Instructional Competence, Professional and Personal Characteristics of Teachers in Multigrade Classes

***Original Research Article***

# ABSTRACT

**Aims:** This study investigated the perceptions of instructional competence, professional characteristics, and personal attributes among multigrade teachers and school heads in Laoang, Northern Samar (You may delete the location mentioned here). The aim was to identify areas of alignment and discrepancy in these perceptions to inform strategies for enhancing multigrade education.

**Study Design:** A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a survey questionnaire. The instrument demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.995) following pilot testing.

**Place and Duration of Study:** The study was conducted in multigrade schools within the Laoang Division of Northern Samar, during the school year 2023-2024.

**Methodology:** Participants, selected through purposive sampling and complete enumeration, included 28 multigrade teachers and 14 school heads. Data were collected using the survey questionnaire, and descriptive statistics were used to compare the mean ratings of the two groups.

**Results:** A significant divergence in perceptions emerged. Multigrade teachers generally self- assessed their instructional competence, professional characteristics, and personal attributes more favorably than they were evaluated by school heads, indicating a potential perceptual gap across roles within the multigrade educational context.

**Conclusion:** The findings reveal a notable discrepancy in how multigrade teachers and school heads in Laoang, Northern Samar, (No need to mention the name of the place in your conclusion) perceive the teachers' attributes, with teachers exhibiting more positive self-evaluations. To address this perceptual gap and improve multigrade education, the study recommends collaborative professional development tailored to multigrade contexts, mentorship initiatives to foster mutual understanding, the establishment of clear and agreed-upon evaluation criteria, and formal recognition of multigrade teachers' contributions. These interventions aim to create a more aligned and supportive educational environment conducive to enhanced instructional practices and improved student outcomes in multigrade settings.

*Keywords: Instructional competence; professional characteristics; personal characteristics; multigrade classes; teacher self-assessment; school head evaluation; professional development programs; mentorship initiatives.*

# INTRODUCTION

Multigrade teaching, an educational approach where a single teacher instructs students from multiple grade levels within the same classroom, is often employed in areas characterized by limited resources, low population density, or remote communities where establishing separate grade-level classes is not feasible (UNESCO, 2013). This strategy emphasizes personalized instruction and fosters self-directed learning among students.

Multigrade classes, therefore, are mixed-grade settings designed to optimize teaching resources while addressing diverse learning needs (Cornish, 2021). Teachers in these classrooms frequently utilize strategies such as thematic lessons, peer tutoring, and differentiated learning plans to effectively manage varying academic requirements (UNESCO, 2015). In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) supports this approach as part of its commitment to ensuring accessible education for all. Specifically, multigrade teaching serves as a crucial solution for reaching students in geographically isolated barangays where traditional school structures are less practical. By implementing this method, DepEd aims to bridge educational gaps and extend learning opportunities to underserved communities.

Multigrade teaching presents both challenges and rewards, demanding that educators excel in areas such as instructional competence, professional skills, and personal characteristics (Kstatelibraries, 2024). These aspects are

significant for ensuring the effectiveness of multigrade teaching and offer valuable insights into how this approach can cater to diverse learning needs while promoting success. For instance, strong instructional competence enables teachers to design and deliver lessons tailored to students across different grade levels within a single classroom. Furthermore, professional skills, such as teamwork and dedication, foster collaboration among teachers, parents, and the community, thereby strengthening support for multigrade classes (Nobis & Caparroso, 2024)(*Please provide an accurate year published mentioned here. In the references, there study was published in 2025)*. Additionally, personal traits like patience, creativity, and empathy are vital in shaping a nurturing and inclusive classroom environment (Kstatelibraries, 2024). Consequently, these qualities work together to empower teachers in overcoming the inherent challenges of multigrade teaching while positively influencing their students' growth and success. Their inclusion in this discussion highlights their critical role in shaping effective educational practices and enriching the overall understanding of the study.

