

Instructional Competence in Reading of Early Grade Teachers

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Abstract:

This study investigated the instructional competence in reading among early grade teachers in a small division in central Philippines during the 2022-2023 academic year. The research aimed to provide insights for developing a learning recovery plan. Through a mixed-methods approach, data on teachers' profiles and instructional competence were collected and analyzed. Findings indicated a commendable level of competence among teachers, particularly in content knowledge, pedagogy in reading, assessment practices, and instructional materials development. Despite variations in age, educational attainment, and length of service, educators consistently demonstrated high levels of proficiency. However, significant differences in competence were observed across demographic variables, emphasizing the importance of tailored professional development initiatives. Based on the findings, recommendations were provided to enhance instructional practices and support teachers in fostering a conducive learning environment for early-grade students. These include targeted professional development workshops, collaborative learning initiatives, and technology integration strategies aimed at improving teaching effectiveness and student outcomes in reading instruction.

Keywords: Assessment practices, Instructional Competence, Strategy

Introduction:

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the urgency to address learning loss and facilitate recovery in education has become increasingly pressing. Central to this endeavor is the proficiency of early grade teachers in delivering effective reading instruction. Research consistently underscores the pivotal role of proficient reading skills in academic achievement and cognitive development (Qiampa & Manion, 2021). However, recent studies have revealed concerning gaps in the instructional competence of early grade teachers, particularly regarding content knowledge and pedagogy in reading (Kosnik & Beck, 2016; Nguyen, 2020). This highlights the critical need to investigate and enhance the instructional practices of early grade teachers, focusing on developing instructional materials and assessment strategies tailored to the diverse needs of learners.

The issue of inadequate instructional competence among early grade teachers manifests in various ways, such as limited familiarity with evidence-based reading strategies and insufficient understanding of child development and literacy acquisition (Kosnik & Beck, 2016; McCutchen et al., 2019). These deficiencies contribute to suboptimal learning outcomes, particularly for students facing learning challenges or those from marginalized backgrounds (Denton, 2017). Furthermore, the existing gap in teacher competence exacerbates learning disparities, widening the achievement gap among students, especially those affected by recent disruptions to education (Di Carlo, Reardon, & Smith, 2021; Reardon, 2014). Addressing this issue requires a thorough examination of the factors contributing to teacher competence deficits and the development of targeted interventions to bridge this gap.

As a teacher committed to working with early grade students, my motivation to conduct this study stems from a dedication to fostering inclusive and effective learning environments. Firsthand experience witnessing the struggles of students grappling with reading difficulties and observing the challenges faced by fellow educators in delivering impactful instruction creates an imperative to contribute to the advancement of instructional competence in reading. Existing research highlights the persistent challenges that teachers face in three critical areas: knowledge and pedagogy in reading, assessment practices, and instructional materials development (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 2020). These issues often hinder teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes, particularly in early grade settings. Therefore, there is a pressing need to conduct a focused study on these areas to better understand the specific

problems encountered by teachers and develop targeted interventions. This research will aim not only to enhance professional practice but also to empower colleagues and contribute to broader efforts aimed at mitigating learning loss and promoting educational equity. Specifically, the study will explore the three key areas mentioned, which are essential to improving both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes.

Current State of Knowledge

The literature and studies presented in this section focused on issues about the instructional competence of early grade teachers. These materials helped the researcher in the formulation of the conceptual framework upon which this study would be anchored. Moreover, the related studies provided the researcher with information on the future treatment of data that would be gathered and analyzed. The aforementioned studies had presented valuable information in the identification of the specified areas of concern for the present investigation.

The reviewed literatures tried to explain the role of teachers' teaching competence and its influence on learners' performance. The reviewed studies reflect some semblance and differences with the current study but altogether provided useful insights to the researcher about concepts of competence and commitment of teachers and academic performance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Kolb's Competence Development Theory (Kolb, 1984), which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals acquire and develop competence through experiential learning processes. Kolb's theory posits that learning is an iterative process involving the interaction between experience and reflection. Through a continuous cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, individuals construct knowledge and enhance their competencies. In the context of early grade teachers, this theory emphasizes the importance of engaging with real-world instructional practices, reflecting on them, and integrating new insights to improve their effectiveness in teaching.

Kolb's Competence Development Theory offers a valuable lens for exploring the three key areas of instructional competence central to this study: knowledge and pedagogy in reading, assessment practices, and instructional materials development.

First, in terms of knowledge and pedagogy in reading, teachers gain concrete experience through direct interaction with students as they navigate various reading instruction challenges. Reflective observation allows them to assess their teaching methods, identifying gaps in content knowledge or pedagogical approaches, as noted by Snow, Burns, and Griffin (2020), who highlight common teacher difficulties in these areas. By abstractly conceptualizing their reflections, teachers connect their experiences to established reading theories and instructional strategies, allowing for deeper understanding and innovation in their practice.

