

Challenges and Support Systems for Non-Early Childhood Education Teachers in Kindergarten Instruction

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Abstract. This study explored the instructional challenges and support systems encountered by non-Early Childhood Education (non-ECE) teachers in kindergarten settings. Recognizing the increasing deployment of non-ECE graduates in early childhood programs, the study examined how gaps in training, pedagogical alignment, and classroom management affected instructional effectiveness. A qualitative, phenomenological approach was utilized, involving in-depth interviews with twelve non-ECE kindergarten teachers across selected Davao del Sur Division districts. Thematic analysis revealed three significant challenges: professional and pedagogical mismatch, student engagement and behavior management difficulties, and limited familiarity with play-based learning. Teachers employed self-directed learning, multimedia tools, and parental collaboration as coping mechanisms. However, these were often unstructured and insufficient. Findings highlighted the critical need for targeted professional development, structured mentorship, and access to quality instructional resources. Moreover, inconsistencies in parental involvement also affected the continuity of learning. The study recommends strengthening institutional support from the Department of Education and teacher training institutions to enhance early childhood instructional competence among non-ECE teachers. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on quality kindergarten education and the urgent need for inclusive capacity-building efforts in the early childhood teaching workforce.

Keywords: Classroom management; Early childhood education; Non-early childhood education teachers.

1.0 Introduction

Kindergarten is the foundational stage of formal education, shaping children's early learning experiences and setting the tone for their academic, social, and emotional development. However, the quality of this critical stage is compromised when teachers without specialized training in Early Childhood Education (ECE) are assigned to kindergarten classrooms. In many contexts, including the Philippines, the deployment of non-ECE graduates to early childhood education has created a gap between the developmental needs of young learners and the instructional practices employed by these teachers.

Globally, early childhood education underscores the need for appropriately qualified teachers to implement developmentally appropriate and play-based strategies (Du et al., 2019). However, non-ECE teachers often rely on traditional, direct instruction methods that may not cater to the learning styles of young children. Studies have shown that the lack of specialized training in early childhood pedagogy and developmental psychology

among kindergarten teachers negatively affects children's learning outcomes and well-being (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2020). This mismatch between teacher preparation and classroom demands results in ineffective instruction, behavioral challenges, and reduced student engagement.

In the Philippine context, education policies are gradually acknowledging the importance of qualified early childhood educators. Republic Act 10157 mandates kindergarten teachers to complete at least 18 ECE units (DepEd, 2012), but this requirement is often not enforced, particularly in rural and underserved areas. As a result, teachers without ECE backgrounds are frequently assigned to kindergarten classes. Davao del Sur, for example, hosts 218 public elementary schools offering kindergarten programs, yet none of the tertiary institutions in the province offer specialized ECE programs (DepEd, 2021). This gap significantly impacts the instructional competence of teachers and the overall quality of early childhood education in the region.

Studies such as those by Constantino-Lane (2021) and Ulep et al. (2024) emphasized the need for reforms that enhance teacher readiness through targeted training, curriculum alignment, and institutional support. While some research has explored professional development and policy interventions, there remains a lack of comprehensive frameworks addressing the lived experiences of non-ECE teachers and the specific challenges they face in kindergarten classrooms. Furthermore, limited local research examines how these challenges affect program development and instructional delivery in Philippine schools. The urgency of this study lies in the critical role of teacher qualifications in delivering developmentally appropriate instruction and sustaining learner engagement in the early years. When instructional approaches do not align with young children's cognitive and emotional needs, it can hinder their growth and weaken public trust in the education system (Jernes et al., 2020). This particularly concerns kindergarten, a level that lays the groundwork for lifelong learning.

This study aims to explore the instructional challenges faced by non-ECE teachers in kindergarten settings, identify their coping mechanisms, and examine the support systems needed to enhance their teaching effectiveness. By analyzing the gaps in teacher preparation and the institutional and community support structures available to them, the study offers evidence-based recommendations to improve kindergarten instruction. The insights gained can serve as a foundation for future policies, professional development programs, and academic interventions to equip non-ECE teachers with the necessary competencies for early childhood instruction.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of non-Early Childhood Education (non-ECE) teachers assigned to kindergarten classes. Phenomenology was chosen for its emphasis on understanding participants' subjective perspectives and revealing the essence of their experiences (Groenewald, 2004; Bliss, 2016). The approach enabled the researcher to uncover meaningful patterns and themes related to non-ECE teachers' instructional challenges, coping strategies, and support systems in early childhood settings.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in various kindergarten classrooms across three districts—Malalag, Sulop, and Kiblawan—in the Division of Davao del Sur, representing diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. It involved five kindergarten teachers from two districts and two from the third district. Participants were secondary education graduates, aged 25–45, without Early Childhood Education specialization, and had one to five years of teaching experience.

2.3 Research Participants

The participants comprised twelve (12) kindergarten teachers from selected schools in the Division of Davao del Sur. These participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria: ages 25–45, graduates of secondary education without specialization in ECE, and with at least one to five years of teaching experience in kindergarten. The sample included five teachers from each of two districts (Malalag and Sulop) and two teachers from the third district (Kiblawan). The sample size was sufficient to reach thematic saturation, consistent with qualitative research standards (Fofana et al., 2020).

