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PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE AS INFLUENCED BY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN CARMEN DISTRICT, DAVAO DEL NORTE

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers in Carmen District, Davao del Norte. Specifically, it assessed the level of professional practices in terms of community linkages, professional engagement, personal growth, and professional development; evaluated pedagogical competence; examined the relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence; and identified the domains of professional practices that significantly influenced pedagogical competence. A quantitative-predictive approach was employed to capture naturally occurring teacher behaviors and competencies. The study involved fifty-eight (58) kindergarten teachers, and a total enumeration technique was used to ensure comprehensive coverage. Data on professional practices and pedagogical competence were collected and analyzed using weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that kindergarten teachers demonstrated high levels of professional practices, actively engaging in community linkages and pursuing personal and professional growth. Pedagogical competence was also high across all dimensions, including content knowledge, curriculum implementation, learner diversity management, and assessment practices. A strong and significant relationship was found between professional practices and pedagogical competence, with both community engagement and personal growth significantly predicting pedagogical skills. These results highlighted that active professional involvement and sustained development positively influenced teaching effectiveness. Based on these findings, kindergarten teachers were recommended to continue professional development, reflect on teaching, and adopt innovative strategies. School heads were advised to support teachers' growth and foster collaboration. Learners were encouraged to engage actively, while future researchers were suggested to explore additional factors and long-term effects on pedagogical competence.

KEYWORDS: *Carmen district, Davao del Norte, kindergarten teachers, pedagogical competence, professional practices*

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the professional practices and pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers. Professional practices pertain to the knowledge, abilities, and instructional approaches teachers apply in planning, delivering, and evaluating learning activities while considering the social, emotional, and developmental needs of young learners. In this study, professional competence refers to the teacher's capacity to effectively carry out their responsibilities, including content mastery, instructional effectiveness, and engagement in continuous professional development. It is closely related to pedagogical competence, as strong professional competence enables teachers to design and deliver effective, developmentally appropriate instruction. Therefore, professional practices play an essential role in strengthening pedagogical competence and promoting the overall quality of early childhood education.

In many countries, early childhood and kindergarten educators face various systemic challenges that affect their professional practices and pedagogical competence. A limited supply of trained pre-primary teachers, frequent staff turnover, and unequal access to continuous, high-quality professional development restrict teachers' ability to deepen their subject knowledge and apply child-centered approaches (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). As a result, classroom instruction often becomes more teacher-directed rather than play-based, which contradicts established principles of effective early childhood education. In addition, the absence of sustained training and guidance makes it difficult for teachers to consistently align their practices with curriculum frameworks that promote inquiry-based learning and the holistic development of young learners (Ng & Bull, 2019).

A further global issue involves the high levels of work-related stress, lack of adequate instructional resources, and limited preparation for addressing diverse learner needs, all of which constrain the use of developmentally appropriate teaching approaches. According to Markussen-Brown et al. (2018), professional development becomes more effective when it is sustained, connected to actual classroom practices, and aligned with teachers' everyday experiences, while one-time

training sessions often result in minimal meaningful improvement. Moreover, heavy teaching loads, ongoing curriculum changes, and increasing expectations to prepare children for formal schooling place additional pressure on teachers, often leading to stress and a decline in instructional effectiveness (García & Weiss, 2019). These realities suggest that professional practices are influenced not only by teachers' individual efforts but also by the level of systemic support and the priorities set by educational institutions.

Within the Philippine educational setting, improving the professional practices of kindergarten teachers remains an important policy priority, particularly following the implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). While the PPST offers a structured framework for teacher competencies and professional growth, access to continuous, high-quality, and context-responsive training opportunities remains inconsistent across schools and divisions (DepEd, 2019). As a result, many kindergarten teachers encounter difficulties in fully implementing the required play-based curriculum, particularly in creating developmentally appropriate activities and using authentic assessment methods (Llego, 2020). These limitations contribute to variations in pedagogical competence among teachers across different regions.

