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INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: ITS IMPACT ON TEACHER COMPETENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how instructional leadership shapes teacher competence in public elementary schools in the Balaoan District, Division of La Union. Anchored in Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model, it used a predictive correlational design involving 100 teachers selected through stratified random sampling. Data were gathered through the researcher-made Instructional Leadership and Teacher Competence Scale (ILTCS), which demonstrated strong validity (CVI = 0.93) and reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$ for instructional leadership and 0.93 for teacher competence). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression were employed to examine the data. The findings present a generally encouraging picture. Instructional leadership was rated high overall ($M = 3.74$), with Fostering a Positive Instructional Climate obtaining the highest mean ($M = 3.95$), while Promoting Teacher Professional Development received the lowest ($M = 3.42$). Teacher competence was likewise rated high ($M = 3.75$). Content Knowledge and Pedagogy led the dimensions ($M = 3.94$), whereas Professional Engagement and Development registered the lowest rating ($M = 3.56$). More tellingly, instructional leadership was strongly and positively associated with teacher competence ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further showed that instructional leadership significantly predicted teacher competence ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 34% of its variance. These findings suggest that leadership matters not simply as an administrative function but as an everyday influence on teachers' professional practice. The study therefore points to the need for school heads to strengthen instructional leadership, particularly professional development, while investing in sustained capacity-building for educational leaders within public schools.

KEYWORDS: Instructional leadership, teacher competence, school leadership, teacher professional development, public schools.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Instructional leadership is often discussed as though good leadership naturally produces good teaching. But in public schools, where school heads work within policy demands, limited resources, and competing administrative responsibilities, the relationship is rarely that straightforward. Leadership matters, but its value is ultimately tested in what happens to teachers and, eventually, to learners. The more important question, therefore, is not simply whether school heads practice instructional leadership, but whether these practices strengthen teachers' capacity to teach well.

International research has established instructional leadership as an important element of school effectiveness. Leadership practices such as setting clear instructional goals, supervising teaching, supporting professional development, coordinating curriculum, and creating positive learning environments have been associated with stronger teaching practices and improved student outcomes [1]. Tan et al. [2], in a comprehensive meta-analysis, found that instructional leadership had a substantially stronger relationship with student outcomes than transformational leadership. Yet these findings should not be read as evidence that instructional leadership works in the same way everywhere. Mincu [3] noted that its implementation is shaped by cultural and institutional contexts. This raises an important concern: while the effects of instructional leadership on student achievement have received considerable attention, its relationship with teacher competence remains comparatively less examined.

The Philippine context makes this question particularly relevant. The Department of Education's Basic Education Development Plan 2030 identifies instructional leadership as an important pathway toward improving learning outcomes and positions school heads as responsible for curriculum implementation, teacher development, and the management of learning environments [4]. Similarly, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), established through DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020, places instructional leadership at the center of school head practice. These policy expectations are significant because they assign school heads a role that extends beyond administration. They are expected to shape the conditions under which teachers learn, teach, collaborate, and improve.

At the same time, the performance of the Philippine education system suggests that policy expectations alone are not enough. In PISA 2022, the Philippines remained among the lowest-performing participating countries in reading, mathematics, and science, with only 23% of Filipino 15-year-olds reaching the minimum proficiency level in science [5]. This performance cannot be attributed to school leadership alone. Learning loss, resource limitations, socioeconomic conditions, and other structural factors matter. Still, the persistent gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities invites closer examination of the school-level practices that may influence teacher capacity.

This study takes that question seriously. Drawing from Hallinger's foundational work instructional leadership model [6], it examines instructional leadership through five dimensions: setting instructional goals and expectations, supervising and evaluating instruction, promoting teacher professional development, coordinating the curriculum, and fostering a positive instructional

climate. These dimensions translate a broad leadership concept into observable practices that matter in the daily life of schools.

Teacher competence is likewise treated not as a single attribute but as a multidimensional capacity. Guided by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) under DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, the study considers content knowledge and pedagogy, instructional planning and preparation, classroom management, assessment and feedback, and professional engagement and development. This framing recognizes that competent teaching involves more than knowing what to teach. It also requires the ability to plan, manage learning, assess progress, respond to learners, and continuously develop professionally.

The local setting gives this inquiry its practical significance. In the Balaoan District, Division of La Union, public school teachers work amid the familiar pressures of Philippine basic education: demanding workloads, diverse learner needs, administrative requirements, and varying access to instructional resources. In such circumstances, instructional leadership can become either meaningful professional support or another layer of compliance. Classroom observations, lesson planning, meetings, and monitoring activities may satisfy institutional requirements, yet their deeper value depends on whether they help teachers become more capable and confident practitioners.

This distinction matters. Leadership is not demonstrated merely by the presence of supervisory activities. Its significance lies in what those activities enable teachers to do. When goal-setting becomes a shared understanding of instructional priorities, supervision becomes constructive feedback, curriculum coordination becomes genuine collaboration, and professional development responds to actual teacher needs, instructional leadership can move beyond paperwork and become a mechanism for professional growth.

The present study therefore examines the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher competence in public elementary schools in the Balaoan District, Division of La Union. More specifically, it seeks to determine whether instructional leadership is significantly associated with, and predictive of, teacher competence. By doing so, the study contributes local evidence to a broader conversation about school leadership: not simply whether school heads lead instruction, but whether the way they lead helps teachers become better at their work.

In particular, this study addresses the following questions: (1) What is the level of instructional leadership as perceived by the teachers in terms of: a) setting instructional goals and expectations, b) supervising and evaluating instruction, c) promoting teacher professional development, d) coordinating the curriculum, and e) fostering a positive instructional climate? (2) What is the level of teacher competence in terms of: a) content knowledge and pedagogy, b) instructional planning and preparation, c) classroom management, d) assessment and feedback, and e) professional engagement and development? (3) Is there a significant relationship between instructional leadership and teacher competence in public schools? (4) Does instructional leadership significantly predict teacher competence in public schools?