2.4 Research Instrument

The primary data collection instrument was a semi-structured narrative interview guide, designed to elicit in-depth insights into the teachers’ challenges, instructional practices, and support needs. The instrument underwent content validation by two internal faculty reviewers from Davao del Sur State College and one Master Teacher from the Department of Education. Revisions were made based on their feedback to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study’s objectives.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

Data collection occurred during the third and fourth quarters of the 2024–2025 school year. Following ethical clearance and informed consent, interviews were conducted in person or virtually, depending on participant availability and accessibility. Interviews were recorded with participant permission and later transcribed verbatim. Ethical standards and confidentiality protocols were strictly observed (Taherdoost, 2021). Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the qualitative data, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, as cited in Byrne (2022).

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research standards involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participation was voluntary, with full disclosure of the study’s purpose, potential risks, and the right to withdraw at any point without consequence. To ensure confidentiality, all names and identifiable details were anonymized using pseudonyms. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. The Institutional Ethics Committee of Davao del Sur State College approved the research protocol.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Challenges Faced by Non-ECE Teachers in Kindergarten Instruction

The Department of Education's implementation of the K-12 Basic Education Program in 2012 aimed to enhance the educational system by extending schooling years and mandating kindergarten through Republic Act No. 10157 (DepEd, 2012). DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2012, established policies for kindergarten instruction, while DepEd Order No. 81, s. 2012, outlined hiring requirements, emphasizing ECE qualifications. However, based on this research, many kindergarten teachers lack specialized training, leading to instructional misalignment and classroom management challenges. Without a solid foundation in early childhood education, they struggle with age-appropriate teaching strategies, behavior management, and fostering an engaging learning environment. These findings highlight the need for targeted training, mentoring, and continuous professional development to bridge these gaps and ensure high-quality early education. Table 1 below presents the challenges non-Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers encounter in kindergarten instruction.

Table 1. Core Ideas, Emerging Themes, and Major Themes on the Challenges Faced by Non-ECE Teachers in Kindergarten Instruction			
Core Ideas		Emerging Themes	Major Theme
- Struggling with professional mismatch in the transition to early childhood teaching. - Lack of preparation and confidence in teaching kindergarten. - Difficulty in Student Engagement due to limited Knowledge of Classroom Management - Struggle in managing behavior in kindergarten classrooms		Challenges in Professional and Pedagogical Mismatches in Kindergarten Instruction	Classroom Management Gap, Professional and Pedagogical Misalignment in Kindergarten Education
		Struggles in Enhancing Student Engagement and Managing Behavior in Kindergarten Classrooms	
- Reliance on Direct Instruction due to limited training in play-based methods. - Limited Understanding of Play-Based Learning and lack of knowledge in hands-on, exploratory approaches. - Struggles to balance play with structured lessons		Pedagogical Gaps in Play-Based Learning	

The result reveals challenges faced by non-ECE kindergarten teachers, including a readiness gap, difficulty in student engagement, and reliance on direct instruction due to limited training in play-based learning. These issues underscore the need for professional development, mentorship, and support systems to ensure effective, developmentally appropriate teaching.

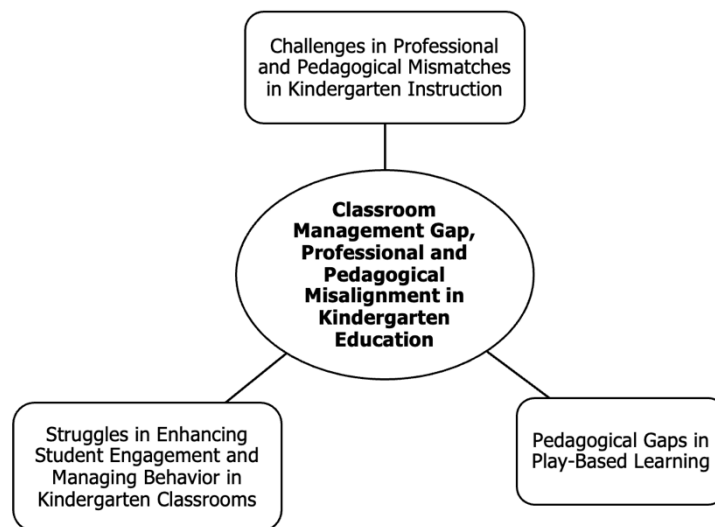


Figure 1. *Challenges of Non-Early Childhood Education Teachers*

The Department of Education's implementation of the K-12 Basic Education Program in 2012 aimed to enhance the educational system by extending schooling years and mandating kindergarten through Republic Act No. 10157 (DepEd, 2012). DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2012, established policies for kindergarten instruction, while DepEd Order No. 81, s. 2012, outlined hiring requirements, emphasizing ECE qualifications. However, based on this research, many kindergarten teachers lack specialized training, leading to instructional misalignment and classroom management challenges. Without a solid foundation in early childhood education, they struggle with age-appropriate teaching strategies, behavior management, and fostering an engaging learning environment. These findings highlight the need for targeted training, mentoring, and continuous professional development to bridge these gaps and ensure high-quality early education.

Challenges in Professional and Pedagogical Mismatches in Kindergarten Instruction

Teachers without a background in Early Childhood Education (ECE) assigned to kindergarten often face challenges due to insufficient preparation and confidence in managing kindergarten learners. The findings indicate that many of these educators have limited formal training in early childhood pedagogy, which affects their ability to effectively deliver instruction, manage classroom behavior, and sustain student engagement. Lacking a strong foundation in child development and kindergarten teaching strategies, they frequently feel unprepared and uncertain about implementing developmentally appropriate practices.

