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Instructional Competencies and Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Teaching English

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Abstract

This study examined the instructional competencies of Grade 4 English teachers, the challenges they encounter, and their relationship to learners' academic performance in public elementary schools in the Second Congressional District of Camarines Sur. Grounded in educational theories emphasizing learner-centered instruction and motivation, the study aimed to determine how teachers' competencies and contextual challenges influence learners' achievement in English. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, involving 45 teachers and 495 learners selected through total enumeration and proportionate sampling. Data were collected using a validated survey questionnaire and documentary analysis of learners' General Weighted Average in English. Statistical tools such as weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. Results revealed that teachers demonstrated high levels of instructional competence, particularly in instructional delivery, while frequently encountering challenges related to diverse learning needs, resources, and classroom environment. Learners' academic performance was generally satisfactory. Correlation analysis showed weak and mostly non-significant relationships between competencies, challenges, and academic performance, while regression analysis indicated that these variables had minimal predictive impact on learners' achievement. Based on the findings, an Inclusive and Differentiated Instructional Enhancement Program was proposed to strengthen teachers' competencies, address classroom challenges, and improve learner outcomes in English.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Education is widely recognized as a primary driver of human development and societal progress, serving to shape cognitive abilities, communication skills, and lifelong learning capacities. Within the global educational landscape, English occupies a central position as a dominant medium of instruction, research, and professional interaction. Proficiency in the language is essential for academic success and participation in the global community. However, the quality of English language education depends heavily on the competence of teachers and the conditions under which teaching and learning occur. When teachers lack necessary skills or operate within constrained environments, learner achievement and language proficiency are inevitably compromised.

Globally, improving educational quality remains a priority, with reforms consistently emphasizing the need for competent, adaptable, and well-supported educators. Despite these efforts, disparities persist between nations and within regions, particularly in developing educational systems. These realities underscore that instructional competence is not merely a technical requirement but a foundational element

of educational equity and quality. This perspective aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning, and explicitly calls for enhanced teacher training and professional development as pathways to improved outcomes.

In the Philippines, English is a core subject and medium of instruction from intermediate grades onward, demanding that learners develop advanced comprehension and communication skills. Legal frameworks such as Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, mandate a learner-centered, constructivist curriculum that requires teachers to possess high-level instructional competencies. Complementing this, DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 institutionalized the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), defining clear expectations for content knowledge, pedagogy, assessment, and classroom management. Yet, policy ideals often meet contextual realities: teachers in public schools frequently navigate large classes, limited materials, inadequate facilities, and diverse learner needs—factors that may impede effective practice.

Existing literature confirms that instructional competence influences student engagement and achievement. However, the relationship is not linear; external variables such as socioeconomic status, school climate, and institutional support mediate outcomes. While numerous studies have examined teacher competence or teaching challenges separately, fewer have investigated their combined influence within specific local contexts. This gap is evident in the Second Congressional District of Camarines Sur, where despite national interventions like the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Program and the National Reading Camp, implementation gaps remain. Understanding how teacher competencies interact with field realities is critical to crafting responsive, context-specific solutions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to assess the instructional competencies of Grade 4 English teachers, identify challenges encountered, and determine how these variables collectively influence learner academic performance. Specifically, it achieved the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of instructional competencies in terms of pedagogical knowledge, instructional delivery, and assessment and evaluation.
2. To identify challenges related to instruction, school environment, resources, and learner diversity.
3. To describe learners' academic performance in English.
4. To evaluate the influence of competencies on the challenges experienced.
5. To determine the predictive impact of competencies and challenges on academic performance.
6. To propose an evidence-based instructional program.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Instructional competence integrates content knowledge, pedagogy, assessment, and professional disposition; competent teachers plan, deliver, assess, and reflect effectively (La Velle, 2022; Danielson et al., 2025; Stronge, 2018) to boost engagement and achievement (Sortwell et al., 2024; Engida et al., 2024), though effectiveness relies on preparation, development, and school support (Mallillin & Lopez, 2024; Rahman et al., 2020). Contextual barriers—rigid curricula, scarce resources, large classes, workload, limited technology—hinder ideal practices and cause stress (Atherton, 2024; Marzano, 2017; Sebayang et al., 2025; Tomlinson, 2019; Hakim et al., 2023), while student traits interact with teaching quality to shape results (Wilson et al., 2021; Khan & Younas, 2021). Technology integration and assessment literacy are

key needs, yet access, training, and capacity-building remain insufficient (Erwin & Mohammed, 2022; Anwar et al., 2024; Elmahdi et al., 2018; Napanoy & Peckley, 2020).