Instructional competence is crucial for effective teaching and improved student outcomes. Research consistently indicates that teachers' preparedness, mastery of teaching strategies (Bongala & Bobis, 2020), and professional knowledge are essential for fostering conducive learning environments and driving academic achievement (Smith et al., 2020). However, challenges such as limited resources and varying skill levels among educators can hinder the effective implementation of instructional

practices, particularly in multigrade classes. The correlation between teachers' instructional competence and student performance underscores the need for continuous professional development to address gaps and strengthen teaching methodologies.

Taripe and Limpot (2022) emphasized the importance of teacher competence, motivation, and instructional strategies in enhancing students' academic performance, noting that integrating ICT into teaching and learning significantly contributes to student success. Similarly, in multigrade classes, instructional competence is vital, requiring teachers to effectively plan and adapt lessons to meet diverse student needs (UNESCO, 2013). Professional characteristics, such as continuous learning and engagement, further enhance teaching effectiveness, while personal attributes like creativity and problem-solving skills improve educators' ability to support student achievement (Kstatelibraries, 2024). These studies highlight that well-trained, motivated, and adaptable teachers are key to improving academic outcomes.

The study also identified a variation in focus between teachers' self-assessments and school heads' evaluations of instructional competence. Teachers generally rated themselves highly, reflecting their confidence in their ability to deliver effective lessons, while school heads assessed instructional competence from a broader institutional perspective, prioritizing goals such as curriculum flexibility and teamwork. This difference in emphasis reflects the distinct roles and responsibilities of teachers and school heads, highlighting their unique contributions to the educational process. Recognizing these diverse perspectives underscores the importance of fostering alignment through targeted training and mentorship programs, which can bridge the gap between the classroom-centered priorities of teachers and the institution-wide objectives of school heads, ultimately encouraging collaboration and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the educational system.

To effectively bridge this gap, professional development initiatives must focus on enhancing instructional competence through practical training and skills development. Continuous evaluations, collaboration between teachers and school heads, and recognition of teachers' contributions are essential strategies to achieve alignment and improve overall teaching

effectiveness. Addressing these gaps enables educators to integrate diverse teaching methodologies that meet students' needs and enhance learning outcomes.

Furthermore, research underscores the significance of instructional competence in promoting critical thinking and active engagement among students. Evaluations not only identify areas for improvement but also foster professional growth among educators. Effective strategies, such as enhancing student motivation and participation, have been shown to significantly improve learning outcomes. Additionally, integrating modern teaching methods and fostering collaboration between teachers and school heads are critical to strengthening instructional practices. Altogether, these findings highlight the ongoing need for continuous improvement in instructional competence to achieve educational excellence.

Professional characteristics, such as adaptability, collaboration, and commitment, are equally crucial for educators navigating the demands of modern classrooms. These traits enable teachers to effectively address diverse student needs and create inclusive learning environments. Zhang and Hyland (2021) notably emphasized the crucial role of feedback in the refinement of professional practices. Similarly, Thawabieh (2017) found that discrepancies between self-assessments and external evaluations often arise due to unclear criteria and expectations. Establishing transparent performance indicators and fostering open communication bridges these gaps and promotes better alignment. Consequently, professional development programs focusing on reflective practices and integrative feedback mechanisms further support educators in enhancing their competencies and building strong partnerships with school leaders. Ultimately, these efforts strengthen teamwork and improve teaching effectiveness, benefiting both educators and students.

In addition, the findings emphasize that multigrade teaching demands a dynamic skill set and a high degree of adaptability, which are often essential for teachers' success in addressing diverse student needs. Membreve (2023) highlighted that multigrade educators demonstrate strong professional characteristics, frequently adjusting to unique challenges in their classrooms. Onde (2023) complements this by emphasizing the creativity of multigrade teachers

in crafting innovative solutions, which not only enhance their teaching experiences but also contribute to professional satisfaction. This proactive approach supports the idea that multigrade teaching, though demanding, provides significant opportunities for personal and professional growth.

