

Reframing Instructional Competence: A Phenomenological Study of Pupils' and Parents' Lived Experiences in Philippine Public Elementary Schools

Gina A. Boyles, MAEM

Department of Education

Charlie A. Dayon, Ph.D.

Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology

ABSTRACT This study explored instructional competence through the lived experiences of pupils and the perspectives of parents in a Philippine public elementary school and examined its implications for educational management. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, 20 participants comprising 10 pupils and 10 parents were purposively selected. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and analyzed through an iterative thematic process. Findings revealed that instructional competence was experienced through relational competence, demonstrative and scaffolded teaching, and observable development in pupils' literacy and skills. Pupils valued teachers who were kind, supportive, and able to facilitate understanding, while parents associated effective teaching with caring relationships and visible improvements in their children's learning. However, pupils' accounts of punitive disciplinary practices revealed a tension between pedagogical effectiveness and ethical, child-centered teaching. Differences between pupils' experiences and parents' perceptions further demonstrated the value of multiple stakeholder perspectives in evaluating teacher competence. The study concludes that instructional competence encompasses pedagogical, relational, and ethical dimensions and underscores the importance of learner-centered supervision, positive discipline, child protection, and stakeholder participation in educational management.

Keywords: *instructional competence, phenomenology, teacher evaluation, qualitative research, philippines, child protection*

INTRODUCTION

The quality of teaching remains central to the effectiveness of educational systems because teachers influence not only what learners know but also how they engage with learning, interact with others, and develop confidence in their abilities. Contemporary conceptions of teacher competence therefore extend beyond subject-matter mastery and the delivery of prescribed content. Effective teaching integrates pedagogical knowledge, responsiveness to learner needs, appropriate assessment, supportive relationships, reflective practice, and the capacity to create learning environments in which pupils can participate meaningfully (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021; Stronge, 2018). From this perspective, instructional competence is multidimensional: it encompasses what teachers know, how they facilitate learning, how they relate to learners, and how responsibly they exercise their professional authority.

Within the Philippine basic education system, this multidimensional understanding is reflected in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Adopted through Department of Education Order No. 42, s. 2017, the PPST defines teacher quality through interconnected domains covering content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development (Department of Education–Teacher Education Council, 2017). These standards indicate that competence cannot be confined to technical instructional performance. Teachers are also expected to respond to learner diversity, maintain supportive learning environments, communicate with families and communities, and continuously improve their professional practice. Instructional competence is consequently embedded within the broader responsibility of enabling learning while safeguarding learners' participation, dignity, and well-being.

The pedagogical dimension of competence is particularly important in elementary education, where teachers establish many foundational literacy and learning skills on which later academic development depends. Constructivist perspectives view learners as active participants who develop understanding through interaction, experience, and guided engagement rather than through passive reception of information (Piaget, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978). Within this perspective, competent instruction requires teachers to make learning accessible by connecting new ideas with learners' prior experiences, modeling processes, providing

appropriate guidance, and gradually supporting independent performance. Contemporary interpretations of constructivism similarly emphasize that effective learning requires appropriately guided instruction rather than leaving learners to construct understanding without sufficient pedagogical support (Taber, 2022).

These principles are particularly relevant to literacy instruction. Effective teachers make otherwise complex processes visible to learners by demonstrating strategies, explaining procedures, providing guided practice, and responding to difficulties as they emerge. Research on effective primary literacy instruction shows that teachers recognized for promoting literacy use varied, explicit instructional practices to support pupils' reading and writing development (Pressley et al., 1996). Teacher knowledge and instructional expertise are likewise important in translating knowledge about reading processes into classroom practices that develop reading proficiency (Lyon & Weiser, 2009). Instructional competence may therefore become meaningful to pupils and parents not through abstract professional standards but through concrete experiences such as understanding a lesson, learning to read or write, completing tasks successfully, and becoming increasingly independent as a learner.