"It is not easy since I am a BSSED graduate. I lack the knowledge and skills to handle kindergarten learners." KT02L32-33
Pg2

This gap underscores the need for structured professional development programs focused on early childhood pedagogy, classroom management, and effective instructional strategies tailored for young learners. Their background primarily equips them to teach older students, making adjusting to younger learners' learning styles and behaviors difficult. The absence of specialized training in child development and kindergarten teaching methods further contributes to uncertainty in implementing developmentally appropriate practices.

Struggles in Enhancing Student Engagement and Managing Behavior in Kindergarten Classrooms

The second emerging theme focuses on kindergarten teachers' challenges in maintaining student engagement and managing classroom behavior effectively. Many young learners have difficulty staying focused, managing their emotions, and minimizing disruptions, which makes it hard for teachers to create a well-structured and engaging classroom. The findings indicate that while strong behavior management strategies are essential, some educators struggle to apply them consistently. This concern was reflected in the experience of Kindergarten Teacher Participant 2, who shared her challenges in maintaining student engagement and addressing behavioral issues in the classroom:

“Managing classroom behavior is challenging, especially with the diverse needs of kindergarten learners. Their attention span is very short, and I find it difficult to sustain their engagement.” KT02L25-27Pg02

Managing student engagement and behavior is a common challenge for non-ECE teachers in kindergarten classrooms. Kindergarten learners often struggle with attention regulation, emotional control, and social interactions, making it difficult for teachers to establish structured and engaging learning environments. Many participants expressed frustration over managing young learners' behaviors, particularly in sustaining engagement and minimizing classroom disruptions. Teachers with backgrounds in secondary education noted that their previous training did not adequately prepare them for the behavioral complexities of kindergarten learners. Short attention spans, emotional immaturity, and diverse classroom dynamics further complicate classroom management efforts.

The findings suggest that effective classroom management strategies, such as positive reinforcement, structured routines, and interactive teaching methods, should be integrated into training programs for non-ECE teachers. Sandoval (2023) highlights the importance of consulting educational psychologists and speech therapists to address young children's developmental and behavioral needs, underscoring the necessity of specialized training for kindergarten educators. Taylor et al. (2023) found that while structured routines are essential for classroom management, excessive strictness may hinder peer interactions, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that promotes order and engagement. Therefore, mentorship and peer collaboration provide valuable support in navigating behavioral challenges in kindergarten settings.

Pedagogical Gaps in Play-Based Learning

The third emerging theme focuses on Pedagogical Gaps in Play-Based Learning, which presents significant challenges in kindergarten instruction. Several teachers rely on direct instruction due to inadequate training in play-based methodologies. This gap limits their ability to incorporate hands-on, exploratory, and experiential learning approaches, essential for fostering engagement and holistic development in kindergarten learners. The lack of familiarity with these strategies makes it difficult for teachers to fully integrate play as a central component of early childhood education.

The struggle to integrate play-based learning was a common concern among participants. This was emphasized by Participant 3, who stated:

“Play-based learning is a good approach, but balancing it is challenging on my part, especially for those who need extra support in grasping lessons.” KT03L36-37Pg03

A key challenge in the study is the pedagogical gap in play-based learning. Several non-ECE teachers struggle to integrate play-based methods due to limited training, often relying on direct instruction, which may not suit young learners. Participants found it challenging to balance structured lessons with engaging activities, highlighting the need for better training in play-based strategies. To address these challenges, professional development should focus on hands-on, experiential learning aligned with early childhood principles. With proper training, teachers can create engaging environments that foster meaningful learning experiences while ensuring that play-based pedagogy is effectively integrated into structured learning outcomes.

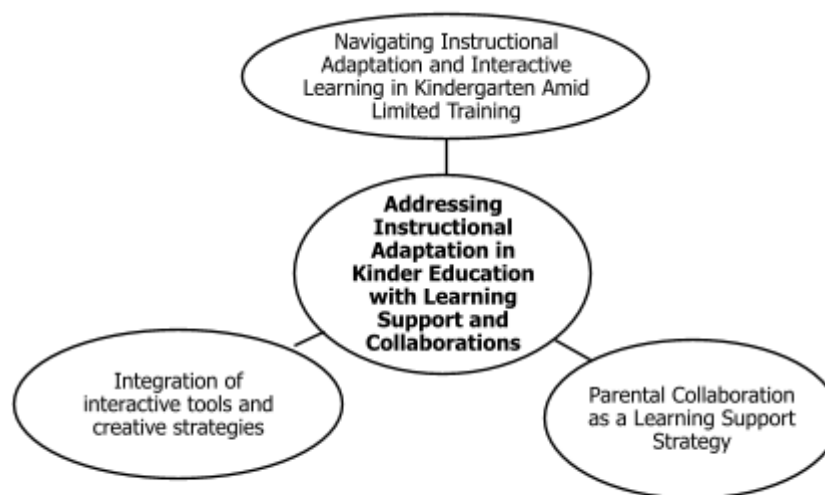
3.2 Coping Mechanism in Adapting Instructional Strategies

Non-ECE teachers address instructional adaptation in kindergarten through continuous learning and collaborative support. They engage in professional development, self-directed learning, and mentorship to bridge gaps in early childhood pedagogy. Collaboration with experienced colleagues and access to learning resources further assist in overcoming instructional challenges. These coping strategies are systematically examined through the central theme, which is further analyzed alongside its emergent themes, synthesized from the core ideas presented in Table 2. Table 2 below presents the strategies teachers use to enhance instruction, highlighting their integration of multimedia, manipulatives, and play-based activities while facing challenges in effectively implementing and optimizing these methods in the classroom.

