

Exploring in-service training programs for teacher development in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how in-service training affects teachers' professional growth and job performance. Data were collected from 40 teachers with over five years of experience using open-ended questionnaires. The analysis identified several challenges and opportunities related to in-service training. Key issues include inadequate planning and preparation of training programs, limited availability of resources and technological support, and low levels of teacher participation. These challenges hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of professional development initiatives. Despite these issues, teachers acknowledged the potential benefits of in-service training. They reported that such training could enhance their pedagogical skills, update their knowledge, and increase their motivation. The study highlights the importance of refining the planning and execution of training programs to better align with teachers' needs and improve outcomes. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the benefits of on-going professional development. The research emphasizes the need for strategic improvements to overcome barriers and ensure that training programs effectively support teachers' growth. By contributing valuable insights into the on-going discourse on teacher training, this study underscores the importance of continuous enhancement in training quality and relevance. While there have been advancements in teacher training, significant challenges remain that must be addressed to fully realize the potential of professional development efforts.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a cornerstone of national development in the Philippines, playing a pivotal role in shaping the future of the country. The educational sector is experiencing significant changes driven by global trends including shifting demographics, knowledge-intensive economies, evolving employment patterns, and rapid advancements in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) (OECD, 2019). These factors are transforming the educational landscape, underscoring the need for continuous adaptation and enhancement within the system to meet contemporary demands.

In response to these evolving trends, policymakers in the Philippines are focusing on strengthening the capacity of educational systems to facilitate reform and innovation. Central to this initiative is the enhancement of In-Service Training (INSET) programs, which are designed to advance the advancement of teachers' professional skills. Department of Education (DepEd) has recognized the importance of these programs in ensuring the delivery of high-quality education and in equipping educators with the skills and knowledge required meeting the demands of the K to 12 Program and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as outlined in Department Order No. 42, s. 2017. This framework is intended to support the effective implementation of educational reforms and maintain high teaching standards, ensuring that teachers are well-prepared to handle the evolving needs of their students and the broader educational environment.

Despite the structured approach and intent behind INSET programs, several challenges persist. Many of these programs remain centralized and traditional, which often limits their flexibility and responsiveness to the dynamic needs of educators (Ovens, 2000). Traditional INSET programs may not fully address the rapid changes and the diverse needs of teachers, resulting in a gap between the training provided and the actual requirements of the educational context. This static nature of professional development can hinder teachers' ability to adapt to new teaching methods, emerging technologies, and changing educational standards.

Furthermore, issues related to teacher motivation and adaptability to change complicates the effectiveness of professional development initiatives (Guskey, 2002). Teachers' engagement with INSET programs can be influenced by various factors, including the perceived relevance and applicability of the training. If programs are not aligned with the real-world challenges and opportunities that educators face, it can lead to a lack of enthusiasm and diminished impact. Recent studies have highlighted that traditional training approaches may fall short in addressing the evolving demands placed on educators, signalling the need for a shift towards more adaptable and responsive training methods.

To address these challenges, there is a growing need for INSET programs to incorporate a range of delivery techniques and emerging technologies that can enhance the training experience. Embracing diverse methods, such as online learning, collaborative platforms, and interactive workshops, can provide more flexible and accessible professional development opportunities. This approach can also support continuous learning and adaptation, allowing educators to stay current with new developments and pedagogical strategies.

Creating a supportive environment that fosters on-going professional growth is also crucial for the success of INSET programs. For these programs to be effective, they must not only evolve alongside changing educational contexts but also ensure efficient resource allocation. This involves revising training content to align with contemporary educational needs, exploring innovative delivery methods, and addressing any barriers that may impede educators' participation and engagement.