Pedagogical competence, however, represents only one dimension of children's classroom experiences. Teaching is inherently relational because instruction occurs through sustained interactions between teachers and learners. Pupils encounter teachers not simply as sources of academic information but as adults whose communication, encouragement, responsiveness, fairness, and treatment of learners influence the classroom environment. Positive teacher–student relationships have been consistently associated with important educational outcomes. Roorda et al. (2023), in a meta-analytic examination of affective teacher–student relationships, found that positive relationships were associated with greater student engagement and achievement, whereas negative relationships were associated with less favorable outcomes. Subsequent research has continued to emphasize the importance of relational quality in supporting pupils' academic and socio-emotional experiences. Thus, instructional competence should be considered not only in terms of the teacher's ability to explain content but also in terms of the relational conditions through which pupils encounter that instruction.

A relational understanding of competence is particularly relevant for younger learners because feelings of trust, belonging, care, and psychological safety may shape their willingness to participate, ask questions, make mistakes, and persist when learning becomes difficult. Humanistic perspectives similarly position empathy, authenticity, and acceptance as important conditions for meaningful learning (Rogers, 1983). Teachers who combine instructional clarity with care and responsiveness may therefore create environments in which pupils are more willing to engage with academic tasks. In this sense, relational competence is not separate from instruction; rather, it can influence how learners receive, interpret, and respond to teaching.

The relational dimension of teaching also introduces an important ethical component. Professional competence involves not only the ability to produce desirable learning outcomes but also the responsibility to achieve those outcomes through practices that respect learners' rights and dignity. This consideration is especially important in classroom discipline. In the Philippines, the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy explicitly seeks to protect children from abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of harm within schools and prohibits corporal punishment as a disciplinary practice (Department of Education, 2012). The policy establishes an important ethical boundary for teacher competence: instructional effectiveness cannot be separated from the responsibility to maintain a safe, child-centered learning environment.

The importance of this ethical dimension is reinforced by research on corporal punishment. Evidence indicates that physical punishment is linked to adverse developmental and psychosocial outcomes in children (Cuartas et al., 2021; Gershoff et al., 2023). This evidence challenges conceptions of competence that evaluate teachers primarily by academic performance while overlooking how learners experience discipline, authority, and interpersonal treatment. A teacher may demonstrate content knowledge and effective instructional techniques, but practices that cause fear, humiliation, or physical harm can undermine the supportive conditions necessary for meaningful participation and learning. Instructional competence must therefore encompass pedagogical, relational, and ethical dimensions rather than treating classroom management and child protection as concerns separate from teaching quality.

Reflective practice further strengthens this multidimensional conception of competence. Teachers operate in complex classroom environments in which learner needs, behaviors, abilities, and circumstances continually change. Consequently, competent teaching requires the capacity to examine one's instructional

and relational practices and make appropriate adjustments. Reflective teaching enables educators to critically consider the consequences of their decisions and improve practice in response to learners and classroom circumstances (Zeichner & Liston, 2014). Reflection is especially relevant when teachers consider whether established disciplinary or instructional practices remain consistent with learner-centered pedagogy, professional standards, and child-protection principles. From this perspective, competence is not a fixed attribute teachers possess but an evolving professional capacity shaped by experience, feedback, ethical judgment, and continuing professional learning.

Despite the multidimensional nature of instructional competence, its evaluation has often emphasized professional standards, teacher self-assessment, administrative observation, or measurable student outcomes. Philippine studies have likewise examined teachers' professional and instructional competencies using indicators derived primarily from professional expectations and teacher performance (Gepila, 2020; Talahiban et al., 2022). Such approaches provide valuable information about whether teachers demonstrate expected knowledge and practices; however, they may not fully capture how those practices are experienced by the people most directly affected. Evaluating competence exclusively from the perspective of teachers or administrators may therefore leave important aspects of everyday classroom experience insufficiently understood.

Pupils represent a particularly important yet comparatively underutilized source of evidence about instructional competence. They directly experience teachers' explanations, learning activities, feedback, classroom management, interpersonal behavior, and disciplinary practices. Their accounts can illuminate aspects of teaching that may not be visible during scheduled classroom observations or fully captured by formal evaluation instruments. From a phenomenological standpoint, these experiences matter because competence is not merely a set of externally prescribed behaviors but something encountered and given meaning through everyday interactions. Phenomenological inquiry is particularly appropriate when the purpose is to understand how individuals experience and interpret a phenomenon within the contexts in which it occurs (van Manen, 2014; Neubauer et al., 2019).