Table 2. *Core Ideas, Emerging Themes, and Major Themes on Teachers' Coping Mechanisms in Adapting Instructional Strategies*

Core Ideas	Emerging Theme	Major Theme
• Modification of instructional activities due to insufficient early childhood training • Conducting self-study and researching effective kindergarten strategies. • Limited guidance leading to self-training and trial-and-error approach • Integration of multimedia, manipulatives, and play-based learning tools despite challenges • Balancing interactive strategies with curriculum demands and objectives • Compensation for resource shortages with self-made materials • Open communication with parents about child progress and involvement in learning at home • Dependence on parental involvement to reinforce learning beyond the classroom	Navigating Instructional Adaptation in Kindergarten Amid Limited Training Integration of interactive tools and creative strategies Parental Collaboration as a Learning Support Strategy	Addressing Instructional Adaptation in Kinder Education with Learning Support and Collaborations

This reveals that teachers struggle with effective teaching strategies, interactive learning, and reliance on parental support. Insufficient training leads to unstructured adjustments, while difficulties persist in aligning interactive methods with academics. The heavy dependence on parents highlights the need for stronger classroom strategies and professional development. Delivering quality instruction in kindergarten requires specialized training, as this stage is crucial for shaping a child's foundational learning experiences. However, many teachers struggle with developmentally appropriate instruction due to limited formal preparation in early childhood education. They often rely on direct instruction methods without proper training, restricting opportunities for child-centered exploration and hands-on learning. While teachers incorporate storybooks, multimedia, and play-based activities, they face challenges in maximizing these interactive and exploratory learning tools while meeting academic expectations. Balancing structured instruction with engaging activities remains difficult, leading to a reliance on parental involvement to reinforce learning beyond the classroom. These challenges highlight the need for professional development and instructional support to enhance teaching effectiveness in kindergarten settings.

**Figure 2.** *Coping Mechanisms of Non-Early Childhood Education Teachers*

Navigating Instructional Adaptation in Kindergarten amid Limited Training

Teachers face challenges in utilizing effective teaching strategies due to insufficient training in early childhood pedagogy. As a result, they rely on unstructured adjustments rather than planned instructional methods, leading to inconsistencies in lesson delivery. This lack of structured approaches affects student engagement and learning outcomes, highlighting the need for professional development to enhance teachers' instructional skills and confidence. As evidence, Participant 1 shared her struggles in managing her class, stating:

"I research online for strategies and activities that are suitable for them. I also use learning videos to engage them." KT01L51-52Pg03

Moreover, Participant 3 shared that she relied on a trial-and-error approach in giving strategies to deliver her instruction effectively, stating:

"I try using strategies for higher grades in my kindergarten class, but they do not work as expected." KT03L40-41Pg03

In addition, due to a lack of training, Participant 10 resorted to researching effective strategies for lesson delivery, stated:

"I do research – I read articles and study different approaches in kindergarten education." KT10L67-68Pg04

Emerging theme one focuses on the challenges of utilizing effective teaching strategies, emphasizing the importance of targeted professional development and instructional strategies for effective lesson delivery in kindergarten education. The responses indicate that many teachers struggle with implementing appropriate instructional methods due to a lack of formal training. Consequently, they often rely on self-research, direct instruction, and trial-and-error approaches to find effective strategies. Some integrate learning videos and online resources, while others experiment with methods designed for higher grades, which may not always be effective for young learners. These findings highlight the need for structured training programs to support teachers in using developmentally appropriate strategies, ultimately enhancing foundational learning experiences and long-term student success.

One of the key challenges non-ECE teachers encounter is implementing structured, developmentally appropriate teaching strategies. Due to insufficient training, some participants resort to unstructured adjustments in lesson plans rather than adhering to planned instructional methods. This inconsistency affects student engagement and overall learning outcomes. To compensate, teachers explore alternative solutions such as researching instructional techniques, incorporating multimedia resources, or adapting strategies designed for older students. While these efforts demonstrate adaptability, they are not always effective in meeting the unique learning needs of kindergarten students.

According to El-Aasar et al. (2024), the reliance on self-research, direct instruction, and spontaneous modifications further underscores the need for structured training programs that equip teachers with research-based methodologies tailored for early childhood education. Research suggests that the effectiveness of kindergarten instruction depends on the quality of interactive learning experiences. Observational measures indicate that instructional methods—particularly those balancing structured and exploratory learning—can influence children's academic persistence beyond kindergarten (McCormick et al., 2022). This highlights the importance of engaging and adaptive teaching approaches that foster meaningful learning experiences in early childhood education.

While teachers develop various self-directed strategies to navigate these instructional challenges, Condiman (2024) emphasizes that kindergarten teachers frequently encounter physical exhaustion, classroom management difficulties, and stress. They rely on resilience, peer support, and self-care mechanisms, such as taking short breaks or seeking colleague assistance. However, these coping strategies, while beneficial, are often reactive rather than proactive solutions to the underlying issue of inadequate training. This reinforces the need for targeted professional development and structured mentorship programs, as Brown et al. (2021) emphasize, to equip non-ECE kindergarten teachers with the necessary skills to balance mandated standards with the holistic learning needs of young children. This underscores the importance of engaging and adaptive teaching approaches that foster meaningful learning experiences in early childhood education.

