

Development of Early Childhood Teachers' Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children in Thailand

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the need assessment of early childhood teachers' competency to strengthen executive functions of private preschool children in northeast region of Thailand. A total of 514 administrators and teachers participated in the survey using multi-stage random sampling. The five scopes of early childhood teachers' competencies were investigated, utilizing a 52-items questionnaire. The need assessment results indicated that the curriculum and learning management (PNI_{modified} = 0.27) was the most essential scope of competency. This was followed by promoting child development (PNI_{modified} = 0.22), leadership and professional development (PNI_{modified} = 0.16), and classroom management (PNI_{modified} = 0.15). The least capacity scope was ethics, morality and professional ethics (PNI_{modified} = 0.09). The overall results imply that early childhood teachers can develop the competencies by focusing on these five scopes to effectively strengthen the executive functions of young children, thereby supporting their overall cognitive and social-emotional development.

Keywords: Early Childhood Teachers, Executive Functions, Need Assessment, Private Preschool Children.

INTRODUCTION

The early childhood education is increasingly recognizing the key role played by teachers in terms of fostering a supportive and enriching learning environment to develop young children's executive function skills (Garon et al., 2008). Therefore, early childhood teachers' competency is crucial and should be better equipped to meet the developmental needs of children, support their growth, and enhance their learning experiences (Ackerman & Friedman-Krauss, 2017). The executive function skills are defined as the cognitive abilities that consciously support goal directed behaviors (Diamond, 2006). Ackerman and Friedman-Krauss (2017) conducted a thorough review of past research on the traits and skills that fall under the broader umbrella of preschool executive function over the past 15 years. They found that the child environmental activity-related and curricular factors potentially impacting the development of executive function thus early childhood teachers should take into consideration while they are carrying out teaching and learning process.

The development of early childhood education teachers' competency is important for strengthening the executive function of young children because execution functions is a set of cognitive processes that include working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control. These skills are essential for learning, behavior and development (Uopasai et al., 2018). Traditionally, executive function is a multifaceted neuropsychological construct consisting of a set of higher-order neurocognitive processes that allow children to make choices and to engage in purposeful goal-oriented, and future-oriented behavior (Suchy, 2009). In short, executive function has been described as being associated with the so-called prefrontal cortex of the brain which includes all portions of the frontal lobes that are located anterior to motor and premotor cortices and the supplementary motor area (Suchy, 2009).

In Thailand preschools are categorized under the preprimary category which aims to promote school readiness in children. Those preschools emphasize on the importance of play, discovery, and hands-on learning activities such as music, dance, art physical exercise, and dramatic play (Preschool & Kindergarten Education System in

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Thailand, 2020). The main goal of preschools is to promote developmental learning and growth in children. Therefore, those early childhood teachers are expected to possess competencies in helping their preschool children to build communication skills self-confidence, self-esteem alongside academic skills (Chaiyuth, 2018). In addition, private preschools in Thailand offer various programs and educational philosophies to cater to the diverse needs of families. These institutions typically emphasize high standards of education, often incorporating international curricula and teaching methodologies. Many private preschools in Thailand offer international curricula such as International Baccalaureate (IB), British Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), or American-based programs (Shaeffer & Perapate, 2022).

According to Shaeffer and Perapate (2022), private preschool children can get some benefits such as individualized attention, extracurricular activities, global perspective, and strong community comparing with public preschool children in Thailand. For example, smaller class sizes in private preschools allow for more personalized attention and tailored learning experiences. Besides, a wide range of extracurricular activities help in the all-round development of children. On top of that, private preschool children have great opportunity of exposure to international curricula and diverse cultures to prepare them for a globalized world. Finally, most of the parents in private preschools are involving actively in their children's learning process hence have a strong sense of community to enhance the educational experience to their children (Shaeffer & Perapate, 2022).

Shaeffer and Perapate (2022) identified five competencies required by early childhood preschool teachers in developing children's executive functions, namely curriculum and learning management, promoting child development, leadership and professional development, classroom management, and ethics, morality and professional ethics. Curriculum and learning management refer to teachers' competencies in incorporating executive function activities and developmentally appropriate practices. For instance, early childhood teachers can integrate activities that promote executive functioning skills in their teaching and learning process, such as memory games, sorting tasks and problem-solving activities. Moreover, they also possess the ability to understand how executive functioning skills can be developed at different ages and designing curriculum accordingly (Shaeffer & Perapate, 2022). On top of that, early childhood teachers have to possess competency in developing consistent daily routines to assist children in building self-regulation and planning skills.