While significant strides have been made in developing INSET programs to support teachers' professional development, there is a need for continued evolution and improvement. By addressing the

limitations of traditional approaches, incorporating modern technologies, and fostering a supportive environment for continuous growth, the education system can better meet the demands of the 21st century. This proactive strategy will improve educational quality and support national development goals, ensuring that educators are well-prepared to handle the challenges of modern education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to investigate the impact of In-Service Training (INSET) Programs on Teacher Professional various Developments in the Philippines. The study sought to address the following questions: How did In-Service Training (INSET) Programs impact teaching practices among teachers in the Philippines? This question was explored through in-depth interviews and focus groups with teachers who had participated in INSET programs, aiming to uncover detailed accounts of changes in teaching practices and classroom interactions resulting from the training. In what ways did INSET programs influence the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers? The study investigated this by analyzing qualitative data from interviews and focus groups, focusing on teachers' perceptions of how their teaching strategies had evolved and identifying specific changes in their pedagogical methods. What evidence-based recommendations could be made for improving INSET programs? By analyzing qualitative data from teacher feedback and reflections, the study developed recommendations for policymakers, educational institutions, and training providers to enhance the design, content, and delivery of INSET programs to better meet teachers' needs and improve professional development outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In-Service Training (INSET) programs are essential for the development of teachers in the Philippines, designed to address the numerous challenges and opportunities present in the educational sector. Balagtas (2020) underscores the critical role of effective INSET programs in improving teaching quality and aligning with evolving curriculum demands. However, while Balagtas emphasizes the importance of alignment with curriculum changes, the study falls short in exploring how varying local contexts might influence the implementation and effectiveness of these programs. This oversight is significant, as it suggests that although INSET programs are designed with broad educational objectives in mind, their applicability could be constrained if not adapted to specific local contexts.

Santos and Salazar (2020) highlight that successful INSET initiatives are marked by well-planned sessions and strong support from educational leaders. Their research indicates that structured planning and leadership are crucial for enhancing teachers' professional growth. Nevertheless, their focus is predominantly on the theoretical advantages of structured planning, without delving into potential limitations such as the actual resource constraints faced by schools. This gap in the research indicates a need for further investigation into how resource availability impacts the practical execution of these plans, and how schools can navigate these constraints to implement INSET programs effectively.

Garcia (2020) critiques many INSET programs for suffering from insufficient resources and inadequate technological integration. Although Garcia provides a valuable critique of resource limitations, there is less emphasis on how these issues can be systematically addressed within existing frameworks. This reveals a need for future studies to explore strategies for effectively integrating technology and managing resources to enhance the delivery of INSET programs. Addressing these resource challenges could significantly improve the efficacy of professional development initiatives.

Mendoza (2020) emphasizes the need to address diverse developmental needs to ensure inclusive and relevant professional development. However, Mendoza's focus on diversity lacks a detailed examination of how programs can be tailored to meet the varying needs across different educational contexts. This suggests that additional research is required to develop more nuanced approaches to customizing INSET

programs for diverse educational environments, ensuring that all teachers benefit from relevant and practical training.

Mantilla et al. (2021) emphasize the benefits of school-based INSET programs, showing that tailored, context-specific training can greatly improve teaching practices. However, their study does not thoroughly address the difficulties of integrating these programs into broader School Improvement Plans (SIP) and Annual Implementation Plans (AIP), particularly regarding budget limitations. This gap highlights the need for further research on effectively incorporating and funding school-based INSET programs within existing improvement frameworks to ensure their sustainability and impact.

Elwarraki et al. (2023) examine the role of teachers as facilitators in INSET programs, noting that a participatory approach can foster peer learning and professional growth. However, their study primarily focuses on Moroccan contexts, which may not fully capture the unique dynamics and needs of the Philippine educational system. Further research could explore how similar participatory approaches are implemented locally and assess their impact on teacher development in the Philippines. Understanding local adaptations of participatory methods could provide valuable insights into enhancing INSET effectiveness.

Ovens (2020) critiques the centralization and rigidity of many INSET models, suggesting that these approaches might limit their relevance and adaptability to diverse regional contexts. Guskey (2022) adds to this discourse by highlighting the complexities of teacher motivation and the process of change. While Guskey's insights are valuable, they do not fully address how motivation strategies can be tailored to meet the evolving demands of educators. Future research could focus on developing more flexible and responsive INSET approaches that take into account local needs and motivational factors, thereby improving program effectiveness.