To maximize the potential of multigrade teaching, schools should prioritize capacity-building programs tailored to the distinct needs of educators. Gamede and Uleanya (2021) noted that external stakeholders sometimes perceive multigrade teaching as less effective compared to monograde setups, thereby underscoring the importance of addressing misconceptions through training and awareness programs. Furthermore, establishing strong communication channels between teachers and school heads fosters collaboration and ensures shared goals. Peer mentorship and adequate resources further strengthen the effectiveness of multigrade teaching practices (UNESCO, 2013). These efforts enhance teacher performance and reinforce the value of multigrade education in achieving high-quality learning outcomes.

Furthermore, building upon existing research, this study examines instructional competence, professional characteristics, and personal attributes of multigrade teachers while addressing challenges such as infrastructure limitations, digital literacy gaps, and equitable access to training (Booc & Potane, 2023; Kumari & Pandey, 2025). It underscores the importance of professional development programs in enhancing teacher practices and fostering collaboration between educators and school heads (Cabasan & Baguio, 2025; Nobis 2021). Moreover, studies indicate that motivation, creativity, and problem-solving are essential for teachers, positively influencing their instructional effectiveness (Kstatelibraries, 2024). Professional development initiatives from DepEd can improve teaching methods and expand educational opportunities, particularly in multigrade classrooms (Lastrado & Baguio, 2025). At the same time, resource constraints in underserved areas emphasize the need for teacher training and optimized resource utilization to improve learning conditions (Basu et al., 2025). In addition, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in managing student diversity, reducing stress, and enhancing instructional competence (Mustofa & Mulyanah, 2025). Integrating emotional intelligence into teacher training fosters better classroom engagement

and overall teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, organizational commitment and innovative work behavior significantly impact teachers' performance, reinforcing the necessity of continuous development programs and supportive environments (Pansag & Baguio, 2025).

Finally, the study was conducted to address the challenges faced by teachers in the multigrade classes of schools in Laoang, Northern Samar. These educators often dealt with limited resources, the complexities of managing diverse grade levels in a single classroom, and specific professional and personal demands that affected their teaching effectiveness. Additionally, multigrade teaching, as a program designed to ensure access to education for all (UNESCO, 2015), played a crucial role in reaching learners in remote areas where traditional schooling structures were not feasible. However, the perceptual gap between teachers' self- assessments of their instructional competence and school heads' evaluations further complicates efforts to achieve alignment and a shared understanding of expectations. In response to these circumstances, the study examined the instructional, professional, and personal characteristics of multigrade teachers in this unique context. By focusing on bridging this perception gap, advancing professional development programs, and fostering collaborative evaluation systems, the study aimed to empower multigrade educators, improve teaching practices, and enhance educational outcomes for both teachers and learners in these communities.

## Objectives of the Study

The study generally aimed to examine the instructional competence, professional, and personal characteristics of teachers teaching multigrade classes in schools in Laoang, Division of Northern Samar. It particularly sought to determine the level of instructional competence among these teachers, evaluate their professional characteristics, and assess their characteristics as perceived by both the teachers themselves and their school heads. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify any differences between teachers' self-perceptions and school heads' evaluations regarding instructional competence, professional characteristics, and personal traits, addressing key aspects of teaching effectiveness in multigrade settings.

# METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive methodology to examine multigrade teachers’ instructional competencies, professional, and personal characteristics in Laoang, Division of Northern Samar. The research design was structured to ensure robust data collection and analysis, providing meaningful insights into multigrade education. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants from five districts, specifically targeting schools with multigrade classes. To ensure comprehensive representation, a complete enumeration approach was applied, gathering data from all 28 multigrade teachers and 14 school heads within the identified schools. The primary data collection instrument was a survey questionnaire designed to evaluate three key dimensions: instructional competence, as well as the professional and personal characteristics of multigrade teachers. To maintain consistency and accuracy, the questionnaires were distributed within a defined timeframe, ensuring that participants received clear instructions and had adequate time to complete them. To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted, confirming its validity in measuring key constructs. The results indicated excellent reliability, with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.995, affirming the consistency and robustness of the measurement tool. Quantitative data were processed using statistical software, with descriptive statistics, mean scores, and weighted means calculated to summarize participants’ evaluations.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicate a generally positive perception of instructional competence, professional, and personal characteristics among multigrade teachers. However, there are significant differences in ratings between teachers and school heads.

