

Competencies and Work Performance of Beginning Reading Teachers in Public Elementary Schools

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Abstract

This study determined the competencies and work performance of beginning reading teachers in public elementary schools in Baras District, Division of Rizal during the School Year 2025–2026. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study examined teachers' competencies in key areas of reading instruction, including knowledge of reading development, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, comprehension strategies, and assessment and progress monitoring, as well as their corresponding work performance based on the Performance Management and Evaluation System (PMES). The respondents were primarily female, aged 31–35, married, holding a baccalaureate degree, occupying Teacher I positions, with 1–5 years of teaching experience, and with participation in division-level in-service trainings. Findings revealed that beginning reading teachers were very much competent across all domains of reading instruction and demonstrated very satisfactory work performance. No significant differences in competencies were found when respondents were grouped according to age, sex, civil status, position, length of service, and in-service trainings attended. However, educational attainment showed a significant difference in selected competency areas, particularly in reading development, phonemic awareness and phonics, and assessment practices. Furthermore, a significant relationship was established between teachers' competencies and their work performance, indicating that higher levels of instructional competence contribute to improved teaching effectiveness. Challenges encountered by teachers included limited resources, insufficient access to digital tools, and learner-related behavioral and socio-emotional concerns. The study concluded that educational attainment is a key factor influencing teachers' competencies, while other demographic variables have minimal effect. It also affirmed that strengthening teachers' competencies enhances their work performance. The study recommends the development of targeted training programs, establishment of professional learning communities, increased resource allocation, and continuous professional development through graduate studies, mentoring, and coaching. Implementation of the proposed action plan and further research on related variables are also encouraged.

Keywords: beginning reading teachers, competencies, work performance, reading instruction, phonemic awareness, assessment, elementary education

1. Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument in equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to become productive members of society. It serves as the foundation for lifelong learning and sustainable development, enabling individuals to adapt to the demands of an ever-changing world. As stipulated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Section 2, the State shall establish and maintain a system of education that is relevant to the needs of the people and society. In line with this mandate, the Department of Education continuously implements programs and policies aimed at improving literacy and overall educational outcomes. Among these, early language and literacy development is given utmost priority, as emphasized in DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2018, which underscores the importance of developing foundational skills in reading, writing, and numeracy among learners from Kindergarten to Grade 3. Reading is a critical component of education, as it directly influences learners' academic performance and engagement across subject areas. Proficient readers are more likely to succeed academically, while those with reading difficulties often struggle in comprehension and overall learning. Despite the implementation of various reading interventions, many learners continue to face challenges in reading proficiency, highlighting the need for effective instructional practices. Teachers, particularly those handling beginning readers, play a vital role in addressing these challenges. Their competencies in the essential components of literacy instruction—oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—are crucial in shaping learners' reading development.

Several foreign and local studies have explored the relationship between teachers' competencies and learners' reading outcomes. Dilgard et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of phonics instruction and professional learning in improving reading achievement, while Nilsson (2021) highlighted the effectiveness of targeted interventions and teacher-

student relationships in supporting struggling readers. Similarly, Muzammil and Saifullah (2022) found that scaffolding strategies significantly enhance reading comprehension, and Schmidt and Tiba (2021) underscored the value of explicit instruction in developing higher-order comprehension skills. Porter et al. (2023) further established that teachers' knowledge of language and literacy significantly predicts learners' reading outcomes, particularly in foundational skills. In the local context, Pocaan (2022) and Ditona and Rico (2021) demonstrated that well-designed reading interventions improve learners' reading abilities, while Montales (2022) and Valido (2025) confirmed that teaching strategies and instructional practices significantly influence reading performance. Padua (2023) also highlighted the importance of teachers' competencies in relation to their work performance, emphasizing the need for adequate instructional resources and continuous professional development. Despite these significant contributions, several research gaps remain evident. First, many studies focus primarily on learners' reading performance and intervention strategies, with limited emphasis on the competencies and work performance of beginning reading teachers. Second, while existing research confirms the importance of teacher competencies, there is insufficient empirical evidence examining how these competencies directly relate to teachers' work performance, particularly in the context of beginning reading instruction. Third, inconsistencies in findings regarding the influence of teachers' demographic and professional profiles on their competencies suggest the need for further investigation. Lastly, there is a scarcity of localized studies focusing specifically on beginning reading teachers in public elementary schools within the Division of Rizal.

