

Instructional Leadership and Professional Learning Community Engagement in Relation to Teacher Competence in Public Elementary Schools of Rizal District

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between instructional leadership, professional learning community (PLC) engagement, and teacher competence among public elementary school teachers in Rizal District, Occidental Mindoro. Anchored on instructional leadership frameworks and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), the study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to determine the levels of the variables and their statistical relationships without establishing causality. Data were collected using a validated survey questionnaire administered to teachers across selected public elementary schools, and analyzed through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. Findings revealed that instructional leadership, PLC engagement, and teacher competence were all rated at high levels. Significant positive relationships were found between teacher competence and the instructional leadership dimensions of managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate, while defining the school mission showed no significant relationship. All PLC dimensions were significantly associated with teacher competence, with supportive conditions emerging as the strongest predictor. Regression results further indicated that a positive school learning climate and supportive conditions within PLCs were the most influential factors in enhancing teacher competence. The study concludes that effective instructional leadership and collaborative professional environments are critical in strengthening teachers' professional capabilities and instructional quality, and recommends sustaining supportive, collaborative, and growth-oriented school conditions. This study supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by emphasizing the importance of teacher development and effective school leadership in improving educational outcomes. It also contributes to sustainability by strengthening institutional practices that promote continuous professional growth, collaborative culture, and improved instructional quality within public elementary schools.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Professional Learning Community Engagement, School Learning Climate, Supportive Conditions, Teacher Competence

1. Introduction

Instructional quality remains central to educational reform, yet improvements in student outcomes are often shaped more by internal school dynamics than by policy alone. Leadership practices, collaborative professional learning, and shared instructional goals influence how reforms are implemented in schools. This study examines the relationship between instructional leadership, professional learning community (PLC) engagement, and teacher competence in public elementary schools, emphasizing how organizational conditions within schools contribute to effective teaching. Educational reforms globally emphasize standards, accountability, and performance indicators to improve student outcomes; however, instructional effectiveness largely depends on school-level dynamics such as leadership practices and professional collaboration. Instructional leadership is grounded in teaching and learning processes, with leaders shaping professional environments rather than directly intervening in classroom instruction (Gümüş et al., 2021). Leadership practices also vary from general administrative roles to direct influence on classroom instruction (Bellibaş et al., 2020).

Professional learning communities (PLCs) complement instructional leadership by fostering collaborative inquiry, shared planning, and collective decision-making. Participation in PLCs has been associated with improved teacher competence, shifting professional development from individual efforts to shared practice. In the Philippine context, teacher competence is guided by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which define domains such as pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum planning, and assessment (Marcelo, 2025). Within public elementary schools, leadership and professional development operate within an integrated governance system where school heads oversee curriculum implementation while teachers engage in collaborative learning. This study investigates how instructional leadership and PLC engagement relate to teacher competence in Rizal District, Occidental Mindoro.

Literature highlights that instructional leadership influences teaching quality by structuring professional conditions that support teacher development (Gümüş et al., 2021). Leadership practices that emphasize instructional supervision, feedback, and collaboration are more impactful than purely administrative functions (Bellibaş et al., 2020). PLCs are identified as

key mechanisms for professional growth, enabling teachers to collaborate, reflect, and improve instructional practices. These communities promote shared responsibility, continuous learning, and collective accountability, contributing to enhanced teaching effectiveness. Research also suggests that collaborative environments strengthen professional relationships and foster innovation in instructional practices.

Teacher competence, as conceptualized in the PPST framework, integrates knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective teaching (Marcelo, 2025). Studies indicate that competence is influenced by both leadership practices and collaborative professional environments, highlighting the importance of organizational support in teacher development. Globally, educational systems emphasize instructional leadership and collaborative professional learning as key drivers of school improvement. Nationally, the Philippines adopts the PPST framework to standardize teacher competence and guide professional development (Marcelo, 2025).

At the local level, public elementary schools operate under the Department of Education, where school leaders are tasked with ensuring instructional quality and supporting teacher development through structured programs and collaborative activities. In Rizal District, these dynamics are evident as schools implement leadership practices and PLC engagement within daily operations, reflecting broader national and global educational trends. This study is anchored on instructional leadership theory and social constructivist perspectives on learning. Instructional leadership theory emphasizes the role of school leaders in improving teaching and learning through supervision, support, and the creation of conducive learning environments (Gümüş et al., 2021; Bellibaş et al., 2020).

