

**DETERMINING THE TEACHING COMPETENCIES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS
IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF MADDELA, QUIRINO: BASIS
FOR A PROPOSED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

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Abstract

Kindergarten education is fundamental in shaping early learning development; however, the extent of teachers' competencies and the factors influencing them remain insufficiently examined. This study assessed the teaching competencies and challenges encountered by kindergarten teachers in public elementary schools in Maddela, Quirino, during School Year 2025-2026. The study employed a descriptive-comparative research design involving 33 kindergarten teachers selected through total enumeration. Data were gathered using a validated and reliability-tested researcher-made questionnaire with domains lifted from DepEd's Teacher Performance and Development Framework. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequency, percentage, weighted mean, t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were used to analyze the data.

Results revealed that the respondents were predominantly female, married, Teacher II, and bachelor's degree holders. Findings further showed that kindergarten teachers demonstrated a very high level of competence across all domains, namely content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development. Moreover, teaching competencies did not significantly differ when teachers were grouped according to age, sex, position, and educational attainment. However, significant differences were found in assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development when grouped according to civil status, with single teachers exhibiting higher levels of competence than their married counterparts. In terms of challenges, limited opportunities for professional development related to early childhood education, limited access to ICT tools and technology-based instructional resources, administrative workload, insufficient instructional materials, and inadequate classroom facilities

emerged as the most common concerns encountered by the respondents.

It is recommended that school administrators and education authorities strengthen regular, school-based professional development programs for kindergarten teachers while simultaneously improving access to ICT resources, instructional materials, and classroom facilities to address the identified challenges and enhance teaching effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is recognized as a vital stage in human development, establishing the foundation for children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical advancement. At this juncture, educational experiences profoundly impact children's preparedness for formal education and their potential for lifelong learning. International and national educational frameworks continually underscore that the efficacy of kindergarten education predominantly relies on the caliber of instruction delivered by skilled and well-qualified educators. The study of Y. Wang (2024) highlighted that global spending and strategies for early childhood education have increasingly garnered significant attention, leading to the formulation of various educational policies and programs aimed at enhancing opportunities and resources for early childhood development and learning. Families, educational institutions, and communities are integral to the provision and execution of early childhood education. These contextual factors represent a complex ecosystem with interconnected elements that collectively affect the transition and academic success of early schooling for children aged 4-6 years.

Teaching competencies in kindergarten include a comprehensive array of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and professional practices that empower educators to address the varied developmental needs of young learners effectively. These competencies encompass content and pedagogical mastery, the capacity to cultivate supportive learning environments, responsiveness to learner diversity, proficient curriculum planning, suitable assessment practices, significant engagement with families and communities, and dedication to ongoing professional development. When these qualities are proficiently exhibited, kindergarten instructors are more equipped to provide developmentally appropriate and inclusive instruction.

In the Philippines, the implementation of the Kindergarten Education Program under the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum demonstrates the Department of Education's dedication to enhancing early childhood education. Kindergarten educators are required to conform their methodologies to professional standards that foster comprehensive child development. Disparities in teaching abilities may arise from differences in teachers' educational backgrounds, professional experiences, access to training, and contextual issues within school communities. According to the study of Bongalon et al. (2025), the main challenge in learning resources is the insufficiency of high-quality materials. Moreover, within the learning space and environment, the predominant issue is an unsupportive school atmosphere, and in the realm of monitoring and assessment, the most prevalent obstacle is the insufficiency of monitoring and evaluation instruments. The implementation strategy may tackle the issues encountered in the execution and support of the Kindergarten Education Program.

In public elementary schools, especially in rural areas like Maddela, Quirino, kindergarten teachers frequently have distinct problems in fulfilling their instructional duties. These may encompass restricted educational resources, heterogeneous learner requirements, and disparate levels of professional assistance. Assessing the teaching competencies of kindergarten teachers and the issues they face is crucial for developing pertinent and effective professional development programs. Based on the findings of Arquillo, M. (2025), it is advised that the Department of Education allocate resources towards specialized professional development programs, optimize resource distribution, strengthen home-school partnerships, and offer ongoing mentorship to educators to enhance their pedagogical proficiency within the MATATAG Curriculum.

This study aims to assess the teaching competencies of kindergarten educators in public elementary schools located in Maddela, Quirino. The study's findings will underpin the proposal for a professional development enhancement program aimed at addressing identified competency deficiencies and facilitating ongoing professional growth for educators.

Literature Review

Teaching Competencies as a Multi-Dimensional and Standards-Based Construct

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) is a foundational framework instituted during Secretary Leonor M. Briones' leadership of the Department of Education. It originated from Department Order 42, series of 2017. The similar departmental order indicated that the adoption of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) functions as a reference framework to fulfill teachers' requirements, therefore improving the quality of education. Furthermore, it specified the aims of the reference framework as follows: (1) to set clear expectations for educators, (2) to act as the benchmark for teachers' professional progression, and most importantly, (3) to serve as a guide in identifying teachers' needs and interventions (D.O 42 S. 2017, 2017)

Furthermore, according to Li et al. (2024), competencies in curriculum development are a crucial aspect of professional development for kindergarten teachers and are highly regarded globally. This study examined the theoretical basis for the curriculum development competencies of kindergarten educators. This study identified that the theoretical framework for curriculum development competencies of kindergarten teachers is derived from competencies theory (Iceberg and Onion competency theories), curriculum development theory (Tyler and Taba curriculum theories), and early childhood education theory (Montessori and Chen Heqin education theories). This theoretical framework offers guidelines for kindergarten educators, the curriculum system, and teacher training, ultimately enhancing the quality of early childhood education.