2.0 METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a predictive correlational design. Following Creswell and Guetterman [7], a predictive correlational design is appropriate when the researcher intends to determine whether one variable can predict the value of another without manipulating either variable. This design was selected to directly examine whether instructional leadership predicts teacher competence in public schools. In this design, instructional leadership served as the predictor variable, while teacher competence served as the outcome variable.

To address the specific research questions, the study employed a combination of descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses. Descriptive statistics, specifically, means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were used to characterize the level of instructional leadership as perceived by teachers across its five dimensions: setting instructional goals and expectations, supervising and evaluating instruction, promoting teacher professional development, coordinating the curriculum, and fostering a positive instructional climate. The same descriptive approach was applied to determine the level of teacher competence across its five dimensions: content knowledge and pedagogy, instructional planning and preparation, classroom management, assessment and feedback, and professional engagement and development. Pearson product-moment correlation was then employed to determine whether a significant relationship exists between instructional leadership and teacher competence. Finally, simple linear regression was used to test whether instructional leadership significantly predicts teacher competence. This two-step approach, that is, first establishing correlation, then testing prediction, is consistent with standard procedures in predictive correlational studies [8].

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted among public elementary school teachers in the Balaoan District, Division of La Union, during School Year 2025–2026. Teachers were chosen as respondents because they encounter school leadership not as an abstract policy but as part of their everyday professional work. They are directly exposed to how school heads set expectations, supervise instruction, provide feedback, coordinate curriculum, and create opportunities for professional development. Their accounts therefore provide an important basis for understanding instructional leadership and its relationship with teacher competence.

The study employed stratified random sampling. Creswell and Guetterman [7] explain that this approach is useful when a population contains identifiable subgroups and the researcher intends to ensure that each subgroup is adequately represented. In this study, the public elementary schools in the Balaoan District served as the basis for stratification. Treating schools as strata recognized that teachers do not experience leadership in identical institutional settings. Differences in school size, organizational arrangements, leadership practices, and teacher composition may shape how instructional leadership is perceived and experienced. Proportional allocation was therefore used so that larger schools contributed more respondents while smaller schools remained represented.

The required sample was determined using G*Power. For a multiple linear regression analysis with a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of 0.05, and statistical power of 0.80, the

minimum sample was 92 respondents. The researcher increased this to 100 teachers to provide a modest allowance for possible non-response or incomplete questionnaires and to maintain sufficient statistical power for the planned descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses.

Sampling proceeded in several stages. The researcher first obtained the official list of public elementary schools in the Balaoan District from the Division of La Union Schools Division Office and the La Union provincial government website. The number of teachers in each school was then established from available school records. Respondents were subsequently selected randomly and proportionately from each school until the target of 100 teachers was reached.

Participation was guided by clear eligibility criteria. Respondents had to be officially employed as teachers in a public elementary school in the Balaoan District during School Year 2025–2026, have completed at least one full school year of teaching before data collection, have direct experience with the instructional leadership practices of their school head, and provide informed consent.

Teachers were excluded if they were newly hired and had not completed one full school year, were on extended leave during data collection, had no direct experience with their school head's instructional leadership because of non-teaching or outside-district assignments, or declined to participate. These criteria helped ensure that the responses came from teachers with sufficient experience to assess the leadership practices and professional conditions examined in the study.

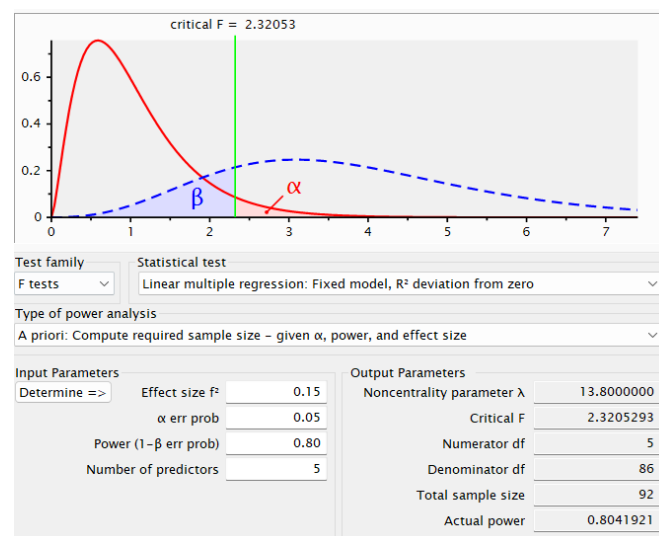


Figure 1. G*Power sample size computation

2.3 Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made instrument titled Instructional Leadership and Teacher Competence Scale (ILTCS). Its development was guided by Hallinger's [6] Instructional Leadership Model, together with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The instrument was also shaped by the researcher's engagement with the realities of public elementary school practice in the Balaoan District. In this sense, the ILTCS was designed not merely to translate established

frameworks into survey items, but to locate these frameworks within the institutional and professional conditions in which teachers actually work.

The ILTCS measured two central constructs: instructional leadership, treated as the predictor variable, and teacher competence, treated as the outcome variable. Each construct was organized into five dimensions to allow the study to examine these concepts beyond their overall scores.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part I gathered the respondents' demographic and professional profiles, including sex, age, highest educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and grade level taught.

Part II measured perceived instructional leadership through 30 items distributed across five dimensions: setting instructional goals and expectations (Items 1–6), supervising and evaluating instruction (Items 7–12), promoting teacher professional development (Items 13–18), coordinating the curriculum (Items 19–24), and fostering a positive instructional climate (Items 25–30).