The study is anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1952; McLeod, 2025), viewing learning as active knowledge building facilitated by teachers; Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Yengkopiong, 2025), linking supportive environments to motivation; Teacher–Curriculum–Engagement Theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998; Tomovic, 2021), stressing alignment between skills, curriculum, and engagement; Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986; Zhai et al., 2023), explaining reciprocal person-behavior-environment influences; and Instructional Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022; Hazel, 2026), framing adaptation to challenges as vital for effectiveness.

The conceptual framework positions instructional competencies (independent variable) as influencing challenges (intervening: instructional, environmental, resource, learner-related) and academic performance (dependent, measured via GWA). Competencies may mitigate challenges, while both predict achievement, with performance data guiding instructional improvement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive-correlational design was employed (Putri et al., 2025). The descriptive component described the status of competencies, challenges, and performance. The correlational component measured associations between variables, while regression analysis determined predictive relationships without implying causality (Fraenkel et al., 2019). This design is appropriate for educational research aiming to profile existing conditions and explain relationships among naturally occurring phenomena (Cohen et al., 2018).

Respondents and Sampling

The study involved 45 Grade 4 English teachers and 495 learners from four public elementary schools in the Second Congressional District of Camarines Sur during School Year 2025–2026. All eligible teachers were included via total enumeration. Learners were selected through proportionate stratified sampling to ensure representation across schools. Teachers were required to have at least one year of experience teaching Grade 4 English; learners needed complete academic records.

Research Instruments

Two instruments were used:

1. **Survey Questionnaire**: A structured, Likert-scale instrument assessing three domains of competence and four categories of challenges. It underwent content validation by experts and pilot testing, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient confirming internal reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Responses ranged from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5) for competencies, and *Never* (1) to *Always* (5) for challenges.
2. **Documentary Analysis**: Official school records provided learners' GWA in English, serving as the measure of academic performance (Bowen, 2009).

Data Collection Procedure

Formal permission was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent and school principals. Informed consent was obtained from teachers and parents/guardians of learners. The researcher personally administered questionnaires and gathered academic records, ensuring confidentiality through coding and secure storage.

Data Analysis

- **Weighted Mean**: Determined levels of competencies and frequency of challenges (Boone & Boone, 2012).
- **Mean and Standard Deviation**: Described academic performance and variability in responses (Bhandari, 2024).
- **Pearson Product-Moment Correlation**: Measured relationships between variables.
- **Regression Analysis**: Identified the predictive contribution of competencies and challenges to performance (Pallant, 2020).

Ethical standards including voluntary participation, anonymity, data privacy compliance, and academic integrity were strictly observed throughout the process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Instructional Competencies of Grade 4 English Teachers in Terms of Pedagogical Knowledge, Instructional Delivery, and Assessment and Evaluation

Table 1 presents the summary of the instructional competencies of Grade 4 English teachers across three key domains: *Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills*, *Instructional Delivery*, and *Assessment and Evaluation*. Results are quantified using the Average Weighted Mean (AWM), interpreted based on a standard scale, ranked according to magnitude, and presented as follows, Delivery obtained the highest Average Weighted Mean of 4.17, interpreted as Agree (A), and ranked 1st, Assessment and Evaluation recorded an AWM of 4.11, also interpreted as Agree (A), and ranked 2nd, Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills garnered an AWM of 4.09, likewise interpreted as Agree (A), and ranked 3rd, Collectively, the Overall Weighted Mean for instructional competencies is 4.12, described as Agree (A), denoting that the teachers exhibit a generally high level of competence in the performance of their instructional duties.These values indicate that across all measured dimensions, the respondents consistently demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes required in the teaching profession, albeit with observable variations in proficiency levels across specific domains