Similarly, Bai and Ai (2022) stated that professional vital talents include the fundamental personality traits and practical abilities that meet job requirements. They function as an essential reference for the selection and training of kindergarten educators. A tentative three-tier professional competency model for kindergarten educators has been established. The innermost layer of the model embodies the core professional principles of kindergarten teachers, the middle layer encompasses the four important personality traits, and the outside layer comprises the nine critical action competencies of kindergarten teachers. The results of this study are highly relevant for the training of kindergarten educators and the formation of teaching staff teams.

Moreover, Pupíková et al. (2021) further highlight that a crucial prerequisite of Education 4.0 is the engagement of students and practitioners in the formulation of study plan content. This research focused on identifying the supplementary educational needs of kindergarten educators. The data analysis indicated that teachers demonstrate the greatest demand for enhanced education in 'diagnostic knowledge,' a requirement that is unaffected by their years of experience. A declining tendency in teachers' educational needs has been noted across the other three dimensions, particularly falling in three of the four variables examined as practice length increases. The self-evaluation of teachers about their pedagogical competencies corresponds with their educational demands, hence underscoring the importance of the findings connected to the continuous training necessities of kindergarten educators.

Likewise, Ajani (2019, 2020) underscored the necessity of professional development activities for improving teachers' instructional practices and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Moreover, while the study did not cite the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), it emphasized aspects such as instructional planning, instructional delivery, subject knowledge, student rapport, and classroom management, all of which are included within the same framework across multiple domains.

Furthermore, Bacus and Macalisang (2024) highlighted that despite the essential significance of early childhood education and the distinct obstacles encountered by kindergarten teachers, there is a significant demand for more targeted professional development requirements and competences necessary for effective instruction. The findings indicated that kindergarten instructors reported significant professional development requirements while exhibiting considerable skill in managing kindergarten classes. This highlighted the need for professional development to improve the skills of kindergarten teachers, especially in meeting the varying competency requirements of male and female students.

In addition, the study of Caingcoy, M. (2022), specifically reports that kindergarten educators have advanced competencies in subject knowledge and pedagogy, learning settings and learner diversity, curriculum development and planning, as well as evaluation and reporting. These indicate that they demonstrate almost all the attributes of proficient educators. The results revealed a substantial level of professional requirements in subject knowledge, pedagogy, the learning environment, and learner diversity, alongside a pronounced level of professional needs in the remaining areas. Due to their focus on topic knowledge, pedagogy, the learning environment, and learner diversity, these areas will be the principal factors in formulating a professional development plan.

Similarly, according to Gastador et al. (2025), despite the essential significance of early childhood education and the distinct obstacles encountered by kindergarten teachers, there is a significant demand for more targeted professional development requirements and competences necessary for effective instruction. The findings indicated that kindergarten instructors reported significant professional development requirements while exhibiting considerable skill in managing kindergarten classes. This highlighted the need for professional development to improve the skills of kindergarten teachers, especially in meeting the varying competency requirements of male and female students.

Finally, Szabó-Thalmeiner's (2022) indicates that competency-based teacher training and development has been a global practice for 60 years. The technique was adopted into Romanian teacher training in the twenty-first century, and a set of competencies for

kindergarten teachers and teacher training was officially included in the national register of qualifications in tertiary education (RNCIS1) in 2012. This study analyzes the abilities relevant to kindergarten instructors and their training, emphasizing the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to be cultivated. Structuring training around competencies can promote the intentional design of the training process, improving the educator's efficacy and assisting students in recognizing their professional self-development.

Variability of Teaching Competency Across Teacher Profile Variables

The study by Gallego and Caingcoy (2020) revealed that kindergarten instructors exhibit substantial expertise in subject matter, pedagogical strategies, learning environments, learner diversity, curriculum development, and assessment practices. These indicate that they demonstrate almost all the attributes of proficient educators. The findings revealed a substantial degree of professional requirements in subject matter expertise, pedagogical strategies, the educational environment, and learner diversity, while the other domains also demonstrated a considerable level of professional demands. Considering their focus on subject expertise, instructional methods, the educational setting, and learner variety, these elements will be the principal variables in formulating a professional development plan.

The study performed by Ardiente, T., and Jacela, Z. A (2025) revealed that educators showed a high level of overall competence, with personal competence being the most prominent and professionalism receiving the lowest mean score, highlighting a necessity for institutional support. The study indicates that despite early childhood educators demonstrating ability, motivation, and dedication, inadequate graduate education and diminished professionalism ratings underscore the need for structured support. Recommendations include offering accessible training on professionalism, collaborating with higher education institutions to provide affordable graduate programs, fostering reflective practice and mentorship, recognizing consistent professional performance, and ensuring equitable access to training, particularly for disadvantaged educators.