Second, in the realm of assessment practices, teachers' ability to design and implement effective assessments is crucial for understanding students' progress and literacy acquisition. Kolb's cycle enables teachers to reflect on the success and limitations of their current assessment methods. As research shows, many teachers struggle with aligning assessments to diverse learner needs and evidence-based strategies (McCutchen et al., 2019). Through active experimentation, teachers can incorporate new, differentiated assessment techniques, thereby enhancing their ability to evaluate and support student learning more effectively.

Lastly, instructional materials development plays a pivotal role in creating engaging and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Teachers, through Kolb's cycle, experiment with different materials, reflect on their impact, and refine their instructional resources. This iterative process is essential in addressing challenges related to instructional materials that often arise due to a lack of access to high-quality, evidence-based resources (Kosnik & Beck, 2016).

By applying Kolb's theory, this study investigates how early grade teachers' classroom experiences, reflections, theoretical integrations, and experimental strategies contribute to their competence development across these three critical areas. This framework provides a structured approach to understanding the dynamic nature of teacher competence, allowing for targeted strategies to improve instructional practices, assessment accuracy, and material development.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to determine the level of instructional competence in reading of early grade teachers in the identified schools in a small size division in the central Philippines for the school year 2022-2023 as the basis for a learning recovery plan.

Methodology:

This section presents the research design used, respondents of the study, the research instruments, the conduct of the study, the procedure in the analysis of the data relative to the specific objectives and statistical tools used in the study.

Research Design

This study used the descriptive research design in determining the level of the level of teachers' instructional competence in reading of early grade teachers in the identified schools in a small size division in central Philippines for school year 2022-2023 as basis for learning recovery plan.

According to Best and Kahn (2016), descriptive research is a method of research which concerned itself with the present phenomena in terms of conditions, practices beliefs, processes, relationships or trends invariably. Descriptive research is devoted to the gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of description and interpretation.

Descriptive research is well-suited for investigating teachers' competence in teaching reading comprehension, primarily through the use of surveys. This systematic approach allows for a thorough examination of teachers' knowledge, skills, and instructional practices within the population of interest. Surveys enables the collection of quantitative data, facilitating the identification of patterns and trends in teaching strategies, curriculum frameworks, and professional development opportunities. By systematically documenting these findings, descriptive research contributes to evidence-based recommendations for enhancing teachers' competence and improving reading outcomes, thereby addressing crucial educational needs across various contexts.

Respondents of the Study

This study undertook a quantitative investigation into the instructional competence in reading among [early-grade](#) teachers within a delineated elementary school district in the central Philippines during the 2022-2023 academic year. Utilizing a stratified random sampling technique, 106 [early-grade](#) teachers were selected from a total population of 145 within the identified schools. The determination of the sample size was guided by Cochran's formula, a widely utilized statistical method for sample size calculation in research studies (Cochran, 1977).

Table 1
The Distribution of Respondents

Schools	Population (N)	Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
A	29	21	20.00
B	25	18	17.24
C	52	38	35.86
D	19	14	13.10
E	20	15	13.79
Total	145	106	100.00

Data Gathering Instrument

The researcher gathered data by administering the survey questionnaire to the total population of early grade teachers To determine the level of teachers' competence in various areas, the researcher utilized a questionnaire composed of two parts. Part 1 contained queries on respondents' profile such as their age, highest educational attainment and length of service. Part 2 contained the questionnaire proper which consists of 30 item questions. These questions were classified into three components, namely; content knowledge and pedagogy in reading, instructional materials development and assessment of learning.

Teachers' responses were interpreted according to the following guide: 5 (Always), 4 (often), 3 (Sometimes), 2 (rarely) and 1 (almost never).

Validity

A research instrument was regarded to be valid if it served the purpose for which it was designed Taherdoost (2018). The content validity involved essentially the systematic examination of the test items and its content to determine whether it covered a representative sample of the behavior domain to be measured.

The instrument used for this study was subjected to face content validation by three experts. The first validator is an education program supervisor who is a doctor in educational management and an expert in research. The second validator is a school principal, doctor of educational management and an expert in statistics. The third validator is a master teacher 2, doctor in development education and an expert in pedagogy. The criterion used for evaluating survey questionnaire was set by Carter V. Good and Douglas B. Scates. In the reasoned judgment of these professionals, the items of the test and the entire data - gathering tool itself were validated. To be valid, the average ratings should generally be 0.8 or higher.

The validity result was 4.70 interpreted as excellent.

Reliability

Reliability is the overall consistency of a measure. A measure is said to have a high reliability if it produced similar results under consistent conditions (Carlson 2019).

After establishing the validity of the questionnaire on teachers' classroom management skills, the same were subjected to reliability testing with the use of Cronbach Alpha.

For reliability test, the research instrument was answered once by the 30 dry run respondents who are not actual respondents of the study.

To be reliable, the obtained value of the tests is between 0.70 to 1.00.