Given these gaps, the present study aims to assess the competencies and work performance of beginning reading teachers in public elementary schools in Baras District, Division of Rizal. By examining the relationship between teachers' competencies and their work performance, this study seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can inform the development of targeted professional development programs, improve instructional practices, and ultimately enhance learners' reading outcomes.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study applied the descriptive method of research specifically, the survey design.

2.2 Research Setting

This study was conducted in public elementary schools in Baras District, Division of Rizal. These schools include Baras Elementary School, Baras Pinugay Elementary School, Paopawan Elementary School, Baras-Pinugay Phase 2 Elementary School, Evangelista Elementary School, Malalim Elementary School, Painaan Elementary School, Heroesville Elementary School, Pinugay Elementary School, San Roque Elementary School, and Santiago Elementary School. The schools offer complete elementary education from kindergarten to grade six.

2.3 Respondents

The respondents of the study were the total population of teachers in the selected public elementary schools in the Sub-Office of Baras. These consist of 121 primary grade teachers handling key stage 1. They were described in terms of age, sex, civil status, position title, length of service, educational attainment and in-service trainings attended.

2.4 Research Instruments

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire-checklist as the primary instrument for data collection, composed of three parts. Part I gathered the respondents' demographic profile, including age, sex, civil status, position title, length of service, educational attainment, and in-service trainings attended. Part II measured the competencies and work performance of beginning reading teachers across four key domains: knowledge of reading development, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, comprehension strategies, and assessment and progress monitoring. This section contained 40 items rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" (Least Competent) to "Always" (Very Much Competent). Part III assessed the extent of challenges encountered by teachers using a similar 5-point scale, from "Not Encountered" to "Always Encountered." Additionally, teachers' work performance was determined based on their latest Performance Management and Evaluation System (PMES) ratings. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to content validation by experts in the field of education and research, including professorial lecturers, the thesis adviser, statistician, school head, master teacher, and the dean of the Graduate Studies Program. Their feedback and recommendations were carefully reviewed and incorporated into the final version of the instrument to enhance its clarity, relevance, and overall quality.

2.5 Data Collection

The study followed the Gantt Chart of Activities in the conduct of the research. This included the formulation of the research problem up to the revision of the manuscript and submission of the final copy. The questionnaire-checklist was content-validated and afterwards, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. The questionnaire-checklist was then administered to the respondents using Google Form. The researcher

was also guided by the Data Privacy Act. After the retrieval, the data were encoded and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data were analyzed and interpreted based on the sub-problems. Summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations were formulated. After the oral defense, the manuscript was revised considering the comments and suggestions of the Oral Examination Committee. The manuscript was also subjected to an anti-plagiarism process at the statistical center. After finalization, hardbound copies were submitted to the Office of the Graduate Studies Program and other offices.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data gathered in the study were analyzed and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools. Frequency, percentage, and rank distribution were used to describe the profile of the respondents. The level of competencies of beginning reading teachers across the identified domains was determined using weighted mean, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to identify significant differences in competencies when grouped according to their profile variables. Moreover, the level of work performance of beginning reading teachers, based on their latest Performance Management and Evaluation System (PMES) ratings, was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Correlation analysis was utilized to determine the significant relationship between teachers' competencies and their work performance. Lastly, the extent of challenges encountered by beginning reading teachers was measured using weighted mean to identify the frequency and severity of these challenges.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study ensured the protection of the rights and welfare of all respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided were strictly maintained, and data were used solely for research purposes. The researcher ensured that the respondents were treated with respect and that no harm, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, would result from their participation in the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Selected Variables

As shown in the table, out of 121 respondents, 34.7% are 31 – 35 years old while 13.2% are 51 – 55 years old. In terms of sex, 94.2% are female while 5.8% of them are male. With regard to their civil status, most of them are married with 62.0% while 1.7% are widow/widower. As to their educational attainment, 52.1% are baccalaureate degree holders while 1.7% are EdD / PhD graduates and with EdD / Ph.D. units. In terms of position title, most of them are Teacher I with 80.2% while 0.8% are Master Teacher I and Teacher II. In addition, in terms of their length of service, 43.8% were in the service for 1 - 5 years, and 4.1 % were in service for 26 years and above. Meanwhile, in terms of in-service trainings attended, most of them attended at the division level at 35.5 % while 1.7% of them attended at the international level.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent	Rank
21 – 25 years old	39	32.2	2
31 – 35 years old	42	34.7	1
41 – 45 years old	24	19.8	3
51 – 55 years old	16	13.2	4
Total	121	100.0	
Sex			
Male	7	5.8	2
Female	114	94.2	1
Total	121	100.0	
Civil Status			
Single	44	36.4	2
Married	75	62.0	1
Widow/er	2	1.7	3
Total	121	100.0	
Educational Attainment			
EdD / PhD Graduate	2	1.7	4.5
With EdD / PhD Units	2	1.7	4.5
Master's Degree	31	25.6	2
Master's Degree Units	23	19.0	3
Baccalaureate Degree	63	52.1	1
Total	121	100.0	
Position Title			