In addition, everyday constraints such as overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of developmentally appropriate instructional materials, and limited access to mentoring or instructional coaching negatively affect the quality of kindergarten teaching. In many cases, teachers depend on improvised methods and their own resourcefulness due to insufficient material support, which adds to their workload and can lessen their confidence in delivering effective instruction (Gonzales & Abadiano, 2019). These conditions point to wider systemic shortcomings in teacher support, which suggests that although policies exist, their full translation into classroom practice is still lacking.

In the Carmen District of Davao del Norte, kindergarten teachers face persistent challenges that reflect both national trends and specific local conditions, which affect their pedagogical competence. Studies and reports indicate that many teachers have limited access to continuous professional development, such as workshops, mentoring, and coaching sessions that are essential for strengthening play-based and child-centered teaching strategies (Department of Education–Davao del Norte, 2023). Locally, classrooms are often overcrowded, and teachers have limited access to age-appropriate learning materials, which constrain their ability to design developmentally appropriate activities and implement authentic assessments. Combined with increasing administrative tasks and heavy workload, these conditions hinder teachers from fully applying curriculum standards that emphasize inquiry, holistic learning, and individualized instruction. Consequently, differences in pedagogical competence can be observed among schools, emphasizing the need to investigate how local systemic conditions and resource-related factors influence professional practices and the overall quality of teaching in early childhood classrooms.

Despite increasing attention to early childhood education, significant gaps still exist in understanding how kindergarten teachers' professional practices are related to their pedagogical competence. Substantively, although existing research emphasizes the importance of professional development and play-based instruction, limited studies have examined how specific aspects of professional practices—such as community engagement, professional collaboration, and personal development—directly affect teachers' competence in designing developmentally appropriate learning activities and assessments. Methodologically, much of the research relies on broad surveys or secondary data, leaving a lack of in-depth, context-specific exploration of teachers' lived experiences and instructional decision-making processes. Contextually, there is a lack of sufficient evidence from local settings such as the Carmen District of Davao del Norte, where distinct challenges like limited resources, large class sizes, and unequal access to professional support may significantly influence pedagogical outcomes.

This study is necessary and timely, as strengthening the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers is essential in improving the quality of early childhood education, particularly in local contexts where systemic and resource-related challenges continue to exist. Gaining a clearer understanding of how professional practices interact with contextual factors can help guide more targeted interventions, including customized professional development programs, mentoring systems, and improved resource allocation, all of which can enhance teaching effectiveness. Moreover, the results of this study are expected to add to the existing literature by offering empirical evidence on the local dynamics of teacher competence. This can provide practical insights for policymakers, school administrators, and teacher educators, and may also serve as a foundation for future studies aimed at improving early childhood learning outcomes in similar contexts.

THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the study is to determine the relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers in Carmen District, Davao del Norte. The study's specific objectives are as follows:

1. To assess the level of professional practices of kindergarten teachers in terms of community linkages and professional engagement, ad personal growth and professional development
2. To evaluate the level of pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers.

3. To determine whether there is a significant relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers.
4. To identify the domains of professional practices that significantly influence the pedagogical competence of the respondents.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study, outlining the systematic procedures employed to examine the relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence among kindergarten teachers. It explains the research design that guided the study, identifies the respondents who served as the source of data, and describes the instruments used for data collection. It also details the step-by-step procedures followed to ensure the accuracy, consistency, and ethical conduct of the research process. Furthermore, it discusses the statistical techniques applied in analyzing the data to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. For clarity and organization, the chapter is divided into the following sections: Research Design, Ethical Considerations, Research Respondents, Research Instruments, Data Gathering Procedure, and Data Analysis.