The reliability coefficient result was 0.827 interpreted as good.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission from the Schools Division Superintendent was secured for the conduct of the study. The Cluster Head and School Heads note d and approve the schedule of distribution of the questionnaires to the respondents. After the approval of the heads, the researcher presented the purposed of the study to the faculty and to the respondents. After the test was conducted to the respondents, the questionnaires were retrieved immediately and the data were organized, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science).

Research Ethics Protocol

In conducting the study, research ethics considerations were taken into account. Anonymity was maintained by not requiring personal identifying information from the respondents. Confidentiality was also ensured by keeping the data securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. To minimize the risk of harm, the researcher observed health protocols such as wearing a mask and face shield when interacting with the respondents. Informed consent was also obtained from the participants, emphasizing their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The potential risks and benefits of the study were explained to the participants, and they were given the opportunity to ask questions before giving their consent to participate. These research ethics considerations were put in place to protect the welfare and rights of the participants and maintained the integrity of the study.

Analytical Schemes

This study employed two analytical schemes based on the research objectives which were descriptive, and comparative.

Objective No. 1, which aimed to determine the profile of teacher-respondents used the descriptive analytical scheme. Objective No. 2, which aimed to determine the level of early grade teachers' instructional competence used descriptive analytical scheme.

Objective No. 3 which aimed to determine the level of early grade teachers' instructional competence when grouped according to selected variables used descriptive analytical scheme.

Objective No. 4, which aimed to determine whether or not significant difference exists between the level of early grade teachers' instructional competence when grouped and compared according to aforementioned variables used comparative analytical scheme.

Results and Discussion:

Table 2

Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Younger (below 30 years old)	49	46.20

	Older (30 years old and above)	57	53.80
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower (Bachelor's Degree)	44	41.50
	Higher (Master's/Doctoral Degree)	62	58.50
Length of Service	Shorter (below 10 years)	53	50.00
	Longer (10 years and above)	53	50.00
	Total	106	100.00

Table 2 provided a detailed insight into the demographic profile of the respondents, emphasizing key variables such as Age, Highest Educational Attainment, and Length of Service in the context of the study on "Instructional Competence of Early Grade Teachers."

In terms of Age, the distribution was almost evenly split between Younger (below 30 years old) and Older (30 years old and above) categories, with 46.20 % and 53.80 % of respondents, respectively. Exploring instructional competence across these age groups unveiled potential variations in teaching approaches and adaptability to new educational strategies based on age.

Considering Highest Educational Attainment, the majority of respondents (58.50%) fall into the Higher category, indicated that a significant portion of early grade teachers possess advanced degrees (with units in MAED and above). This educational diversity could impact instructional approaches and strategies, influencing the overall instructional competence observed in the study.

The Length of Service distribution is evenly split, with 50.00% falling into both Lower (below 10 years) and Higher (10 and above) categories. This balance ensured a representation of both early-career and experienced teachers, enabling a thorough examination of instructional competence across different lengths of service.

Overall, this demographic profile set the stage for a comprehensive analysis of instructional competence, considering the varying ages, educational backgrounds, and lengths of service among early grade teachers. The diverse representation in these demographic factors allows for a nuanced exploration of how these characteristics may intersect with instructional competence within the context of the study.

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence

This section delved into a critical examination of the instructional competence of early grade teachers, seek to understand the proficiency and effectiveness of educators in delivering quality instruction within the context of early education. The focus on instructional competence encompasses a multifaceted analysis, including pedagogical skills, content knowledge, and the ability to create engaging and developmentally appropriate learning environments. Through a meticulous exploration of various factors influencing instructional competence, this section aimed to provide valuable insights into the strengths and potential areas of improvement within the teaching practices of early grade educators.

Table 3

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Content Knowledge and Pedagogy in Reading

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher, ...		
I can teach children to express themselves and share their personal experiences.	4.29	High Level
I have ample knowledge in teaching learners to sort and classify objects according to size, shapes and color.	4.27	High Level
I am well aware of the basic principles in teaching preparatory skills for writing.	3.62	High Level
I am well versed in developing learner competence to identify number, letter or words that is different or the same.	4.31	High Level
I discuss thoroughly competencies on shape recognition and symmetry.	4.89	Very High Level
As a preschool teacher, I discuss thoroughly the different body parts and its functions.	4.91	Very High Level
I demonstrate movements of different body parts to model to the learners.	4.91	Very High Level
I discuss thoroughly teacher; I teach the names of five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.90	Very High Level
I discuss thoroughly teacher; I discuss thoroughly the different basic needs and ways to care for ones' body.	4.85	Very High Level

I discuss thoroughly teacher; I demonstrate ways to care for ones' body.	4.89	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.58	Very High Level

Table 3 presented the Instructional Competence of Early Grade Teachers in the Area of Content Knowledge and Pedagogy in Reading. The overall mean for all items is 4.58, indicating a very high level of competence in this domain. The item with the highest mean is Item 6, "As a preschool teacher, I discuss thoroughly the different body parts and its functions," with a mean of 4.91, reflecting a very high level of competence.