Part III assessed teacher competence through another 30 items covering content knowledge and pedagogy (Items 1–6), instructional planning and preparation (Items 7–12), classroom management (Items 13–18), assessment and feedback (Items 19–24), and professional engagement and development (Items 25–30). The complete instrument therefore contained 60 substantive items.

Parts II and III used a five-point Likert scale: 5 – Strongly Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Neutral, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree. The responses were numerically coded for statistical analysis, with higher scores representing higher perceived levels of instructional leadership and teacher competence.

2.4 Validation

The validation of the instrument was undertaken through a three-phase process designed to establish its content validity, refine the clarity and appropriateness of its items, and determine its internal consistency reliability. This process was guided by established procedures for the development of researcher-made instruments in educational research [7]. The process involved expert evaluation, item refinement based on expert judgment, and pilot testing with respondents who were not included in the actual study.

For the first phase, the researcher subjected the initial version of the instrument to expert validation. Three experts were invited to examine the questionnaire: the researcher's research adviser, a faculty member of the Graduate School, and a master teacher with experience in instructional leadership and teacher professional development. Using a validation checklist, the experts evaluated each item in terms of its relevance to the research objectives, clarity and comprehensibility, appropriateness of language and wording, and alignment with the dimension it was intended to measure. Ratings were provided using a four-point scale, with 4 indicating Very Relevant, 3 Relevant, 2 Somewhat Relevant, and 1 Not Relevant. In addition to the numerical ratings, the experts were encouraged to provide qualitative observations and recommendations that could further improve the instrument.

The expert review resulted in several refinements to the questionnaire. Items that obtained ratings below 3.5 from at least two experts were either revised or removed. Beyond the numerical ratings, particular attention was given to the experts' observations concerning the wording and accessibility of the items. Some statements were simplified to make them more direct and comprehensible, while clarifying examples were incorporated into selected indicators where greater specificity was considered necessary. The sequence of several items was likewise adjusted to establish a more coherent progression and facilitate respondent understanding. These revisions were undertaken not merely as technical corrections but as an effort to ensure that the instrument remained faithful to the constructs it intended to capture while remaining responsive to the realities of the school context. Following the revisions, the instrument obtained a content validity index (CVI) of 0.93, indicating excellent content validity.

The revised instrument was subsequently subjected to pilot testing to determine its internal consistency and to identify possible concerns in its administration. The pilot test involved 30 teachers from two public elementary schools in a neighboring district within the Division of La Union. The respondents were not included in the actual study. They completed the entire Instructional Leadership and Teacher Competence Scale (ILTCS) during a scheduled faculty meeting, with administration requiring approximately 15 to 20 minutes. All 30 respondents completed the questionnaire in full, and no item was left unanswered. The absence of missing responses also suggested that the instructions and item formulations were sufficiently clear for the intended respondents.

The pilot-test results demonstrated strong internal consistency across the dimensions of instructional leadership. For Part II, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.89 for Setting Instructional Goals and Expectations (Items 1–6), 0.88 for Supervising and Evaluating Instruction (Items 7–12), 0.90 for Promoting Teacher Professional Development (Items 13–18), 0.87 for Coordinating the Curriculum (Items 19–24), and 0.89 for Fostering a Positive Instructional Climate (Items 25–30). Taken as a whole, the 30-item instructional leadership scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94, with 95% confidence intervals ranging from 0.82 to 0.97. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.43 to 0.76, with all items exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.30. These results indicate that the items demonstrated satisfactory to excellent consistency in measuring the dimensions of instructional leadership.

A similarly strong pattern was observed for Part III, which measured teacher competence. Cronbach's alpha was 0.88 for Content Knowledge and Pedagogy (Items 1–6), 0.89 for Instructional Planning and Preparation (Items 7–12), 0.87 for Classroom Management (Items 13–18), 0.90 for Assessment and Feedback (Items 19–24), and 0.88 for Professional Engagement and Development (Items 25–30). The overall 30-item teacher competence scale produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93, with 95% confidence intervals ranging from 0.81 to 0.96. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.42 to 0.75, and all items exceeded the 0.30 threshold. The coefficients indicate that the items within each dimension were sufficiently related while retaining their capacity to represent the distinct aspects of teacher competence.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure of this study was systematically carried out in three phases: preliminary activities and permission seeking, actual data collection, and post-data collection procedures.

The preliminary activities, including ethics clearance and permission seeking, were conducted during the first quarter of the School Year 2025–2026. Ethics clearance was secured from the university as recommended by the research adviser, ensuring that the study adhered to ethical standards for research involving human participants. Following ethics approval, the researcher formally requested permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of La Union to conduct the study in the Balaoan District. Upon approval from the Division Office, the researcher coordinated with the Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS) of the Balaoan District to inform and orient the school heads regarding the research undertaking. Subsequently, the researcher sought permission from the school principal of each participating public elementary school in the Balaoan District. An information sheet explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of responses was distributed to all prospective teacher-respondents. Consent was entirely voluntary, and no participant was penalized for declining to participate. Respondents who agreed to participate signed an informed consent form, which the researcher collected before any data were gathered.

Following the pilot test and subsequent refinements to the Instructional Leadership and Teacher Competence Scale (ILTCS), actual data collection was carried out during the second quarter of the school year. The researcher coordinated with the school principals to schedule the administration of the survey on dates when teachers could conveniently participate. The survey was administered during a scheduled district-wide faculty development session or monthly school-based faculty meeting to ensure maximum participation while minimizing disruption to instructional time. The survey was administered in a designated room or venue where respondents could complete the questionnaire without interruptions. Before distribution, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, provided clear instructions for each part of the questionnaire, and reminded respondents that their answers would remain anonymous and confidential. Respondents were informed that they could skip any item they were uncomfortable answering and could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

The ILTCS was then distributed to all eligible teachers who had provided informed consent. The researcher, together with trained research assistants, remained present during the entire administration period to answer any clarifying questions. Respondents were instructed to answer each item based on their actual experience and honest perceptions, rather than on what they believed to be the ideal or expected response. To reduce social desirability bias, respondents were assured that no school administrator would have access to their individual responses and that only aggregated data would be reported in the study. The questionnaire required approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Upon completion, respondents placed their answered questionnaires in a sealed envelope or a designated collection box to further ensure confidentiality. To achieve the target sample size of 100 teacher-respondents, the researcher employed stratified random sampling. All eligible teachers from the participating schools who met the inclusion criteria were considered,

and teachers were randomly selected from each school proportionate to the total number of teachers in that school, ensuring representation across the different schools in the district.

