
Kindergarten Teachers' Instructional Competence

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Abstract — This study assessed the instructional competence of thirty (30) Kindergarten teachers from two school districts in the Schools Division of Nueva Ecija using a descriptive-correlational research design. Data were gathered through a validated questionnaire-checklist and analyzed using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson r correlation. Findings revealed that the respondents were generally qualified and demonstrated a “very competent” level of instructional competence. No significant differences were found in their competence when grouped according to profile variables, except for years of teaching experience, which significantly influenced the consideration of instructional materials. Teaching experience was also significantly correlated with instructional competence in instructional materials, evaluation of learning outcomes, and overall competence. The study recommends continuous professional development, scholarship opportunities for graduate studies, and the implementation of training programs to further enhance Kindergarten teachers' instructional competence.

Keywords: Instructional Competence, Behavioral Management, Evaluation of Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Children need early childhood education to help them grow and learn. In kindergarten, children learn how to think, make friends, manage their emotions, and develop positive feelings toward school. What they learn during these early years affects their readiness for school and future academic success. Studies show that high-quality kindergarten education improves children's learning outcomes and overall development. Over the years, kindergarten education has changed from traditional teacher-centered instruction to more child-centered and play-based learning.

While reading and basic math remain important, experts believe that children learn better when they can explore, play, and interact with others. These activities help children stay interested in learning and develop good study habits.

The quality of kindergarten education depends greatly on the teacher's instructional competence. This includes lesson planning, use of teaching materials, classroom management, teaching strategies, and assessment of learning. Competent teachers create positive learning environments and keep children engaged in classroom activities. Research also shows that effective teaching practices improve children's participation and learning outcomes.

Learning engagement refers to how active and interested children are during classroom activities. Engaged learners pay attention, participate, and complete tasks willingly. However, teachers may face challenges in maintaining engagement because of limited materials, different learner needs, and lack of training opportunities. These challenges highlight the importance of continuous professional development for teachers. In the Philippines, the Kindergarten Education Act of 2012 emphasizes the importance of quality kindergarten education and competent teachers. However, some schools still experience problems related to teacher training, instructional materials, and readiness. Differences in teachers' instructional competence may affect how learning engagement is managed in kindergarten classrooms. Because of these concerns, it is important to examine the instructional competence of kindergarten teachers in managing learning engagement. The findings of this study may help improve teaching practices, guide training programs, and support efforts to strengthen early childhood education.

Literature Review

Early childhood education plays an important role in the growth and development of children. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, high-quality kindergarten education helps improve children's academic performance, social skills, and emotional development. Kindergarten serves as the foundation of learning where children develop basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for future schooling. During this stage, children also learn how to interact with others, express emotions, and build confidence in learning activities.

Kindergarten education has gradually shifted from traditional teacher-centered instruction to child-centered and play-based learning approaches. UNESCO emphasized that children learn more effectively when they are actively involved in play, exploration, and interaction. Play-based learning encourages creativity, communication, and problem-solving skills among young learners. Studies also show that excessive drills and rigid instruction may lessen children's interest and motivation to learn. Because of this, many schools now encourage interactive and learner-centered activities in kindergarten classrooms.

Teacher instructional competence is considered one of the most important factors affecting the quality of kindergarten education. Instructional competence refers to the teacher's ability to plan lessons, use appropriate teaching materials, apply effective teaching strategies, manage the classroom, and assess learning outcomes. According to Lucero (2018), effective kindergarten teachers create a positive classroom environment, balance structure and play, and keep learners actively engaged. Competent teachers are also able to adjust their teaching methods according to the needs and abilities of young children.

Learning engagement is another important aspect of early childhood education. Learning engagement refers to the level of children's participation, attention, interest, and willingness to complete classroom activities. Children who are actively engaged are more motivated to learn and show better academic and social outcomes. Research by Conroy et al. (2014) found that the use of effective teaching strategies increases children's participation and improves learning outcomes in early childhood classrooms. Similarly, learner-centered and play-based strategies were found to enhance children's engagement and interest in learning activities.

Despite the benefits of effective teaching strategies, teachers still experience challenges in managing learning engagement. According to Huo (2022), limited instructional materials, varied learner needs, and insufficient training opportunities affect teachers' ability to consistently apply engaging teaching practices. These challenges highlight the need for continuous professional development and training programs for kindergarten teachers. Training programs help teachers improve their instructional competence and adapt to the changing needs of learners.