According to Aquino, et al. (2019), the nursery serves as a precursor to kindergarten education. This article examines the acquired competencies of nursery students as they transition to the kindergarten program within the K-12 Curriculum in the Philippines. This study demonstrates both similarities and differences in the curriculum programs of nursery and kindergarten. It indicates that nursery children excelled in the learning domains of Social and Emotional Development, Self-Management, Perceptual and Motor Skills, Early Mathematics, Early Literacy, Receptive Language, and Expressive Language. Furthermore, it concludes that gender does not correlate with the children's capacity to learn and acquire age-appropriate skills. The competencies acquired by children in the nursery program should be further developed in the kindergarten program. Given that kindergarten represents a crucial developmental milestone for young children, it must provide an environment conducive to the complete development of their abilities, competencies, and potentials, while ensuring a balanced and holistic growth.

Nikola, S. (2021) mentioned that the educational process is inherently cyclical, requiring educators to have a broad spectrum of competencies. The analytical results revealed that teachers, based on their self-assessments, assign considerable importance to all diverse ability areas, so fully supporting the main concept. The results revealed statistically significant disparities in the expression of views towards competency groups for independent research factors. The initial hypothesis was dismissed, the second was largely validated, and the third and fourth hypotheses were entirely substantiated. The issue of teachers' core competences is

undeniably a significant factor in excellent instruction, its inventiveness, and the efficient management of the educational process.

Challenges in Implementing Competency-Based Teaching and Inclusive Practice

Gepila (2020) reports that educators serve as catalysts for national development. With their support, the nation may foster and nurture individuals who will lead the country towards progress and advancement. Prioritizing the enhancement of teacher quality and the maintenance of excellent teaching standards is essential for sustainable nation-building. The investigation revealed that most participants assessed themselves as highly skilled in managing the learning environment, although only somewhat competent in handling learner diversity. Consequently, a need has been identified about teachers' requirements to improve the management of learner diversity.

The study of Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021) emphasized that the implementation of the Kindergarten program garnered diverse responses from stakeholders. This study assessed the degree of preparedness for implementing the kindergarten curriculum and the obstacles faced by teachers in public elementary schools within the Division of Cebu City, Philippines. The study indicated that educators are consistently prepared for the execution of the Kindergarten program. The study concluded that the application of the contextualized Kindergarten curriculum, contingent upon the availability of instructional materials, learning modalities, assessment methods for learners, and the school environment, was consistently accessible for teachers' utilization.

Solihati and Hermanto (2025) indicate that inclusive early childhood education has significant challenges in effectively managing classes with children possessing diverse skills and developmental needs. Traditional teacher training approaches are predominantly theoretical, leading to considerable gaps between legislative mandates and practical implementation. Educators demonstrated enhanced skills in project planning, promoting collaborative learning, adapting resources for children with special needs, and implementing inclusive assessment methods.

Preschool and kindergarten educators evaluated the importance of 12 skills categorized into academic, self-regulatory, and interpersonal domains. In the autumn of kindergarten, children underwent direct assessments of their reading and mathematical skills, while instructors evaluated their learning strategies, disruptive behavior, and social interactions. The results revealed that (a) the most substantial misalignment existed in educators' perceptions of the importance of academic competence, (b) heightened misalignment in beliefs across all three competence domains predicted poorer assessments of learning strategies, social abilities, and reduced mathematical performance, and (c) children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds were more susceptible to the negative impacts of misalignment on adjustment outcomes than their more privileged counterparts. The findings pertain to activities aimed at improving coherence in early childhood educational environments (Abry et al., 2015).

Institutional and Leadership Factors Influencing Competency Development

The study of Sardimi and Lisda (2023) revealed that the principal, as the leader, is accountable for all facets of the school, including the instructional personnel. Therefore, the administrator must adeptly tackle matters concerning teachers, especially in improving their proficiency. The research findings reveal that school principals have not specifically

implemented programs to promote teacher competency; rather, activities for promoting teacher competency are incorporated into the principal's annual work program.

Tabura (2025) highlighted significant budgetary constraints, the digital gap, and socio-emotional challenges encountered in delivering good education during exceptional disruptions. The proposed action plan recommended increased funding, enhanced professional development, smaller class sizes, and streamlined administrative tasks to enhance teaching efficacy and promote a more inclusive educational environment. This study provided valuable insights for educational policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders, emphasizing the need to address these challenges to support teachers in delivering quality education to young learners.

The research conducted by Utami, D. Et al. (2021) found that the degrees of agreement among raters were primarily classified as no agreement, indicating variations in perceptions between instructors and principals. The application of a multi-rater methodology in this study is a rare undertaking, especially in the realm of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Indonesia. Research on teaching abilities and performance generally depends on a sole evaluator, either teachers or principals evaluating their own competencies and performance, leading to subjective results. The assessment of teaching competencies in relation to cognitive abilities was conducted using a test that included subjective questions and case analyses to evaluate the teachers' skills based on their performance and self-evaluation.