## Instructional Competence of the Respondents as Perceived by the Teachers and School Head

The study's findings in Table 1 reveal that teachers generally perceive their instructional competence more favorably compared to school heads. This difference in perceptions suggests that while teachers feel confident in their instructional abilities, school heads identify areas

that require further improvement to meet administrative standards and broader educational goals.

* + 1. **Classroom management**

Classroom Management Teachers rated their classroom management skills highly, with an overall mean of 4.21 (Good). They believed they excelled in providing opportunities for developing learners' sense of responsibility (4.56, Excellent) and using material resources effectively (4.25, Excellent). In contrast, school heads provided a lower mean rating of 3.38 (Average), particularly highlighting the need for improvement in applying curriculum flexibility (3.39, Average) and promoting teamwork (3.03, Average). The discrepancies in ratings suggest that teachers feel confident in their classroom management abilities, likely due to their direct interactions with students. However, school heads may have broader criteria for evaluation, focusing on overall school performance and the need for more dynamic and flexible teaching methods. This indicates areas where additional support and training can help teachers align with administrative expectations and enhance classroom management practices.

Supporting studies emphasize the importance of effective classroom management in improving academic achievement. For instance, teachers' preparedness, social-emotional proficiency, and the availability of resources are crucial factors for fostering a conducive learning environment (Smith et al., 2020). Additionally, research by Sumintan et al. (2024) highlights that effective classroom management correlates with student performance, while factors beyond management skills also influence overall teaching effectiveness. Moreover, schools with limited resources and less-skilled teachers often face challenges in managing classrooms effectively, affecting student outcomes (He et al., 2024).

The study highlights a gap between teachers' and school heads' perceptions of classroom management. Teachers rated themselves highly, focusing on fostering effective learning environments, while school heads criticized broader areas like curriculum flexibility and teamwork. This means teachers prioritize direct classroom interactions, whereas school heads consider systemic goals. This implies that professional development needs to align teachers' skills with institutional expectations. Bridging this gap through open communication

and targeted training can enhance collaboration and overall school performance.

* + 1. **Teaching strategies**

The findings on teaching strategies highlight a significant disparity between teachers’ and school heads’ evaluations. Teachers rated their strategies highly, achieving an overall mean of

4.26 (Excellent), indicating confidence in their effective use of textbooks and materials (4.38, Excellent) and integrative teaching methodologies (4.24, Excellent). However, school heads provided a lower mean rating of

3.67 (Good), particularly identifying integrative methodologies as needing improvement, with a rating of 3.03 (Average).

This means that while teachers perceive their teaching strategies as effective, school heads focus on areas requiring development, particularly in integrating diverse teaching methodologies to address varying student needs. Casinillo and Guarte (2018) emphasized that evaluating teaching strategies not only identifies gaps but also fosters both personal and professional growth among educators. Similarly, Magsucang et al. (2020) found that effective strategies, like enhancing student motivation and participation, significantly improve learning outcomes. Additionally, Burroughs et al. (2019) highlighted that professional knowledge and teaching strategies are crucial to improving student performance and suggested that continuous training is essential for strengthening instructional practices. This implies the need for targeted professional development to equip teachers with advanced integrative teaching strategies. Addressing this gap could foster collaboration between educators and school leaders, aligning instructional practices with institutional goals and ultimately elevating teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

* + 1. **Pupils’ motivation**

The study highlights disparities in teachers’ and school heads’ perceptions regarding pupils’ motivation. Teachers rated their ability to motivate students with a mean of 4.21 (Good), excelling in providing homework as a follow-up to lessons (4.38, Excellent) and encouraging student interest and motivation to learn (4.29, Excellent). School heads, while recognizing these strengths, provided a lower mean rating of

3.56 (Good), and notably rated fostering research and critical thinking skills at 2.86 (Average).