Effective early childhood teachers have to possess a variety of skills and knowledge that enable them to support and enhance the development of children in several key areas such as understanding child development (Richter et al., 2019). For example, early childhood teachers should be familiar with the typical developmental stages of milestones in early childhood, including physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. A competent early childhood teacher observes and assesses children regularly to understand their individual needs and developmental progress (Richter et al., 2019). Leadership and professional development are another key factor that contributes to early childhood teachers' competency to cultivate young children's executive functioning development. In other words, early childhood teachers should have a clear vision and set achievable goals for their children. This vision should prioritize the development needs of children, high standards of teaching, and continuous improvement. Therefore, teachers always encourage open communication and feedback in a supportive environment (Nicholson et al., 2018). Furthermore, early childhood teachers should be updated on the latest educational research, teaching methods, and child development theories as regular, high-quality training sessions so that teachers are equipped with sufficient professional competency (Nicholson et al., 2018).

Classroom management is an essential scope of competency for early childhood teachers to possess in terms of developing young children's executive functions. According to Koçyiğit et al. (2020), early childhood teachers should establish and maintain consistent classroom routines to help young children develop self-regulation and time management. Besides, they can use positive reinforcement and clear expectations to help young children develop inhibitory control and self-discipline. If teachers can create a classroom environment that minimizes distractions and promotes focus and organization, this will directly lead to young children's opportunity to develop their thinking skills (Koçyiğit et al., 2020). Ethics, morality, and professional ethics are foundational competencies for early childhood teachers. This is because the scope of competency can guide teachers in making decisions that best support the welfare and development of young children (Arda Tuncdemir et al., 2022). Arda Tuncdemir et al. (2022) suggested that early childhood teachers to be familiar with ethical principles such as respect for the dignity and rights of all children, fairness, honesty, and integrity. They emphasized the

importance of these principles in daily interactions, otherwise decision-making processes are crucial for the early childhood teachers (Arda Tuncdemir et al., 2022).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design and Instrument

The researchers employed a survey research design using a questionnaire as an instrument to collect quantitative data. The purpose of this survey was to assess the current competencies of early childhood teachers in fostering executive functioning skills in young children. The results would help to identify gaps in knowledge, skills, and practices, guiding targeted professional development and support initiatives (Khantawong et al., 2021). The key approach utilized to examine the need assessments of early childhood teachers' competencies in terms of the five scopes, namely curriculum and learning management, promoting child development, leadership and professional development, classroom management, and ethics, morality and professional ethics. The questionnaire consisted of 52 items to examine the needs of the five scopes for early childhood teachers' competencies.

The questionnaire was administered in the Thai language to ensure that the respondents could understand all the items. Section A of the questionnaire was comprised of three items, was designed to gather the demographic background of the respondents which included information associating to their general profile such as work position, years of experience, and highest academic qualification. Section B to F was the need assessment specifically designed to measure the needs of early childhood teachers' competencies in terms of five scopes as follows: Curriculum and learning management (12 items), promoting child development (11 items), leadership and professional development (10 items), classroom management (10 items), and ethics, morality and professional ethics (6 items), giving a total of 49 items.

Population and Samples

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed as it is a useful technique when dealing with large populations spread across various provinces in northeast region of Thailand. According to Gay et al. (2009), the multi-stage sampling technique involves selecting samples in multiple stages, often moving from larger to smaller units. Following this line of reasoning, the researchers started selecting provinces, which in this case are private preschools in northeast region of Thailand with a total of 714 preschools. Then, the researchers used simple random sampling where every administrator or teacher of the population has an equal chance of being selected. This simple random sampling is often used in survey research to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire population, thereby minimizing bias (Gay et al., 2009). In the second stage, the selection of samples consisted of 257 school administrators and 257 teachers from 514 selected preschools.

The sample size was determined in accordance with Taro Yamane's formula at a 95 percent confidence level (Yamane, 1967). Taro Yamane's formula is a simplified method to calculate the sample size for a given population, ensuring a desired confidence level and margin of error. The formula is particularly useful for researchers who need a quick estimation of sample size. At a 95% confidence level, the formula is: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$, where n = sample size, N = population size, and e = margin of error (expressed as a decimal). A total of 514 respondents of 257 school administrators and 257 teachers, as required sample size. Table 1 presents the distribution of population and sample group.