To establish the test-retest reliability of selected items in the ILTCS, a test-retest procedure was conducted. Two weeks after the initial administration, the same questionnaire was readministered to a randomly selected subset of 30 respondents from the original sample. This procedure was specifically conducted to assess the temporal stability of the instrument, as recommended by DeVellis and Thorpe [9]. The test-retest responses were compared using Pearson correlation coefficients to establish the stability of the instrument over time.

Finally, all data from the completed questionnaires were encoded into a spreadsheet by the researcher. The encoded data were then stored in a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher, and the original paper questionnaires were kept in a locked filing cabinet to ensure data security and confidentiality. The researcher then proceeded with data cleaning, checking for incomplete responses or outliers, and preparing the data for statistical analysis using appropriate software.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed through a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical procedures, each selected in relation to the questions the study sought to answer. Before proceeding to the actual analysis, the dataset was examined for missing values, outliers, and the assumptions relevant to the use of parametric tests, particularly normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. This preliminary examination was necessary not simply as a technical requirement, but as a way of determining whether the data could reasonably support the statistical procedures to be applied. Descriptive statistics were then used to address the first two research questions.

For Research Question 1, which examined the level of instructional leadership as perceived by the teachers, the analysis focused on the central tendency and variability of the responses. Means and standard deviations were computed for the overall Instructional Leadership scale, consisting of Items 1–30, as well as for each of its five dimensions: setting instructional goals and expectations (Items 1–6), supervising and evaluating instruction (Items 7–12), promoting teacher professional development (Items 13–18), coordinating the curriculum (Items 19–24), and fostering a positive instructional climate (Items 25–30). The mean scores provided an indication of the general level at which instructional leadership was perceived, while the standard deviations showed the extent to which teachers' perceptions converged or differed from one another.

Table 1. Scoring and Interpretation for Level of Instructional Leadership

Mean Range	Interpretation
1.00–1.49	Very Low
1.50–2.49	Low
2.50–3.49	Moderate
3.50–4.49	High
4.50–5.00	Very High

For the level of teacher competence (Research Question 2), the same descriptive approach was employed. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the overall Teacher Competence scale (Items 1–30) and for each of its five dimensions: content knowledge and pedagogy (Items 1–6), instructional planning and preparation (Items 7–12), classroom management (Items 13–18), assessment and feedback (Items 19–24), and professional engagement and development (Items 25–30). Additionally, frequencies and percentages were computed to determine how many respondents fell into each interpretive category (Very Low, Low, Moderate, High, Very High) based on the scoring system presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Scoring and Interpretation for Level of Teacher Competence

Mean Range	Interpretation
1.00–1.49	Very Low
1.50–2.49	Low
2.50–3.49	Moderate
3.50–4.49	High
4.50–5.00	Very High

To address the third research question on the significant relationship between instructional leadership and teacher competence, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed. Specifically, correlations were calculated between the overall Instructional Leadership score (Part II) and the overall Teacher Competence score (Part III). Prior to computing the correlations, the researcher confirmed that all requisite assumptions were met, including normality (assessed using Shapiro-Wilk tests), linearity (assessed through visual inspection of scatterplots), and the absence of outliers (assessed using boxplots and z-scores). Correlation coefficients were interpreted as small ($r = 0.10$), medium ($r = 0.30$), or large ($r = 0.50$).

To address the fourth research question on whether instructional leadership significantly predicts teacher competence, simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The overall Instructional Leadership score served as the predictor variable, while the overall Teacher Competence score served as the outcome variable. For the regression model, the following statistics were reported: the unstandardized regression coefficient (B), the standardized regression coefficient (β), the coefficient of determination (R^2), the F-statistic for model fit, and the p-value. The R^2 value indicated the proportion of variance in teacher competence explained by instructional leadership. Prior to conducting the regression analysis, the researcher confirmed that all requisite assumptions were met, including linearity (assessed through scatterplots), independence of residuals (assessed using the Durbin-Watson statistic), homoscedasticity (assessed through visual inspection of residual plots), normality of residuals (assessed using Shapiro-Wilk tests and Q-Q plots), and absence of multicollinearity (VIF was not applicable as there was only one predictor variable). All statistical analyses were performed using appropriate software at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Level of Instructional Leadership as Perceived by Teachers

The first research question examined teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership across five key dimensions: setting instructional goals and expectations, supervising and evaluating instruction, promoting teacher professional development, coordinating the curriculum, and fostering a positive instructional climate.

Table 3. Level of Instructional Leadership as Perceived by Teachers

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Setting Instructional Goals and Expectations	3.89	0.68	High
Supervising and Evaluating Instruction	3.67	0.72	High
Promoting Teacher Professional Development	3.42	0.75	Moderate
Coordinating the Curriculum	3.78	0.70	High
Fostering a Positive Instructional Climate	3.95	0.65	High
Overall Instructional Leadership	3.74	0.64	High

As shown in Table 3, teachers generally perceived the instructional leadership of school heads in the Balaoan District as high ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.64$). Yet the aggregate score conceals an important pattern. The five dimensions did not receive equal ratings. Fostering a Positive Instructional Climate emerged as the strongest dimension ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.65$), followed by Setting Instructional Goals and Expectations ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.68$), Coordinating the Curriculum ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.70$), and Supervising and Evaluating Instruction ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.72$). Promoting Teacher Professional Development, however, registered a moderate rating ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.75$), making it the only dimension that fell below the high category.

