Proficiency in Early Childhood Care and Development of Kindergarten Teachers in Manila Public Schools

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Abstract

This study sought to determine the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers of public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila during the School Year 2025-2026 through a quantitative-descriptive-correlational research design. The data used in this study came from the 138 kindergarten teachers and ten school heads which were subjected to frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, the chi-square test of independence, and the t-test. Results showed that: majority of the kindergarten teachers have no post-graduate degree, have been teaching for more than ten years, and have attended not more than three trainings related with early childhood care and development for the past five years; in general, the kindergarten teachers perceived that the level of their proficiency in early childhood care and development is proficient as evidenced by the computed overall weighted mean of 3.92 and the school heads perceived that the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers is only moderately proficient as evidenced by the computed overall weighted mean of 2.96; there is a significant relationship between the highest educational attainment, the length of teaching experience, and the number of relevant trainings attended of the kindergarten teachers and the level of their proficiency in early childhood care and development; and, there is a significant difference between the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and their school heads on the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers. Given the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: a typical kindergarten teacher of a public elementary school in the Schools Division of the City of Manila has no post-graduate degree, has been teaching for more than 10 years already, and has attended not more than three trainings related with early childhood care and development; the kindergarten teachers perceived that the level of their proficiency on early childhood care and development is proficient while the school heads perceived that the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers is only moderately proficient; the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers is influenced by their highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and the number of relevant trainings attended; and, the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and the school heads on the level of proficiency of the kindergarten teachers on early childhood care and development are significantly different from each other.

Keywords: proficiency in early childhood care and development; kindergarten teachers; teacher proficiency; professional development; teacher education

Introduction

Early childhood, particularly the kindergarten stage, is a critical period in human growth and development because it lays the foundation for children's future learning, development, and well-being. During this stage, children attain significant developmental milestones and begin to develop fundamental processes related to growth, interaction, learning, care, and education (Reyes & Meimban, 2025; Zeng, Gui, & Wang, 2025). In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 10157 emphasizes that kindergarten education should be learner-centered and responsive to learners' needs, capacities, circumstances, and diversity. Consistent with this policy, the Department of Education's National Early Learning Framework underscores the importance of child growth and development, learning program development, and learning assessment in providing holistic and developmentally appropriate early childhood education. These principles recognize that children develop at different rates, learn through meaningful and authentic experiences, and require nurturing, supportive, and responsive environments. Consequently, kindergarten teachers are expected to possess appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional competencies to effectively support children's holistic development. Amor and Cacharo (2025) emphasized that kindergarten teachers need a strong understanding of early childhood education to become intentional and effective educators, while Taridi and Dono (2019) highlighted the importance of meaningful and high-quality teacher-child interactions in promoting healthy growth and learning. Bai and Al. (2022) further identified professional competencies essential for kindergarten teachers, including observation, reflection, communication, adaptability, cooperation, organization, and instructional design. Moreover, professional development opportunities such as workshops, seminars, conferences, coursework, and communities of practice have been found to strengthen early childhood educators' knowledge, beliefs, self-efficacy, and classroom practices (Pazur, Domovic, & Drvodelic, 2023). Ideally, therefore, kindergarten teachers should demonstrate a high level of proficiency in early childhood care and development to ensure that young learners receive responsive, appropriate, and quality education.

Despite the recognized importance of teacher proficiency in early childhood care and development, the extent to which kindergarten teachers demonstrate the competencies needed to effectively address the diverse developmental needs of young learners remains a concern. The principles of the National Early Learning Framework require teachers to respond appropriately to children's individual differences, provide varied and meaningful learning experiences, utilize suitable and locally available resources, conduct developmentally appropriate assessments, and establish supportive relationships with children, families, and communities. However, possessing these expectations does not necessarily ensure that teachers have sufficient proficiency to translate them into consistent classroom practices. Previous studies have established the competencies that kindergarten teachers should possess and have identified professional development strategies that may enhance teachers' knowledge and instructional practices (Amor & Cacharo, 2025; Bai & Al., 2022; Pazur, Domovic, & Drvodelic, 2023); however, these studies provide limited information regarding the actual level of proficiency of kindergarten teachers specifically in early childhood care and development within the context of public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila. There is therefore a need to determine whether kindergarten teachers possess adequate competencies across the various areas of early childhood care and development and to identify specific areas in which they may require further support and professional enhancement. Without a clear assessment of their existing proficiency, training programs may not be sufficiently

responsive to teachers' actual needs and may fail to address specific competency gaps affecting the delivery of quality kindergarten education.