Teaching Competencies in Planning, Instructional Interaction, and Assessment in Kindergarten Education.

Taridi and Dono (2019) delineated three principal themes: teachers' proficiency in educational program planning (encompassing instructional activities and care and protection initiatives), teachers' proficiency in managing instructional interactions (employing varied resources and assessing teaching methodologies), and teachers' proficiency in executing assessments and evaluations (including both test-based and non-test-based assessments). Suggestions for the improvement of Indonesian kindergarten education are provided.

The study by Zoupidis et al. (2022) revealed that kindergarten teachers' intentions to employ particular content and pedagogical methods depend on their ability to implement them effectively and their assessment of their students' potential to acquire substantial knowledge. The educator's choice of pedagogical method is associated with the assessment of personal benefits or drawbacks, together with the viewpoints of influential third parties.

The reviewed literature indicates that kindergarten teaching competencies are multifaceted and encompass curriculum development, pedagogy, classroom management, assessment, learner diversity, and professional values. While studies consistently show that kindergarten teachers possess high levels of competence in instructional practices and classroom management, they also reveal ongoing needs for professional development, particularly in inclusive education, learner diversity, diagnostic skills, and professionalism. Moreover, factors such as leadership support, training opportunities, resource availability, and institutional policies significantly influence competency development. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of continuous professional development programs to enhance teachers' competencies and improve the quality of early childhood education.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-comparative research design. The descriptive aspect aimed to determine the profile of kindergarten teachers, assess their level of teaching competencies, and identify challenges encountered in carrying out teaching responsibilities. The comparative aspect sought to determine whether significant differences exist in teaching competencies when teachers are grouped according to selected profile variables.

Respondents and Locale of the Study

The respondents were 33 kindergarten teachers, selected through total enumeration in public elementary schools in the municipality of Maddela, province of Quirino, during School Year 2025-2026.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire was utilized, comprising three sections: (1) respondents' personal information, (2) assessment of kindergarten teachers' teaching competencies, and (3) identification of challenges encountered by kindergarten teachers. To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed and validated by experts in the field. It was then pilot-tested, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, which indicates acceptable internal consistency and reliability. The finalized instrument was subsequently administered to the respondents through a survey questionnaire.

Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

Prior to the conduct of the study, the researcher formally sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent through the respective school heads to ensure proper authorization and compliance with institutional protocols. Upon approval, the finalized research instrument was prepared and distributed to the identified respondents. Ethical considerations were strictly observed by informing the participants of the purpose of the study and assuring them of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. The questionnaires were administered and retrieved on scheduled dates agreed upon with the respondents to ensure completeness and accuracy of the data collected.

The gathered data were systematically organized, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools. Frequency and percentage were employed to describe the profile of the kindergarten teachers and the challenges they encountered. The weighted mean was utilized to assess the level of teaching competencies of kindergarten teachers. T-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to determine significant differences in teaching competencies when grouped according to profile variables.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards in research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, permission was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent and respective school heads, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring that participation was voluntary. Participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study and were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. No personal identifiers were collected, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. The study complied with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), ensuring secure handling and storage of data. Moreover,

the researcher maintained honesty, accuracy, and integrity in data collection, analysis, and reporting, avoiding any form of fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the profile of the kindergarten teachers in public elementary schools of Maddela, Quirino. The demographic distribution reveals that respondents are relatively diverse in terms of age, with the largest groups clustered within the 25–30 years old (30.3%) and 41–45 years old (30.3%) categories. This indicates a workforce composed of both early-career and mid-career teachers, suggesting a blend of newer educators and those with more teaching experience. Meanwhile, the smaller proportions in the 36–40 (9.1%) and 46–50 (6.1%) age ranges, as well as those aged 51 and above (12.1%), suggest a less concentrated representation of older teachers, which may imply gradual workforce renewal in the kindergarten teaching sector.

Profile	Frequency (n=33)	Percent
Age		
25-30	10	30.3
31-35	4	12.1
36-40	3	9.1
41-45	10	30.3
46-50	2	6.1
51 and above	4	12.1
Sex		
Male	6	18.2
Female	27	81.8
Civil Status		
Single	7	21.2
Married	26	78.8
Position		
Teacher 1	10	30.3
Teacher 2	23	69.7
Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	22	66.7
Master's Degree	10	30.3
Doctoral Degree	1	3.0

In terms of sex, the findings show a strong predominance of female teachers (81.8%) compared to male teachers (18.2%). This reflects the continuing feminization of the early childhood education workforce, where teaching at the kindergarten level is largely dominated by women.

Regarding civil status, most of the respondents are married (78.8%), while only a smaller proportion are single (21.2%). This suggests that the majority of kindergarten teachers

manage both professional responsibilities and family roles, which may have implications for their time allocation, workload management, and participation in professional development opportunities.

In terms of position, the data reveal that most respondents are occupying Teacher II positions (69.7%), while the remaining are holding Teacher I (30.3%) positions. This indicates that the respondents are generally in the early to mid-stages of their teaching careers, with many already having progressed beyond entry-level rank, suggesting a moderately experienced teaching workforce.