Integration of Interactive Tools and Creative Strategies

The use of interactive tools and creative strategies as coping mechanisms to overcome their lack of training in early childhood education. Incorporating multimedia, manipulatives, and activities like singing and movement to engage students and compensate for limited pedagogical knowledge. These strategies helped maintain students' attention and facilitated learning, despite the absence of formal training in kindergarten education.

Although there were challenges in balancing these methods with the curriculum, teachers effectively adapted their approaches to meet the developmental needs of their students, demonstrating resourcefulness in creating an engaging learning environment.

These strategies were described in the statements of Kindergarten Teacher 3, as shown below:

"I use videos from YouTube to help with topics like numbers and phonetics." KT03L58Pg04

Despite limited resources, participant 7 adapted by maximizing available materials, stated:

"Using printed materials since we don't have a TV for visual learning. I create engaging visuals and hands-on activities to keep students interested and help them understand lessons." KT07L48-50Pg03

Another statement from participant 9 shared her experience in incorporating play and music-based learning strategies, stating:

"Strategies like playing, letting them watch videos – I download and incorporate them in music." KT09L46-47Pg03

This emerging theme emphasizes how teachers employ various strategies to enhance student engagement and learning by adapting to available resources and classroom needs. Some incorporate multimedia, such as YouTube videos and audiovisual materials, but face challenges when students become more engaged with entertainment than the lesson content. Others compensate for the lack of technology by using printed materials, creating engaging visuals, and incorporating hands-on activities. Additionally, play and music-based strategies, such as singing and interactive exercises, help reinforce learning concepts. The use of colorful visual aids, storybooks, and flashcards further supports instruction, highlighting the need for adaptable and resourceful teaching methods in early childhood education.

Interactive and play-based learning is essential in early childhood education, yet many non-ECE teachers struggle with its effective implementation. While they integrate multimedia, manipulatives, and play-based activities, balancing these interactive methods with curriculum expectations is challenging. The tendency to rely on digital tools such as educational videos can sometimes lead to unintended distractions, where students focus more on entertainment than learning. Teachers lacking technology access resort to printed materials and other hands-on activities to maintain student engagement. Some incorporate music and movement to reinforce learning, while others create engaging visual aids to support instruction. Suazo and Almeraz (2024) highlighted how kindergarten teachers adapted by digitizing materials and using interactive activities to enhance learning, demonstrating the effectiveness of technology-driven approaches.

Danniels et al. (2020) examined the role of technology in supporting classroom assessment within play-based kindergarten settings. Their findings suggest that while technology is primarily used to improve the efficiency of assessment practices, it also has the potential to enhance student learning when integrated effectively. This indicates that interactive tools can serve a dual purpose—streamlining assessment while reinforcing play-based instructional strategies. Educators can create engaging and developmentally appropriate learning experiences that support assessment and active exploration by incorporating technology.

However, research suggests that multimedia integration, gamification, and scenario-based learning foster active participation and critical thinking, making them essential for meaningful learning experiences (Dahlan et al., 2023). Despite these efforts, the struggle to maximize interactive learning strategies persists, underscoring the necessity of professional development programs that provide training on effectively integrating play-based learning techniques. Dzamesi and Heerden (2020) emphasize the significance of such training, demonstrating how a professional development program in Ghana successfully equipped kindergarten teachers with the knowledge and skills to implement indigenous play-based pedagogy. Their findings highlight the positive impact of structured training on teacher preparedness and student engagement, reinforcing the need for targeted support in integrating play-based strategies.

Integrating interactive tools and play-based strategies is crucial to effectively enhancing kindergarten instruction. Proper training, mentorship, and access to resources can help teachers implement developmentally

appropriate practices, ensuring meaningful and engaging learning experiences for young children.

Parental Collaboration as a Learning Support Strategy

Extending learning beyond the classroom heavily relies on parental involvement, as emphasized in emerging theme three. Teachers recognize that collaboration with parents enhances student engagement, reinforces lessons, and provides additional support tailored to individual learning needs. Teachers actively communicate with parents to keep them informed about their child's progress and encourage participation in home-based learning activities. This collaboration helps reinforce classroom lessons, as students benefit from additional guidance and support at home. However, reliance on parental involvement highlights the need for a balanced approach to ensure students receive adequate learning support at school and at home.

As evidence, participant 1 highlighted the need for parents to follow up on their children's lessons at home, stating:

"Parents need to follow up with their children at home, so they do not forget their lessons." KT01L69-70Pg04

Another perspective shared from participant 2 was that support from parents plays a vital role in reinforcing children's learning at home:

"I ask parents to follow up on their child's learning at home. I provide them with worksheets and reading materials to help reinforce learning after class hours." KT02L60-62Pg04

In emerging theme three, which focuses on instructional strategies, teachers emphasize the importance of parental involvement in reinforcing student learning at home by encouraging follow-ups on lessons to enhance retention and engagement. Some provide worksheets and reading materials, while others conduct assessments to create individualized learning plans tailored to each child's needs. This collaborative approach between teachers and parents supports students' academic progress, ensures continuity of learning beyond the classroom, and fosters a more personalized and practical learning experience.

Recognizing the importance of instructional support, non-ECE teachers actively foster collaboration with parents to enhance student learning. By engaging families in reinforcing lessons at home, providing supplementary materials, and offering guidance, teachers create a seamless learning experience that extends beyond the classroom. This partnership strengthens children's foundational skills and allows for individualized learning support, ensuring students receive the reinforcement they need to succeed. Strengthening these programs ensures teachers are well-prepared to create dynamic and effective learning environments (Hidayat & Arini, 2022). Moreover, fostering strong school-family collaboration provides a supportive learning environment, as parental involvement significantly contributes to children's academic and emotional development (Paccaud et al., 2021). While home reinforcement plays a valuable role, meaningful home-school communication, active parental engagement in school activities, and structured learning support at home further enhance student learning (Bartolome et al., 2020).