Parents provide a complementary perspective. Although parents may not directly observe routine classroom instruction, they encounter its perceived effects through their children's academic development, attitudes toward schooling, accounts of classroom experiences, and interactions with teachers. Parents may interpret teaching competence through observable changes in reading, writing, confidence, motivation, behavior, or school participation. Their perspectives can therefore offer insight into how instructional competence is understood beyond the classroom and how families judge teacher effectiveness. At the same time, parental perceptions should not be assumed to reproduce children's experiences. Differences between pupils' and parents' perspectives may also provide important information about how educational stakeholders observe, interpret, and understand teaching and classroom relationships differently.

Bringing these perspectives together is particularly important for educational management. School heads are responsible not only for monitoring instructional performance but also for cultivating safe learning environments, supporting teachers' professional development, implementing national policies, engaging families, and promoting continuous school improvement. The PPST itself recognizes that quality teaching involves relationships among instruction, learning environments, community engagement, and professional development (Department of Education–Teacher Education Council, 2017). Understanding how pupils and parents experience instructional competence may therefore provide school leaders with evidence that complements conventional supervisory mechanisms. Stakeholder perspectives may reveal instructional strengths requiring reinforcement, relational practices that support learning, and ethical or classroom-management concerns that require professional or administrative attention.

Although instructional competence has been widely studied, a significant gap remains in understanding how pupils' lived experiences and parents' perspectives shape it within Philippine public elementary schools. Much of the available literature conceptualizes teacher competence from professional, institutional, or performance-based perspectives, while comparatively less attention has been given to how stakeholders who directly experience or observe its everyday consequences understand competence. Moreover, pedagogical effectiveness, relational quality, learner development, and ethical classroom practice are frequently examined as separate concerns rather than as interconnected dimensions through which stakeholders may interpret competent teaching. This gap matters particularly in elementary education, where pupils' dependence on teachers for both academic guidance and classroom care makes instructional and interpersonal experiences inseparable.

Addressing this gap requires an approach that keeps participants' experiences and meanings central to the analysis. Rather than assuming predetermined indicators adequately represent instructional competence, a phenomenological inquiry offers an opportunity to examine how competence is experienced, recognized, negotiated, and interpreted in everyday schooling. Listening to pupils alongside parents can further reveal areas of convergence and divergence between direct classroom experience and family perceptions. Such evidence can broaden prevailing understandings of teacher quality and provide school leaders with a more stakeholder-informed basis for instructional supervision, professional development, child protection, and school improvement.

Against this background, this phenomenological study explored instructional competence through the lived experiences of pupils and the perspectives of parents in a Philippine public elementary school. Specifically, the study aimed to describe how pupils and parents perceive and experience teachers' instructional competence and to determine the implications of these experiences for educational management and school leadership. By examining instructional competence through pedagogical, relational, and ethical lenses, the study seeks to contribute a context-sensitive understanding of teacher quality that recognizes not only what teachers enable pupils to learn but also how learners experience teaching and how families interpret it.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore how pupils and parents experience and interpret teachers' instructional competence in a Philippine public elementary school. Phenomenology was appropriate because the study focused on participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attributed to teaching practices, relationships, and learning experiences (van Manen, 2014; Neubauer et al., 2019).

Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select 20 information-rich participants comprising 10 pupils and 10 parents (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The pupils were aged 9–12 years and had sufficient school experience to describe their interactions with teachers. Parents were primary caregivers of pupils enrolled in the same school and provided complementary perspectives on their children's educational experiences and development. We determined participant adequacy by the richness, relevance, and recurrence of information across accounts rather than by statistical representativeness.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to capture both individual and shared perspectives on instructional competence. Interviews began with broad questions before proceeding to participants' experiences of teaching practices, classroom relationships, learning, and teacher competence. Sessions were conducted in safe and convenient locations, audio-recorded with informed consent, and supplemented with notes on relevant non-verbal cues. Participants were allowed to communicate in English or the local language to facilitate comfortable and authentic expression of their experiences. The use of these complementary methods generated rich descriptions that captured the depth and complexity of participants' lived experiences (Bryman, 2008).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through an iterative thematic process consistent with the study's phenomenological purpose. Audio recordings were transcribed and repeatedly reviewed for familiarization. The analysis identified significant statements and meaning units related to instructional competence, then coded, compared, and clustered them into recurring themes. The analysis examined pupil and parent accounts for both convergence and divergence. Theoretical perspectives served as sensitizing concepts during interpretation rather than predetermined categories, keeping the themes grounded in participants' experiences.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was supported through member checking and comparison of interview and focus group accounts. Transferability was addressed through contextual descriptions of the participants and setting, while dependability was supported by documentation of data collection and analytical procedures. Confirmability was strengthened through reflective journaling and peer debriefing to minimize the influence of researcher assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent and school principal. Adult participants provided informed consent, while parental consent and child assent were secured for pupil participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw. Confidentiality was protected through anonymized participant codes and secure storage of research records. Particular sensitivity was observed when pupils discussed disciplinary experiences to protect their privacy, dignity, and welfare.