With respect to educational attainment, the majority of teachers hold a Bachelor's degree (66.7%), followed by those with Master's degrees (30.3%), and only a very small proportion have attained a Doctoral degree (3.0%). This suggests that while a considerable number of teachers are pursuing or have completed graduate studies, the level of advanced academic qualification remains limited, which may have implications for research engagement, instructional innovation, and long-term professional advancement.

Level of Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers

Table 2. Level of Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers in terms of Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Items	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Demonstrates adequate mastery of Kindergarten subject content aligned with the K-12 curriculum.	4.21	Very High Competence
2. Applies developmentally appropriate teaching strategies suited to young learners.	4.39	Very High Competence
3. Utilizes varied and child-centered instructional strategies to enhance engagement and understanding.	4.42	Very High Competence
4. Integrates age-appropriate instructional materials, including ICT-based resources, in lesson delivery.	4.36	Very High Competence
5. Encourages creativity, curiosity, and basic higher-order thinking skills among Kindergarten learners.	4.42	Very High Competence
Weighted Mean	4.36	Very High Competence

Table 2 presents the level of teaching competencies of kindergarten teachers in terms of content knowledge and pedagogy. The findings indicate that the kindergarten teachers are very highly competent in terms of content knowledge and pedagogy, as evidenced by their strong performance across all indicators. Specifically, the teachers demonstrate adequate mastery of Kindergarten subject content aligned with the K-12 curriculum, which enables them to deliver lessons accurately and effectively. They consistently apply developmentally appropriate teaching strategies that cater to the unique needs and characteristics of young learners, while utilizing varied and child-centered instructional approaches that promote active engagement and meaningful learning experiences. Moreover, the integration of age-appropriate instructional materials, including ICT-based resources, reflects their ability to enrich classroom instruction and support diverse learning styles. Their high competence is further demonstrated by their efforts to develop creativity, curiosity, and emerging higher-

order thinking skills among learners, which are essential foundations for lifelong learning. These results suggest that the teachers possess the pedagogical expertise and content knowledge necessary to provide high-quality early childhood education and facilitate holistic learner development. Similarly, Gallego & Caingcoy (2020) found that kindergarten teachers have a high level of competencies in content knowledge and pedagogy, and teachers are capable of applying developmentally appropriate teaching strategies.

Table 3. Level of Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers in terms of Learning Environment

Items	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Maintains a safe, nurturing, and child-friendly classroom environment.	4.70	Very High Competence
2. Manages classroom routines, transitions, and time effectively.	4.61	Very High Competence
3. Promotes respect, positive discipline, and inclusive behavior among learners.	4.70	Very High Competence
4. Implements learning activities that actively engage learners in the learning process.	4.67	Very High Competence
5. Organizes the physical classroom environment to support learning and movement activities.	4.55	Very High Competence
Weighted Mean	4.64	Very High Competence

Table 3 presents the level of teaching competencies of kindergarten teachers in terms of the learning environment. The table reveals that the kindergarten teachers are very highly competent in creating an effective learning environment that promotes safe and active learning. Specifically, the teachers are highly effective in establishing a classroom atmosphere that prioritizes learners' safety, emotional well-being, respect, and inclusivity. Such practices are essential in kindergarten education, where children require a secure and supportive environment to develop confidence and positive social behavior.

Moreover, the result suggests that the teachers are highly capable of designing and facilitating interactive learning experiences that encourage active participation among young learners. Additionally, the teachers are proficient in organizing daily classroom activities in a smooth and orderly manner. Effective management of routines and transitions helps maintain discipline and ensures that instructional time is maximized for learning.

On the other hand, the teachers demonstrate high competence in arranging classroom spaces that are conducive to learning, allowing flexibility and movement appropriate for kindergarten learners. A well-organized physical environment supports exploration, interaction, and engagement among children.

A study of Pianta, Hamre, & Allen (2012) emphasized that classroom climate strongly affects young children's confidence and behavior. They emphasized that classroom climate is one of the dimensions of emotional supports such that when these supports are provided, student engagement increases.

Table 4. Level of Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers in terms of Diversity of Learners

Items	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Recognizes individual differences in learners' abilities, interests, and developmental levels.	4.64	Very High Competence
2. Designs learning activities that accommodate learners with varied needs and abilities.	4.39	Very High Competence
3. Provides appropriate interventions and support for struggling or at-risk learners.	4.52	Very High Competence
4. Demonstrates gender sensitivity and respect for cultural diversity in classroom practices.	4.55	Very High Competence
5. Encourages learners to appreciate diversity and practice respect toward others.	4.67	Very High Competence
Weighted Mean	4.55	Very High Competence

Table 4 reveals that kindergarten teachers possess a very high level of competence in addressing learner diversity. The results suggest that the respondents are able to create an inclusive classroom atmosphere where learners feel valued, respected, and accepted regardless of their individual characteristics and backgrounds. Such competence is particularly important in kindergarten settings, where children begin developing social awareness, interpersonal skills, and appreciation for differences among their peers. The findings further indicate that teachers are capable of responding to the varied developmental, social, and learning needs of young children, thereby fostering equitable opportunities for participation and growth. Through their inclusive practices, the teachers contribute to the establishment of a supportive learning environment that nurtures both academic and socio-emotional development.