Method Used

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design with predictive analysis to examine the influence of professional practices on the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers. The descriptive component was used to determine the extent of professional practices and pedagogical competence, while the correlational component examined the significant relationship between these variables. Furthermore, regression analysis was employed to determine which domains of professional practices significantly predict pedagogical competence. This design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gather numerical data, describe the current status of the variables, determine relationships, and identify predictive influences without manipulating the research environment (Thomas & Zubkov, 2023). Specifically, the study examined the current level of professional practices, including community linkages and professional engagement, as well as personal growth and professional development, alongside pedagogical competence. Statistical predictive methods were employed to identify which aspects of professional practices significantly forecast variations in pedagogical competence. Predictive analysis, as described by Cohen et al. (2018), determined the strength and direction of these associations, providing empirical evidence of how professional practices influence pedagogical outcomes.

This approach generated both descriptive data, portraying the current status of the variables, and inferential data, quantifying predictive relationships using rigorous statistical tools. This method ensured that data collection, analysis, and interpretation were conducted in a systematic, reliable, and ethical manner. Ultimately, the findings provide evidence-based insights that can inform teacher professional development, strengthen instructional strategies, and enhance learning outcomes in early childhood education.

Sources of Data

The primary data sources of this study were fifty-eight (58) kindergarten teachers from different elementary schools within the Carmen District of Davao del Norte. To ensure comprehensive coverage of the target population, the study employed a total enumeration technique, wherein all identified kindergarten teachers were included as sources of data. This approach was deemed appropriate and reliable, as it eliminated sampling bias and provided an accurate representation of the entire population (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Taherdoost, 2016).

The relatively small number of kindergarten teachers in the district enabled the researcher to include all eligible participants in the study, eliminating the need for sampling procedures. The distribution of respondents across the district ensured balanced representation, which enabled the collection of diverse perspectives. Using total enumeration, the study obtained comprehensive data that accurately reflected the professional practices and pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers, thereby strengthening the validity and generalizability of the findings.

Data Gathering Instrument

The primary instruments for this study were structured questionnaires designed to measure the professional practices and pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers. The questionnaires were composed of closed-ended Likert-scale items designed to measure teachers' perceptions and experiences. The instruments were divided into two sections: the first assessed professional practices, while the second evaluated pedagogical competence.

The instrument on professional practices was adapted from Lagat and Madarang (2023) and was organized into two dimensions: Community Linkages and Professional Engagement, and Personal Growth and Professional Development. Community Linkages and Professional Engagement included four (4) items that assessed teachers' collaboration with families, colleagues, and the wider community in enhancing children's learning experiences. Personal Growth and Professional Development consisted of five (5) items that measured teachers' commitment to continuous improvement of their knowledge, skills, and professional values through training, reflective practice, and collaboration.

To ensure validity, the instrument underwent expert validation of experts to confirm clarity, relevance, and alignment with the intended constructs. The overall expert mean rating was 4.17, described as very good, which indicated that the instrument was valid and appropriate for use. To establish reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested with a separate group of thirty (30) kindergarten teachers from another district in Davao del Norte. The computed Cronbach's alpha value was 0.967, which is higher than the 0.70 threshold recommended by Taber (2018), indicating that the instrument is highly reliable. The responses were interpreted using the following scale.

On the other hand, the instrument for pedagogical competence was adapted from Shulman (1987) and consisted of five dimensions: Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, Learning Environment, Diversity of Learners, Curriculum Planning, and Assessment and Reporting. The number of items per dimension was as follows: Content Knowledge and Pedagogy with six (6) items; Learning Environment with six (6) items; Diversity of Learners with five (5) items; Curriculum and Planning with five (5) items; and Assessment and Reporting with five (5) items. These items were designed to capture the essential skills and practices that enabled kindergarten teachers to provide effective, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate instruction.

Mean Interval	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	Professional practices are always evident.
3.40 - 4.19	High	Professional practices are oftentimes evident.
2.60 - 3.39	Moderate	Professional practices are occasionally evident.
1.80 - 2.59	Low	Professional practices are seldom evident.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	Professional practices are never evident.