Master Teacher II	2	1.7	3
Master Teacher I	1	0.8	4.5
Teacher III	20	16.5	2
Teacher II	1	0.8	4.5
Teacher I	97	80.2	1
Total	121	100.0	
Length of Service			
1 - 5 years	53	43.8	1
6 - 10 years	28	23.1	2
11 - 15 years	19	15.7	3
16 - 20 years	7	5.8	5
21 - 25 years	9	7.4	4
26 years & above	5	4.1	6
Total	121	100.0	
In-service Trainings Attended			
International Level	2	1.7	6
National Level	6	5.0	5
Regional Level	8	6.6	4
Division Level	43	35.5	1
District Level	32	26.4	2
School Level	30	24.8	3
Total	121	100.0	

3.2. Level of Competencies of Beginning Reading Teachers as Perceived by Themselves with Respect to Knowledge of Reading Development, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction, Comprehension Strategies, and Assessment and Progress Monitoring

As shown in the composite table, the overall mean obtained is 4.55, verbally interpreted as Always (Very Much Competent). First in rank is phonemic awareness and phonics instruction with a mean of 4.73, followed by knowledge of reading development at 4.61, verbally interpreted as Always (Very Much Competent), then, comprehension strategies at 4.46, and lastly, assessment and progress monitoring at 4.40, both interpreted as Often (Much Competent). These results indicate that teachers demonstrate a high level of competence across all aspects of reading instruction. This means that beginning reading teachers are very much competent in employing knowledge of reading development, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, comprehension strategies, and assessment and progress monitoring to their pupils. Their competence in phonemic awareness and phonics instruction reflects their deep understanding of foundational literacy components, enabling them to effectively teach sound-symbol relationships and decoding strategies. Likewise, their strong knowledge of reading development allows them to design lessons appropriate to learners' developmental stages and reading needs. Competence in comprehension strategies highlights teachers' ability to cultivate critical thinking and independent reading skills through questioning, guided discussions, and reflective activities. Meanwhile, their proficiency in assessment and progress monitoring demonstrates their capacity to evaluate pupils' learning outcomes and adjust instruction accordingly to address individual differences. The findings imply that beginning reading teachers possess different competencies important for promoting literacy and reading proficiency among pupils. Their integration of different instructional approaches, from phonics-based instruction to comprehension-building and continuous assessment, supports literacy that creates both skill acquisition and meaningful understanding. Moreover, beginning reading teachers are well-equipped to develop pupils' decoding, word recognition, and early reading fluency skills and they can also identify individual learning needs, provide timely interventions, and track improvement over time. This result is consistent with the study of Montales (2022), which found that teachers with high levels of competency in reading pedagogy tend to produce learners with better literacy outcomes.

Table 2: *Level of Competencies of Beginning Reading Teachers as Perceived by Themselves with Respect to Knowledge of Reading Development, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction, Comprehension Strategies, and Assessment and Progress Monitoring*

Competencies	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Knowledge of Reading Development	4.61	Always (Very Much Competent)	2
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	4.73	Always (Very Much Competent)	1
Comprehension Strategies	4.46	Often (Much Competent)	3

Assessment and Progress Monitoring	4.40	Often (Much Competent)	4
Overall Mean	4.55	Always (Very Much Competent)	

3.3. Significant Difference on the Level of Competencies of Beginning Reading Teachers as Perceived by Themselves with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of their Profile

The analysis indicates that beginning reading teachers' personal characteristics—such as age, sex, civil status, position title, length of service, and in-service trainings attended—do not significantly affect their level of competencies in teaching beginning reading. The p-values for these variables exceeded the .05 significance level, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This suggests that these demographic and professional factors have minimal influence on how teachers perceive and perform in key competency areas, including knowledge of reading development, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, comprehension strategies, and assessment and progress monitoring. In contrast, educational attainment significantly affects teachers' competencies in specific areas. Teachers with higher academic qualifications demonstrated greater competence in knowledge of reading development, phonemic awareness, and phonics instruction, as the p-values for these variables were below the .05 level, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that higher education provides teachers with deeper exposure to advanced methodologies and pedagogical knowledge, enhancing their mastery of reading instruction. However, comprehension strategies were not significantly influenced by educational attainment. These findings partly contrast with Valido (2025), which reported significant differences in teaching practices based on multiple personal characteristics, including age, sex, civil status, position, and educational attainment.