The overall finding suggests that instructional leadership is visible in the everyday work of school heads in the district. Teachers appear to experience their school leaders not simply as administrators of school operations but as actors who provide direction, coordinate instructional work, and cultivate conditions that allow teaching to proceed. This is broadly consistent with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), which places instructional leadership at the center of school leadership and associates it with the development of a teaching-learning culture, the supervision of instruction, and the management of curriculum implementation [10]. The high overall rating therefore points to a substantial alignment between teachers' experiences of school leadership and the expectations embedded in the national standards.

What is particularly revealing, however, is that the strongest aspect of instructional leadership was not supervision or curriculum management but the cultivation of an instructional climate. Fostering a Positive Instructional Climate obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.65$). This suggests that school heads are perceived to be more successful in shaping the social conditions of teaching than in directly intervening in the professional development of teachers. In practical terms, teachers appear to experience their schools as places where communication, trust, support, recognition, and collegiality are reasonably well established. This matters because instructional leadership is not exercised only through formal observation and evaluation. It is also expressed through the less

visible work of creating an environment in which teachers feel respected, heard, and capable of doing their work well. Hallinger and Hosseingholizadeh[6] similarly emphasize the importance of school climate in creating conditions that support teacher collaboration, professional growth, and commitment.

The item-level results reinforce this interpretation. Creating a positive and supportive school culture received the highest rating within the dimension ($M = 4.02$), followed by promoting open communication and trust ($M = 3.98$). These ratings point to a form of leadership grounded in relationships. Teachers appear to recognize their school heads' capacity to maintain a supportive environment and sustain communication within the school community. This is not a trivial finding. Trust is often the medium through which leadership becomes influential rather than merely authoritative. Tan et al.[2] showed that leadership practices involving relationships, teacher learning, and instructional improvement are associated with stronger effects on teaching and learning. At the same time, the comparatively lower rating for encouraging innovation and experimentation in teaching practices ($M = 3.78$) suggests that support does not always translate into an environment where teachers feel equally encouraged to take pedagogical risks. The distinction is important: a school can be supportive without necessarily being strongly innovative. As Morris et al. [11]observed, creating a positive organizational climate and promoting instructional change are related but distinct leadership challenges.

Setting Instructional Goals and Expectations ranked second ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.68$), indicating that teachers generally perceive school heads as capable of providing instructional direction. The result suggests that school leaders are communicating expectations and maintaining attention to school-wide teaching and learning priorities. This corresponds with Hallinger's model of instructional leadership [6], in which defining and communicating the school's mission constitutes one of the central responsibilities of the instructional leader. Leadership, in this sense, begins with giving the school a shared sense of direction.

Yet the item-level result also introduces a useful qualification. The indicator concerning teachers' involvement in developing school-wide instructional goals and targets received a relatively lower mean of 3.72. This does not negate the generally high assessment of the dimension, but it suggests that participation in setting goals may not be as strong as the communication of goals themselves. There is a difference between telling teachers where the school intends to go and involving them in deciding where it should go. Hallinger and Hosseingholizadeh[6] emphasized the importance of collaborative goal-setting in building ownership and commitment. The finding therefore suggests an area where instructional leadership could move from communicating expectations toward more participatory forms of leadership in which teachers have a more substantive role in defining instructional priorities.

Coordinating the Curriculum was likewise rated high ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.70$). The result indicates that school heads are perceived as actively supporting curriculum implementation, coordinating instructional planning, and creating opportunities for teachers to work together around curriculum concerns. This role is particularly significant in the Philippine public-school context, where curriculum implementation requires continuous interpretation, coordination, and adjustment at the

school level. The relatively high rating for facilitating regular meetings among teachers to discuss curriculum implementation and instructional issues ($M = 3.82$) suggests that school heads are creating institutional spaces where teachers can collectively address instructional concerns. In this respect, curriculum leadership appears to operate through coordination rather than through the unilateral direction of teachers. This is consistent with Wang et al. [12], who identify curriculum coordination and teacher collaboration as important components of effective school leadership.

Supervising and Evaluating Instruction received a high rating as well, although its mean of 3.67 ($SD = 0.72$) placed it fourth among the five dimensions. The finding indicates that classroom observation, feedback, evaluation, and instructional monitoring are generally present in the schools. But its relatively lower position is worth considering. Supervision is one of the more formal expressions of instructional leadership, and it can easily become associated with accountability rather than professional learning. The item concerning the use of evaluation results for improving teaching and learning, rather than merely satisfying administrative requirements, obtained a mean of 3.58. This comparatively modest rating may indicate that the developmental purpose of supervision is not always experienced as strongly as its compliance function.

This distinction is important because instructional supervision occupies an uneasy space between accountability and professional support. Hallinger [6] notes that instructional leaders must balance the need to monitor teaching with the responsibility to assist teachers in improving their practice. The finding may therefore point not to an absence of supervision but to the continuing challenge of making supervision genuinely formative. The most consequential finding, however, lies in the dimension that received the lowest rating. Promoting Teacher Professional Development obtained a moderate mean of 3.42 ($SD = 0.75$), making it the only dimension that did not reach the high category. This result introduces a tension into the otherwise favorable portrait of instructional leadership in the district. School heads appear to be effective in creating a supportive environment, setting instructional direction, coordinating curriculum, and supervising instruction, but these practices are less consistently translated into sustained opportunities for teacher learning.