Reflexivity and Positionality

The researchers acknowledged that their backgrounds as educators could influence data collection and interpretation (Berger, 2015). Reflective journaling and peer debriefing were therefore used to examine assumptions and emerging interpretations. Language flexibility and rapport-building were also employed to ensure that participants' perspectives remained central to the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the major themes drawn from interviews with selected students are presented. Subsequently, these were confirmed by their parents' information in the focus group discussion.

Theme 1: Relational Competence as Core to Teaching

Maau siya mutudlo kay kasabot ko. Ganahan ko sa akong teacher. (My teacher is good in teaching, because I easily learn from her. So, I like my teacher.) - S1

Happy ko sapag-eskwela kay makabalo ko mubasa. Maayo si teacher nako sa pagtudlo kay makabasa na ko ug makasulat. Pero, naa langkoy dili mauyunan. Nagapangusi ang teacher nako. (I am happy with my studies because I have learned how to read. My teacher is good, for she teaches me how to read and write. However, there is one thing that I dislike about my teacher. She is inclined to pinch.) - S2

Ok man akong maestra kay gipasulat mi. Pero, naa koy dili nauyunan kay nagapamalo siya. (My teacher is OK, for she engages us in writing. However, what I do not like in her is that she tends to spank us.)- S3

Naganahan ko sa akong teacher kay buutan siya. Makasabot kosa pagtudlo niya kay naminaw ko niya. (I like my teacher because she is kind. When she teaches, I listen. So, it makes me easily understand the way she teaches.) -S4

This theme highlights that students' perceptions of instructional competence are neither uniform nor simplistic, but rather shaped by a range of experiences with different teachers, subjects, and classroom contexts. The variation in their responses reflects how competence is relationally and situationally defined—what counts as "good teaching" for one student may be grounded in interpersonal warmth, while for another it is rooted in concrete skill-building. These perspectives are inseparable from the broader socio-educational realities of Philippine public schools, where large class sizes, resource limitations, and the curriculum's strong emphasis on literacy condition how teaching is practiced and perceived.

Students' accounts suggest that instructional competence is understood through three interwoven dimensions: affective (teachers' kindness inspires participation), cognitive (teachers' instruction in reading and writing is recognized as essential), and practical (writing activities provide opportunities for application

and mastery). Collectively, these reveal that for learners, competence is not confined to technique alone; it emerges at the intersection of pedagogy, care, and context. In this sense, students position their teachers' effectiveness not as an abstract standard but as a lived reality that fosters motivation, literacy development, and meaningful engagement, as inferred from their testimonies.

This perspective resonates with Rogers' (1983) humanistic view of teaching as an act of empathy and authenticity that fosters learner confidence and holistic growth. Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist framework underscores the social dimension of learning, where positive relationships with more knowledgeable others are central to developing both cognitive and affective capacities. Recent studies affirm that relational competence—teachers' ability to establish trust, empathy, and care—significantly predicts students' academic engagement and motivation (Federici & Vangrieken, 2020; Roorda et al., 2023).

