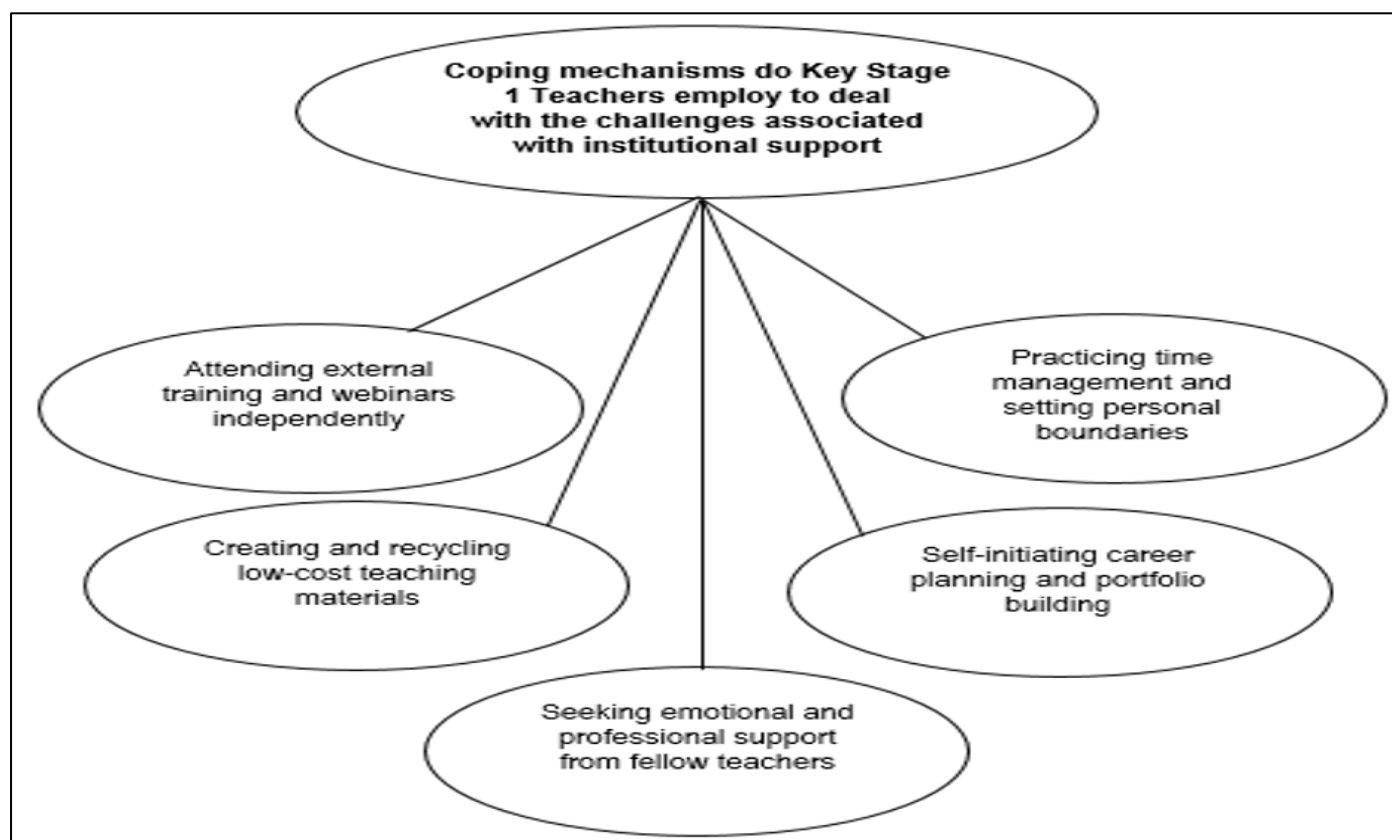


Fig 3 Coping Mechanisms Do Key Stage 1 Teachers Employ to Deal with the Challenges Associated with Institutional Support

The study identified five main challenges for early grade educators: limited access to relevant professional development, lack of instructional materials, minimal administrative and peer support, unclear career advancement paths, and heavy workloads with little recognition. These issues led to frustration, feelings of being undervalued, and hindered growth. To cope, teachers sought external training, created low-cost materials, relied on peer support, engaged in self-directed career planning, and practiced time management to avoid burnout.

Despite these challenges, educators emphasized that effective institutional support should truly address their needs, not just meet policy requirements. They noted that professional growth is still possible through creativity and collaboration, even with limited resources.

The challenges faced by key stage 1 teachers highlight the need for institutions to provide more targeted professional development, adequate resources, and clear career pathways. School leaders and policymakers must recognize the unique demands of early grade teaching and offer proper support instead of leaving teachers to fill gaps on their own.

Teachers' coping strategies show their resilience but also reveal gaps in current support. Institutions should formalize peer collaboration, offer financial and logistical

support, and reduce workload pressures. Support must be responsive, transparent, and appreciative of teachers' efforts.

The Department of Education should prioritize specialized, accessible professional development, equitable resource distribution, clear career pathways, and recognition systems for early grade educators. School leaders need to foster responsive, collaborative leadership through mentoring, peer support, fair workload management, and timely provision of materials to boost teacher morale and effectiveness. Early grade teachers should actively pursue professional growth, strengthen peer networks, and advocate for their needs while documenting achievements for career advancement. Improved institutional support benefits students by enabling educators to deliver higher-quality learning experiences. Future research should examine the long-term effects of such support on teacher retention, satisfaction, and student outcomes, as well as evaluate targeted interventions across diverse school contexts.

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