To ensure validity, the instrument underwent expert validation of experts to verify that each item accurately measured its corresponding dimension. The overall expert mean rating was 4.12, described as very good, which indicated that the instrument was clear, relevant, and aligned with the construct of pedagogical competence. The computed Cronbach's alpha value of this instrument was 0.968, which exceeded the minimum standard of 0.70, confirming that the instrument was highly reliable. Responses were interpreted using the same Likert scale shown below.

Mean Interval	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	Pedagogical competence is always evident.
3.40 - 4.19	High	Pedagogical competence is oftentimes evident.
2.60 - 3.39	Moderate	Pedagogical competence is occasionally evident.
1.80 - 2.59	Low	Pedagogical competence is seldom evident.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	Pedagogical competence is never evident

Both instruments were contextualized to align with the objectives of the study, and feedback from the adviser, panel members, and expert validators was incorporated to refine the tools and strengthen their validity. These instruments were designed to provide accurate, reliable, and meaningful data on how professional practices related to pedagogical competence among kindergarten teachers, which supported evidence-based recommendations for teacher development and improved classroom practices.

Sampling Technique

The primary sources of data in this study were fifty-eight (58) kindergarten teachers from different elementary schools in Carmen District, Davao del Norte. The study employed total enumeration, wherein all qualified kindergarten teachers within the identified population were included as respondents. This technique was appropriate because the target population was relatively small and manageable, allowing the researcher to gather comprehensive data from all eligible participants. By including the entire population, the study minimized sampling bias and ensured complete representation of kindergarten teachers within the study locale. However, the findings are limited to the context of Carmen District and may not necessarily be generalized to other districts or educational settings.

This approach minimized sampling bias and provided an accurate representation of the entire population, which strengthened the validity and generalizability of the findings (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Taherdoost, 2016).

Procedure of the Study

The data gathering procedure for this study followed a systematic and ethically guided process to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of the findings. The major phases included the ethics review, validation of the instruments, securing endorsements and permits from the appropriate offices in Carmen District, Davao del Norte, and the administration and retrieval of questionnaires.

Prior to the conduct of the study, the research proposal underwent an ethics review on November 11, 2025, to ensure full compliance with ethical standards for research involving human participants. The review confirmed that the rights, welfare, and confidentiality of the kindergarten teachers in Carmen District, Davao del Norte were protected throughout the research

process. Ethical principles, including voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, and data protection, were strictly upheld in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

The questionnaires used in the study underwent validation by experts on December 19, 2025, to assess their clarity, relevance, and alignment with the constructs of professional practices and pedagogical competence. Feedback from the experts, research adviser, and panel members was integrated to further refine the instruments. A pilot test was also conducted with a separate group of kindergarten teachers in Carmen District, Davao del Norte to determine reliability, and the results produced high reliability coefficients, confirming the internal consistency of the instruments.

After completing the ethics review and instrument validation, the researcher secured formal endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges, Dr. Nelia Aga, on November 22, 2025. This endorsement confirmed that the study was academically sound, ethically compliant, and approved for implementation in the identified research setting. Following the Dean's endorsement, the researcher obtained official permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao del Norte on December 23, 2025, and thereafter secured approval from the school heads of the participating schools in Carmen District through letters and certificates of appearance coordinated from February 13 to 16, 2026. A written request outlining the study's purpose, target respondents, and data collection procedures was submitted. Upon approval, coordination with school focal persons was conducted to schedule the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires. The validated questionnaires on Professional Practices and Pedagogical Competence were administered to the fifty-eight (58) kindergarten teachers in Carmen District, Davao del Norte through the total enumeration technique. Before answering, participants were oriented regarding the study's objectives and reminded of key ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents on the date of data collection.