Overall, the findings highlight the respondents' commitment to ensuring that diversity is recognized as a strength and that every learner is provided with meaningful opportunities to succeed. This finding is supported by UNESCO (2017), which emphasized that inclusive education requires teachers to promote respect, acceptance, and appreciation of individual differences among learners to create equitable learning environments.

Table 5. Level of Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers in terms of Curriculum and Planning

Items	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Prepares Daily Lesson Logs (DLLs) or lesson plans aligned with curriculum standards.	4.91	Very High Competence
2. Formulates clear and developmentally appropriate learning objectives for each lesson.	4.61	Very High Competence
3. Aligns learning activities with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).	4.67	Very High Competence
4. Selects instructional resources that are suitable for the lesson objectives and learner needs.	4.61	Very High Competence
5. Integrates values education and real-life applications into lesson planning.	4.73	Very High Competence
Weighted Mean	4.70	Very High Competence

Table 5 indicates that kindergarten teachers possess a very high level of competence in curriculum planning and implementation. The findings suggest that the respondents have a strong understanding of curriculum requirements and are able to translate these standards into meaningful learning experiences for young learners. Their competence reflects a commitment to delivering instruction that is purposeful, organized, and responsive to learners' developmental needs. Effective curriculum planning enables teachers to provide coherent learning opportunities that support the attainment of educational goals while ensuring that classroom activities remain relevant and engaging. Furthermore, the results demonstrate the teachers' ability to connect learning experiences with real-life situations and values formation, which are essential components of holistic early childhood education.

Overall, the findings highlight the respondents' preparedness and professionalism in planning and implementing quality instruction that promotes positive learning outcomes among kindergarten learners. This finding supports the assertion of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) that effective teachers consistently engage in standards-based instructional planning to facilitate meaningful and successful learning experiences.

Table 6. Level of Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers in terms of Assessment and Reporting

Items	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Uses varied assessment tools appropriate for Kindergarten learners (e.g., observation, performance tasks)	4.61	Very High Competence
2. Provides timely, constructive, and developmentally appropriate feedback to learners.	4.30	Very High Competence
3. Maintains accurate and updated records of learners' progress and performance.	4.58	Very High Competence
4. Utilizes assessment results to improve teaching strategies and learning activities.	4.36	Very High Competence
5. Communicates learners' progress effectively to parents and relevant stakeholders.	4.61	Very High Competence
Weighted Mean	4.49	Very High Competence

Table 6 reveals that kindergarten teachers possess a very high level of competence in assessment and reporting. The findings suggest that the respondents effectively utilize assessment as an integral component of the teaching-learning process, enabling them to monitor learner progress and make informed instructional decisions. Their competence in assessment and reporting reflects their commitment to supporting learners' academic and developmental growth through systematic monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, the results indicate that the teachers recognize the importance of maintaining open communication with parents and other stakeholders regarding learners' progress, thereby developing stronger home-school partnerships that contribute to positive educational outcomes. Effective assessment practices also allow teachers to identify learners' strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring that instructional interventions are responsive to individual needs.

Overall, the findings highlight the respondents' capability to implement assessment practices that promote accountability, continuous improvement, and meaningful learning experiences among kindergarten learners. This finding is consistent with the position of the

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2009), which emphasized that assessment in early childhood education should be purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and used to support children's learning and development.

Table 7. Level of Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers in terms of Community Linkages and Professional Engagement

Items	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Actively participates in school and community-related activities and programs.	4.48	Very High Competence
2. Collaborates with parents to support children's learning and development.	4.67	Very High Competence
3. Engages in professional dialogue and collaboration with colleagues.	4.61	Very High Competence
4. Establishes partnerships with stakeholders to support educational initiatives.	4.52	Very High Competence
5. Demonstrates commitment to the school's vision, mission, and goals.	4.76	Very High Competence
Weighted Mean	4.61	Very High Competence

Table 7 indicates that kindergarten teachers possess a very high level of competence in community linkages and professional engagement. The findings suggest that the respondents recognize the importance of collaborative relationships with parents, colleagues, stakeholders, and the broader community to support learners' holistic development. Such competence reflects their understanding that effective education extends beyond the classroom and requires the active participation of various individuals and groups who contribute to children's learning experiences.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the respondents' dedication to building meaningful connections and sustaining professional practices that contribute to the advancement of early childhood education. This finding supports the view of Meyer and Allen (1991), who emphasized that strong organizational commitment encourages professional behaviors that are aligned with institutional goals and objectives.