In addition, effective home-school collaboration requires clear communication, teacher training for parent engagement, and policy-driven parental involvement strategies. Schools that address socio-economic barriers and varying parental education levels through inclusive policies can significantly strengthen parents' role in supporting their children's learning (Li, 2021). Empowering teachers with practical classroom strategies also strengthens independent learning. Professional development initiatives equip educators with innovative teaching techniques that minimize overreliance on parental support while maximizing engagement in school settings. Schools can create a balanced support system that fosters student success by integrating well-structured teacher training programs with strong parental collaboration. Ensuring teachers and parents are equipped with the necessary skills and resources will contribute to a more effective and engaging learning environment, ultimately enhancing children's academic and developmental growth.

3.3 Support System for Non-ECE Teachers in Kindergarten Instruction

Non-ECE teachers require comprehensive support to elevate their instructional competence in kindergarten education. Targeted professional development, including early childhood pedagogy and classroom management training, helps bridge their knowledge gaps. Mentorship from experienced educators guides the implementation

of developmentally appropriate practices, while access to quality teaching resources enhances lesson delivery. These essential support systems are systematically examined through the central theme, which is further analysed alongside its emergent themes, synthesized from the core ideas presented in Table 3. Table 3 presents institutional, community, and policy-level support provided in the school heads in multigrade education.

Table 3. *Core Ideas, Emerging Themes, and Major Themes in the Support System for Non-ECE Teachers in Kindergarten Instruction*

Core Ideas	Emerging Theme	Major Theme
• Need for professional development in early childhood education (ECE) • Lacking structured mentorship and hands-on professional development • Need for stronger institutional support for non-ECE teachers • Struggling with insufficient and limited instructional resources for effective teaching • Need for specific instructional materials and modern resources.	Comprehensive Professional Development Training and Mentorship Instructional Resources Support.	Elevating Instructional Competence Through Professional Development, Mentorship, and Resource Support
• Facing inadequate parental support resulting in learning inconsistencies • Engaging parents in reinforcing learning at home	Collaboration and Home-School Partnership	

As a result, there is a need for more substantial support in early childhood education, particularly in professional development, instructional resources, and home-school collaboration. Limited opportunities for professional growth and mentorship may hinder teaching effectiveness, while inconsistencies in instructional resources create additional challenges. Weak parental involvement further affects learning continuity at home. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing teacher support, improving resource allocation, and fostering stronger home-school partnerships. At its core, the figure emphasizes the essential support systems that contribute to building instructional competence among non-ECE kindergarten teachers. It highlights how professional growth is strengthened through ongoing training, access to resources, and meaningful collaboration, all of which help educators meet the unique demands of early childhood education with greater confidence and capability.

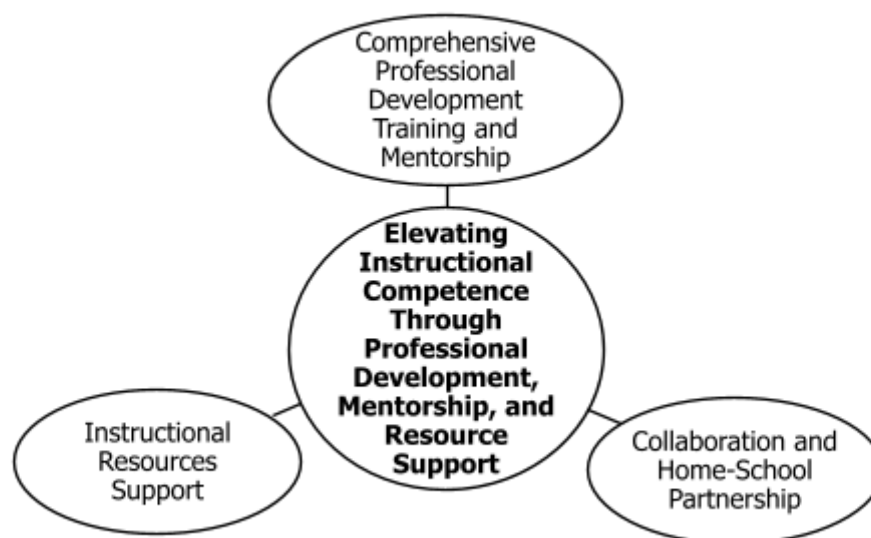


Figure 3. *Support System for Non-ECE Teachers in Kindergarten Instruction*

Effective early childhood education relies on strong support systems for teachers, particularly in professional

development, mentorship, and resource support. Access to specialized training, seminars, structured mentorship programs, and instructional resources enables educators to enhance their skills and adapt to the evolving needs of kindergarten learners. However, limited opportunities for professional growth, especially for non-ECE teachers, create challenges in maintaining teaching effectiveness. Establishing comprehensive professional development initiatives and structured mentorship programs can help bridge this gap, providing teachers with the necessary support on instructional resources to improve their instructional practices and overall confidence in the classroom.

