

TEACHING BEYOND LIMITS: THE PROMISE OF EXPANDED CAREER PROGRESSION

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The Expanded Career Progression (ECP) system is one of the most significant policy changes for the Philippine basic education workforce in recent decades. The ECP aims to professionalize teaching and recognize excellence in the classroom. It creates new career lines and salary-grade ladders to facilitate promotions based on competency standards. The goal of the policy is to make teaching an attractive and sustainable profession by linking career advancement to demonstrated competence and providing multiple pathways for growth beyond administration.

Executive Order No. 174 (s.2022), which established the ECP at the national level, called for the creation of a revised career progression system and pathways for public school teachers, particularly the classroom teaching career line and the school administration career line, to improve professional advancement pathways through the Master Teacher levels. The delayed advancement of teachers under previous systems, the lack of pay differentials linked to classroom performance, and the restricted formal career paths for educators who wanted to stay in the classroom were all issues that the Executive Order addressed.

To implement the policy, Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) were formulated to outline its operational parameters. The IRR sets qualification standards for positions under the ECP and identifies which teacher positions are covered by or excluded from the program. In 2024–2025, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued department orders with technical guidelines and step-by-step procedures to be undertaken by regional and division offices to implement ECP and reclassify affected positions.

Several concrete features distinguish ECP from earlier promotion systems. It introduces more intermediate positions (Teacher IV–VII; Master Teacher V) and salary grades so that teachers who meet certain competency standards have more opportunities for upward career movement. It also institutionalizes two career lines, enabling teachers who remain in the classroom to earn higher ranks without administrative appointments. Additionally, the ECP focuses on competency-based

career progression through evidence-driven promotions rather than time-in-service or vacancy-based promotions. It also calls for the coordination of concerned government entities such as DepEd, Civil Service Commission, and PRC, so that qualification standards can be updated to reflect the new career system.

If implemented properly, the ECP would have several benefits. An expanded career ladder has the potential to improve teacher morale and retention by providing clear paths for professional and financial advancement. Rewarding classroom competence motivates teachers to seek continuous development and creates opportunities for the enhancement of their pedagogical and assessment skills. Over time, this would improve the quality of teaching which means that students would learn better. Moreover, from a policy perspective, this distinction suggests that leadership and classroom prowess are fundamentally different forms of professional expertise.

Nonetheless, policy design is only half of the story because implementation poses even more severe challenges. The ECP needs to ensure that teachers are evaluated in the same way in different classrooms. Otherwise, the decision to promote one instructor and not another may seem arbitrary and political. Capacity gaps at the division and school levels such as limited HR capacity to validate evidence packages, inconsistent understanding of the new qualification standards, insufficient resources to train assessors, may also hinder rollout. Budgetary realism is likewise key because the creation of new salary grades and levels has to be phased in with the Department of Budget and Management and Congress. DepEd orders and guidance notes tried to foresee these needs by providing technical orientation and implementation guidelines, but the local roll-out needs to be closely monitored.

Early scholarly evaluations of the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) have already started making recommendations for policy implementation. These include investing in assessor training and standardized rubrics linked to the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers to ensure consistent evaluation of evidence packages, as well as strengthening information campaigns and help desks at the division level to clarify career pathways, documentation requirements, and appeal mechanisms for teachers. It is also recommended to prioritize sequencing reclassifications and promotions according to fiscal capacity, with a focus on bridging measures for teachers nearing retirement or those in difficult-to-staff locations. Additionally, incorporating feedback mechanisms

such as surveys, consultations, and public reporting is suggested to identify implementation issues early and improve the system progressively. Finally, ensuring coordination among DepEd, DBM, CSC, and PRC is emphasized to harmonize qualification standards.

The Expanded Career Progression system is a landmark reform that will make teaching a professional and rewarding career by creating multiple pathways to promotion and advancement based on competencies without forcing teachers out of the classroom. However, for the policy to succeed, it will have to be consistently implemented by ensuring that there are clear assessment tools, availability of local human resources, proper financial phase-in and consultation of all stakeholders. If these operational demands are met, the ECP would promote a better motivated, remunerated and performing teaching workforce to provide Filipino learners with more equitable learning opportunities.

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