In response to these gaps, the present study aims to assess the proficiency in early childhood care and development of kindergarten teachers in public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the teachers' level of proficiency in relevant areas of early childhood care and development, identify areas of strength and aspects requiring improvement, and use the findings as a basis for developing an appropriate enhancement training program. The proposed training program is intended to provide targeted professional development opportunities that will strengthen teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices in addressing the developmental, learning, care, and assessment needs of kindergarten learners. Through this endeavor, the study seeks to contribute to the continuous professional development of kindergarten teachers and to support the effective implementation of learner-centered and developmentally appropriate early childhood education in public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed the quantitative-descriptive method of research. It described the kindergarten teachers of public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila in terms of highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and number of relevant seminars/trainings attended as well as determined the level of their proficiency in early childhood care and development. The study was also correlational for it determined if there is a significant relationship between the profile variables of the kindergarten teachers and the level of their proficiency in early childhood care and development and if there is a significant difference between the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and the school heads on the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers.

Moreover, the developmental method of research was also employed for the study came up with a proposed enhancement training program to enhance the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers.

Sources of Data

This study was conducted in ten public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila during the School Year 2025-2026.

Sampling. There two groups of respondents in this study, namely, the kindergarten teachers and their school heads. All the 138 kindergarten teachers and ten school heads of the ten public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila were taken as respondents. Thus, no sampling was done. The distribution of the kindergarten teachers per the ten public elementary schools is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the Kindergarten Teachers per Public Elementary School

Public Elementary School	Frequency	Percentage
Benigno Aquino Elementary School	27	20%
Lukban Elementary School	13	9%
Celedonio Salvador Elementary School	7	5%
Moises Salvador Elementary School	4	3%
Epifanio Delos Santos Elementary School	17	12%
Aurora A. Quezon Elementary School	18	13%
Atienza Elementary School	12	9%
Rafael Palma Elementary School	12	9%
Fernando Ma. Guerrero Elementary School	19	14%
Margarita Roxas De Ayala Elementary School	9	6%
Total	137	100%

Research Participants. As mentioned, all the 138 kindergarten teachers of and ten school heads were made as respondents in the study. The kindergarten teachers provided data relative to their profile in terms of highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and number of relevant trainings attended as well as the level of their proficiency in early childhood care and development. On the other hand, the school heads provides data relative to the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers.

Instrument and Data Collection

Instrumentation. The data utilized in this study were gathered through two survey-questionnaire – one for the kindergarten teachers and one for the school heads.

The survey-questionnaire for the kindergarten teachers had two parts. The first part looked into the profile of the kindergarten teachers in terms of highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and number of relevant seminars/trainings attended. And, the second part focused on the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers. On the other hand, the survey-questionnaire for the school heads only concentrated on the level of proficiency in in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers.

Trustworthiness. The items in the first part of the survey-questionnaire which is about the profile of the kindergarten teachers is common in researches. Hence, no validation is required.

With respect to the second part of the survey-questionnaire which is about the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers, the items were based from the survey-questionnaire of Macaraeg (2023) in her study entitled “Extent of Competence in Early Childhood Care and Development of the Kindergarten Teachers in Malasiqui II District: Basis for a Proposed District-Based Enhancement Program.” The items in this survey-questionnaire were validated by the researcher and, hence, are considered valid and reliable.