Table 8. Level of Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers in terms of Personal Growth and Professional Development

Items	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Participates in seminars, workshops, and training programs for professional growth.	4.55	Very High Competence
2. Reflects on teaching practices to identify areas for improvement.	4.48	Very High Competence
3. Engages in lifelong learning and self-directed professional development.	4.39	Very High Competence
4. Demonstrates ethical behavior and professional integrity in teaching practice.	4.58	Very High Competence
5. Shows openness to innovation and the use of new teaching strategies.	4.58	Very High Competence
Weighted Mean	4.52	Very High Competence

Table 8 indicates that kindergarten teachers demonstrate a very high level of competence in professional engagement and development. The findings suggest that the respondents consistently uphold professional ethics and integrity in their teaching practice while remaining open to innovation and new instructional approaches. This combination reflects a strong sense of professionalism and adaptability, which are essential in addressing the dynamic demands of early childhood education. Furthermore, the results highlight the teachers' active involvement in professional development activities such as seminars, workshops, and training programs, which contribute to the continuous enhancement of their teaching skills and competencies. Their engagement in reflective practice further demonstrates their commitment to evaluating and improving their instructional strategies to better support learner achievement.

Overall, the findings show that the respondents are committed to continuous professional growth. This aligns with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST, 2017), which emphasize that teachers must consistently uphold professional ethics, engage in reflective practice, and pursue lifelong learning for sustained professional development.

Table 9. Difference in the Teaching Competencies of Kindergarten Teachers when Grouped According to their Profile Variables

Profile	Content Knowledge and Pedagogy		Learning Environment		Diversity of Learners		Curriculum and Planning		Assessment and Reporting		Community Linkages and Professional Engagement		Personal Growth and Professional Development	
	Test Stat	p-value	Test Stat	p-value	Test Stat	p-value	Test Stat	p-value	Test Stat	p-value	Test Stat	p-value	Test Stat	p-value
Age	0.25	0.94	0.48	0.79	0.81	0.55	0.75	0.59	1.22	0.33	1.14	0.36	1.14	0.36
Sex	-0.48	0.63	-0.39	0.70	-0.30	0.77	-0.26	0.80	-0.62	0.54	-1.30	0.20	0.36	0.20
Civil Status	0.18	0.67	1.50	0.23	2.49	0.13	4.13	0.06	10.92*	0.02	6.00*	0.02	6.00*	0.02
Position	0.20	0.66	0.31	0.58	0.16	0.70	1.07	0.31	1.87	0.18	0.01	0.97	0.03	0.95
Highest Educ Attainment	1.36	0.27	0.43	0.66	1.01	0.38	1.45	0.25	2.80	0.07	1.16	0.33	2.80	0.06

* - significant at 0.05

Table 9 presents the results of the difference tests on the teaching competencies of kindergarten teachers when they are grouped according to their profiles.

The findings reveal that kindergarten teachers' competencies across the domains of content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development are generally not influenced by age, sex, position, and highest educational attainment. This suggests that teaching competencies are relatively uniform across demographic and professional characteristics, which reflects the standards-based nature of teaching practice embodied in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The result supports the view that teaching competence is a multidimensional construct encompassing pedagogical knowledge, curriculum implementation, classroom management, assessment, professional engagement, and continuous learning (Li et al., 2024; Bai & Ai, 2022; Szabó-Thalmeiner, 2022).

The absence of significant differences across most profile variables aligns with studies indicating that professional competence is developed through continuous practice, institutional support, and adherence to professional standards rather than demographic

characteristics alone. Previous studies have shown that kindergarten teachers generally demonstrate high levels of competence in subject knowledge, pedagogy, curriculum planning, learning environment management, and learner diversity while simultaneously expressing the need for continued professional development (Caingcoy, 2022; Gallego & Caingcoy, 2020; Bacus & Macalisang, 2024; Gastador et al., 2025). Similarly, Pupíková et al. (2021) emphasized that teachers' educational needs are closely linked to their self-assessed competencies, underscoring the importance of lifelong professional learning. The findings also support the observations of Avramidis and Norwich (2002), Gepila (2020), Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021), and Solihati and Hermanto (2025), who highlighted that effective teaching, learner diversity management, and inclusive practices are often shaped by professional support systems and school contexts rather than personal characteristics.

Meanwhile, teaching competencies in terms of assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development significantly differ according to civil status. The positive test statistic suggests that single kindergarten teachers exhibit a higher level of competence in monitoring and documenting learner progress, establishing productive partnerships with parents and the community, and pursuing ongoing professional advancement than married kindergarten teachers.

This finding lends support to Ballet et al. (2006), who argued that family responsibilities and personal commitments can affect teachers' participation in professional development activities. The result may also be linked to the demands associated with stakeholder engagement and professional networking, which require additional time and commitment beyond regular teaching duties. Nevertheless, this finding contrasts with the position of Stronge (2018), who contended that teacher effectiveness is primarily influenced by professional knowledge, instructional skills, and experience rather than personal characteristics.

Furthermore, the present findings differ from studies that reported significant effects of age, teaching experience, and professional preparation on teacher competence. For instance, Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that age and teaching experience significantly influence teacher self-efficacy and professional competence, while Wolff et al. (2021) reported that experienced teachers demonstrate stronger classroom management skills. Likewise, Borko and Livingston (1989) noted that experienced teachers possess more sophisticated planning competencies, and Day and Gu (2010) emphasized variations in professional engagement across career stages. These contrasting findings suggest that contextual factors, institutional expectations, and standardized competency frameworks may moderate the influence of demographic and professional characteristics on teachers' competencies.