Table 1
Summary of the Instructional Competencies of Teachers

Statements	AWM	Int.	Rk
Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills	4.09	A	3
Instructional Delivery	4.17	A	1
Assessment and Evaluation	4.11	A	2
Overall Weighted Mean	4.12	A	

Analysis reveals a clear hierarchy: Instructional Delivery ranked highest (4.17), indicating strong proficiency in translating content into practice, organizing lessons, communicating clearly, and engaging learners effectively. Assessment and Evaluation followed (4.11), showing adequate skill in aligned testing, feedback, and interpretation, though with limited sophistication in adapting methods for diverse needs or using data to redesign instruction. Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills were lowest (4.09); while teachers know *what* and *how* to teach, they demonstrate less confidence in theoretical foundations, content adaptation, and applying learner-centered strategies to develop critical thinking.

It infers that teachers are practically competent, excelling in lesson delivery but less so in pedagogical

knowledge and assessment integration. They tend to use traditional methods and view assessment mainly for measurement, not improvement. While meeting DepEd standards, they remain at a basic competency level, needing growth in theoretical application and adaptive strategies.

Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Relation to Instruction, School Environment, Resources, and Diverse Learner Needs.

Table 2 summarizes challenges encountered by Grade 4 English teachers across four domains, measured via Average Weighted Mean (AWM) and interpreted using a 5-point scale. *Diverse Learning Needs Challenges* ranked highest at 4.03 (Often), followed by *Resource Challenges* at 3.89 (Often), *Environmental Challenges* at 3.82 (Often), and *Instructional Challenges* as the lowest at 3.77 (Often). The overall weighted mean of 3.88 (Often) reveals that difficulties are consistently experienced in teaching English, occurring frequently across all categories with slight variations in intensity.

Findings align with theoretical and literature bases. Strong Instructional Delivery supports Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1952; McLeod, 2025), though weaker pedagogical knowledge shows limited grasp of knowledge construction (Haron & Ismail, 2021). Results validate Teacher–Curriculum–Engagement Theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998; Tomovic, 2021), with teachers strong in engagement but less in curriculum alignment (Shah, 2022). High delivery skills reflect adaptability per Instructional Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022; Hazel, 2026). Through Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986; Zhai & Zhang, 2023), practical skills reflect training and supervision, while theory remains underdeveloped. Literature confirms delivery and assessment drive achievement (Sortwell & Campbell, 2024), yet Filipino teachers often lack deep pedagogical reasoning (Miguel & Reyes, 2025; Mallillin & Lopez, 2024). Overall, competence is multidimensional; strengthening theoretical and adaptive skills is vital to meet Republic Act No. 10533 and PPST standards.

Table 2
Challenges Encountered in Teaching English

Statements	AWM	Int.
Diverse Learning Needs Challenges	4.03	O
Resource Challenges	3.89	O
Environmental Challenges	3.82	O
Instructional Challenges	3.77	O
Overall Weighted Mean	3.88	O

Note: 5 = Always 4.21–5.00; 4 = Often 3.41–4.20; 3 = Sometimes 2.61–3.40; 2 = Rarely 1.81–2.60; 1 = Never 1.00–1.80

Analysis shows that diverse learning needs are the most prevalent challenge, as wide differences in learner abilities, readiness, and backgrounds require constant adjustments that are hard to sustain. Resource shortages follow closely, highlighting insufficient learning materials and technology, which force teachers to improvise and consume valuable time. Environmental concerns such as overcrowded classes and poor facilities are also common, limiting interaction and individual support. Instructional difficulties are the least problematic yet still frequent; these involve pacing, planning, and assessment, but are more manageable given teachers' training and experience. Overall, challenges are systemic and recurring, with all constraints operating together to affect instruction quality.