The items with the lowest mean ratings, Item 3 ("I am well aware of the basic principles in teaching preparatory skills for writing") and Item 7 ("I demonstrate movements of different body parts to model to the learners"), both scored 3.62, which, while still indicating a high level of competence, suggest areas for improvement. These lower mean ratings point to potential gaps in the instructional practices of early grade teachers in key areas critical for early childhood development.

Several factors may contribute to the lower ratings in these competencies. For Item 3, the lower awareness of basic principles in teaching preparatory skills for writing may stem from inadequate professional training on writing development, limited resources or materials focusing on early writing skills, or a curriculum that places more emphasis on other foundational skills like reading and oral communication. Teachers may also lack sufficient access to updated teaching strategies or hands-on experience in guiding students through the preparatory stages of writing. For Item 7, the lower competence in modeling body movements might be due to limited knowledge of kinesthetic learning methods, lack of training in incorporating physical movement into lessons, or a misunderstanding of how such activities support cognitive and motor development in young learners.

The impact of these gaps could be significant for early grade learners. Inadequate instruction in preparatory writing skills could delay the development of fine motor skills necessary for writing, potentially leading to challenges in handwriting, spelling, and overall writing fluency as students progress. Without a strong foundation in these areas, learners might struggle with more complex writing tasks in later grades, affecting their academic performance. Similarly, the inability to effectively model body movements may hinder learners' understanding of spatial awareness, coordination, and the connection between physical activity and cognitive learning, which are crucial during early childhood. This can affect their ability to engage in learning experiences that integrate physical movement with cognitive tasks, which are essential for holistic development.

The study's findings, supported by a related study conducted by Flores-Ferers (2023) et al revealing that early grade teachers demonstrate a commendable overall competence in content knowledge and pedagogy in reading, with an emphasis on preparatory writing skills. However, the identified lower mean for teachers' awareness of basic principles in teaching preparatory writing skills implied a need for targeted professional development. This corroborated with the study, which highlighted a similar lack of awareness among early grade teachers in the United States. Both studies emphasized the crucial role of professional development programs in enhancing teachers' understanding and application of fundamental principles, suggesting specific recommendations to address this gap. Ultimately, aligned with these recommendations can empower early grade teachers to improve instructional competence, particularly in the domain of preparatory writing skills, leading to enhanced outcomes for students.

Table 4

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Instructional Materials Development

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher,		
I use animated computer software to aid instruction.	4.24	High Level
I strategic intervention materials to improve instruction.	4.43	High Level
I produce stand up books for interactive reading.	3.22	Moderate Level
I produce basic sight words for reading drill.	4.72	Very Level
I use realia in teaching. .	4.89	Very Level
As a preschool teacher, I use PowerPoint slide decks during instruction.	3.62	High Level
I produce poems to improve appreciation.	4.31	High Level
I utilize songs to catch learners' interest.	4.89	Very Level
I allow learners to watch TV programs relevant to the topic.	3.68	High Level
I use videos to facilitate comprehension	4.29	High Level
Overall Mean	4.23	High Level

Table 4 presents the Instructional Competence of Early Grade Teachers in the Area of Instructional Materials Development. The overall mean for all items is 4.23, indicating a high level of competence in this domain, demonstrating that early grade teachers possessed a strong understanding and proficiency in developing instructional materials.

The item with the highest mean is Item 4, "I produce basic sight words for reading drill," with a mean of 4.72, reflecting a very high level of competence. This suggested that teachers excel in creating instructional materials, specifically basic sight words, to enhance reading drills effectively.

Conversely, the item with the least mean is Item 3, "I produce stand-up books for interactive reading," with a mean of 3.22, indicating a moderate level of competence. The lower mean for this item raised concerns about the teachers' proficiency in developing stand-up books for interactive reading. Data implied that early grade teachers may have a relatively moderate level of competence in producing stand-up books for interactive reading. This could potentially impact the effectiveness of interactive reading sessions in the classroom. To address this, targeted professional development programs and training focusing on creating interactive and engaging instructional materials, such as stand-up books, may be necessary. Additionally, collaborative planning sessions and peer support can be implemented to enhance teachers' skills in this area.

These findings aligned with the outcomes of a study by Connell and Fazio (2017) that explored the competence of early grade teachers in producing stand-up books for interactive reading. The investigation, which surveyed 100 early grade teachers from a U.S. public school district, disclosed a moderate level of competence in this domain, specifically for the item "I produce stand-up books for interactive reading." This correspondence resonated with the current study's identification of a moderate level of competence for similar item. Both studies emphasized a crucial requirement for additional professional development and training to enhance early grade teachers' proficiency in creating stand-up books for interactive reading. Addressing this shared competency gap through ongoing professional development initiatives holds significance for augmenting teaching effectiveness and positively impacting instructional outcomes.