Theme 2: Tension Between Effective Teaching and Corporal Punishment

"Ok man akong maestra kay gipasulat mi. Pero, naa koy dili nauyunan kay nagapamalo siya. (My teacher is OK, for she engages us in writing. However, what I do not like in her is that she tends to spank us.) -S3

"Happy ko sapag eskwela ko ka makabalo ko mubasa. Maayo si teacher nako sa pagtudlo kay makabasa na ko ug makasulat. Pero, naa lang koy dili mauyunan. Nagapangusi ang teacher nako." ("I am happy with my studies because I have learned how to read. My teacher is good, for she teaches me how to read and write. However, there is one thing which I do not like about my teacher. She is inclined to pinch.")-S2

In the student interviews, a complex theme surfaced: while learners recognized their teachers as "good in teaching," this acknowledgment was tempered by accounts of corporal punishment, such as being pinched or spanked. This contradiction reveals how instructional competence is entangled with disciplinary practices. On the one hand, students valued their teachers' ability to facilitate learning; on the other, the persistence of punitive methods introduced tension into their perceptions. Rather than dismissing these experiences, students seemed to negotiate them—holding on to respect for their teachers' academic guidance while simultaneously disclosing practices that undermined the humane and supportive climate they otherwise desired. This suggests that in their lived experience, "good teaching" can coexist with problematic discipline, reflecting broader cultural norms of authority in classrooms and the lingering acceptance of corporal punishment in some educational settings, as inferred from their statements.

The consequences of such practices are well-documented. Corporal punishment has been linked to aggression, increased bullying, and poor psychological adjustment among learners (Zolotor et al., 2010; Cuartas et al., 2021). At the global level, the World Health Organization (2023) has categorized corporal as a public health concern due to its adverse effects on children's mental health, cognitive development, and social functioning. More recent evidence shows that exposure to violent discipline predicts lower academic performance and reduced classroom participation (Gershoff et al., 2023). In this light, while relational competence is celebrated as a transformative quality of teachers, corporal punishment represents a regressive force that erodes students' trust and diminishes the positive relational climate necessary for learning.

Theme 3: Demonstrative and Scaffolded Teaching

"Ginapakita nila ang ways arun makatuon ang mga bata. Example, sa pag-pronounce, gitudluan sa mga teachers kung paano mag pronounce o pag basa. Akong kamagulangan nga anak, hawud pud honor siya sapag graduate, pag abot niya sa Tadeco, hawud na siya." ("They show the ways so that their students can easily learn. For example, in pronunciation, the teachers teach their students how to pronounce words well or read. When my eldest son finished his education here with honors, he was really good in reading. So, when he studied in Tadeco, he maintained his academic honors.")- P3

In the focus group discussion, parents built on their children's testimonies, and from their collective reflections, the theme of Demonstrative Teaching emerged. This theme points to the affirmation of the parents that their children's progress in reading and writing is attributed to the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers. One parent illustrated how the demonstration method became more than a technique—it was a bridge between abstract knowledge and tangible learning. She stated that by modeling pronunciation and showing learners how to decode words, teachers transformed reading from a mechanical exercise into a step-by-step, accessible process. This parental observation suggests that instructional competence lies in the

ability to make learning visible and replicable, enabling children to internalize skills through guided practice. In this light, the demonstration method is interpreted not merely as a tool but as an empowering approach that scaffolds learners' confidence and independence, as inferred from her extracted testimony.

Several studies trace a link between teacher knowledge/instructional expertise and student reading outcomes. When teachers demonstrate, articulate, and scaffold, they translate complex knowledge about phonics, decoding, and comprehension into concrete classroom practices that students can observe, imitate, and internalize (Pressley et al., 1996; Lyon & Weiser, 2009; Ellis & Moss, 2013; Englert et al., 2019).

Theme 4. Good Human Relationships with Students

"Sweto nako sa the way sila mu care sa mga bata. Dili nila gina isipna laing tao ang mga bata. Gina-treat akita murag kadugo nila ang mga bata. Dili pud sila pabaya sa mga bata. Panatag ko sa mga pamaagi nila. Gani ang ginikanan, relaks lang ko." ("I am familiar with the way the teachers teach our children. They do not consider our children as strangers to them. They treat them like their relatives. They do care for our children. I am fully at ease with their ways, so as a parent, I feel relaxed.") – P2

"Ang mga maestra sa Tibungol nagatudlo maau sa mga bata. Wala nila ginapaagi sapag bunal kay bawal naman na. Ila jud na ginapakitasa mga bata ang pamaagi arun makabalo pud ang mga bata." ("The teachers in Tibungol teach well the children. They do not use corporal punishment, for it is restricted by law. They rather show the way for their children to learn.") – P3

A striking tension emerged when comparing the testimonies of students with those of their parents. While some children recounted experiences of corporal punishment, parents in the focus group discussion highlighted the contrasting theme of Good Human Relationships with Students. Their emphasis on kindness and care framed effective teaching as inseparable from the relational and ethical stance teachers adopt. For them, competence was not measured solely by instructional strategies, but by the ability of teachers to embody patience, warmth, and respect in their interactions.