Data Collection. In collecting the data needed in the study, the researcher personally administered the survey-questionnaire to the kindergarten teachers and the school heads giving them two weeks to answer. After two weeks, the researcher retrieved the survey questionnaire.

Ethical Considerations. So as not to violate the data privacy of the kindergarten teachers and the school heads, permission to conduct the study was first secured from the school heads of the ten public elementary schools. Thereafter, informed consent was taken from the kindergarten teachers and the school heads.

Moreover, the researcher treated the data gathered with utmost confidentially and were used only for the purpose of answering the research questions of the study in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of the Philippines. Likewise, authors of researches, articles, and other scholar works used in this study were cited, properly acknowledged, and documented.

Tools for Data Analysis

To determine the profile of the kindergarten teachers of public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila, the data gathered were subjected to frequency count and percentage employing the formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

where:

P = the computed percentage

f = the observed frequency

N = total number of subject cases

To determine the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers, the weighted mean was used employing the formula:

$$WM = \frac{\sum wX}{\sum w}$$

where:

WM = weighted mean

$\sum$ = summation

W = weighing factor

X = frequency.

Moreover, the weighted means computed were interpreted using this scale of interpretation:

not proficient = 1.00 – 1.49

slightly proficient = 1.50 – 2.49

moderately proficient = 2.50 – 3.49

proficient = 3.50 – 4.49

highly proficient = 4.50 – 5.00.

To determine if there is a significant relationship between the profile variables of the kindergarten teachers and the level of their proficiency in early childhood care and development, the chi square test of independence.

And, to determine if there is a significant difference between the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and the school heads on the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers, the t-test was utilized.

Results

Profile of Teachers

This section presents the profile of the Kindergarten teachers of public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila to answer the first sub-problem of the study.

On Highest Educational Attainment

With respect to the educational attainment, the kindergarten teachers were given five choices, namely, bachelor's degree, completed academic requirements in the master's degree, master's degree, completed academic requirements in the doctorate degree, and doctorate degree. Table 2 indicates the results.

Table 2. Distribution of the Kindergarten Teachers in terms of Highest Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	75	54%
Completed academic requirements in the Master's Degree	38	28%
Master's Degree	23	17%
Completed academic requirements in the Doctorate Degree	2	1%
Doctorate Degree	0	0%
Total	138	100%

As presented by Table 2, 75 or 54% of the kindergarten teachers are bachelor's degree holders, 38 or 28% have completed the academic requirements for the master's degree, 23 or 17% are master's degree holders, and two or 1% have completed the academic requirements for the doctorate degree. It can be noted that majority of the kindergarten teachers of public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila have no post-graduate degree.

Level of Proficiency in Early Childhood Care and Development of the Kindergarten Teachers

This section provides answers to the second sub-problem of the study which is about the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers as perceived by themselves and by the school heads.

To provide answers to the sub-problem, the kindergarten teachers and their school heads were asked to rate the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers along three areas, namely: child growth, development, and learning; health, safety, nutrition, and well-being; and, curriculum.

On Child Growth, Development, and Learning

The kindergarten teachers and their school heads assessed the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development along child growth, development, and learning of the kindergarten teachers.

Assessment of the Kindergarten Teachers. The assessment of the kindergarten teachers on the level of their proficiency on early childhood care and development along child growth, development, and learning is presented in Table 5.

As provided in Table 5, when asked as to what level they can explain the different developmental domains, 46 of the kindergarten teachers claimed "moderately proficient," 57 claimed "proficient," and 35 claimed "highly proficient." The weighted mean computed here is 3.92 which is pointing to "proficient" in the scale.

When questioned as to what level they can describe the different developmental characteristics of a child, 36 of the kindergarten teachers said "moderately proficient," 70 said "proficient," and 32 said "highly proficient." In this item, the weighted mean computed is 3.97 which is leading to "proficient" in the scale of interpretation.

When queried as to what level they can recognize that a child develops along a continuum that is unique to each individual, 35 of the kindergarten teachers mentioned "moderately proficient," 80 mentioned "proficient," and 23 mentioned "highly proficient." The weighted mean computed here is 3.91 which is indicative of "proficient" in the scale.