Table 1. Distribution of Population and Sample Group

Province	Population (School)	Sample Group (School)	Total Samples
Kalasin	17	6	12
Khon Kaen	43	15	30
Chaiyaphum	32	12	24
Nakhon Phanom	23	8	16
Nakhon Ratchasima	119	42	84
Bueng Kan	16	6	12
Buriram	27	10	20
Maha Sarakham	33	12	24
Mukdahan	12	4	8

Yasothon	17	6	12
Roi Et	60	21	42
Loei	29	10	20
Sisaket	27	10	20
Sakon Nakhon	46	17	34
Surin	12	4	8
Nong Khai	24	9	18
Nong Bua Lamphu	21	8	16
Amnat Charoen	11	4	8
Udon Thani	60	22	44
Ubon Ratchathani	85	31	62
Total	714	257	514

Pilot Study, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

Before the researchers began to gather data, the questionnaire was sent to nine experts in the area of policy practitioners, university academic experts, and experienced private preschool administrators for their feedback and comments to validate the contents. The researchers made necessary modifications according to the nine experts’ feedback. The pilot testing of the questionnaire was then conducted on 30 early childhood administrators and teachers who were not the samples of the actual study, but they have the same background and structure as the samples of this research. The questionnaire was found reliable and good to use as the Cronbach alpha value was 0.971.

In addition, the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method was used as a technique for evaluating the content validity of survey instruments. It involves assessing the alignment between each survey item and the corresponding objectives or constructs that the survey is intended to measure (Mohamed Ismail & Zubairi, 2022). The researchers conducted the IOC assessment by explaining the purpose of the IOC assessment to the nine experts and provided them with clear instructions on how to rate each item. The researchers used a 3-point rating scale for each item as follows: (i) +1 – The item clearly measures the objective; (ii) 0 – The item is not clear or is neutral in measuring the objective, and (iii) -1 – The item does not measure the objective at all. Each expert rated each survey item against each objective using the provided scale independently. This was followed by compiling the ratings from the nine experts for each item and computed the IOC index for each item using the formula below:

$$IOC\ Index = \sum Ratings\ from\ Experts / Number\ of\ Experts$$

The pilot study results showed the IOC values for both current and desired status of early childhood teachers’ competencies were the same ranging from 0.80 to 1.00, Discriminant Power (D) ranging from 0.31 to 0.78, and a reliability coefficient (α) of 0.95. Then, the researchers started to plan for data collection to explore the need assessments of the early childhood teachers’ competencies in developing young children’s executive functioning skills.

The PNI modification calculation was used to measure the gap of need assessment between the current status compared with the desired status. The indication of the need assessment competency factors is based on the PNI value of at least 0.30, the need factors are more crucial when their number is higher than 0.30. The obtained data commands the effective competencies needed for the development of young children’s executive functioning skills as follows: $PNI_{modified} = (1-D)/D$. Moreover, descriptive statistics such as mean score and standard deviation were used to summarize the obtained data. Therefore, the researchers analyzed the mean scores into lists so that we could put the mean score in order to support comprehension. This could help the researchers to interpret the lowest and highest mean scores quickly in a group of ordinal variables. Subsequently standard deviation was used to analyze the data because standard deviation is the most useful index of variability. Standard deviation could tell us the variability of a distribution (Ubi, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research are presented corresponding to the research purpose as indicated above. A total of 520 questionnaire were sent to 257 private preschools in northeast region of Thailand and 514 questionnaires have been successfully collected after a few times of follow-ups, giving a response rate of 98.8 percent.

General Profile of Samples

These 514 respondents are equally distributed between the school administrators' group (50%) and teachers' group (50%). However, the majority of respondents have less than 10 years working experience (53.89%). On the other hand, most of the respondents had their highest academic qualification as a bachelor's (48.63%) and a master's (44.74%) degree respectively giving a total of 93.37 percent. Only 1.37 percent of them obtained lower than bachelor's degree. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the respondents and their demographics background.