While INSET programs in the Philippines are crucial for enhancing teacher competencies and supporting educational reforms, there are notable limitations in the existing research. Addressing these gaps through more localized and contextually adaptive approaches, improved integration of technology, better resource management, and tailored motivation strategies can significantly enhance the effectiveness of INSET programs. By building on these insights, educational stakeholders can innovate and refine INSET strategies, better meeting the needs of educators and improving student learning outcomes across diverse settings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Qualitative research aims to understand people's experiences and how they make sense of their world (Shuttleworth, 2021). We chose this design to explore how In-Service Training (INSET) Programs impact teachers' professional development in the Philippines by looking closely at participants' personal experiences.

Respondents of the Study

The study involved 40 teachers with more than five years of experience who had undergone INSET training through their schools or school clusters. These experienced teachers provided insights into how effective these training programs were and what challenges they faced. Their varied backgrounds offered a well-rounded view of the INSET program's impact on teaching practices and professional growth.

Sampling Technique

This research utilizes purposive sampling to select teachers who had at least five years of experience working with the Department of Education (DepEd). This method targeted specific individuals to provide detailed feedback on how INSET programs affected their teaching and professional development. While this approach ensures relevant insights, it may limit the diversity of perspectives since only experienced teachers were included.

Research Instrument

The researchers employed open-ended questions to obtain detailed and nuanced information from respondents. This method enabled participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences, offering richer and more in-depth responses than yes/no or multiple-choice questions. While this approach yielded valuable insights, it also resulted in varied responses, complicating direct comparisons.

Validity

Validity means making sure that our questions measure what we intend them to measure (Chapelle & Lee, 2021). We used a well-tested questionnaire by Pasiq et al. (2023) and made slight adjustments based on feedback from participants to better fit our study's needs. We also sought expert opinions to ensure that our questions accurately reflected the experiences we wanted to explore

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of the responses (how similar results would be if the study were repeated). Because we used open-ended questions, it was difficult to ensure that all respondents interpreted the questions in the same way, which could affect the consistency of the responses. To address this, future research could include additional methods to test reliability, such as follow-up interviews or structured coding of responses. In this study, reliability testing was not conducted because the research methodology relied on open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were chosen to capture a diverse range of responses and richer qualitative data. However, the nature of open-ended questions makes it challenging to ensure consistent interpretation among respondents. Each participant may have interpreted the questions differently, potentially affecting the reliability of the responses. Therefore, while the study prioritized depth of insight over standardized responses, it acknowledges the limitation in assessing the instrument's consistency in measuring the construct. Future research could consider incorporating reliability testing methods suitable for qualitative data to enhance the robustness of findings and ensure more rigorous interpretation of responses.

Data Collection

To ensure a smooth data collection process, the researcher adhered to a series of meticulous procedures. First, they obtained all necessary permissions from relevant authorities to conduct the study within the specified schools. This step was crucial for gaining access and ensuring the legitimacy of the research. Data collection was carried out using an online survey platform, which facilitated convenience and accessibility for the respondents. The online format allowed participants to complete the survey at their own pace and from any location, thereby increasing the likelihood of participation and obtaining a diverse set of responses. The survey was designed to include a consent form and a detailed questionnaire. The consent form outlined the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and assurances of confidentiality. The questionnaire was crafted to elicit comprehensive responses, with an emphasis on capturing the depth and nuance of the participants' experiences. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary, and they were given thorough details about the study to ensure informed participation. The researcher had direct access to the raw data collected from the survey. To maintain data integrity and confidentiality, immediate

retrieval of survey responses was implemented, minimizing the risk of data loss or unauthorized access. These procedures were carefully designed to protect participant privacy, ensure data accuracy, and facilitate a smooth data collection process. We collected data through an online survey, which participants could complete at their convenience. This method made it easier for participants to respond and helped us gather a wide range of insights. We ensured that the survey was straightforward and included a consent form explaining the study's purpose and participants' rights. We took steps to protect the data's confidentiality and ensure its accuracy by promptly retrieving and anonymizing responses.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to systematically evaluate textual data, such as interviews or transcripts, by identifying and exploring recurring themes, patterns, and meanings. This method involves a structured six-step process: familiarizing oneself with the data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up the findings. Originally developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke for psychology research, it has since been adapted for various fields due to its flexibility. In this study, thematic analysis was utilized to investigate the effects of In-Service Training Programs on Teacher Professional Development in the Philippines. The main themes identified from the interviews highlighted the impacts of these programs on teachers' professional growth, the challenges faced, and how these challenges influenced their development. The analysis followed the sequence of the research questions, ensuring that the findings aligned with the research objectives and provided clear insights into the effectiveness and potential improvements of the training programs. This method allowed for detailed insights by grouping similar ideas and identifying common trends, though it required careful management to avoid personal biases in theme interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