Table 3: Significant Difference on the Level of Competencies of Beginning Reading Teachers as Perceived by Themselves with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of their Profile

Profile	F-value	p-value	Null Hypothesis	Verbal Interpretation
Age				
Knowledge of Reading Development	0.032	0.969	Accepted	Not Significant
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	0.701	0.498	Accepted	Not Significant
Comprehension Strategies	0.409	0.665	Accepted	Not Significant
Assessment and Progress Monitoring	0.179	0.837	Accepted	Not Significant
Sex				
Knowledge of Reading Development	0.051	0.985	Accepted	Not Significant
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	0.229	0.876	Accepted	Not Significant
Comprehension Strategies	0.585	0.626	Accepted	Not Significant
Assessment and Progress Monitoring	0.475	0.700	Accepted	Not Significant
Civil Status				
Knowledge of Reading Development	1.732	0.181	Accepted	Not Significant
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	2.119	0.125	Accepted	Not Significant
Comprehension Strategies	2.836	0.063	Accepted	Not Significant
Assessment and Progress Monitoring	1.842	0.163	Accepted	Not Significant
Educational Attainment				
Knowledge of Reading Development	3.632	0.008	Rejected	Significant
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	4.729	0.001	Rejected	Significant
Comprehension Strategies	2.342	0.059	Accepted	Not Significant
Assessment and Progress Monitoring	3.730	0.007	Rejected	Significant
Position Title				
Knowledge of Reading Development	1.507	0.205	Accepted	Not Significant
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	2.085	0.087	Accepted	Not Significant
Comprehension Strategies	2.212	0.072	Accepted	Not Significant
Assessment and Progress Monitoring	1.272	0.285	Accepted	Not Significant
Length of Service				
Knowledge of Reading Development	0.399	0.878	Accepted	Not Significant
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	0.055	0.999	Accepted	Not Significant
Comprehension Strategies	0.570	0.753	Accepted	Not Significant
Assessment and Progress Monitoring	0.407	0.873	Accepted	Not Significant
In-service Training Attended				
Knowledge of Reading Development	1.361	0.244	Accepted	Not Significant
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	1.743	0.130	Accepted	Not Significant
Comprehension Strategies	1.327	0.258	Accepted	Not Significant
Assessment and Progress Monitoring	1.461	0.208	Accepted	Not Significant

3.4. Level of Work Performance of Beginning Reading Teachers as Revealed in the Latest Performance Management and Evaluation System

The table reveals that most teachers obtained a Very Satisfactory performance rating at 90.9%, while 9.1% achieved an Outstanding rating. This indicates that most teachers have demonstrated very satisfactory professional performance based on their latest performance management and evaluation system. This result indicates that beginning reading teachers are performing at a very satisfactory level, demonstrating competence, dedication, and professionalism in fulfilling their instructional roles. Their use of different strategies, teaching approaches, appropriate learning resources, and meaningful assessments contributes to creating an engaging, inclusive, and learner-centered environment. Such practices not only enhance pupils' performance and reading proficiency but also promote critical thinking and confidence among pupils. The findings imply that the high level of work performance exhibited by beginning reading teachers shows that they can motivate pupils, adjust to their learning needs, and utilize assessment data. This level of performance also suggests that they meet and exceed the expectations set for their roles as beginning reading teachers. Their ability to apply appropriate teaching strategies, manage classrooms effectively, and utilize different instructional materials contributes to meaningful learning experiences for pupils. Moreover, their consistent engagement in lesson preparation, pupil motivation, and assessment of learning outcomes shows their dedication to improving literacy development. This is in connection with the study of Porter et al. (2023) which found the importance of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom is an educational necessity. Determining which teacher characteristics define teacher quality and measuring their impact on student outcomes.