These findings underscore the importance of addressing gaps in fostering research and critical thinking skills among students. Casinillo and Guarte (2018) emphasize that evaluation systems allow educators to identify gaps, leading to professional growth. Magsucang et al. (2020) highlight the significance of strategies such as enhancing motivation and participation to improve learning outcomes. Additionally, Burroughs et al. (2019) stress that professional knowledge and teaching strategies significantly impact student performance. Further, Lytras et al. (2024) suggest that integrating modern teaching methods fosters critical thinking, while Tan and Tee (2021) point out the value of active collaboration between educators and school heads for aligning teaching practices with institutional goals. To bridge these gaps, targeted training programs and regular feedback sessions become essential, enabling teachers to strengthen their instructional approaches. Such initiatives would not only align educators' efforts with institutional priorities but also foster a more comprehensive and effective educational experience for students.

## Professional Characteristics of the Respondents as Perceived by the Teachers and School Head

Table 2 on professional characteristics revealed distinct differences between the perceptions of teachers and school heads regarding the professional characteristics of multigrade teachers. Teachers rated their professional characteristics highly, with an overall weighted mean of 4.44 (Excellent), while school heads provided a lower evaluation of 3.39 (Good). Teachers scored attributes such as being well- groomed (WM = 4.66, Excellent), cooperation in school activities (WM = 4.66, Excellent), and timely submission of reports (WM = 4.53, Excellent), significantly higher than school heads, who rated these aspects as 4.10 (Good), 3.93 (Good), and 3.75 (Good), respectively. Emotional maturity received a 4.44 (Excellent) rating from teachers but was assessed lower by school heads at 3.57 (Good). The greatest differences appeared in initiative, where teachers scored

4.42 (Excellent) versus school heads’ 3.39 (Average), and role modeling, which teachers rated 4.41 (Excellent), compared to school heads' 3.21 (Average). The use of appropriate language suited to pupils’ grade levels showed a notable difference, with teachers rating it 4.40 (Excellent), while school heads assigned a 3.03 (Average) score.

These results highlight the variation in self- assessment between teachers and external evaluations by school heads. Research supports the role of self-assessment and feedback in enhancing professional competencies. Yan and Carless (2021) findings highlight self-assessment's role in boosting self- awareness and professional reflection, underscoring the importance of both it and feedback literacy for self-regulated, lifelong learning in higher education (Balanquit & Nobis, 2025). Despite their recognized significance, the interplay between these two concepts remains an understudied area, particularly how feedback literacy can facilitate self-assessment practices, while Zhang and

Hyland (2021) emphasized that feedback enhances accuracy in performance evaluation. Thawabieh (2017) also noted that differences in assessment often stem from unclear expectations, reinforcing the need for structured evaluation methods. The findings suggest that professional development initiatives, mentorship programs, and structured feedback mechanisms can help teachers align their self- perceptions with external evaluations. Strengthening reflective practices and communication between teachers and school heads will improve professional collaboration and enhance teaching effectiveness, ultimately benefiting student outcomes (Cabasan & Baguio, 2025).