Academic Performance/General Weighted Average (GWA) of Grade 4 Learners in English

Table 3 shows most learners reached Satisfactory (33.33%), followed by Very Satisfactory (28.69%) and Outstanding (19.80%); fewer were Fairly Satisfactory (14.14%) or Did Not Meet Expectations (4.04%), with a mean GWA of 84.12, interpreted as Satisfactory.

Most learners performed satisfactorily or better, yet some still faced difficulties. While overall performance is acceptable, outcomes remain inconsistent, indicating a need for targeted interventions to support struggling learners and close achievement gaps.

Findings align with theoretical and literature bases. High diverse learning challenges support Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1952; McLeod, 2025), showing varied backgrounds complicate knowledge construction without adaptations (Haron & Ismail, 2021), and reflect Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Yengkopiong, 2025), as untailored instruction reduces motivation. Co-occurring difficulties validate Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986; Zhai & Zhang, 2023), illustrating how poor environments hinder performance (Hakim & Suryadi, 2023), and uphold Instructional Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022; Hazel, 2026), emphasizing adaptability amid constraints (Rachmad, 2022). They also relate to Teacher–Curriculum–Engagement Theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998; Tomovic, 2021), where misaligned resources reduce effectiveness (Shah, 2022). Literature confirms these as persistent barriers (Sebayang & Sinaga, 2025; Atherton, 2024) that limit learner-centered practices (Khasinah & Lubis, 2024) and disproportionately affect rural schools (Gonzales, 2024; Aina, 2023). Collectively, results validate challenges as multidimensional factors interacting with competence, requiring systemic reforms aligned with Republic Act No. 10533 and DepEd policies.

Table 3
Academic Performance (GWA) of the Learners

Performance Level	GWA Range	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding	90–100	98	19.80%
Very Satisfactory	85–89	142	28.69%
Satisfactory	80–84	165	33.33%
Fairly Satisfactory	75–79	70	14.14%
Did Not Meet Expectations	Below 75	20	4.04%
Total		495	100%
Mean GWA		84.12	Satisfactory

Academic Performance of the Learners. It is referred to learners' level of achievement in English as measured through their General Weighted Average (GWA).

While performance is acceptable, targeted interventions, enhanced strategies, remediation, and differentiated instruction are needed to support struggling learners, close gaps, and ensure equitable outcomes.

Findings align with Almerino et al. (2020), who link achievement to instruction and conditions; Abao et al. (2024), who cite teaching quality, learner traits, and environment; and Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020), who note the value of strategies and support. They are explained by Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1952), Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), highlighting how knowledge construction, motivation, and environmental interactions shape performance.

Extent of Influence of Instructional Competencies to the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the School Environment

Table 4A

Model Fit Measures for Linear Regression on the Predictive Impact of Instructional
Model Fit Measures for Linear Regression on the Predictive Impact of
Instructional Competencies on Learners' Academic Performance

Model	R	R^2
1	0.117	0.0136

Note. Model estimated using a sample size of N = 45. R represents the multiple correlation coefficient. R^2 represents the coefficient of determination or proportion of variance explained.

Table 4 displays results of linear regression analysis measuring how instructional competencies predict learners' academic performance. Based on a sample of 45 respondents, the model yields **R = 0.117** (multiple correlation coefficient) and **R^2 = 0.0136** (coefficient of determination). These values show the strength of relationship and the proportion of variance in performance explained by the competencies.

The value *R = 0.117* indicates a **very weak positive correlation** between instructional competencies and learners' grades, meaning the relationship is almost negligible. Meanwhile, *R^2 = 0.0136* reveals that only **1.36%** of the variation in academic performance can be attributed to teachers' instructional competencies. This implies that while there is a slight positive association, instructional competence alone explains almost nothing about why learners perform differently. Other factors clearly play a far larger role in determining outcomes.

It can be inferred that instructional competencies, as measured, are not a strong predictor of learners' academic performance in this study. Even though teachers are generally competent in delivery, assessment, and pedagogy, these skills do not directly or strongly translate to higher grades. This suggests that student performance depends more on other variables—such as learner ability, home support, motivation, learning resources, or environmental conditions—rather than just the teacher's competence level. It also implies that having skilled teachers is necessary but not sufficient to guarantee better results, given the many other challenges present in the teaching-learning process.