In the Philippines, kindergarten education is strengthened through the Kindergarten Education Act of 2012, which made kindergarten a compulsory part of basic education. The law

emphasizes the importance of providing meaningful learning experiences through competent teachers and appropriate instructional practices. However, studies show that some schools still face issues related to teacher readiness, lack of instructional materials, and limited access to professional development opportunities. These concerns may affect the quality of teaching and the learning engagement of kindergarten pupils.

The reviewed literature shows that instructional competence greatly influences children's learning engagement and overall development in kindergarten. Effective teachers who use learner-centered and interactive teaching strategies are more likely to create positive learning environments that encourage active participation among young learners. Therefore, examining the instructional competence of kindergarten teachers is important in improving teaching practices and strengthening early childhood education.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to determine the instructional competence of kindergarten teachers and its relationship to their profile variables. The study also utilized an ex post facto one-shot case study design to gather data at one point in time. The respondents were thirty (30) kindergarten teachers from public schools in the Nampicuan District and Cuyapo West District, Schools Division of Nueva Ecija. Complete enumeration sampling was used, which included all kindergarten teachers in the selected districts.

Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire-checklist that was content validated by experts and pilot-tested to ensure clarity and reliability. The questionnaire included the teachers' profile and their instructional competence in managing learning engagement. A 5-point Likert scale was used in answering the instrument. After securing permission from the schools, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in printed or digital form. The collected data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson r correlation coefficient through SPSS version 17. The t-Test for independent samples, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine whether or not there are significant differences in the extent of instructional competence of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers.

The researcher used Pearson r Coefficient of Correlations to determine whether or not there are relationship between the extents of instructional competence and the profile variables.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Respondents

The results show that most of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers, i.e., 13 of them or 43.3 percent belong to the 31–35 years old age bracket. Only three (3) of them or 10.0 percent belong to the 26–30 years old age bracket. Further, only two (2) of them or 6.7 percent belong to the 46 years old and above bracket

Twenty-six (26) of them have BS degree plus some units leading to a master's degree. Only four (4) of them or 13.3 percent have a Master's degree. There really is not much differences among the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in terms of highest educational attainment.

In terms of teaching experience, Majority of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers, i.e., 19 of them or 63.3 percent have been teaching Kindergarten grade level class for 7–9 years. These Kindergarten teachers are veteran teachers in their own right. Only three (3) of them or 10.0 percent are new, having only 1–3 years teaching experience in the Kindergarten grade level. This result aligns with research indicating that teaching experience contributes significantly to classroom effectiveness and professional growth

Regarding in-service training, Although the majority, i.e., 18 of them or 60.0 percent have attended 3–4 relevant in-service trainings, 12 of them or 40.0 percent have attended only 1–2 relevant in-service trainings. This indicates moderate exposure to professional development opportunities among the respondents. It is concluded that generally, the respondents are similar to each other in their extent of instructional competence.

Extent of Instructional Competence

Lesson Planning

The overall weighted mean (OWM) obtained by the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in this area is 4.783, equivalent to “always” in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating. Overall, the respondent-Kindergarten teachers are “very competent” in the preparation of learning materials. This indicates that kindergarten teachers consistently demonstrate strong capability in designing instructional resources that are aligned with early childhood learning needs. Pyle et al. (2017) explained that effective kindergarten instruction relies heavily on teachers’ ability to design play-based and developmentally appropriate learning materials that promote engagement and active learning among young children. Similarly, Sheridan et al. (2019) emphasized that high-quality early childhood teaching is strongly associated with the use of structured yet flexible learning materials that support children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development in classroom settings.

Context Knowledge

Kindergarten Teachers obtained OWM=4.913 in this area, which is equivalent to “always” in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating. Overall, the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers are “very competent” in the area of instructional strategies. This reflects strong classroom practice in implementing engaging and learner-centered teaching approaches. Indicator statement No. 1, “start each lesson with enjoyable and engaging exercises, to get pupils’ attention” obtained the highest WM=5.000, equivalent to “always” in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating. Indicator No. 4, “commend my pupils for their efforts to promote confidence and active learning” obtained the lowest WM=4.767. This WM is still equivalent to “always” in descriptive rating and “very competent” in transmuted rating

Teaching Strategies

The overall weighted mean (OWM) obtained by the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in this area is 4.853, equivalent to “always” in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating. Overall, the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers are “very competent” in the area of consideration of instructional materials. This indicates a high level of organization and intentional use of learning resources that support effective classroom delivery..