Social constructivist theory underpins PLC practices, highlighting that knowledge is constructed through collaboration, interaction, and shared experiences among teachers. The PPST framework provides the operational basis for measuring teacher competence, linking theoretical constructs to measurable indicators (Marcelo, 2025). Despite extensive research on instructional leadership and PLCs, gaps remain in understanding their combined influence on teacher competence within specific local contexts. Existing studies often examine these variables independently or in different educational settings, limiting contextual applicability.

In the Philippine setting, there is a need for empirical evidence that integrates instructional leadership, PLC engagement, and teacher competence using standardized frameworks such as the PPST. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the statistical relationships among these variables in public elementary schools, providing localized insights without asserting causal relationships.

This study aligns primarily with:

SDG 4 – Quality Education, as it focuses on improving teacher competence and instructional quality through leadership and collaborative professional learning.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, as enhancing teacher competence contributes to workforce development and productivity in the education sector.

By examining factors that improve teaching effectiveness, the study supports efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. The study contributes to educational sustainability by strengthening teaching quality through effective leadership and collaboration. It supports institutional sustainability by providing insights into how school systems can enhance professional development practices. It also contributes to socio-economic sustainability, as improved teacher competence leads to better student outcomes, which in turn supports human capital development. Additionally, the study promotes community sustainability by fostering collaborative school environments that encourage shared responsibility and continuous improvement.

Overall, the research highlights the importance of integrating leadership, collaboration, and professional standards to sustain high-quality education systems.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a quantitative-descriptive correlational design to investigate the relationships between perceived instructional leadership, PLC engagement, and teacher competence. A non-experimental approach was adopted due to the impracticality and ethical concerns of manipulating school conditions. The study examined real-world interactions where instructional leadership and PLC engagement function as embedded organizational practices, while teacher competence was operationalized through indicators derived from the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST).

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in Rizal District, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines, during School Year 2025–2026. The district operates under the Department of Education and includes multiple schools across different barangays within the municipality, all following the national basic education curriculum.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were public elementary school teachers in Rizal District. These teachers served as the primary unit of analysis, as they provided perceptions of instructional leadership, PLC engagement, and their own level of competence within their respective schools.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study measured instructional leadership, PLC engagement, and teacher competence at the individual level using teacher responses. A sampling technique was employed to select participants, ensuring that only those who voluntarily agreed and provided informed consent were included in the study. Teachers outside the district were also involved in pilot testing but were excluded from the final sample.

2.5 Research Instrument

The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire using a Likert-type scale to measure instructional leadership, PLC engagement, and teacher competence. The instrument included adapted scales based on established theoretical frameworks, particularly Hallinger's instructional leadership framework and the PPST. Content validation was conducted by three experts in educational leadership and teacher education to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the constructs being measured. Revisions were made based on expert feedback to improve validity and consistency. A pilot test was conducted among 20 teachers outside the study area to further refine the instrument before final administration.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted during School Year 2025–2026 after obtaining approval from relevant educational authorities and school administrators. The distribution of questionnaires was coordinated with school heads to minimize disruption to instructional activities. Participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality measures, and estimated completion time. Data collection was conducted over a four-week period, and responses were gathered either through printed questionnaires or a secured electronic platform accessible only to the researcher. Incomplete responses were excluded from the final dataset.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the levels of instructional leadership, PLC engagement, and teacher competence. Inferential statistics, including Pearson Product–Moment Correlation, were applied to determine the relationships among variables. Regression analysis was also employed to identify which dimensions of instructional leadership and PLC engagement significantly predict teacher competence.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality of respondents. Participants were not required to share responses with colleagues or administrators, and individual data remained inaccessible to supervisory personnel. All collected data were used solely for research purposes, securely stored, and anonymized during analysis and reporting to protect participants' identities.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Levels of Instructional Leadership, PLC Engagement, and Teacher Competence

3.1.1 Instructional Leadership Practices

The findings revealed that instructional leadership practices in the selected public elementary schools were generally perceived at a high level. School heads demonstrated consistent engagement in setting instructional goals, supervising teaching practices, and supporting professional development activities. Teachers reported that leadership behaviors were evident in monitoring instruction and fostering a supportive learning environment. These results align with the view that instructional leadership plays a crucial role in shaping teaching quality by establishing clear expectations and supporting teacher growth (Gümüş et al., 2021). Leadership practices that focus on instruction rather than administrative tasks are more effective in improving educational outcomes, as emphasized by Bellibaş et al. (2020).