This divergence between student and parent perspectives is revealing. On the one hand, it exposes how children's lived realities of discipline may conflict with parents' idealized or generalized views of teachers as "second parents." On the other hand, it underscores how both groups situate competence within the realm of human relationships, whether as an aspiration (parents' view of care and nurturance) or as a site of struggle (students' accounts of fear and punishment). The parents' insistence on a child-friendly, punishment-free classroom reveals an implicit critique of practices that undermine humane teaching. Thus, the tension itself becomes an interpretive lens: it demonstrates that instructional competence is negotiated not only through pedagogical ability, but also through the alignment—or misalignment—between relational ideals and disciplinary realities in the classroom.

Based on research studies, student narratives that foreground fear or punitive discipline illuminate the counterpoint: disciplinary realities can impede learning when fear inhibits risk-taking, inquiry, and engagement. This aligns with literatures on social-emotional learning and the detriments of high-punitive approaches for marginalized students, reinforcing that effective literacy and disciplinary practices must cohere with relational warmth and autonomy-supportive environments (Bailey et al., 2019; Marshall, n.d.; Stewart et al., 2021). The parental stance represents an interpretive lens where instructional competence includes capacity to create safe, respectful, and responsive classrooms that honor student dignity (Stewart et al., 2021; Bailey et al., 2019).

Theme 5: Development of Literacy and Skills

"Mabantayan nako ang kabaguhan sa akong anak. Gikan sa kinder pa akong mga anak, gitudloan man sila. Nakita nako ang ilahang development. Wala ko naga observe sa klase pero Makita nako sa akong anak ang kabag-uhan. Mismo ang akong anak ang mag tabi kung unsa ilang gihimo." (I observe changes in my children. Since they were in kinder, they have been taught. I have seen their development. Though I do not observe them in their classes, I have seen changes in them. It is my children who tell me about their doings in school.) – P1

"Basin sa pagtudlo sa mga maestra, ok man Sir kay nakita man nako ang kausaban sa akong anak. Sweto nako sa the way sila mu-care sa mga bata." (With regards to teaching, it is OK, Sir, for I have seen the improvement of my child. I knew the way they care for the students.) – P2

On the other hand, the theme of Development of Students' Knowledge and Skills surfaced strongly in the focus group discussion, as parents unanimously validated their children's claims of learning from their teachers. What stood out in their reflections was that "good teaching" was not equated with mere instructional delivery, but interpreted as a transformative force shaping their children's educational trajectories. Parents framed competence less as a technical ability to cover content and more as the capacity to cultivate growth, both cognitive and personal. Their trust in teachers was anchored in visible outcomes—progress in reading and writing—which they regarded as more than functional literacy skills. For them, these were markers of their children's readiness to navigate schooling and life, concrete proof of teachers' effectiveness and care. This interpretation suggests that parents positioned instructional competence at the intersection of pedagogy and human development: teaching was valued not just for transmitting knowledge, but for shaping learners' confidence, motivation, and future possibilities. In this sense, their acknowledgment reflects a broader vision of education as an act of guidance and formation, where teachers are entrusted with nurturing children's holistic growth.