Table 5

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Assessment of Learning

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher		
I utilize performance-based assessment for learners	4.27	High Level
I utilize print and cut out instructional materials in teaching learners to sort and classify objects according to size, shapes and color.	4.27	High Level
I utilize performance assessment for basic principles in teaching preparatory skills for writing.	4.31	High Level
I utilize varied assessments in identifying number, letter or words that is different or the same.	4.72	Very High Level
I require learners to produce various symmetrical shapes.	3.62	High Level
I utilize learners' output as assessment evidence	4.89	Very High Level
I utilize group performance assessment for identifying different body parts.	3.62	High Level
I utilize performance assessment for naming five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.31	High Level
I utilize differentiated assessment to names of five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.27	High Level
I utilize performance assessment in demonstrating ways to care for ones' body.	4.31	High Level
Overall Mean	4.26	High Level

Table 5 presented the Instructional Competence of Early Grade Teachers in the Area of Assessment of Learning. The overall mean for all items is 4.26, indicated a high level of competence in this domain. This signified that early grade teachers possessed a strong understanding and proficiency in assessing learning effectively. The item with the highest mean is Item 6, "I utilize learners' output as assessment evidence," with a mean of 4.89, reflected a very high level of competence. This suggested that teachers excel in utilizing learners' output as a valuable form of assessment evidence.

Conversely, the items which had the least mean ratings are item numbers 5 ("I require learners to produce various symmetrical shapes") and 7 ("I utilize group performance assessment for identifying different body parts"), both with a mean of 3.62, denoted as "High Level."

This lower mean for Item 5 suggested that incorporating activities related to producing symmetrical shapes may not be as prevalent or consistently implemented at a high level among early-grade teachers. Exploring the specific challenges or reasons behind this lower rating is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding.

Similarly, the lower mean for Item 7 indicated that employing group performance assessment for identifying different body parts might be less commonly utilized or faces challenges in implementation among the surveyed teachers. Addressing these challenges and understanding the context around these assessments could provide valuable insights.

These lower means highlighted opportunities for targeted professional development programs or workshops. For Item 5, interventions could be designed to support teachers in integrating activities that require learners to produce various symmetrical shapes effectively. Simultaneously, for Item 7, strategies to overcome potential obstacles and promote effective implementation of group performance assessments in identifying different body parts may be beneficial.

In both cases, understanding the context, gathering qualitative feedback, and tailoring support based on the specific needs of teachers could contribute to more effective instructional practices and improved overall instructional competence among early-grade teachers.

A study by Baroody, Purpura, Eiland et al. (2014) founded that early grade teachers who had received professional development in teaching geometry and spatial reasoning concepts were more likely to use effective instructional strategies in their classrooms. This suggested that professional development could be an effective way to improve early grade teachers' competence in teaching these concepts.

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence When Grouped According to the Aforementioned Variables

This section discussed the instructional competence of early grade teachers when grouped according to the aforementioned variables. Specifically, the analysis focused on how teachers' competence varies in the domains of content knowledge and pedagogy in reading, instructional materials development, and assessment of learning. By examining the nuanced differences in instructional competence within these key areas, this analysis provided insights into the multifaceted nature of early grade teaching and contributed valuable information for targeted professional development and training initiatives.

Table 6

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Content Knowledge and Pedagogy in Reading When Grouped According to Age

Items	Younger		Older	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher, ...				
I can teach children to express themselves and share their personal experiences.	4.27	High Level	4.32	High Level
I have ample knowledge in teaching learners to sort and classify objects according to size, shapes and color.	4.24	High Level	4.30	High Level
I am well aware of the basic principles in teaching preparatory skills for writing.	3.43	Moderate Level	3.79	High Level
I am well versed in developing learner competence to identify number, letter or words that is different or the same.	4.22	High Level	4.39	High Level
I discuss thoroughly competencies on shape recognition and symmetry.	4.80	Very High Level	4.96	Very High Level
As a preschool teacher, I discuss thoroughly the different body parts and its functions.	4.94	Very High Level	4.88	Very High Level
I demonstrate movements of different body parts to model to the learners.	4.92	Very High Level	4.89	Very High Level
I discuss thoroughly teacher; I teach the names of five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.90	Very High Level	4.89	Very High Level
I discuss thoroughly teacher; I discuss thoroughly the different basic needs and ways to care for ones' body.	4.84	Very High Level	4.86	Very High Level
I discuss thoroughly teacher; I demonstrate ways to care for ones' body.	4.86	Very High Level	4.91	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.54	Very High Level	4.62	Very High Level

Table 6 presented a comparative analysis of mean scores and interpretations for items assessing the self-perceived competence of preschool teachers in different age groups. The items focused on various aspects of teaching, ranging from expressive communication to specific instructional competencies such as shape recognition, symmetry, and body parts awareness. The age groups under consideration were categorized as "Younger" (below 30 years old) and "Older" (30 years old and above).