Table 4. *Level of Work Performance of Beginning Reading Teachers as Revealed in the Latest Performance Management and Evaluation System*

Performance Rating	Verbal Interpretation	Frequency	Percent
4.500-5.000	Outstanding	11	9.1
3.500-4.499	Very Satisfactory	110	90.9
2.500-3.499	Satisfactory	-	-
1.500-2.499	Unsatisfactory	-	-
1.000-1.499	Poor	-	-
Total		121	100.0

3.5. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Competencies and the Level of Work Performance of Beginning Reading Teachers

The analysis of the relationship between beginning reading teachers' competencies and their work performance shows that knowledge of reading development, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, and assessment and progress monitoring are significantly correlated with teacher performance, as evidenced by p-values below the 0.05 level. The null hypothesis for these aspects was rejected, indicating that teachers who are proficient in foundational literacy skills and continuous progress monitoring are likely to perform better in their teaching roles. Conversely, comprehension strategies yielded a p-value above 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis, which suggests no significant relationship between this competency and work performance. These findings imply that strengthening teachers' skills in knowledge of reading development, phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, and assessment can directly enhance instructional quality and pupil literacy outcomes. While comprehension strategies remain important, their impact on teacher performance may be mediated by pupils' cognitive and language development, highlighting the complexity of teaching reading comprehension. This underscores the need for targeted professional development programs to equip teachers with more effective strategies for comprehension instruction, ensuring they can address the diverse learning needs of their pupils. The results align with Repaso et al. (2024), who concluded that teachers' mastery of reading pedagogy enhances instructional efficiency, confidence, and overall teaching quality.

Table 5: *Significant Relationship Between the Level of Competencies and the Level of Work Performance of Beginning Reading Teachers*

Competencies and Work Performance	r-value	p-value	Null Hypothesis	Verbal Interpretation
Knowledge of Reading Development	0.2088	0.022	Rejected	Significant
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction	0.200	0.028	Rejected	Significant

Comprehension Strategies	0.097	0.290	Accepted	Not Significant
Assessment and Progress Monitoring	0.228	0.012	Rejected	Significant

3.6. Extent of the Challenges Encountered by the Beginning Reading Teachers

The analysis of the challenges encountered by beginning reading teachers reveals that, on average, these difficulties are sometimes encountered, with a composite mean of 3.34. The most pressing challenges include limited funding or resources (3.99), inadequate access to technology or digital resources (3.57), and behavioral or socio-emotional challenges among pupils (3.41). Other challenges, such as individualized support for struggling readers, time constraints, limited parental involvement, and lack of coordination among stakeholders, were also reported but at slightly lower frequencies. The least encountered issues were language barriers among learners and lack of teacher training or professional development opportunities, both interpreted as sometimes encountered. These results suggest that resource limitations remain the most significant obstacle to effective beginning reading instruction. Insufficient funding and lack of instructional or digital materials restrict teachers' ability to provide engaging, interactive, and differentiated reading activities, potentially affecting learning outcomes. Additionally, managing behavioral and socio-emotional challenges, as well as maintaining student motivation, increases teachers' workload and instructional demands. Addressing these challenges requires institutional and community support, including adequate funding, access to instructional resources, sustained professional development, and strategies for classroom management and motivation. Strengthening these areas enables teachers to focus on developing pupils' reading skills and literacy, thereby improving overall student performance. These findings align with Encinares (2022), who noted that limited instructional materials, large class sizes, and diverse learner abilities are significant barriers to effective reading instruction.

Table 6: *Extent of the Challenges Encountered by the Beginning Reading Teachers*

Challenges Encountered	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Limited funding or resources.	3.99	Often Encountered	1
2. Individualized attention and support to struggling readers.	3.38	Sometimes Encountered	4
3. Lack of teacher training or professional development opportunities.	3.08	Sometimes Encountered	9
4. Language barriers among learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds.	2.92	Sometimes Encountered	10
5. Limited parental involvement or support at home.	3.20	Sometimes Encountered	8
6. Time constraints within the school schedule.	3.23	Sometimes Encountered	7
7. Student motivation and engagement issues.	3.31	Sometimes Encountered	5
8. Inadequate access to technology or digital resources.	3.57	Often Encountered	2
9. Behavioral or socio-emotional challenges.	3.41	Sometimes Encountered	3
10. Lack of coordination or collaboration among stakeholders.	3.27	Sometimes Encountered	6
Composite Mean	3.34	Sometimes Encountered	

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that teachers' educational attainment significantly affects their competence, while other personal characteristics such as age, sex, civil status, position, and length of service do not. Additionally, teachers' competencies in knowledge of reading development, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, and assessment and progress monitoring are positively correlated with their work performance, indicating that stronger mastery of these areas enhances teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that school administrators provide targeted training programs, establish learning communities, and allocate resources such as instructional materials and digital tools to support beginning reading teachers. Teachers are also encouraged to pursue graduate studies, participate in mentoring and coaching, and implement the proposed action plan. Future research may explore similar studies using additional variables to further strengthen the understanding of teacher competencies and reading instruction effectiveness.

Compliance with ethical standards

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