The questionnaires were completed in either paper-based or digital format, depending on school arrangements and teacher preference. All accomplished questionnaires were retrieved and subsequently organized, encoded, and checked for completeness. The collected data were then analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to examine the predictive relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence. Throughout the data collection process, confidentiality, accuracy, and ethical standards were strictly observed to ensure the integrity and credibility of the study's findings.

Statistical Treatment

For a comprehensive interpretation and analysis of the data, the following statistical tools were employed:
To answer the first two research questions, which focused on determining the level of professional practices and pedagogical competence among kindergarten teachers, the weighted mean and standard deviation were used. The weighted mean provided an overview of the average responses of the participants, while the standard deviation measured the variability or consistency of their responses.

To address the third research question, which examined whether a significant relationship exists between professional practices and pedagogical competence, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used. This statistical tool is appropriate for determining the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the two continuous variables. For the fourth research question, which sought to identify which dimensions of professional practices significantly influenced the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers, multiple regression analysis was employed. This analysis enabled the assessment of the relative contribution of each dimension of professional practices to the overall pedagogical competence.

Ethical Consideration

This study ensured that kindergarten teacher-respondents were treated with respect, fairness, and care throughout the research process. Ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, risk minimization, and transparency guided the conduct of the study to safeguard the respondents' rights and well-being.

Social Value. The study sought to examine the relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers. The findings of this study aim to provide insights that enhance teachers' professional growth, instructional effectiveness, and the overall quality of early childhood education. The results are expected to offer evidence-based recommendations that support continuous professional development, effective classroom practices, and inclusive learning environments. Beyond the local context, the findings may also inform teacher training programs and early childhood education policies in other regions.

Informed Consent. Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to data collection. The kindergarten teachers were fully informed about the study's purpose, objectives, and procedures. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no associated risks, and respondents were free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Consent forms used clear and accessible language, and participants were encouraged to ask questions before signing.

Vulnerability of Respondents. While kindergarten teachers were not considered a vulnerable group, reflecting on professional practices and pedagogical competence may have prompted some to consider their teaching strengths and areas for improvement. To address this, data collection was conducted in a non-intrusive manner using structured survey instruments. Teachers were allowed to skip any items they felt uncomfortable answering and could withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequence.

*Privacy and Confidentiality***.** Protecting respondents' privacy was a priority. All data were anonymized, with identifying information removed from reports. Collected data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. The study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring strict confidentiality and data protection throughout the research process.

*Risk, Benefits, and Safety***.** The study posed minimal risk, as it used non-invasive data collection methods such as surveys. Reflecting on professional practices may have caused slight discomfort for some participants, but respondents were allowed to omit any item they found sensitive. The benefits outweighed the risks, as findings guided teacher professional development, strengthened pedagogical competence, and improved classroom practices and student outcomes. Participants were also given access to the results for their professional growth.

Justice. The principle of justice was observed by providing equal opportunity for all kindergarten teachers who met the inclusion criteria to participate. Selection was free from bias, and findings were fairly shared with stakeholders to ensure equitable access to benefits.

Transparency. Transparency was maintained throughout the research process. Teachers were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and the potential risks and benefits prior to their participation. Relevant stakeholders were updated on progress, and upon completion, results were disseminated to teachers, school administrators, and education policymakers to encourage the practical application of findings.

Qualification of Researcher. The researcher was trained in educational research and was well-versed in ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, and data protection, ensuring that the study was conducted in a competent and respectful manner.

Conflict of Interest. The researcher declared no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study. The study was conducted independently, free from personal or financial bias. Any potential conflict that arose was disclosed to participants and stakeholders.

*Adequacy of Facilities***.** Data collection took place in safe and conducive environments, whether in quiet school spaces or through secure online platforms. Proper tools and secure data storage were ensured for accuracy, comfort, and confidentiality.

Community Involvement. The study valued the participation of the educational community by aligning its objectives with the professional development and teaching effectiveness of kindergarten teachers and school leaders. Feedback from stakeholders was considered in refining the research instrument. Upon completion, findings were shared with teachers, administrators, and policymakers to guide strategies that strengthen professional practices and pedagogical competence in early childhood education.