**Table 1. Instructional competence of the respondents as perceived by the teachers and school heads**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements** | **Teacher- respondents** | | **School head- respondents** | |
| **Classroom Management** | **WM** | **Interpretation** | **WM** | **Interpretation** |
| Provides opportunities for developing learners' |  |  |  |  |
| responsibility | 4.56 | Excellent | 4.10 | Good |
| Applies the established curriculum with flexibility | 4.26 | Excellent | 3.39 | Average |
| Uses material resources that facilitate learning | 4.25 | Excellent | 3.21 | Average |
| Formulates the objectives of the lesson for |  |  |  |  |
| grade levels | 4.18 | Good | 3.03 | Average |
| Promotes teamwork | 4.18 | Good | 3.03 | Average |
| Applies the assessment criteria of activities | 4.18 | Good | 2.86 | Average |
| Interweaves content with other courses | 4.17 | Good | 3.20 | Average |
| Promotes individual work | 4.17 | Good | 3.40 | Good |
| Has a good command of the course content | 4.16 | Good | 3.60 | Good |
| Presents the contents logically, highlighting |  |  |  |  |
| important aspects | 4.09 | Good | 4.00 | Good |
| Provides initial and final overviews of the |  |  |  |  |
| session/class | 3.99 | Good | 3.40 | Good |
| **Total Mean** | **4.21** | **Good** | **3.38** | **Average** |
| **Teaching Strategies** |  |  |  |  |
| Uses textbooks/materials clearly and appropriat | 4.38 | Excellent | 4.00 | Good |
| ely | 4.24 | Excellent | 3.03 | Average |
| Uses integrative teaching methodologies | 4.26 | Excellent | 3.57 | Good |
| Informs students of expected competencies | 4.15 | Good | 4.09 | Good |
| Designs course content for professional compet |  |  |  |  |
| ency development |  |  |  |  |
| **Total Mean** | **4.26** | **Excellent** | **3.67** | **Good** |
| **Pupils’ Motivation** |  |  |  |  |
| Gives homework as a follow-up to lessons | 4.38 | Excellent | 4.00 | Good |
| Interacts satisfactorily with students | 4.34 | Excellent | 3.75 | Good |
| Encourages student interest and motivation to le | 4.29 | Excellent | 4.00 | Good |
| arn | 4.06 | Good | 2.86 | Average |
| Fosters research and a critical spirit in learners | 3.99 | Good | 3.20 | Average |
| Provides scientific information for better underst |  |  |  |  |
| anding |  |  |  |  |
| **Total Mean** | **4.21** | **Good** | **3.56** | **Good** |
| **Overall Total Mean** | **4.22** | **Good** | **3.53** | **Good** |

**Table 2. Professional characteristics of the respondents as perceived by the teachers and school heads**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements** | **Teacher-respondents** | | **School head-respondents** | |
|  | **WM** | **Interpretation** | **WM** | **Interpretation** |
| Well-groomed and neat appearance | 4.66 | Excellent | 4.10 | Good |
| Cooperation in all school activities | 4.66 | Excellent | 3.93 | Good |
| Submission of required reports on time | 4.53 | Excellent | 3.75 | Good |
| Emotional maturity/stability | 4.44 | Excellent | 3.57 | Good |
| Interest in doing tasks without being told | 4.42 | Excellent | 3.39 | Average |
| As a role model to peers and pupils | 4.41 | Excellent | 3.21 | Average |
| Desire to use decent words suited to | 4.40 | Excellent | 3.03 | Average |
| pupils’ grade level. |  |  |  |  |
| Professional Growth | 4.31 | Excellent | 3.03 | Average |
| Tactful and objective in opposing views | 4.31 | Excellent | 2.86 | Average |
| Pleasant disposition | 4.30 | Excellent | 3.00 | Average |
| **Overall Mean** | **4.44** | **Excellent** | **3.39** | **Average** |

## Level of Personal Characteristics of the Respondents as Perceived by the Teachers and School Head

Table 3 on personal characteristics in teaching multigrade classes reveals notable differences in the perceptions of teachers and school heads, with teachers generally rating themselves more favorably. Teachers rated their characteristics highly, with an overall sub-mean of 4.43 (Excellent), while school heads provided a more moderate evaluation of 3.47 (Good). Teachers consistently rated themselves favorably in areas such as professional growth and fostering a positive work environment, whereas school heads gave lower assessments. This difference may be influenced by their distinct roles— teachers, being directly involved in daily classroom activities, may perceive their contributions more positively, while school heads, overseeing broader school functions, may offer a more measured evaluation (Ciocon, 2023).