Analyzing the table revealed noteworthy patterns. In general, both younger and older preschool teachers exhibit high levels of self-perceived competence across the evaluated items. Notable areas of strength included discussing competencies related to shape recognition, symmetry, and thorough exploration of body parts and their functions. However, variations were observed in some items, particularly in the awareness of basic principles for teaching preparatory writing skills, where older teachers rated themselves at a higher level compared to their younger counterparts.

The high mean scores across most items suggested a generally positive self-assessment of competence among preschool teachers, irrespective of age. The observed variation in certain items may indicate potential areas for targeted professional development or mentoring, particularly in enhancing the awareness of basic principles for teaching preparatory writing skills among younger teachers. These findings could inform educational strategies and support systems tailored to the specific needs of different age groups within the preschool teaching community.

Miller and Pianta in (2018) contributed valuable insights to the understanding of instructional competence among teachers, particularly in relation to age. Their research established a correlation between age and higher levels of instructional competence, indicating that older teachers generally exhibit greater proficiency in instructional practices compared to their younger counterparts. This observed trend is likely attributed to the cumulative effect of increased teaching experience and exposure to professional development opportunities over the course of their careers.

Table 7

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Instructional Materials Development When Grouped According to Age

Items	Younger Mean	Interpretation	Older Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher, ...				
I use animated computer software to aid instruction.	4.24	High Level	4.23	High Level
I strategic intervention materials to improve instruction.	4.55	Very High Level	4.33	High Level
I produce stand up books for interactive reading.	3.14	Moderate Level	3.28	Moderate Level
I produce basic sight words for reading drill.	4.63	Very High Level	4.79	Very High Level
I use realia in teaching. .	4.92	Very High Level	4.86	Very High Level
As a preschool teacher, I use PowerPoint slide decks during instruction.	3.43	Moderate Level	3.79	High Level
I produce poems to improve appreciation.	4.22	High Level	4.39	High Level
I utilize songs to catch learners' interest.	4.88	Very High Level	4.89	Very High Level
I allow learners to watch TV programs relevant to the topic.	3.53	High Level	3.81	High Level
I use videos to facilitate comprehension	4.27	High Level	4.32	High Level
Overall Mean	4.18	High Level	4.27	High Level

Table 7 provided a comprehensive overview of Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Instructional Materials Development when grouped according to age. The table categorized teachers into "Younger" (below 30 years old) and "Older" (30 years old and above) age groups. The items in the table gauged various aspects of instructional material development, including the utilization of technology, creation of intervention materials, and incorporation of diverse teaching resources.

A cursory look at the table reveal nuanced differences in the self-perceived instructional competence between younger and older early-grade teachers. Overall, both age groups demonstrated a high level of competence, with mean scores falling into the "High Level" or "Very High Level" interpretations. Notable strengths included the use of realia, strategic intervention materials, and the incorporation of songs and videos to enhance instruction. However, variations exist in certain areas, such as the production of stand-up books and the use of PowerPoint slide decks, where younger teachers rated themselves at a more moderate level compared to their older counterparts.

The findings suggested a generally positive self-assessment of instructional competence among early-grade teachers, regardless of age. However, the variations in specific items indicated potential areas for targeted professional development. For instance, addressing the moderate levels in producing stand-up books and utilizing PowerPoint slide decks among younger teachers could enhance their skills in these areas. Additionally, understanding the strengths and preferences of each age group could inform collaborative teaching approaches that capitalize on the unique competencies of both younger and older teachers.

Hew and Brush (2017) investigated the instructional competence of early grade teachers in instructional materials development based on age. The findings echoed the trend of high overall mean competency levels but highlighted specific areas for improvement. Both studies underscored the importance of continuous professional development to address age-specific variations and ensure that early-grade teachers remain well-equipped to employ effective instructional strategies, thus enhancing the overall quality of education. The implications drawn from this study further supported the notion that tailored professional development initiatives should focus on specific sub-items, like interactive reading materials, to ensure a comprehensive and effective approach to enhancing instructional competence among early grade teachers.

Table 8

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Assessment of Learning When Grouped According to Age

Items	Younger Mean	Interpretation	Older Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher, ...				
I utilize performance-based assessment for learners	4.24	High Level	4.30	High Level
I utilize print and cut out instructional materials in teaching learners to sort and classify objects according to size, shapes and color.	4.24	High Level	4.30	High Level
I utilize performance assessment for basic principles in teaching preparatory skills for writing.	4.22	High Level	4.39	High Level
I utilize varied assessments in identifying number, letter or words that is different or the same.	4.63	Very High Level	4.79	Very High Level
I require learners to produce various symmetrical shapes.	3.43	Moderate Level	3.79	High Level
I utilize learners' output as assessment evidence	4.94	Very High Level	4.84	Very High Level

I utilize group performance assessment for identifying different body parts.	3.43	Moderate Level	3.79	High Level
I utilize performance assessment for naming five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.22	High Level	4.39	High Level
I utilize differentiated assessment to names of five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.24	High Level	4.30	High Level
I utilize performance assessment in demonstrating ways to care for ones' body.	4.22	High Level	4.39	High Level
Overall Mean	4.18	High Level	4.33	High Level

Table 8 presented an insightful analysis of Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Assessment of Learning, categorized by age. The table distinguished between "Younger" (below 30 years old) and "Older" (30 years old and above) age groups. The items in the table evaluated various aspects of assessment practices employed by preschool teachers, ranging from performance-based assessments to differentiated assessments for different concepts.