The item-level results make this tension clearer. Encouraging teachers to participate in professional development activities received the highest rating within the dimension ($M = 3.58$), while allocating time and resources for professional development obtained the lowest ($M = 3.22$). The difference suggests that the difficulty may not lie in recognizing the value of professional development. Rather, it may lie in creating the material and organizational conditions that allow it to happen consistently. Encouragement is relatively inexpensive; sustained professional learning requires time, resources, scheduling space, and institutional commitment. The moderate rating for facilitating or organizing Learning Action Cells (LAC) sessions ($M = 3.38$) points in the same direction. LACs may exist as part of the formal architecture of professional learning, but their effectiveness depends on whether schools can provide the conditions necessary for meaningful engagement.

This finding is particularly significant when viewed against the broader literature on teacher learning. Bendtsen et al. [13] argue that effective professional development is not an occasional activity but a sustained process connected to teachers' practice, collaboration, and instructional

needs. School leaders consequently have a critical role in creating the conditions under which such learning can occur. In the Philippine setting, the challenges surrounding LAC implementation, including time constraints, limited resources, and uneven facilitator preparation, have likewise been documented by Baldera [14]. The moderate rating in the present study may therefore reflect an institutional constraint rather than simply a deficiency in the willingness of school heads to support their teachers.

3.2 Level of Teacher Competence

The second research question aimed to determine the level of teacher competence across five dimensions: content knowledge and pedagogy, instructional planning and preparation, classroom management, assessment and feedback, and professional engagement and development.

Table 4. Level of Teacher Competence

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	3.94	0.62	High
Instructional Planning and Preparation	3.82	0.68	High
Classroom Management	3.78	0.70	High
Assessment and Feedback	3.65	0.72	High
Professional Engagement and Development	3.56	0.74	High
Overall Teacher Competence	3.75	0.62	High

Table 4 presents a generally favorable picture of teacher competence in the Balaoan District. The overall mean of 3.75 (SD = 0.62) falls within the high category, with all five dimensions receiving similarly high ratings. Content Knowledge and Pedagogy ranked first (M = 3.94, SD = 0.62), followed by Instructional Planning and Preparation (M = 3.82, SD = 0.68), Classroom Management (M = 3.78, SD = 0.70), Assessment and Feedback (M = 3.65, SD = 0.72), and Professional Engagement and Development (M = 3.56, SD = 0.74). The pattern is notable not because any dimension appears deficient, but because the areas where teachers feel most confident are not necessarily the same areas that require the greatest investment in continuing professional learning.

The high overall rating suggests that teachers perceive themselves as capable of meeting the demands of their professional roles. Such self-assessments are consistent with the expectations established by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which defines the knowledge, skills, and professional practices expected of teachers across career stages [10]. The result also resonates with Karim et al. [15], who emphasize the importance of teacher efficacy and professional capacity in the quality of teaching and, ultimately, in student learning. At the same time, self-perceived competence should be read carefully. A high rating tells us how teachers understand their own practice; it does not, by itself, establish the objective quality of that practice. This distinction becomes important when interpreting the differences across dimensions.

Content Knowledge and Pedagogy emerged as the strongest dimension (M = 3.94, SD = 0.62). Teachers appear particularly confident in their command of the subjects they teach and, in their ability, to translate that knowledge into classroom instruction. The highest-rated indicator, "I have a

deep and thorough understanding of the subject matter I teach" ($M = 4.08$), reinforces this sense of professional confidence. There is an important institutional implication here. Teachers seem to regard expertise in what they teach as one of the more secure parts of their professional identity.

Yet the lower rating for continuously updating content knowledge through reading, research, and professional development ($M = 3.78$) introduces a small but meaningful qualification. Knowing one's subject and continuously renewing that knowledge is not the same thing. The former reflects accumulated expertise; the latter requires an ongoing relationship with new research, emerging practices, and changing curricular demands. The PPST's emphasis on content knowledge and pedagogy therefore points not only to mastery but also to continued professional learning [10]. The finding suggests that teachers may feel confident about what they already know while having fewer opportunities, or perhaps less consistent habits, for systematically expanding that knowledge.

Instructional Planning and Preparation ranked second ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.68$). The rating suggests that teachers generally feel capable of translating curriculum requirements into concrete instructional plans. Setting clear, measurable, and achievable learning objectives received the highest rating within this dimension ($M = 3.94$), indicating considerable confidence in establishing direction for classroom instruction. Planning, in this sense, appears to be one of the more established aspects of professional practice.

The relatively lower rating for planning differentiated instruction according to varied learner needs ($M = 3.72$), however, points to a familiar challenge. It is one thing to design a coherent lesson for a class; it is another to anticipate and respond to differences in learners' readiness, interests, and learning needs. Bunga et al. [16] have noted the practical difficulties teachers encounter in implementing differentiated instruction, particularly when classrooms are large and resources are limited. In public-school settings, these structural conditions matter. The finding therefore suggests that further strengthening teacher competence may require moving beyond lesson preparation toward more adaptive forms of planning that respond deliberately to learner diversity.

Classroom Management was likewise rated high ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.70$). Teachers appear confident in their ability to establish orderly and supportive learning environments, manage behavior, maintain routines, and sustain constructive relationships with learners. The highest-rated indicator, building positive relationships with students based on respect, trust, and care ($M = 3.92$), is particularly revealing. It suggests that teachers do not understand classroom management simply as controlling behavior. Rather, they appear to associate effective management with the quality of relationships they establish with their students.

The comparatively lower rating for maximizing instructional time by minimizing interruptions and transitions ($M = 3.64$) suggests that maintaining a positive classroom climate does not always translate into maximizing the time available for learning. This distinction is significant. Effective classroom management involves both relational and organizational work. Pianta et al. (2016) similarly emphasize the importance of teacher-student interactions while recognizing the continuing challenge of sustaining effective classroom processes. In classrooms characterized by large

numbers of learners and diverse needs, managing transitions and protecting instructional time can be particularly demanding.