Comprehensive Professional Development Training and Mentorship

The need for professional development and mentorship in early childhood education (ECE) is evident, as teachers require specialized training, seminars, and workshops to enhance their skills and knowledge. However, limited opportunities for professional growth and the absence of structured mentorship programs for non-ECE teachers present significant challenges. Without adequate support, educators may struggle to implement effective teaching strategies and adapt to evolving educational standards. Addressing these gaps through a holistic approach to professional development and mentorship can help build a more competent and confident workforce, ultimately benefiting teachers and young learners. Participant 1 emphasized the need for training, especially for those transitioning from secondary education to kindergarten:

"I need support like training, seminars, and workshops. As secondary teachers handling kindergarten, we must be equipped as kindergarten teachers." KT01L65-67 Pg04

Moreover, participant 4 highlighted the importance of learning engaging and developmentally appropriate teaching strategies, along with mentorship from experienced kindergarten teachers:

"Workshops or training on engaging and developmentally appropriate approaches for kindergarten instruction would be invaluable. Also, having a mentor – an experienced and skilled kindergarten teacher – would be very helpful." KT04L76-79 Pg05

The emerging theme reflects a shared recognition among participants of the need for professional development and mentorship in early childhood education. Many expressed the necessity of training, seminars, and workshops to enhance their instructional strategies and better understand the developmental needs of young learners. The lack of structured mentorship was also highlighted, with participants emphasizing the value of learning from experienced kindergarten teachers to improve their teaching practices. Additionally, a participant suggested district-level training and scholarship opportunities to support professional growth. These findings underscore the importance of continuous learning and mentorship in equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective kindergarten instruction.

Non-ECE teachers require continuous professional development and mentorship to bridge the gap in their knowledge and skills related to early childhood education. The lack of structured training programs, specialized workshops, and mentorship opportunities hinders their ability to implement developmentally appropriate teaching strategies. Participants unanimously expressed their need for access to seminars, training sessions, and mentoring programs to equip them with the competencies required for kindergarten instruction. The responses reflect a shared recognition that training and mentorship are pivotal in enhancing instructional strategies and fostering confidence in kindergarten instruction.

Moreover, structured mentorship programs, where experienced early childhood educators guide non-ECE teachers, were identified as crucial in providing practical insights and support. Sandoval (2024) emphasized that equipping pre-kindergarten teachers with essential competencies, including consultations with specialists, enhances instructional effectiveness and supports holistic child development. Suazo and Almeréz (2024) further noted that collaboration and resource-sharing foster innovation, particularly in adapting to new learning modalities. A structured support system, including mentorship and institutional backing, strengthens teachers' ability to provide quality instruction.

Caingcoy and Gallego (2022) highlight that even competent kindergarten teachers recognize the need for continuous learning, particularly in pedagogy, content knowledge, and classroom diversity. This reinforces the necessity of structured professional development programs to support non-ECE teachers in adapting to early

childhood instruction. Effective professional learning cycles, coaching, and differentiated support, as highlighted by Hilaire and Gallagher (2020), help mitigate instructional challenges kindergarten educators face. Providing structured professional development opportunities, such as modelling and scaffolding techniques, can significantly enhance teachers' instructional competence and confidence in early childhood education settings. These findings underscore the importance of institutionalizing professional development initiatives designed explicitly for non-ECE teachers in kindergarten. Offering district-level training, scholarship opportunities for ECE certification, and mentorship programs would significantly enhance their instructional competence, ultimately improving learning outcomes for young children.

Instructional Resources Support

In emerging theme two, strengthening support systems for quality early childhood education, the availability of kindergarten-specific instructional materials and sufficient resource support is essential for effective teaching and learning, expressing frustration over the lack of adequate instructional resources, which can hinder the implementation of developmentally appropriate teaching strategies. Consistent access to well-designed materials tailored to young learners is essential for creating engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Addressing these resource challenges through structured support systems can help kindergarten teachers deliver high-quality early childhood education, ultimately benefiting teachers and students.

As evidence, participant 5 highlights the lack of sufficient teaching materials, requiring teachers to be resourceful in supporting their students' learning:

"Accessing teaching resources, books, and materials specifically designed for kindergarten instruction would further support my professional growth." KT05L97-98Pg06

Moreover, even when resources are provided, they are not always suitable for all students, as stated by participant 8:

"It's much better if DepEd gives us the materials that we need because when materials are not provided, the struggle is real, especially with the new Matatag Curriculum." KT08L71-72Pg05

Participant 11 further added to the challenge, making it difficult to acquire durable and practical instructional materials, stated:

"Adequate budget to provide effective and appropriate instructional materials for our learners." KT11L66-67Pg04.

Emerging Theme Two, which focuses on teacher support, highlights the need for enhanced assistance in kindergarten instruction, particularly in accessing adequate teaching materials and resources. Teachers face challenges in implementing effective strategies due to limited instructional tools, financial constraints, and the unsuitability of some provided materials. These limitations hinder both professional growth and student engagement. Addressing these concerns through improved resource allocation and targeted support would enhance the quality of early childhood education, allowing teachers to implement interactive and play-based learning methods effectively.