In adherence to ethical standards, the researcher followed key considerations and protocols. Initially, consent was sought from the district office supervisor and the school office in-charge before conducting the study. This step ensured that the research was conducted with proper authorization and respect for institutional guidelines. To protect participants' privacy, the researcher implemented strict measures to ensure the confidentiality of their real identities. Individual responses were anonymized to prevent any personal identification. By safeguarding the participants' anonymity, the researcher aimed to encourage honest and open feedback, which is crucial for the integrity of the research findings. Furthermore, these ethical practices ensured that the study adhered to established norms and regulations, thereby reinforcing the credibility and reliability of the research. The measures taken not only aligned with ethical standards but also fostered a trustworthy environment for participants, ensuring their responses were handled with the utmost care and respect.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges met during the INSET

The study revealed several significant challenges associated with the implementation of In-Service Training (INSET) programs for teachers, each with notable implications for the effectiveness of professional development efforts. 1. **Insufficient Planning and Preparation** A predominant challenge identified by 83% of respondents was insufficient planning and preparation. Poorly defined objectives and overcrowded content were reported to undermine the training's effectiveness. When training lacks clear goals and is disorganized, it impedes teachers' ability to acquire and apply new skills. This finding underscores the need for meticulous planning and structured curriculum development in INSET programs. Future programs should prioritize setting specific, measurable objectives and organizing content to ensure it is manageable and relevant. This will help align training sessions with educators' needs and enhance the overall learning experience. 2.

Inadequate Resources and Technological Expertise Half of the respondents highlighted the shortage of resources and inadequate technological skills as significant barriers. While some resources are available, the lack of expertise in using them effectively limits their impact. This challenge emphasizes the importance of not only providing necessary resources but also ensuring that teachers receive adequate training in technology integration. Future INSET programs should incorporate comprehensive training on available tools and resources, equipping teachers with the skills needed to utilize them effectively. Addressing this issue will help close the gap between the availability of resources and their practical use in the classroom. 3. Low Teacher Participation The issue of low teacher participation, noted by 50% of respondents, is closely tied to the overwhelming workloads and personal commitments faced by educators. This finding suggests a need for more flexible and manageable training schedules. Programs should consider offering training sessions during less busy periods or providing online options to accommodate teachers' schedules. Additionally, addressing work-life balance issues and reducing extraneous distractions during training could help increase participation rates and engagement in professional development activities. 4. Expertise of Facilitators One-third of the respondents reported that facilitators and resource speakers often lacked sufficient expertise in their topics. This shortfall can detract from the quality of training and hinder the effectiveness of INSET programs. Ensuring that facilitators are well-prepared and knowledgeable is crucial for delivering high-quality training. Future initiatives should include rigorous selection and training processes for facilitators to ensure they possess the necessary expertise and skills to guide effective learning experiences. 5. Inadequate Training Venues Lastly, 17% of respondents indicated that the training venues were often unsuitable for effective learning. Poorly equipped or poorly arranged environments can negatively impact the training experience.

Addressing this issue involves ensuring that venues are properly equipped and conducive to learning. This includes providing adequate facilities and creating environments that support interactive and engaging training sessions.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Improving planning and preparation will help set clear objectives and organize content more effectively. Investing in technological training will enhance teachers' ability to use available resources. Increasing flexibility in training schedules and addressing workload issues can boost participation rates. Ensuring that facilitators are well-trained and knowledgeable will enhance the quality of the training delivered. Finally, improving the suitability of training venues will support a more effective learning environment. These findings contribute to the field by identifying specific challenges and providing actionable recommendations for enhancing INSET programs. They highlight the importance of well-planned and resource-rich training environments and suggest practical steps to address common barriers. Future research could explore the effectiveness of these recommendations in different contexts and develop strategies to further improve INSET programs. By addressing these challenges and implementing the suggested improvements, INSET programs can better support teachers' professional development and ultimately contribute to enhanced educational outcomes.