Assessment and Feedback obtained a high rating of 3.65 (SD = 0.72), placing it fourth among the five dimensions. Teachers generally perceive themselves as capable of designing assessments, documenting student progress, providing feedback, and using assessment information to support instruction. The highest-rated indicator, maintaining accurate and organized records of student performance and progress (M = 3.78), suggests that teachers are particularly confident in the administrative and documentation aspects of assessment.

The lower rating for involving students in self-assessment and reflection on their own learning progress (M = 3.48) is more revealing. It suggests that assessment may still be understood primarily as something teachers administer and manage rather than as a process in which students actively participate. Chappuis [17] argue that formative assessment becomes more powerful when learners are involved in understanding where they are in relation to learning goals and what they need to do next. The result therefore points to an opportunity to deepen assessment practice by giving students a more active role in evaluating and reflecting on their own learning. Such a shift would move assessment from a record of achievement toward a resource for learning.

Professional Engagement and Development received the lowest mean among the five dimensions (M = 3.56, SD = 0.74), although it remained within the high category. This is perhaps the most consequential pattern in the table. Teachers generally regard themselves as competent professionals, yet the domain most closely associated with sustaining and extending that competence receives the lowest rating. The highest-rated indicator, reflecting on one's own teaching practice and continuously seeking ways to improve (M = 3.68), suggests that teachers value self-reflection. But active participation in professional development activities such as seminars, workshops, and trainings received a lower mean of 3.48, while staying informed about current educational trends, research, and best practices obtained 3.52.

The pattern may indicate that professional engagement is stronger at the level of individual reflection than at the level of sustained participation in broader professional learning. This distinction matters. Reflection can occur within one's own classroom and on one's own time, whereas meaningful professional development often depends on access to training, colleagues, resources, time, and institutional support. In the Philippine context, Pasique and Maguate[18] likewise identified limitations in resources, funding, and competing professional responsibilities as challenges to teachers' access to development opportunities.

There is also an important correspondence between this finding and the earlier results on instructional leadership. Promoting Teacher Professional Development was the only dimension of instructional leadership that received a moderate rating. Professional Engagement and Development, in turn, was the lowest-rated dimension of teacher competence. The two findings, taken together, suggest a possible relationship between what school leaders provide and how teachers experience their own opportunities for professional growth. This should not be interpreted as evidence of causality, particularly at the descriptive stage of the analysis. It does, however, offer

a meaningful pattern for the subsequent analysis of the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher competence.

The broader lesson from Table 4 is therefore less about whether teachers are competent. They clearly perceive themselves to be. The more useful question is where that competence is being sustained and where it may need further development. Teachers appear most confident in their content knowledge, instructional planning, and classroom relationships. They are somewhat less confident in assessment practices that require active student participation and in professional engagement that demands continuous connection with research and professional learning communities. This pattern suggests that strengthening teacher competence in the district may require less emphasis on basic professional compliance and greater attention to the conditions that make continuous learning possible.

In this respect, the findings reinforce the idea that teacher competence is not a fixed possession. It is something that must be continually renewed through practice, reflection, collaboration, and professional learning. The high overall rating is therefore encouraging, but its greatest value lies in identifying where that confidence can be converted into deeper professional growth. The relatively lower rating for Professional Engagement and Development provides precisely such a point of entry.

3.3 Relationship Between Instructional Leadership and Teacher Competence

The third research question examined the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher competence in public schools.

Table 5. Correlation Between Instructional Leadership and Teacher Competence

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Instructional Leadership	3.74	0.64	—	
2. Teacher Competence	3.75	0.62	0.58**	—

*** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed)*

Table 5 shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between instructional leadership and teacher competence ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$). The direction of the relationship is straightforward: as teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership increase, their reported levels of competence also tend to increase. In other words, teachers who experience stronger instructional leadership from their school heads are more likely to describe themselves as more competent in their professional practice.

The strength of the association is important. An r of 0.58 indicates a substantial relationship between the two variables, while the corresponding coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.34$) suggests that approximately 34% of the variation in teacher competence is statistically associated with instructional leadership. This is a meaningful proportion, but it should not be mistaken for a causal estimate. The study establishes an association, not proof that stronger instructional leadership directly produces higher teacher competence. Teacher competence is shaped by a wider set of

conditions, including qualifications, teaching experience, motivation, professional learning opportunities, working conditions, and access to instructional resources.

The finding nevertheless offers empirical support for the study's theoretical premise. Instructional Leadership Model [6] positions school leadership as an important influence on teaching and learning through three interconnected functions: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and developing a positive school learning climate. These functions matter because leadership does not operate in isolation from classroom practice. The goals that leaders communicate, the instructional practices they monitor, the professional learning they encourage, and the climate they cultivate become part of the environment in which teachers work. The observed relationship in this study suggests that these leadership practices are also reflected in how teachers assess their own professional competence.

The result also gives empirical weight to the policy expectations established in the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). The standards identify instructional leadership as a central component of school leadership, particularly in relation to developing a teaching-learning culture, supervising instruction, and managing curriculum implementation [10]. The significant relationship observed in the present study suggests that these responsibilities are not merely administrative prescriptions. From the teachers' perspective, the quality of instructional leadership is meaningfully connected with how they perceive their own capacity to perform their professional roles.

This finding is consistent with the broader literature on school leadership. Robinson et al. (2008), in their meta-analysis of leadership effects, found that leadership practices closely connected to teaching and teacher learning are particularly important for educational outcomes. Hallinger and Hosseingholizadeh[6] likewise emphasizes that instructional leadership operates through the conditions surrounding teaching and learning rather than through leadership authority alone. The present result fits within this understanding: leadership appears consequential insofar as it creates conditions in which teachers can work, learn, and improve.