Classroom Management

Kindergarten Teachers obtained OWM=4.913 in behavioral management, which is equivalent to “always” in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating. Overall, the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers are “very competent” in the area of behavioral management. This indicates that teachers consistently apply effective classroom management strategies that promote positive behavior and minimize disruptive conduct among young learners. Emmer et al., (2015) emphasized that effective classroom behavioral management in early childhood settings is strongly associated with clear routines, consistent expectations, and positive teacher–child interactions that support self-regulation and engagement.

Assessment or Evaluation

The Kindergarten Teachers obtained OWM=4.933 in evaluation of learning outcomes, which is equivalent to “always” in descriptive rating, and “very competent” in transmuted rating. Overall, the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers are “very competent” in the area of evaluation of learning outcomes. This indicates that teachers consistently apply appropriate assessment practices to determine learners’ progress and achievement in early childhood education

Summary of Strategies

The grand overall weighted mean is 4.887, equivalent to “very competent,” is the extent of instructional competence of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in this study. This result indicates that kindergarten teachers demonstrate consistently high levels of instructional competence across different areas such as instructional materials, instructional strategies, behavioral management, and evaluation of learning outcomes. This suggests that their teaching practices are well-aligned with early childhood education standards and are consistently applied in classroom settings.

Competencies	OMW	Descriptive Rating	Transmuted Rating
Lesson Planning	4.783	always	very competent
Context Knowledge	4.913	always	very competent
Teaching Strategies	4.853	always	very competent
Classroom Management	4.913	always	very competent
Assessment or Evaluation	4.933	always	very competent
Overall Mean	4.887		very competent

The GOWM =4.887, equivalent to “very competent,” is the extent of instructional competence of the respondent-Kindergarten Teachers in this study. This result indicates that kindergarten teachers demonstrate consistently high levels of instructional competence across different areas such as instructional materials, instructional strategies, behavioral management, and evaluation of learning outcomes.

Differences across Profile Variables

The study found that there were generally no significant differences in the instructional competence of the respondent-kindergarten teachers when grouped according to profile variables such as age, highest educational attainment, and number of relevant in-service trainings attended. This means that the teachers showed similar levels of instructional competence regardless of these profile characteristics.

For the variable age, all computed p-values were higher than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the instructional competence of the teachers remained “very competent” regardless of age group.

In terms of highest educational attainment, no significant differences were also found in all areas of instructional competence. Teachers with bachelor’s degrees and those with master’s degree units or completed master’s degrees demonstrated similar levels of competence.

Similarly, the number of relevant in-service trainings attended did not significantly affect the instructional competence of the respondents. The teachers consistently showed a “very competent” level across all areas despite differences in the number of trainings attended.

However, a significant difference was found in the area of consideration of instructional materials when teachers were grouped according to the number of years teaching kindergarten ($F=7.129$, $p=0.003$). This means that teaching experience influenced how teachers selected and used instructional materials. More experienced kindergarten teachers tended to demonstrate better competence in this area.

Overall, the findings show that instructional competence among kindergarten teachers is generally consistent across profile variables, except for teaching experience, which significantly affected the consideration of instructional materials.

Relationship between Variables

Results showed that most of the profile variables had no significant relationship with the teachers' instructional competence. This means that age, highest educational attainment, and number of trainings attended were not associated with differences in instructional competence.

However, the variable number of years teaching kindergarten showed significant relationships with some areas of instructional competence. A significant relationship was found between years of teaching experience and consideration of instructional materials ($r = 0.477$, $p = 0.008$), evaluation of learning outcomes ($r = 0.389$, $p = 0.033$), and the overall instructional competence rating ($r = 0.371$, $p = 0.043$).

These findings indicate that teaching experience contributes to improving certain aspects of instructional competence among kindergarten teachers, particularly in selecting instructional materials and evaluating pupils' learning outcomes.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the respondent-kindergarten teachers are qualified to teach Kindergarten. Most of the respondents were middle-aged, had bachelor's degrees with units in master's studies, had several years of teaching experience, and attended relevant in-service trainings.

The study also concluded that the respondent-kindergarten teachers are "very competent" in all areas of instructional competence, as shown by the high overall weighted mean and grand overall weighted mean ratings. This indicates that the teachers consistently demonstrate effective instructional practices in managing learning engagement.

Furthermore, the study revealed that there were generally no significant differences in the instructional competence of the respondents when grouped according to age, highest educational attainment, and number of relevant in-service trainings attended. However, the number of years

teaching kindergarten significantly affected the teachers' competence in the consideration of instructional materials.

Lastly, the study concluded that teaching experience was significantly related to instructional competence, particularly in the areas of consideration of instructional materials, evaluation of learning outcomes, and overall instructional competence. This suggests that years of teaching experience contribute to the development of teachers' instructional skills and classroom effectiveness.

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