Research supports these findings. Membreve (2023) highlights the adaptability and responsibility required in multigrade teaching, which may contribute to teachers' high self- assessment. Onde (2023) emphasizes the resilience and creativity of multigrade teachers, reinforcing their sense of professional satisfaction. Kstatelibraries (2024) and Casane (2025) points out the importance of personal attributes like empathy and patience for effective teaching. Meanwhile, Gamede and Uleanya (2021) indicate that while teachers view their roles positively, external stakeholders may see multigrade teaching as less effective than

monograde education, underscoring the need for structured capacity-building programs. The findings suggest that regular communication and feedback mechanisms between teachers and school heads can help align perspectives and foster mutual understanding. Joint professional development programs can enhance collaboration and shared learning experiences (Dagohoy, 2018; Elumbra, 2018). Additionally, establishing clear evaluation criteria collaboratively developed by both groups can provide a fairer and more objective assessment of teacher characteristics. Strengthening these initiatives will support a more cohesive and productive educational environment, benefiting teachers, school leaders, and students alike (Pala et al., 2025).

## Summary of Perceptions of Instructional Competence, Professional Characteristics, and Personal Attributes Among Teachers and School Heads

Based on Table 4, teachers rated their instructional competence, professional characteristics, and personal attributes positively, with interpretations ranging from "Good" to "Excellent." The overall mean of 4.22 reflects their confidence in their abilities. In contrast, school heads provided lower evaluations across all categories, with an overall mean of 3.53, indicating areas where further development may be beneficial. Instructional competence was rated as "Good" by both groups, with teachers scoring it 4.21 and school heads at 3.56, suggesting potential improvements in curriculum flexibility and integrative strategies (Coubergs et

al., 2017). Similarly, professional characteristics were rated "Excellent" by teachers with a mean of 4.44, while school heads rated it "Good" at 3.39, highlighting opportunities for enhanced professional growth and support systems (Ciocon, 2023). Personal characteristics also showed a difference, with teachers giving an "Excellent" rating of 4.43, compared to school heads’ "Good" rating of 3.47, suggesting the need for stronger mentoring and professional engagement initiatives.

These findings emphasize the importance of leadership support, ongoing professional development, and collaboration between teachers and administrators (Dagohoy, 2018; Elumbra, 2018). Structured mentorship programs and training initiatives can help educators refine their instructional methods and enhance professional growth (Shareefa, 2023; Casinillo & Guarte, 2018). Schools can establish professional development programs, mentorship systems, and training opportunities to support teachers in adapting to evolving educational needs (Kumari & Pandey, 2025). Strengthening collaboration between teachers and school heads will improve alignment in instructional approaches, professional expectations, and engagement within the school community (Cabasan & Baguio, 2025).

Building on previous research, Taripe and Limpot (2022) emphasize that integrating ICT into teaching and learning significantly enhances academic performance. Their findings align with studies by Kumari and Pandey (2025), which highlight the importance of teacher training and curriculum flexibility. Lastrado and Baguio (2025) further support this by underscoring creativity and problem-solving as key components of instructional competence. Similarly, Cabasan and Baguio (2025) stress collaboration and teacher involvement, reinforcing professional characteristics essential for effective teaching.

Mustofa and Mulyanah (2025) focus on emotional intelligence in managing stress and promoting successful classroom practices, while Pansag and Baguio (2025) highlight organizational commitment and innovation, emphasizing the need for structured mentorship and leadership development. In conclusion, continuous professional development, mentorship, and open communication between teachers and school heads are vital in fostering an effective educational environment (Little, 2000). Strengthening teacher support systems, combined with ICT integration, will further improve instructional competence, professional engagement, and overall teaching effectiveness (Dantas & Cunha, 2020; He et al., 2024; Magsucang et al., 2020).