Results

The findings revealed that kindergarten teachers demonstrated a **high level of professional practices** in both dimensions. Community Linkages and Professional Engagement obtained an overall mean of **3.94**, while Personal Growth and Professional Development obtained an overall mean of **3.91**. These results indicate that teachers often practice professional engagement, maintain ethical standards, collaborate with parents and the community, and pursue continuous professional growth. Among the indicators, teachers showed stronger performance in engaging parents and the school community, while sustaining professional development during crises received a lower but still high rating. This suggests that although teachers value professional growth, challenges may affect their consistency during difficult situations.

The level of pedagogical competence was also generally rated **High** across all dimensions. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy obtained a mean of **3.70**, Learning Environment obtained **3.85**, Diversity of Learners obtained **3.86**, Curriculum and Planning obtained **3.45**, and Assessment and Reporting obtained **3.86**. These findings show that kindergarten teachers often apply appropriate teaching strategies, create safe and child-friendly learning environments, respond to learner diversity, plan curriculum-based instruction, and use assessment data to support learning. However, some areas require improvement, particularly the use of research-based instructional practices, adaptation of learning delivery modalities, development of ICT-based learning resources, and design of developmentally appropriate assessment strategies.

The correlation analysis showed a **strong positive and significant relationship** between professional practices and pedagogical competence, with an overall correlation value of **r = 0.894, p < .001**. This means that teachers with stronger professional practices tend to demonstrate higher pedagogical competence. The strongest relationships were found between overall work engagement and Diversity of Learners **r = 0.892, p < .001**, and overall work engagement and Content Knowledge and Pedagogy **r = 0.891, p < .001**. These results suggest that professional engagement, collaboration, and continuous development help teachers become more responsive, inclusive, and effective in their classroom practices. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The regression analysis further confirmed that professional practices significantly influenced pedagogical competence. The model produced an **R value of 0.898** and an **R^2 value of 0.806**, indicating that **80.6% of the variance in pedagogical competence** can be explained by professional practices. The model was statistically significant, **F = 114.48, p < .001**. Among the predictors, Community Linkages and Professional Engagement was the stronger predictor, **B = 0.577, β = 0.620, t = 6.482, p < .001**. Personal Growth and Professional Development also significantly predicted pedagogical competence, **B = 0.325, β = 0.325, t = 3.400, p = .001**. These results imply that teachers who actively engage with parents, colleagues, and the community, and who continue to develop professionally, are more likely to demonstrate stronger pedagogical competence.

Overall, the study shows that professional practices play an important role in strengthening the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers. While teachers generally perform at a high level, the findings point to the need for targeted professional development in research-based instruction, curriculum adaptation, ICT-based resource development, and assessment design. Strengthening these areas may further improve teachers' ability to provide inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and effective learning experiences for kindergarten learners.

Summary

The study findings can be summarized as follows: Kindergarten teachers demonstrated a high level of professional practices in both community linkages and professional engagement (M = 3.94, SD = 0.54) as well as personal growth and professional development (M = 3.91, SD = 0.50). This suggests that the teachers are actively engaging with the community, maintaining professional standards, and consistently pursuing opportunities for continuous professional growth.

Furthermore, kindergarten teachers demonstrated a high level of pedagogical competence across all identified dimensions. These include content knowledge and pedagogy (M = 3.70, SD = 0.63), learning environment (M = 3.85, SD = 0.51), diversity of learners (M = 3.86, SD = 0.67), curriculum and planning (M = 3.45, SD = 0.33), and assessment and reporting (M = 3.86, SD = 0.65). This indicated that teachers generally demonstrated strong instructional practices, effectively managed learning environments, addressed learner diversity, planned curriculum activities, and utilized assessment strategies, although some areas showed relatively moderate ratings compared to others.