3.1.2 Professional Learning Community (PLC) Engagement

The results indicated that teachers exhibited a high level of engagement in PLC activities. Collaboration among teachers, shared planning, and participation in reflective discussions were commonly practiced. Teachers actively engaged in collective learning processes aimed at improving instructional strategies and student outcomes. This finding supports the literature that PLCs enhance teacher development by promoting collaboration and shared responsibility for learning

(Gümüş et al., 2021). The presence of strong professional communities contributes to continuous improvement and innovation in teaching practices, reinforcing the importance of collaborative environments in schools.

3.1.3 Teacher Competence

Teacher competence was found to be at a high level across key domains, including content knowledge, pedagogy, classroom management, and assessment practices. Teachers demonstrated confidence in their instructional abilities and adherence to professional standards. This result is consistent with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers framework, which emphasizes comprehensive competence across multiple domains (Marcelo, 2025). The high level of competence suggests that structured professional support systems, such as leadership and PLCs, contribute to teacher effectiveness.

3.2 Relationship Among Instructional Leadership, PLC Engagement, and Teacher Competence

The analysis revealed significant positive relationships between instructional leadership and teacher competence, as well as between PLC engagement and teacher competence. Additionally, instructional leadership was positively associated with PLC engagement, indicating that leadership practices influence the extent of teacher collaboration. These findings suggest that effective instructional leadership fosters environments that encourage collaboration, which in turn enhances teacher competence. This is supported by studies indicating that leadership and professional collaboration are interconnected factors that contribute to improved teaching practices (Gümüş et al., 2021; Bellibaş et al., 2020). The results highlight the importance of integrating leadership and collaborative structures to sustain teacher development.

3.3 Predictors of Teacher Competence

The results further showed that specific dimensions of instructional leadership and PLC engagement significantly predict teacher competence. Leadership practices related to instructional supervision and professional support, along with PLC dimensions such as collaborative learning and shared practices, were identified as key predictors. This finding reinforces the argument that teacher competence is influenced not only by individual capabilities but also by organizational conditions within schools. The role of leadership in guiding instructional improvement and the contribution of PLCs in facilitating continuous learning are consistent with existing literature (Gümüş et al., 2021; Marcelo, 2025). These results underscore the importance of strengthening both leadership practices and collaborative mechanisms to enhance overall teaching effectiveness.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study found that public elementary school heads in Rizal District exhibit high levels of instructional leadership, while schools maintain strong professional learning community (PLC) engagement and teachers demonstrate high competence aligned with PPST standards. Instructional leadership dimensions related to managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate were significantly associated with teacher competence, whereas defining the school mission showed no significant relationship. Similarly, all PLC dimensions were positively correlated with teacher competence, with supportive conditions emerging as the strongest predictor. Overall, the findings highlight that effective instructional supervision, a supportive learning climate, and strong collaborative conditions within PLCs play a critical role in enhancing teacher competence.

It is recommended that school leaders strengthen instructional leadership practices by prioritizing instructional supervision and fostering a positive school learning climate to further enhance teacher competence. Schools should sustain and reinforce PLC engagement by promoting collaboration, shared practices, and especially supportive conditions such as trust, resource availability, and professional encouragement. Emphasis should be placed on maintaining environments that facilitate continuous professional growth and effective collaboration among teachers, as these factors were identified as the most influential in improving teacher competence.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This study complied with recognized ethical standards for human-participant research by ensuring voluntary participation with informed consent, the right to withdraw without penalty, and strict confidentiality through anonymous, secure, and aggregated data handling. Given the focus on psychological well-being, procedures were non-invasive, and safeguards were observed to minimize discomfort, with guidance to appropriate support services when needed, and required institutional permissions were secured for instrument use and access to academic records.

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