Table 2. Distribution of the Samples

General Profile	Frequency	Percent
<i>Position</i>		
School administrators	257	50.00
Early childhood teachers	257	50.00
<i>Years of experience</i>		
< 10 years	277	53.89
11 to 20 years	198	38.52
>21 years	39	7.59
<i>Highest academic qualification</i>		
Below bachelor's degree	7	1.36
Bachelor's degree	250	48.63
Master's degree	230	44.74
Doctoral degree	27	5.27
Total	514	100.00

Need Assessment for Development of Early Childhood Teachers' Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

The interpretation of suitability of each scope of the early childhood teachers' competency to strengthen executive functions of private preschool children was assessed according to Boomchom's (2014) identification as shown in Table 3

Table 3: Interpretation of Suitability of Early Childhood Teachers' Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

Interval of Mean Value	Interpretation
4.51 to 5.00	Highest
3.51 to 4.50	High
2.51 to 3.50	Moderate
1.51 to 2.50	Low
1.00 to 1.50	Lowest

The results of the need assessment for early childhood teachers' competency to strengthen executive functions of private preschool children indicated that curriculum and learning management is the essential scope of competency. Table 4 depicts the details of each scope of early childhood teachers' competencies ranking in order from the most needed to the least are as follows: Curriculum and learning management ($PNI_{modified} = 0.27$); promoting child development ($PNI_{modified} = 0.22$); leadership and professional development ($PNI_{modified} = 0.16$); classroom management ($PNI_{modified} = 0.15$), and ethics, morality and professional ethics ($PNI_{modified} = 0.09$).

Table 4: Overall Need Assessment Index of Early Childhood Teachers' Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

Scope of Early Childhood Teachers' Competency	Current status			Desirable status			$PNI_{modified}$	Ranking
	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	Level	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	Level		
Curriculum and Learning Management	3.51	0.32	High	4.46	0.06	High	0.27	1
Promoting Child Development	3.67	0.33	High	4.51	0.11	Highest	0.22	2

Leadership and Professional Development	3.88	0.23	High	4.52	0.11	Highest	0.16	3
Classroom Management	4.04	0.27	High	4.67	0.10	Highest	0.15	4
Ethics, Morality and Professional Ethics	4.29	0.17	High	4.69	0.13	Highest	0.09	5
Total	3.88	0.13	High	4.57	0.05	Highest		

Need Assessment of Curriculum and Learning Management Competency of Early Childhood Teachers to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

The curriculum and learning management competency were explored in detail as portrayed in Table 5. The greatest gap between the current status and desirable status in terms of curriculum and learning management showed that teachers can organize learning activities to promote children’s desirable characteristics. Table 5 shows the 12 gaps in descending order between the current status and the desirable status for the scope of curriculum and learning management.

Table 5: Overall Need Assessment Index of Curriculum and Learning Management Scope of Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

Competencies in Curriculum and Learning Management	Current status			Desirable status			PNI _{modified}	Ranking
	\bar{X}	SD	Level	\bar{X}	SD	Level		
Teachers can organize learning activities to promote children’s desirable characteristics.	3.25	0.86	Moderate	4.98	0.14	Highest	0.53	1
Teachers can evaluate children’s developmental progress according to actual conditions	3.14	0.94	Moderate	4.66	0.47	Highest	0.48	2
Teachers can explain guidelines for organizing early childhood learning experiences.	3.43	0.97	Moderate	4.79	0.41	Highest	0.39	3
Teachers can use innovative media and technology to organize various ways of learning.	3.66	1.04	High	4.92	0.27	Highest	0.34	4
Teachers utilize principles of psychology to manage enjoyable lessons.	3.01	0.69	Moderate	4.03	0.16	High	0.33	5
Teachers can organize learning experiences by considering individual differences.	3.61	0.67	High	4.76	0.42	Highest	0.31	6
Teachers can create media for early childhood learning.	3.31	1.11	Moderate	4.31	0.46	High	0.30	7
Teachers can apply new techniques and	3.49	0.83	Moderate	4.45	0.50	High	0.27	8

innovations to organize learning experiences.								
Teachers can create and develop school curriculum.	3.58	1.05	High	4.09	0.28	High	0.14	9
Teachers have the ability to create and develop classroom curriculum.	3.89	0.70	High	4.37	0.48	High	0.12	10
Teachers can provide experiences that meet the needs of early childhood children.	3.68	1.27	High	4.15	0.35	High	0.12	10
Teachers can analyze the current status and context of schools.	4.11	0.98	High	4.24	0.13	High	0.03	11
Total	3.51	0.32	High	4.46	0.06	Highest		

Need Assessment of Promoting Child Development Competency of Early Childhood Teachers to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

The next scope of early childhood teachers' competency was promoting child development. The greatest gap between the current status and desirable status in promoting child development to strengthen executive functions of private preschool children showed that teachers can develop media to promote positive executive functions of early childhood. Table 6 demonstrates the 10 gaps in descending order between the current status and the desirable status for the promotion of child development.