The results revealed a significant relationship between professional practices and the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers across all dimensions. Community linkages and professional engagement showed strong positive correlations with content knowledge and pedagogy (r = .886, p = .000), learning environment (r = .805, p = .000), diversity of learners (r = .875, p = .000), and assessment and reporting (r = .771, p = .000), while a moderate relationship was observed with curriculum and planning (r = .428, p = .001). Likewise, personal growth and professional development was significantly correlated with all dimensions, ranging from moderate to strong associations. Overall, professional practices demonstrated a very strong and significant relationship with pedagogical competence (r = .894, p = .000), indicating that higher levels of professional practices are associated with higher levels of pedagogical competence among kindergarten teachers.

The multiple regression analysis revealed that professional practices significantly influence the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers. The model explained 80.6% of the variance in pedagogical competence (R = 0.898, R^2 = 0.806), and the result was statistically significant (F = 114.48, p = 0.000). Both community linkages and professional engagement (B = 0.577, β = 0.620, t = 6.482, p = 0.000) and personal growth and professional development (B = 0.325, β = 0.325, t = 3.400, p = 0.001) emerged as significant predictors. This indicated that improvements in these dimensions of professional practices were associated with increased levels of pedagogical competence among the respondents.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn: The results indicate that kindergarten teachers demonstrate a high level of professional practices. Their involvement in community linkages and professional engagement, as well as their commitment to personal growth and professional development, are consistently evident. This suggests that kindergarten teachers actively participate in professional activities that support their teaching effectiveness and continuous improvement. This finding is supported by Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals acquire behaviors and skills through observation and modeling of others. Through professional interactions and community engagement, teachers are able to acquire, refine, and apply effective instructional strategies.

The findings indicate that kindergarten teachers demonstrate a high level of pedagogical competence across all measured dimensions. They show strong content knowledge, create supportive learning environments, address learner diversity, plan and implement curriculum effectively, and conduct appropriate assessment and reporting. This implies that kindergarten teachers consistently apply pedagogical principles to enhance learning outcomes in their classrooms. This aligns with Shulman's (1986) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) Theory, which emphasizes that effective teaching requires both strong subject matter knowledge and the ability to present it in ways that are appropriate and understandable for learners.
The study reveals a strong and significant relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence. Teachers who are more engaged in community linkages and personal professional development exhibit higher pedagogical competence. This indicates that active participation in professional practices is closely associated with more effective teaching and better instructional performance. This finding is supported by Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that individuals develop skills and behaviors through observation and modeling of others. This suggests that professional engagement and collaborative practices contribute to the enhancement of teachers' pedagogical effectiveness. The results further demonstrate that professional practices significantly influence the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers. Both community engagement and personal growth contribute substantially to teachers' pedagogical skillsThis signifies that sustained professional involvement and continuous development play a crucial role in enhancing overall teaching effectiveness and improving the quality of early childhood education. This finding is supported by Fullan's Theory of Professional Development and Teacher Change (2007), which emphasizes that ongoing professional development and engagement with educational innovations lead to meaningful improvements in teaching practices and foster higher pedagogical competence.

Recommendations

Kindergarten teachers are encouraged to continuously participate in professional development programs and strengthen community linkages to further enhance their pedagogical competence. They may also engage in regular reflection on their teaching practices and adopt innovative strategies that address learner diversity and improve learning outcomes.

School heads may provide support and create opportunities for teachers to engage in professional growth activities, including workshops, seminars, and collaborative projects.They may also create an enabling environment that encourages reflective practices and the sharing of best teaching strategies among staff.

Learners may benefit from teachers' continued efforts to create inclusive and supportive learning environments. They may also be encouraged to actively participate in classroom activities and engage with diverse learning modalities to maximize their learning experiences. Future researchers may examine other factors that influence the relationship between professional practices and pedagogical competence. They may also conduct longitudinal studies to investigate the long-term effects of professional development on teaching effectiveness in early childhood education.

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