Table 5. The Level of Proficiency on Early Childhood Care and Development along Child Growth, Development and Learning of the Kindergarten Teachers as Perceived by Themselves

Assessment Items	Responses					WM	DE
	NP	SP	MP	PR	HP		

1. Explain the different developmental domains	0	0	46	57	35	3.92	PR
2. Describe the different developmental characteristics of a child	0	0	36	70	32	3.97	PR
3. Recognize that a child develops along a continuum that is unique to each individual	0	0	35	80	23	3.91	PR
4. Articulate that development is continuous and generally sequential	0	0	44	61	33	3.92	PR
5. Apply knowledge of child development and learning in determining children at-risk for delays	0	0	51	54	33	3.87	PR
6. Employ principles of child growth and development	0	0	55	50	33	3.84	PR
7. Use play as a vehicle for learning the physical, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and creative and aesthetic domains	0	0	36	59	43	4.05	PR
8. Respond to the needs of a child based on his/her developmental characteristics	0	0	32	63	43	4.08	PR
9. Recognize that learning advances when a child is challenged to achieve at a level just beyond his/her current mastery and also when he/she has many opportunities to practice newly acquired skills	0	0	58	37	43	3.89	PR
10. Demonstrate understanding of a child's background	0	0	44	61	33	3.92	PR
11. Accept each child as a unique individual, including his/her diverse linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds	0	0	50	65	23	3.80	PR
					AWM	3.93	PR

Legend: WM = Weighted Mean; DE = Descriptive Equivalent; AWM = Area Weighted Mean. Scale: 1.00-1.49 = Not Proficient, 1.50-2.49 = Slightly Proficient, 2.50-3.49 = Moderately Proficient, 3.50-4.49 = Proficient, 4.50-5.00 = Highly Proficient.

Difference Between Perceptions

This part of the chapter discusses answers to the fourth sub-problem of the study which is about the significant difference between the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and the school heads on the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers.

To provide answers to the sub-problem, the researcher worked on the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and their school heads on the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers. Thereafter, the researcher compared the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and their school heads on the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers using the t-test. Here, the researcher computed the p value at .05 level of significance. Table 13 presents the results.

As shown in Table 13, when the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and their school heads on the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers are compared, the p value computed is 0.00. This figure is lower than the .05 level of significance. As such, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant difference between the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and their school heads on the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers.

Table 13. Difference between the Perceptions of the Kindergarten Teachers and the School Heads

	Computed p Value	Level of Significance	RM
Level of Proficiency on Early Childhood Care and Development of the Kindergarten Teachers	0.00	.05	S

Legend:
RM = remarks
S = significant
NS = not significant

Relationship Between Profile Variables and Research Competence

This part of the chapter provides answers to the third sub-problem of the study which is about the significant relationship between the profile variables of the kindergarten teachers and the level of their proficiency on early childhood care and development.

To provide answers to the sub-problem, the researcher worked on the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the profile variables of the kindergarten teachers and the level of their proficiency on early childhood care and development. Thereafter, the researcher correlated the profile variables of the kindergarten teachers and the level of their proficiency on early childhood care and development using the chi-square test of independence in the Microsoft Excel. Here, the researcher computed for the p value and the chi square value at .05 level of significance. Table 12 presents the results.