Table 6: Overall Need Assessment Index of Promoting Child Development Scope of Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

Competencies in Promoting Child Development	Current status			Desirable status			PNI _{modified}	Ranking
	\bar{X}	SD	Level	\bar{X}	SD	Level		
Teachers can develop media to promote positive executive functions of early childhood.	3.39	0.82	High	4.99	0.11	Highest	0.47	1
Teachers have knowledge to understand the psychology of early childhood children	3.41	1.12	Moderate	4.94	0.24	Highest	0.44	2
Teachers can organize daily activities to promote executive functions of early childhood.	3.32	0.67	Moderate	4.74	0.44	Highest	0.42	3
Teachers have understanding of children's psychology.	3.43	0.83	Moderate	4.65	0.48	Highest	0.35	4
Teachers can organize activities that incorporate morality and ethics.	3.57	1.00	High	4.75	0.44	Highest	0.33	5
Teachers have knowledge to understand early childhood development.	3.41	0.99	Moderate	4.03	0.17	High	0.18	6
Teachers have knowledge to	3.73	0.86	High	4.40	0.49	High	0.18	6

understand individual differences.								
Teachers can organize activities to instill democracy.	4.10	0.60	High	4.69	0.46	Highest	0.14	7
Teachers have knowledge about children's health and mental health.	3.79	0.54	High	4.04	0.20	High	0.06	8
Teachers have knowledge to understand children's nature.	4.25	0.79	High	4.54	0.35	Highest	0.06	8
Teachers can take care of children's safety.	4.02	0.86	High	4.24	0.43	High	0.05	9
Total	3.67	0.33	High	4.51	0.11	Highest		

Need Assessment of Leadership and Professional Development Competency of Early Childhood Teachers to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

The following scope of early childhood teachers' competency to discuss was leadership and professional development. Table 7 elucidates the 10 greatest gaps between the current status and the desirable status for leadership and professional development.

Table 7: Overall Need Assessment Index of Leadership and Professional Development Scope of Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

Competencies in Leadership and Professional Development	Current status			Desirable status			PNI _{modified}	Ranking
	\bar{X}	SD	Level	\bar{X}	SD	Level		
Teachers can use innovation and new technology to develop their work.	3.24	0.42	Moderate	4.59	0.49	Highest	0.41	1
Teachers strive for self-development professionally to keep up with current events.	3.64	0.73	High	4.89	0.30	Highest	0.34	2
Teachers can work to achieve their goals.	3.35	0.62	Moderate	4.30	0.46	High	0.28	3
Teachers have academic leadership.	3.90	0.77	High	4.74	0.44	Highest	0.21	4
Teachers encourage others to cooperate for student development.	4.15	0.73	High	4.87	0.33	Highest	0.17	5
Teachers can analyze their strengths and weaknesses.	4.01	0.78	High	4.63	0.48	Highest	0.15	6
Teachers can exchange knowledge with their colleagues.	4.21	0.85	High	4.96	0.20	Highest	0.09	7
Teachers always seek more knowledge.	3.75	0.75	High	4.04	0.18	High	0.07	8
Teachers choose methods for self-development that appropriate to their strengths and weaknesses.	4.12	0.92	High	4.33	0.16	High	0.05	9
Teachers can work together under change conditions.	4.43	0.70	High	4.54	0.34	Highest	0.02	10
Total	3.88	0.23	High	4.52	0.11	Highest		

Need Assessment of Classroom Management Competency of Early Childhood Teachers to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

The subsequent scope of early childhood teachers' competency to debate was classroom management. Table 8 shows the 10 greatest gaps between the current status and the desirable status for classroom management.