The claim that progress in reading and writing serves as concrete proof of teacher effectiveness and care is supported by work emphasizing observable literacy outcomes as signals of instructional quality and teacher competence. (Cromwell et al., 2024; Lyon & Weiser, 2009; Pressley et al., 1996) These sources argue that modeling, explicit instruction, guided practice, and progress monitoring translate teacher knowledge into visible student gains, which parents and stakeholders interpret as evidence of care and efficacy. (Englert et al., 2020; Pressley et al., 1996)

CONCLUSIONS

Instructional competence in elementary education cannot be adequately understood through technical teaching performance alone. The lived experiences examined in this study indicate that competence is constructed through the interaction of pedagogical effectiveness, supportive teacher–learner relationships, ethical practice, and learners' perceived development. The contrasting accounts of pupils and parents further demonstrate the importance of incorporating multiple stakeholder perspectives into school-based understandings of teacher quality. For educational management, these insights call for approaches to instructional supervision and professional development that place learner dignity, positive relationships, reflective practice, and child protection alongside pedagogical effectiveness. Instructional competence should therefore be understood not only in terms of what teachers enable pupils to learn, but also in terms of the conditions under which that learning occurs.

REFERENCES

- Bailey, R., Meland, E., Brion-Meisels, G., & Jones, S. (2019). Getting Developmental Science Back Into Schools: Can What We Know About Self-Regulation Help Change How We Think About "No Excuses"? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01885>
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cuartas, J., McCoy, D. C., Rey-Guerra, C., Britto, P. R., Beatriz, E., & Salhi, C. (2021). Corporal punishment and children's development: A meta-analysis and global estimate. *Child Development*, 92(5), 2103–2126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13534>
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Oakes, J. (2021). *Preparing teachers for deeper learning*. Harvard Education Press.
- Department of Education – Teacher Education Council. (2017). National adoption and implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017). Department of Education.
- Ellis, S. and Moss, G. (2013). Ethics, education policy and research: the phonics question reconsidered. *British Educational Research Journal*, 40(2), 241–260. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3039>

- Englert, C. S., Mariage, T. V., Truckenmiller, A. J., Brehmer, J., Hicks, K., & Chamberlain, C. (2020). Preparing special education preservice teachers to teach phonics to struggling readers: Reducing the gap between expert and novice performance. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 43(3), 235–256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406419863365>
- Federici, R. A., & Vangrieken, K. (2020). Teachers' relational competence: A review and research agenda. *Educational Psychology Review*, 32(2), 203–227. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09500-0>
- Gepila, E. C. (2020). Teachers' competence in managing learning environments and addressing learner diversity. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 11(4), 1–14.
- Gershoff, E. T., Goodman, G. S., Miller-Perrin, C. L., Holden, G. W., Jackson, Y., & Kazdin, A. E. (2023). The case against corporal punishment of children: Converging evidence from psychology, pediatrics, and neuroscience. *American Psychologist*, 78(1), 59–74. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000905>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Lyon, G. and Weiser, B. (2009). Teacher Knowledge, Instructional Expertise, and the Development of Reading Proficiency. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 42(5), 475–480. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022219409338741>
- Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 8(2), 90–97. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2>
- Piaget, J. (1964). Development and learning. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 2(3), 176–186. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.3660020306>
- Pressley, M., Rankin, J., & Yokoi, L. (1996). A Survey of Instructional Practices of Primary Teachers Nominated as Effective in Promoting Literacy. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96(4), 363–384. <https://doi.org/10.1086/461834>
- Rogers, C. R. (1983). *Freedom to learn for the 80s*. Charles E. Merrill.
- Roorda, D. L., Zee, M., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2023). Don't forget about teacher–student relationships! A meta-analysis update on teacher–student relationships and student outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 93(2), 163–201. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543221126236>
- Stronge, J. H. (2018). *Qualities of effective teachers* (3rd ed.). ASCD.
- Taber, K. S. (2022). Constructivism as educational theory: Contingency in learning, and optimally guided instruction. *Educational Theory*, 72(2), 195–213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12521>
- Talahiban, H. A., Malabarbas, D. G., Amoto, C. G., & Mendoza, J. C. (2022). Teaching competencies of public elementary school teachers in a remote district. *Journal of Qualitative Social Sciences*, 3(1), 1–10.
- van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Left Coast Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- World Health Organization. (2023). Violence against children [Fact sheet]. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children>
- Zeichner, K. M., & Liston, D. P. (2014). *Reflective teaching: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Zolotor, A. J., Theodore, A. D., Chang, J. J., Berkoff, M. C., & Runyan, D. K. (2010). Corporal punishment and children's psychosocial outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Pediatrics*, 125(5), e1057–e1068. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2009-2427>