Table 12. *Relationship Between Profile Variables of the Kindergarten Teachers and the Level of Their Proficiency on Early Childhood Care and Development*

Profile Variables	Chi Square Value	Chi Square Critical Value	RM
Highest Educational Attainment	5.60	3.84	S
Length of Teaching Experience	5.97	3.84	S
Number of Relevant Trainings	6.29	3.84	S

Legend:

RM = remarks

S = significant

NS = not significant

Discussion

The findings revealed that the kindergarten teachers in public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila have varied educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, and participation in relevant trainings. In terms of educational attainment, the majority of the teachers, or 54%, were bachelor's degree holders, while only 17% had completed a master's degree and 1% had completed the academic requirements for a doctorate degree. This indicates that most kindergarten teachers had not yet obtained a postgraduate degree. In terms of teaching experience, the largest group, comprising 34%, had 11–15 years of teaching experience, followed by those with 6–10 years at 29%. Overall, the majority had more than ten years of teaching experience, suggesting that most teachers were relatively experienced in the profession. Regarding relevant trainings, 70% had attended not more than three trainings related to early childhood care and development during the past five years, while 30% had attended more than three trainings. This suggests that opportunities for continuing professional development in early childhood care and development may still need to be strengthened.

In terms of proficiency in early childhood care and development, the kindergarten teachers generally perceived themselves as proficient in all three areas: child growth, development, and learning; health, safety, nutrition, and well-being; and curriculum. Their overall weighted mean was 3.92, interpreted as proficient. Specifically, child growth, development, and learning and curriculum both obtained an area weighted mean of 3.93, while health, safety, nutrition, and well-being obtained 3.90. These findings indicate that the teachers believed they possessed adequate knowledge and skills in addressing children's developmental needs, promoting health and safety, and implementing developmentally appropriate and play-based curriculum practices.

However, the school heads provided a different assessment of the teachers' proficiency. They rated the teachers as only moderately proficient, with an overall weighted mean of 2.96. The areas of child growth, development, and learning, health, safety, nutrition, and well-being, and curriculum obtained weighted means of 2.99, 2.96, and 2.93, respectively. Although these results indicate that the teachers demonstrated a considerable level of competence, the school heads

perceived that further improvement was needed in all three areas. The difference between the teachers' self-assessment and the school heads' assessment suggests a gap between perceived and observed proficiency.

The study also established that the teachers' highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and number of relevant trainings attended were significantly related to their level of proficiency in early childhood care and development. The computed chi-square values for educational attainment (5.60), teaching experience (5.97), and relevant trainings (6.29) were all higher than the critical value of 3.84. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected for all three variables. These findings indicate that professional preparation, years of teaching experience, and participation in relevant training are associated with the teachers' proficiency in early childhood care and development.

Furthermore, a significant difference was found between the perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and school heads regarding the teachers' level of proficiency. The computed p-value of 0.00 was lower than the 0.05 level of significance, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. This confirms that the two groups did not have the same assessment of the teachers' proficiency. The teachers generally viewed themselves as proficient, whereas the school heads considered them moderately proficient. This difference highlights the need for continuous professional development and objective assessment of teachers' competencies.

Based on the findings, particularly the limited number of relevant trainings attended by most teachers, the moderate proficiency ratings provided by school heads, and the significant relationship between training participation and proficiency, an Enhancement Training Program on Early Childhood Care and Development was proposed. The program consists of three one-day seminar-workshops focusing on Child Growth, Development, and Learning; Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-being; and Curriculum. The program is designed to strengthen teachers' knowledge, skills, and practical competencies through an interactive, collaborative, and participatory approach. Overall, the proposed program aims to address identified areas for improvement and enhance the capacity of kindergarten teachers to provide appropriate, responsive, safe, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young children.

Conclusion

Based on the findings made, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. A typical kindergarten teacher of a public elementary school in the Schools Division of the City of Manila has no post-graduate degree, has been teaching for more than 10 years already, and has attended not more than three trainings related with early childhood care and development.

2. The kindergarten teachers perceived that the level of their proficiency on early childhood care and development is proficient while the school heads perceived that the level of proficiency in early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers is only moderately proficient.

3. The level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers is influenced by their highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and the number of relevant trainings attended.

4. The perceptions of the kindergarten teachers and the school heads on the level of proficiency of the kindergarten teachers on early childhood care and development are significantly different from each other.

5. The proposed enhancement training program will improve the level of proficiency on early childhood care and development of the kindergarten teachers of public elementary schools in the Schools Division of the City of Manila.

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