Moreover, the table indicated a high level of self-perceived instructional competence in the assessment domain for both younger and older early-grade teachers. The mean scores consistently fell into the "High Level" or "Very High Level" interpretations across the assessed items. Notable strengths included the utilization of varied assessments, performance-based assessments, and incorporating learners' output as assessment evidence. However, there were slight variations in certain items, such as the use of symmetrical shapes in assessments, where younger teachers rate themselves at a more moderate level compared to their older counterparts.

The overall high mean scores suggested a positive self-assessment of instructional competence in the assessment domain among early-grade teachers, regardless of age. The variations observed may point to potential areas for targeted professional development or collaboration. For example, enhancing the utilization of symmetrical shapes in assessments could be a focus for younger teachers to align with the high levels reported by their older counterparts. Additionally, recognizing the strengths of each age group could inform collaborative efforts to refine assessment practices across the board.

Anderson and Pianta (2019), conducted a study on assessment practices of early grade teachers were investigated based on age. The findings of Anderson et al. align with the trends observed in Table 8, indicated that older teachers tend to exhibit a higher level of competence in the assessment of learning compared to their younger counterparts. This consistency strengthens the reliability of the observed patterns and emphasized the importance of considering age-related factors in designing professional development programs tailored to enhance assessment practices among early grade teachers. The implications drawn from both Table 8 and Anderson et al.'s study underscore the need for targeted interventions to address specific assessment practices, ensuring a comprehensive and effective enhancement of instructional competence.

Table 9

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Content Knowledge and Pedagogy in Reading When Grouped According to Highest Educational Attainment

Items	Lower		Higher	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher, ...				
I can teach children to express themselves and share their personal experiences.	4.23	High Level	4.34	High Level
I have ample knowledge in teaching learners to sort and classify objects according to size, shapes and color.	4.23	High Level	4.31	High Level
I am well aware of the basic principles in teaching preparatory skills for writing.	3.45	Moderate Level	3.74	High Level
I am well versed in developing learner competence to identify number, letter or words that is different or the same.	4.14	High Level	4.44	High Level
I discuss thoroughly competencies on shape recognition and symmetry.	4.86	Very Level	4.90	Very Level
As a preschool teacher, I discuss thoroughly the different body parts and its functions.	4.91	Very Level	4.90	Very Level
I demonstrate movements of different body parts to model to the learners.	4.93	Very Level	4.89	Very Level
I discuss thoroughly teacher; I teach the names of five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.91	Very Level	4.89	Very Level
I discuss thoroughly teacher; I discuss thoroughly the different basic needs and ways to care for ones' body.	4.82	Very Level	4.87	Very Level
I discuss thoroughly teacher; I demonstrate ways to care for ones' body.	4.86	Very Level	4.90	Very Level
Overall Mean	4.53	Very Level	4.62	Very Level

Table 9 presented an analysis of the instructional competence of early grade teachers in the area of content knowledge and pedagogy in reading, categorized by their highest educational attainment. The overall mean for those with lower educational attainment is 4.53, classified as a very high level, while the mean for those with higher educational attainment is slightly higher at 4.62, also falling within the very high level category. This marginal difference suggested that, on average, both groups demonstrate very high levels of instructional competence in the specified areas. However, the nuanced variation prompts a closer examination of specific items to identify potential areas for targeted professional development or support.

Upon analyzing individual items, certain sub-items stand out. For example, in teaching preparatory skills for writing (Item 3), there is a notable difference between those with lower educational attainment (mean of 3.45, a moderate level) and those with higher educational attainment (mean of 3.74, a high level). This discrepancy suggested that there may be a specific area within writing instruction where teachers with lower educational attainment could benefit from targeted professional development to enhance their competence.

In a related study conducted by San Luis, Garcia and Santos (2019) the instructional competence of early grade teachers in content knowledge and pedagogy in reading was explored based on their highest educational attainment. The findings supported the trends observed indicated that those with higher educational attainment tend to exhibit a slightly higher level of instructional competence. This alignment reinforced the notion that educational attainment may play a role in shaping instructional competence. Data emphasized the importance of considering the educational background of teachers in designing professional development programs, ensuring that targeted interventions address specific competencies to achieve a comprehensive enhancement of instructional competence.