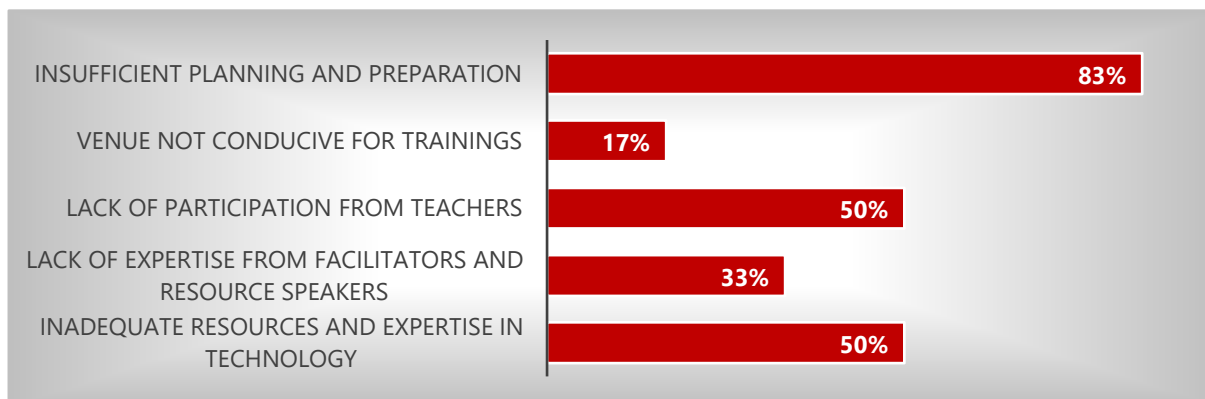


Figure 1: Challenges on the conduct of In-Service Training



Figure 2: Opportunities for Professional Growth

The study identified five significant themes related to enhancing opportunities for professional growth through In-Service Training (INSET) programs: 1. Capacitation of Facilitators and Resource Speakers Sixty-seven percent of respondents emphasized that the capacitation of facilitators and resource speakers is crucial for effective professional development. The quality of training depends heavily on the expertise and preparation of those leading the sessions. When facilitators are not well-trained or knowledgeable, the effectiveness of the training can be compromised. Therefore, ensuring that facilitators and speakers are thoroughly prepared and skilled in their subjects is essential for delivering high-quality, impactful training sessions. 2. Better Support from Educational Leaders Eighty-three percent of respondents highlighted the importance of robust support from educational leaders. Strong backing from leaders can significantly enhance teachers' motivation and engagement in professional development. This support can include providing time for training, recognizing teachers' efforts, and integrating professional development into the institution's broader goals. Educational leaders play a key role in fostering a culture that values continuous learning and growth, which is crucial for encouraging teachers to pursue and benefit from development opportunities. 3. Availability of Scholarships and More Free Trainings Thirty-three percent of respondents called for increased availability of scholarships and free training opportunities. Financial constraints often limit teachers' access to valuable professional development programs. Offering scholarships and free training sessions can alleviate these financial barriers, making it easier for teachers to participate in and benefit from additional learning opportunities. Expanding such options, including Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, would further support teachers' ongoing professional growth. 4. Better Planning and Preparation Seventeen percent of respondents stressed the need for improved planning and preparation in INSET programs. Effective planning involves setting clear objectives, organizing content logically, and addressing logistical arrangements. Well-planned training sessions are more likely to meet participants' needs and achieve desired outcomes. By tackling challenges like time constraints and resource limitations with strategic planning, the quality and effectiveness of professional development activities can be greatly improved. 5. Another important theme was the need to address the varied developmental needs of teachers. Professional development programs should be designed to accommodate different levels of experience, expertise, and interests. Tailoring training to meet specific needs ensures that all teachers, regardless of their background or current skill level, receive relevant and impactful support. This might involve offering a range of training topics and differentiated learning experiences to accommodate diverse needs and interests.