Table 8: Overall Need Assessment Index of Classroom Management Scope of Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

Competencies in Classroom Management	Current status			Desirable status			PNI _{modified}	Ranking
	\bar{X}	SD	Level	\bar{X}	SD	Level		
Teachers can make the classroom environment beautiful, clean, and safe.	3.70	0.80	High	4.86	0.34	Highest	0.31	1
Teachers can organize activities to promote learning through the five senses.	3.82	0.98	High	4.96	0.18	Highest	0.29	2
Teachers can arrange media and equipment that are sufficient and suitable for the needs of children.	3.78	0.56	High	4.79	0.40	Highest	0.26	3
Teachers can organize activities to stimulate and encourage children to take action.	4.02	0.77	High	4.96	0.20	Highest	0.23	4
Teachers can organize activities to encourage children to express themselves.	3.90	0.90	High	4.79	0.40	Highest	0.22	5
Teachers can organize activities to solve daily problems.	4.23	0.77	High	4.97	0.15	Highest	0.17	6
Teachers can solve disciplinary behavioral problems in the classroom.	3.84	0.93	High	4.45	0.49	High	0.15	7
Teachers can manage the classroom in a calm manner.	4.35	0.77	High	4.78	0.41	Highest	0.09	8
Teachers can create fun in classroom atmosphere.	4.56	0.87	Highest	4.76	0.24	Highest	0.04	9
Teachers can manage conducive learning experience in the classroom corners.	4.18	0.71	High	4.34	0.18	High	0.03	10
Total	4.04	0.27	High	4.67	0.10	Highest		

Need Assessment of Ethics, Morality and Professional Ethics Competency of Early Childhood Teachers to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

The final scope of early childhood teachers' competency to deliberate was ethics, morality and professional ethics. Table 9 displays the seven greatest gaps between the current status and the desirable status for early childhood teachers' competency to strengthen executive functions of private preschool children.

Table 9: Overall Need Assessment Index of Ethics, Morality and Professional Ethics Scope of Competency to Strengthen Executive Functions of Private Preschool Children

Competencies in Ethics, Morality and Professional Ethics	Current status			Desirable status			PNI _{modified}	Ranking
	\bar{X}	SD	Level	\bar{X}	SD	Level		
Teachers have public consciousness and sacrifice for society.	4.12	0.32	High	4.98	0.14	Highest	0.20	1

Teachers have the ability to act as good role models.	4.31	0.60	High	4.97	0.15	Highest	0.15	2
Teachers have the ability to build good relationships with students, parents, fellow teachers and administrators.	4.35	0.79	High	4.98	0.13	Highest	0.14	3
Teachers have the ability to control their emotions.	4.26	0.43	High	4.78	0.41	Highest	0.12	4
Teachers are honest and fair.	4.55	0.50	Highest	4.90	0.29	Highest	0.07	5
Teachers develop themselves for continuous advancement in teaching profession.	4.17	0.40	High	4.29	0.39	High	0.02	6
Teachers have the ability to care to their early childhood children constantly	4.25	0.70	High	4.34	0.20	High	0.02	6
Total	4.29	0.17	High	4.69	0.13	Highest		

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research was to explore the need assessments on scopes of early childhood teachers' competencies to strengthen executive functions of private preschool children, namely curriculum and learning management, promoting child development, leadership and professional development, classroom management, and ethics, morality and professional ethics. The $PNI_{modified}$ results indicated that curriculum and learning management was found to have the greatest gap between the current status and desirable status. This implies that early childhood teachers should incorporate executive function activities, structured routines, and play based learning. For example, teachers can integrate activities that promote executive functioning skills such as memory games, puzzles, and role-playing exercises. Hence, teachers can utilize play as a primary method for teaching executive functioning skills, encouraging exploration, and problem-solving.

The second greatest gap was promoting child development. This implies that teachers should promote emotion regulation, social skills, and problem-solving. Teachers can teach young children's strategies for recognizing and managing their emotions, encourage activities that develop social interaction skills, such as cooperative games and group projects. Nevertheless, teachers should provide opportunities for children to practice problem-solving in a social context. In conclusion, early childhood teachers must have commitment to ongoing professional development and stay updated with the latest research and best practices as parts of their lifelong learning. They also need to do regular self-reflection to evaluate and improve teaching practices. Finally, they should work collaboratively with colleagues, specialists, and the community to enhance educational outcomes.

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