Table 10

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Instructional Materials Development When Grouped According to Highest Educational Attainment

Items	Lower Mean	Interpretation	Higher Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher, ...				
I use animated computer software to aid instruction.	4.27	High Level	4.21	High Level
I strategic intervention materials to improve instruction.	4.48	High Level	4.40	High Level
I produce stand up books for interactive reading.	3.09	Moderate Level	3.31	Moderate Level
I produce basic sight words for reading drill.	4.55	Very High Level	4.84	Very High Level
I use realia in teaching. .	4.93	Very High Level	4.85	Very High Level
As a preschool teacher, I use PowerPoint slide decks during instruction.	3.45	Moderate Level	3.74	High Level
I produce poems to improve appreciation.	4.14	High Level	4.44	High Level
I utilize songs to catch learners' interest.	4.93	Very High Level	4.85	Very High Level
I allow learners to watch TV programs relevant to the topic.	3.52	High Level	3.79	High Level
I use videos to facilitate comprehension	4.23	High Level	4.34	High Level
Overall Mean	4.16	High Level	4.28	High Level

Table 10 presented an analysis of the instructional competence of early grade teachers in the area of instructional materials development, categorized by their highest educational attainment. The overall mean for those with lower educational attainment is 4.16, indicating a high level of competence, while the mean for those with higher educational attainment is slightly higher at 4.28, also falling within the high level category. This marginal difference suggested that, on average, both groups demonstrated commendable competence in instructional materials development. While the overall means are similar, it is essential to delve into specific items to identify potential areas for targeted professional development or collaboration.

Upon analyzed individual items, certain sub-items stand out. For example, in producing stand-up books for interactive reading (Item 3), there is a noticeable difference between those with lower educational attainment (mean of 3.09, a moderate level) and those with higher educational attainment (mean of 3.31, also a moderate level). This discrepancy suggested that there may be a specific area within interactive reading material development where teachers with lower educational attainment could benefit from targeted professional development to enhance their competence.

A study by Villarino (2020) corroborated these claims as they founded that early grade teachers in the Philippines who had participated in professional development programs on instructional materials development were more likely to use a variety of instructional materials in their classrooms. This suggested that professional development could be an effective way to improve early grade teachers' competence in this area.

Table 11

Early Grade Teachers' Level of Instructional Competence in the Area of Assessment of Learning When Grouped According to Highest Educational Attainment

Items	Lower	Higher
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	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
As a preschool teacher, ...				
I utilize performance-based assessment for learners	4.23	High Level	4.31	High Level
I utilize print and cut out instructional materials in teaching learners to sort and classify objects according to size, shapes and color.	4.23	High Level	4.31	High Level
I utilize performance assessment for basic principles in teaching preparatory skills for writing.	4.14	High Level	4.44	High Level
I utilize varied assessments in identifying number, letter or words that is different or the same.	4.55	Very High Level	4.84	Very High Level
I require learners to produce various symmetrical shapes.	3.45	Moderate Level	3.74	High Level
I utilize learners' output as assessment evidence	4.89	Very High Level	4.89	Very High Level
I utilize group performance assessment for identifying different body parts.	3.45	Moderate Level	3.74	High Level
I utilize performance assessment for naming five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.14	High Level	4.44	High Level
I utilize differentiated assessment to names of five sense and corresponding body parts.	4.23	High Level	4.31	High Level
I utilize performance assessment in demonstrating ways to care for ones' body.	4.14	High Level	4.44	High Level
Overall Mean	4.14	High Level	4.34	High Level

Table 11 presented an analysis of the instructional competence of early grade teachers in the area of assessment of learning, categorized by their highest educational attainment. The overall mean for those with lower educational attainment is 4.14, indicated a high level of competence, while the mean for those with higher educational attainment was notably higher at 4.34, also fell within the high level category. This difference suggested a potential variation in the assessment practices between the two educational attainment groups. While both groups exhibited a high level of competence, the nuanced variation prompts a closer examination of specific items to identify areas of strength and potential improvement for targeted professional development.

Upon analyzing individual items, certain sub-items stand out. For instance, in requiring learners to produce various symmetrical shapes (Item 5), there was a notable difference between those with lower educational attainment (mean of 3.45, a moderate level) and those with higher educational attainment (mean of 3.74, a high level). This discrepancy suggested that there may be a specific area within assessment practices where teachers with lower educational attainment could benefit from targeted professional development to enhance their competence.

A study by Borromeo, Garcia, Santos et al. (2021) found that early grade teachers in the Philippines who had participated in professional development programs on assessment of learning were more likely to use a variety of assessment strategies in their classrooms. This suggested that professional development can be an effective way to improve early grade teachers' competence in this area. Overall, the results of this study suggested that early grade teachers with both lower and higher educational attainment have a strong foundation of knowledge and skills in the area of assessment of learning. However, there was some room for improvement, particularly for teachers with lower educational attainment in the areas of assessing students' ability to produce symmetrical shapes and using group performance assessment. Additionally, professional development programs may be beneficial for teachers of all educational attainment levels to help them improve their instructional competence in assessment of learning.

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