The availability of appropriate instructional resources is essential for effective kindergarten instruction. Many non-ECE teachers expressed frustration over insufficient teaching materials, which limit their ability to implement engaging and interactive learning experiences. Participants highlighted the necessity of kindergarten-specific instructional tools such as visual aids, books, and technology-based learning materials to enhance classroom engagement. Teachers also noted that while resources are sometimes provided, they may not always be suitable for the developmental needs of their students. The absence of essential tools, such as TVs for visual learning and durable instructional materials, further complicates the teaching process. Financial constraints and reliance on handmade materials present additional challenges that impact both instructional quality and teacher efficiency. Bongabong et al. (2023) highlight the importance of ensuring access to age-appropriate learning resources, emphasizing that well-selected instructional materials enhance teaching efficiency and student engagement. Their study underscores that adequate resource provision—both physical and digital—supports interactive and play-based learning approaches, making lessons more meaningful for young learners. Similarly, Luo et al. (2020) emphasize the role of Open Educational Resources (OER) in

addressing instructional material shortages, offering cost-effective and accessible digital resources to enhance teaching effectiveness. Suazo and Almeréz (2024) also stress the importance of updated, well-structured instructional resources, including interactive and developmentally appropriate materials, to align with curriculum standards and improve teaching quality.

Integrating technology into kindergarten instruction requires tailored support, including administrative collaboration and educator-focused coaching (Hilaire & Gallagher, 2020), to ensure effective implementation of instructional resources. Enhancing instructional resource support through guided professional learning and access to technology-driven teaching tools can improve the quality of kindergarten instruction for non-ECE teachers. Ensuring access to adequate learning materials and digital tools is crucial in supporting teachers and fostering meaningful learning experiences for young children. To address these concerns, the education sector must prioritize resource allocation for kindergarten instruction, ensuring non-ECE teachers access high-quality, developmentally appropriate materials. Strengthening resource support systems through funding, innovative teaching tools, and digital learning platforms would improve the overall teaching and learning experience.

Collaboration and Home-School Partnership

In emerging theme three, parental involvement is crucial in reinforcing learning at home, supporting children's academic growth beyond the classroom. However, weak parental support can lead to learning inconsistencies, making it difficult for students to retain and apply concepts effectively. A strong collaboration between home and school is essential in addressing these challenges, ensuring teachers and parents work together to create a more structured and supportive learning environment. Strengthening this partnership can enhance student engagement, consistency in learning, and overall academic success. Emphasizing the importance of parental involvement, participant 2 shared:

"Building relationships with parents, asking for their help, and implementing one-on-one instructions have been beneficial. Being open to parents allows me to extend learning beyond the classroom." KT02L67-69Pg04

Supporting this view, participant 10 noted that parental help at home leads to student progress:

"Although not all parents can follow up at home, some do. When I reassess the students, I see improvements in those whose parents helped them." KT10L76-78Pg05

As a result, teachers acknowledge the role of parental involvement in reinforcing learning beyond the classroom. Building relationships with parents and encouraging their participation can help extend instruction and support student progress. However, not all parents can provide follow-up at home due to various factors such as time constraints, work commitments, or limited resources. Nonetheless, some teachers have observed improvements in students' learning outcomes when parental support is present, highlighting the potential benefits of home-school collaboration in early childhood education. Parental involvement is a key factor in reinforcing learning beyond the classroom. However, the study revealed that weak parental support contributes to inconsistencies in students' learning experiences. Many teachers noted that students show noticeable academic progress when parents actively participate in their child's education.

Despite the recognized importance of home-school collaboration, not all parents can provide the necessary follow-up support at home due to work commitments, time constraints, or lack of resources. This discrepancy creates challenges in ensuring continuous learning outside the classroom. According to the research, when parents actively engage in autonomy-supportive practices at home, children develop stronger independence and learning motivation, reinforcing the need for consistency between home and school environments (Linkiewicz et al., 2021). Strong home-school partnerships can enhance adequate instructional resource support, as collaboration between teachers, parents, and school leadership helps facilitate access to essential teaching materials and learning aids (Ngadni & Shuang, 2024). Open communication and shared responsibility in early childhood education settings contribute to better academic and developmental outcomes, which are closely linked to the availability of instructional resources in the classroom.

Collier et al. (2020) emphasize that effective home-school collaboration relies on strong communication, problem-solving, and well-integrated interventions. Their study highlights that when educators receive adequate training and institutional support, they develop the confidence and skills necessary to engage parents

as active partners in their children's education. Moreover, fostering a school environment that promotes collaboration between educators and families can significantly enhance student learning outcomes and provide a more cohesive support system for young learners. To enhance home-school collaboration, schools should implement programs that encourage parental engagement, such as workshops on effective home learning strategies, regular teacher-parent communication, and community-based support initiatives. Dicataldo et al. (2022) emphasize that parents guided by educators on effective strategies to support learning at home can significantly enhance children's academic readiness. Their study highlights that structured parental involvement, such as dialogic reading interventions, can produce substantial gains in children's vocabulary, comprehension, and overall language skills. Strengthening this partnership will create a more structured and supportive learning environment, fostering better educational outcomes for kindergarten students.

4.0 Conclusion

The findings underscore the multifaceted challenges faced by non-ECE teachers in kindergarten classrooms and the critical role of systemic support in addressing these issues. By implementing comprehensive support systems, such as continuous professional training, mentorship opportunities, and resource allocation, educational institutions can help equip non-ECE teachers with the competencies to deliver developmentally appropriate and engaging instruction. These findings suggest that empowering teachers through structured interventions and collaborative efforts can significantly enhance the quality of early childhood education, particularly in contexts where teacher specialization is limited.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Cherry R. Gastador – Editing, writing and finalizing the study, Queenie Lyn G. Almeraz – Giving additional input and guidance for the betterment of the study, Amelie E. Trinidad – Giving additional input for the betterment of the study, Dulce Marie A. Martinez – Giving additional input for the betterment of the study, Augie E. Fuentes – supervising for the betterment of the study.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

None.

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