At the same time, the coefficient of 0.58 tells a more careful story than a simple claim that "good leadership produces competent teachers." The relationship is strong enough to matter, but not so large as to suggest that leadership accounts for everything. With approximately 34% of the variance statistically associated with instructional leadership, a substantial portion remains connected to other influences. This is precisely where the finding becomes useful. Rather than treating instructional leadership as a single solution to teacher competence, the result positions it as one important element within a larger institutional and professional ecology.

The practical implication, therefore, is not simply to ask school heads to become better leaders. It is to consider what kinds of leadership practices teachers actually encounter in their everyday work. Clear instructional goals, meaningful supervision, opportunities for professional learning, coordinated curriculum work, and a supportive school climate may create conditions in which teachers are better able to develop and exercise their professional capacities. Strengthening teacher

competence consequently requires attention not only to teachers themselves but also to the organizational environments in which their competence is expected to grow.

3.4 Instructional Leadership as a Predictor of Teacher Competence

The fourth research question aimed to determine the extent to which instructional leadership significantly predicts teacher competence in public schools. Simple linear regression was conducted with overall instructional leadership as the predictor variable and overall teacher competence as the outcome variable.

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Summary for Instructional Leadership Predicting Teacher Competence

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	T	p	95% CI
Constant	1.82	0.22	—	8.27	< .001	[1.38, 2.26]
Instructional Leadership	0.52	0.06	0.58	8.67	< .001	[0.40, 0.64]

Model Summary: $R = 0.58$, $R^2 = 0.34$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.33$, $F(1, 98) = 75.16$, $p < .001$.

Note. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval.

Table 6 presents a statistically significant regression model showing that instructional leadership is a significant predictor of teacher competence, $F(1, 98) = 75.16$, $p < .001$. The model accounted for 34% of the variance in teacher competence ($R^2 = 0.34$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.33$). Instructional leadership likewise emerged as a significant positive predictor ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < .001$). In practical terms, the unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.52$) indicates that a one-unit increase in instructional leadership is associated with a 0.52-unit increase in the predicted level of teacher competence. The standardized coefficient further indicates that the relationship is substantial.

The result is important because it moves the discussion beyond whether instructional leadership and teacher competence are merely related. The regression analysis shows that instructional leadership accounts for a meaningful share of the observed differences in teachers' reported competence. At the same time, the 34% figure should not be read as saying that school heads determine 34% of what teachers know or can do. It means that variation in instructional leadership statistically accounts for 34% of the variation observed in the measure of teacher competence in this sample. The remaining 66% reminds us that teacher competence is produced within a much wider field of influences.

This finding is consistent with Instructional Leadership Model[6], which understands leadership through the interrelated work of defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and developing a positive school learning climate. These are not simply functions performed by school heads in isolation. They shape the institutional environment in which teachers plan lessons, respond to learners, receive feedback, collaborate with colleagues, and pursue professional growth. The predictive relationship observed in this study therefore provides empirical support for the proposition that the conditions created by school leadership matter for how teachers experience and exercise their professional competence.

The finding is also consistent with the broader literature on instructional leadership. Tan et al. [2] demonstrated that leadership practices closely connected to teaching and teacher learning are associated with educational outcomes. What emerges from the present study is a similar institutional logic: leadership matters not necessarily because school heads directly produce teacher competence, but because they influence the conditions under which that competence can be developed and expressed. This becomes particularly relevant in the context of Philippine public schools, where teachers often work within organizational conditions marked by competing demands, limited resources, large classes, and diverse learner needs. Under such circumstances, instructional leadership can provide something more basic but equally important: direction, coordination, feedback, and institutional support. A school head who clarifies instructional priorities, coordinates curriculum work, provides useful supervision, supports professional learning, and maintains a constructive school climate does more than fulfill a formal administrative role. Such leadership helps organize the environment in which teachers do their work.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher competence in public schools in the Balaoan District. The findings show that instructional leadership is more than a formal responsibility of school heads. It is part of the institutional environment in which teachers learn, work, and develop. The significant relationship and predictive effect observed in the study suggest that teachers' professional competence is shaped, in meaningful measure, by the leadership conditions surrounding their practice.

One finding deserves particular attention: Promoting Teacher Professional Development was the lowest-rated dimension of instructional leadership, while Professional Engagement and Development was the lowest-rated dimension of teacher competence. Their convergence suggests that teacher professional growth cannot be treated simply as an individual responsibility. Teachers need time, resources, opportunities, and institutional encouragement to sustain professional learning. When these conditions are weak, professional development becomes easier to postpone amid the everyday demands of school work.

This has a direct implication for policy and practice. The PPSSH appropriately places instructional leadership at the center of school head responsibilities, but standards alone do not guarantee implementation. School heads need sustained capacity-building, particularly in facilitating professional learning, supporting collaborative practice, and creating conditions where teachers can grow. Professional development should likewise extend beyond seminars and trainings to include Learning Action Cells, collaborative planning, peer observation, mentoring, and other forms of job-embedded learning.

The findings also suggest that improving teacher competence requires attention to the leadership environment, not only to teachers themselves. The predictive relationship between instructional leadership and teacher competence provides a basis for investing in the preparation and continuing development of school heads. This is especially relevant in public schools where teachers work amid large classes, limited resources, and diverse learner needs. In such settings, effective

instructional leadership can provide direction, coordination, and support that help teachers navigate everyday constraints.

At the same time, the study does not suggest that leadership explains everything. Instructional leadership accounted for 34% of the variance in teacher competence, leaving substantial room for other influences such as teacher experience, qualifications, motivation, resources, and working conditions. Future studies should therefore examine the mechanisms behind this relationship through qualitative and longitudinal approaches, including the contextual factors that may strengthen or weaken it.

Ultimately, the findings point to a simple but consequential proposition: teachers do not develop in isolation. Their competence is cultivated within institutions, and school heads help shape those institutions. Improving teacher quality therefore requires not only asking teachers to become better professionals but also asking whether schools provide the leadership, resources, and professional conditions that make such growth possible.

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