This aligns with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986; Zhai & Zhang, 2023), affirming that performance arises from interactions between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors, with outcomes strongly shaped by external conditions and learner traits (Hakim & Suryadi, 2023). It also supports Instructional Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022; Hazel, 2026), showing constraints diminish the direct impact of competence (Rachmad, 2022). Literature concurs: performance depends on teaching quality, learner attributes, and environment (Abao et al., 2024); achievement reflects conditions as much as instruction (Almerino et al., 2020); and strategies succeed best with adequate support (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Overall, competence alone does not determine results; improvements require systemic reforms aligned with Republic Act No. 10533 and DepEd's holistic standards.

Table 4B

Regression Coefficients for the Predictive Effect of Teacher Challenges on Learners'Academic Performance

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t
Intercept	3.640	0.741	4.909

Means of Teacher Challenges	0.137	0.178	0.771

Note. SE = standard error.

Table 4B shows a significant intercept of 3.640 (t = 4.909, p < .001), indicating a stable performance baseline. However, challenges yielded a coefficient of 0.137 with p = 0.445 and t = 0.771, showing no significant predictive effect on performance. The slight positive relationship is statistically non-significant, likely due to chance, implying outcomes depend on other factors. This aligns with Taguba (2022) but contrasts with Sortwell et al. (2024) and Engida et al. (2024), a difference attributed to context and support systems. It supports Instructional Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022; Hazel, 2026), which stresses effectiveness depends on adaptation within supportive environments, not just challenges or competence.

Impact of Instructional Competencies and the Challenges Encountered by Teachers on the Academic Performance of Learners

Table 5A shows R = 0.0771 (negligible positive relationship) and R^2 = 0.00594, meaning only 0.594% of performance variance is explained by competencies and challenges combined. These factors have almost no predictive power; achievement depends largely on external variables like learner traits, home background, and school support. Improving results thus requires a holistic approach beyond teacher-related aspects alone. This aligns with Aina (2023) but contrasts with Almerino et al. (2020) and Abao et al. (2024), with differences likely due to context. Findings are supported by Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1952), which highlight active learning and adaptation amid conditions.

Table 5A

Model Fit Summary of the Linear Regression Analysis on the Predictive Effect of Instructional Challenges on Learners' Academic Performance

Model	R	R^2
1	0.0771	0.00594

Note. N = 45. R represents the multiple correlation coefficient. R^2 represents the coefficient of determination or proportion of variance explained by the predictor variables.

Table 5B shows a significant intercept (3.52008, p < .001), while instructional competencies yield a small coefficient (0.00811, p = .245), indicating no significant effect. Competencies have negligible influence, with observed relationship likely due to chance; they are not reliable predictors. This supports Taguba (2022) but contrasts with Sortwell et al. (2024) and Engida et al. (2024), implying context shapes outcomes. It aligns with Instructional Resilience Theory (Rachmad, 2022; Hazel, 2026), which holds competence works best alongside other instructional and environmental factors.

Table 5B Model Coefficients Predicting Academic Performance from Instructional Competencies

	Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept		3.52008	0.58694	6.00	< .001

Instructional	Competencies	0.00811	0.00688	1.18	.245

CONCLUSIONS

1. Teachers have acceptable competencies; delivery is strongest, while pedagogical knowledge is the least developed.
2. Challenges occur often, mostly from learner diversity, resources, and environment.
3. Learner performance is generally satisfactory, though some still have learning gaps.
4. Competencies have limited influence on challenges, which are shaped mainly by context.
5. Competencies and challenges do not significantly predict performance; other factors matter more.
6. An enhancement program is needed to address gaps and improve instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen professional development focused on pedagogical knowledge and learner-centered methods.
2. Provide training, materials, and better facilities to reduce common classroom challenges.
3. Use remediation, enrichment, and formative assessment to support low-performing learners.
4. Improve resources, class size management, and community support to reduce contextual barriers.
5. Adopt holistic interventions considering home background, motivation, and school resources.
6. Implement the proposed program to enhance instruction and learner performance.

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