These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of enhancing professional growth through INSET. Ensuring high-quality training requires capacitating facilitators, securing strong support from educational leaders, removing financial barriers, improving planning, and addressing diverse needs. By focusing on these areas, educational institutions and policymakers can improve the effectiveness of INSET programs and better

support teachers' professional development. Addressing these opportunities can result in more effective and inclusive training programs, ultimately enhancing educational practices and outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study highlights several persistent challenges facing In-Service Training (INSET) for teachers, including issues related to resource allocation, preparation, and participant engagement. Key problems identified are inadequate resources, insufficient planning, and varying levels of participant motivation and skills. Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving the effectiveness of INSET programs.

The findings emphasize the need for enhanced resource allocation, more refined planning processes, and strategies to boost participant engagement. Effective INSET programs necessitate well-trained facilitators, comprehensive planning, and sufficient resources to support meaningful training experiences. Administrators and policymakers play a critical role in addressing these challenges by ensuring that INSET programs are adequately funded and supported. Improving resource allocation involves not only increasing financial support but also ensuring that resources are effectively utilized to meet the specific needs of participants. Refining planning processes means developing clear objectives, structured content, and practical strategies for implementation. Ensuring participant engagement requires understanding and addressing diverse motivational factors, providing relevant content, and fostering an interactive and supportive training environment.

Support from educational leaders and policymakers is essential in creating an environment where INSET programs can thrive. Their involvement can lead to better program design, effective implementation, and sustained impact. Focusing on these areas allows INSET programs to be better customized to teachers' needs, leading to more effective professional development and improved educational outcomes. Ultimately, addressing these issues will help INSET programs better support teachers in their professional growth and contribute to overall improvements in the quality of education. By prioritizing resource allocation, planning, and participant engagement, educational stakeholders can enhance the impact of INSET programs, ensuring that they are a valuable tool for teacher development and educational advancement.

Based on the study's findings, the following actionable recommendations are suggested to tackle the challenges encountered in implementing In-Service Training (INSET) for teachers:

1. **Enhance Planning and Preparation:** conduct Comprehensive Needs Assessments: Before planning INSET sessions, assess the specific needs, challenges, and goals of the training. This will ensure that the training is tailored to address the actual requirements of the participants. Establish Clear Goals and Plans: Define precise, measurable objectives for each training session. Develop detailed training plans that include schedules, content outlines, logistical arrangements, and contingency plans. Involve Stakeholders: Engage teachers and school administrators in the planning phase to ensure that the training aligns with their needs and expectations. Implement Pre-Training Briefings: Organize briefings with facilitators and resource speakers to clarify the delivery of content and align expectations.

2. **Improve Venue Selection:** Set Clear Criteria for Venues: Prioritize accessibility, adequate seating, proper lighting, acoustics, and availability of necessary technology. Ensure the venue includes essential amenities like break areas, comfortable seating, and ventilation. Plan for Contingencies: Identify backup venues and contingency plans to address any issues with the primary training location.

3. **Increase Teacher Participation:** Offer Incentives: Provide professional development credits, certificates, or recognition programs to encourage participation. Flexible Scheduling: Offer training sessions at various times and in different formats to accommodate teachers' schedules. Engage Training Methods: Use interactive and engaging methods to enhance participation and learning.

4. Enhance Facilitator Expertise: Rigorous Selection Process: Implement a thorough selection process for facilitators and resource speakers, focusing on their expertise and experience. Provide Training for Facilitators: Offer training programs to enhance facilitators' skills in content delivery, adult learning principles, and engagement techniques. Establish Mentorship Programs: Create mentorship opportunities where less experienced facilitators can learn from seasoned professionals.

5. Address Resource and Technology Gaps: Assess Technological Resources: Conduct an assessment to identify gaps in current technological resources and address them. Provide On-going Training: Offer continuous training for teachers and facilitators on using technology effectively in education and training. Establish Tech Support: Set up a dedicated tech support team to assist with the setup, troubleshooting, and maintenance of technological tools. Implement Digital Literacy Programs: Develop programs to build teachers' and facilitators' confidence and competence in using technology.

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