**Table 3. Personal characteristics of the respondents as perceived by the teachers and school heads**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements** | **Teacher- respondents** | | **School head- respondents** | |
|  | **WM** | **Interpretation** | **WM** | **Interpretation** |
| Attend teachers’ meetings to discuss the vision | 4.58 | Excellent | 4.00 | Good |
| and mission of the school. |  |  |  |  |
| Become a mentor or be willing to mentor a new | 4.57 | Excellent | 3.75 | Good |
| and experienced teacher. |  |  |  |  |
| Take part in professional learning activities and | 4.48 | Excellent | 3.75 | Good |
| supervision. |  |  |  |  |
| Dedicated to teaching as a lifelong career | 4.45 | Excellent | 4.00 | Good |
| Exchange teaching materials with colleagues. | 4.43 | Excellent | 3.57 | Good |
| Serves as a public reference in education. | 4.42 | Excellent | 3.21 | Average |
| Actively looking for professional development | 4.42 | Excellent | 3.03 | Average |
| opportunities. |  |  |  |  |
| It helps to foster a positive work environment in | 4.41 | Excellent | 3.03 | Average |
| the school. |  |  |  |  |
| Actively looking for professional development | 4.36 | Excellent | 3.03 | Average |
| opportunities. |  |  |  |  |
| Exhibit professional responsibility for the quality | 4.18 | Good | 3.03 | Average |
| of their teaching. |  |  |  |  |
| **Overall mean** | **4.43** | **Excellent** | **3.47** | **Good** |

**Table 4. Summary of perceptions of instructional competence, professional, and personal characteristics of the respondents as perceived by the teachers and the school head**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Teacher-respondents** | | **School head-respondents** | |
|  | **WM** | **Interpretation** | **WM** | **Interpretation** |
| Instructional Competence Professional Characteristics Personal Characteristics | 4.21  4.44  4. 43 | Good Excellent Excellent | 3.56  3.39  3.47 | Good Good Good |
| **Overall mean** | **4. 22** | **Good** | **3.53** | **Good** |

# CONCLUSIONS

The study identified differences in how teachers and school heads perceived instructional competence, professional, and personal characteristics. While teachers rated themselves highly, school heads provided more reserved evaluations, reflecting their distinct roles and priorities. Consequently, bridging these gaps requires targeted training, shared performance indicators, and enhanced feedback mechanisms to align perspectives on instructional competence. Moreover, the findings emphasized the need for continuous professional development programs that synchronize teachers’ self-perceptions with the expectations of school heads. Encouraging reflective practices, paired with transparent evaluation criteria, strengthens communication and fosters mutual understanding of professional excellence.

In addition, teachers consistently rated their characteristics as "excellent," whereas school heads assessed them as "good." This variation highlights the importance of initiatives that support personal and professional growth, helping educators enhance interpersonal skills, emotional maturity, and adaptability. Furthermore, cultivating a supportive work environment that prioritizes collaboration, and shared success improves professional relationships and contributes to a unified school community. Above all, establishing structured feedback sessions, professional dialogues, and joint development programs enhances communication and ensures transparency in performance assessments. Ultimately, addressing these perception gaps fosters a more effective educational system, benefiting not only teachers and school heads but also students, who thrive in a well-coordinated learning environment.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study’s findings, the following recommendations are proposed to bridge

perception gaps between teachers and school heads while enhancing instructional competence, professional characteristics, and collaboration in multigrade education.

To bridge perception gaps between teachers and school heads, schools should prioritize regular dialogue sessions, transparent feedback mechanisms, and standardized evaluation criteria to align instructional expectations. Targeted professional development programs, including mentorship initiatives and specialized training, can strengthen teaching effectiveness and professional growth. Additionally, fostering a collaborative work environment through joint planning, shared goal setting, and teamwork enhances cohesion within multigrade education. Providing resources, recognizing achievements, and supporting personal development will further empower teachers, ensuring their interpersonal skills and adaptability align with institutional goals. Continuous reassessment of strategies and integration of innovative approaches will sustain progress, ultimately creating a more cohesive and effective learning environment that benefits both educators and students.

**DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

This research employed artificial intelligence language tools—specifically ChatGPT and Quillbot—to assist in refining the manuscript. These tools were utilized for paraphrasing paragraphs to enhance clarity and readability, ensuring the effective communication of ideas while preserving their original meaning. Additionally, ChatGPT and Quillbot were used to check language and grammar, thereby improving the overall accuracy and fluency of the text.

## Details of AI Usage

1. ChatGPT and Quillbot were used to paraphrase paragraphs to improve the clarity and readability of the text.
2. ChatGPT and Quillbot were employed to check language and grammar to

enhance the overall accuracy and fluency of the manuscript.

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