Overall, the findings affirm that kindergarten teachers possess relatively consistent competencies across most demographic and professional groups, highlighting the effectiveness of competency-based standards and professional support mechanisms in promoting equitable levels of teaching competence. The results further underscore the need for sustained professional development programs, supportive leadership, and institutional initiatives that strengthen teachers' competencies while recognizing the potential influence of personal circumstances on professional engagement and growth.

Table 10. Common Challenges Encountered by Kindergarten Teachers in Carrying Out Their Teaching Responsibilities

Common Challenges Encountered by Kindergarten Teachers	Frequency	Rank
1. Limited opportunities for professional development related to early childhood education	32	1
2. Limited access to ICT tools and technology-based instructional resources.	31	2
3. Administrative workload that affects focus on teaching and instructional improvement.	29	3
4. Insufficient instructional materials and learning resources appropriate for Kindergarten learners.	28	4
5. Inadequate classroom space and physical facilities for play-based learning.	27	5
6. Difficulty in managing learner behavior and maintaining classroom discipline.	18	6
7. Emotional and physical fatigue resulting from the demands of Kindergarten teaching.	15	7
8. Limited time for lesson preparation due to multiple teaching and non-teaching responsibilities.	14	8
9. Language barriers between teachers and learners, particularly in multilingual settings.	12	9
10. Insufficient parental support in reinforcing learning at home.	11	10
11. Difficulty in managing diverse learning needs and developmental levels within the classroom.	10	11
12. Large class size that limits individualized attention to learners.	7	12
13. Challenges in aligning lesson plans with curriculum standards and MELCs.	7	13
14. Challenges in implementing developmentally appropriate assessment tools.	3	14
15. Inadequate training on inclusive education and differentiated instruction.	2	15

Table 10 presents the common challenges encountered by kindergarten teachers in carrying out their teaching responsibilities in terms of frequency and rank. The results reveal that the most prominent challenge is limited opportunities for professional development related to early childhood education, followed closely by limited access to ICT tools and technology-based instructional resources. These findings suggest that teachers face significant constraints in terms of continuous training and access to modern instructional technologies, both of which are essential in enhancing teaching effectiveness and instructional innovation.

In addition, other notable challenges include administrative workload that affects focus on teaching, insufficient instructional materials for kindergarten learners, and inadequate classroom space and facilities for play-based learning. These indicate that both workload distribution and resource limitations remain key concerns that may hinder the delivery of quality early childhood education.

Meanwhile, challenges related to classroom management, teacher fatigue, lesson preparation time, language barriers, parental support, and learner diversity were also identified, reflecting the multifaceted demands faced by kindergarten teachers in their daily responsibilities. On the other hand, concerns such as large class size, alignment of lesson plans

with curriculum standards, and implementation of assessment tools were less frequently reported, though still relevant to instructional practice.

Overall, the table highlights that the challenges encountered by kindergarten teachers are primarily centered on professional development, instructional resources, and workload management, which may significantly affect their teaching performance and effectiveness in delivering quality early childhood education. This finding is consistent with OECD (2019) which found that many teachers report insufficient access to high-quality professional development opportunities.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORKS

The study demonstrates that kindergarten teachers in public elementary schools possess a very high level of teaching competencies across all domains, including content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development. This indicates that teachers are generally well-prepared to implement developmentally appropriate practices and effectively support early childhood learning. The findings further reveal that teaching competencies do not significantly differ in terms of teachers' profile variables such as age, sex, position, and educational attainment, suggesting that competence is relatively consistent across different demographic groups. However, single kindergarten teachers demonstrate a higher level of competence in learner assessment and feedback practices, school-community collaboration and stakeholder engagement, and continuous professional learning and self-improvement compared to their married counterparts.

Despite these strong competencies, teachers continue to face challenges such as limited access to professional development opportunities, insufficient ICT resources, heavy administrative workloads, and a lack of adequate instructional materials, which may affect the full optimization of their instructional effectiveness.

For future work, it is recommended that school administrators and education authorities strengthen and sustain targeted professional development programs focused on early childhood education to further enhance teachers' competencies. Schools should also prioritize the provision of ICT tools, digital resources, and adequate instructional materials to support more engaging and effective classroom instruction. Improving school facilities and strengthening support for play-based and learner-centered approaches are likewise essential in addressing the needs of kindergarten learners. In addition, continuous institutional support should be provided to help teachers manage classroom challenges and diverse learner needs more effectively. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in other divisions or educational levels and to include additional variables to further validate and expand the present findings.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study. This research was conducted objectively, and no financial or personal relationships have influenced the results and interpretations presented in this paper.

DECLARATION OF AI USE

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly were used solely to assist in language refinement, grammar correction, and formatting of the manuscript. All intellectual content, data analysis, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this study are the original work of the authors. The use of AI did not influence the research design, data collection, analysis, or the integrity of the findings.

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