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Bridging Reading Gaps Among Struggling Grade 7 Readers: Teachers' Reading Intervention Practices and Instructional Experiences in Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the reading intervention practices and lived instructional experiences of teachers in addressing the reading gaps among struggling Grade 7 readers at Gamu Agri-Fishery School. Specifically, the study examined teachers' intervention strategies, classroom experiences, challenges encountered, and perceived learner responses during reading remediation programs. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, the study involved purposively selected Junior High School teachers engaged in reading intervention initiatives. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that teachers employed differentiated reading instruction, guided reading, repeated reading, peer tutoring, vocabulary enhancement, contextualized reading materials, and individualized remediation sessions to improve learners' reading comprehension and fluency. Participants perceived that reading interventions improved learners' confidence, participation, motivation, and comprehension skills. However, teachers encountered challenges related to learner disengagement, limited instructional time, inadequate reading materials, varying learner abilities, poor parental support, and persistent comprehension difficulties. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated instructional adaptability, patience, and commitment in sustaining reading intervention programs. The study highlights the importance of strengthening literacy intervention support systems, contextualized instructional materials, parental involvement, and professional development programs focusing on secondary reading remediation.

Keywords: reading intervention, struggling readers, literacy instruction, learner engagement, qualitative inquiry, secondary education

Introduction

Reading literacy remains one of the most fundamental competencies necessary for academic achievement and lifelong learning. It serves as the foundation for understanding content across disciplines and enables learners to participate meaningfully in educational, social, and civic contexts. In secondary education, learners are expected to demonstrate higher-order reading skills involving comprehension, analysis, interpretation, and critical thinking. However, many Grade 7 learners continue to experience reading difficulties that affect academic performance, classroom participation, and learning motivation.

In the Philippine educational context, persistent literacy gaps remain a major concern in public secondary schools. National and international assessments have repeatedly highlighted the low reading proficiency levels of Filipino learners, emphasizing the urgent need for effective reading intervention programs and instructional support systems. Reports from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and local educational agencies indicate that many learners struggle with reading comprehension, vocabulary development, fluency, and critical interpretation of texts.

Struggling readers in Grade 7 often encounter difficulties in decoding words, understanding passages, analyzing information, and sustaining reading engagement. These challenges affect learners' confidence, participation, and overall academic performance across learning areas. Consequently, teachers play a critical role in implementing reading intervention practices that support literacy development and bridge existing reading gaps among struggling readers.

Reading intervention programs commonly involve differentiated instruction, guided reading, repeated reading, scaffolding, peer tutoring, vocabulary enhancement, remedial sessions, and contextualized learning materials. Existing studies emphasize that individualized and learner-centered reading interventions significantly improve learners' reading fluency, comprehension, and motivation.

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored on the constructivist theory of Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes the importance of guided learning, scaffolding, and social interaction in cognitive development. The study is likewise supported by the experiential learning theory of David Kolb, which highlights active participation and reflective learning experiences in skills development. These theoretical perspectives underscore the significance of collaborative and learner-centered reading intervention practices in improving literacy outcomes.

Despite the implementation of reading programs in many schools, teachers continue to encounter instructional and contextual challenges in addressing reading difficulties among secondary learners. Existing literature identifies concerns related to limited reading materials, insufficient instructional time, learner disengagement, poor parental support, and diverse learner abilities as barriers to effective reading intervention implementation.

Although several studies have examined reading intervention programs quantitatively, limited qualitative inquiries have explored teachers' lived instructional experiences in implementing reading interventions among struggling Grade 7 readers in public secondary schools. Understanding teachers' experiences provides deeper insights into instructional realities, intervention practices, learner engagement, and literacy development challenges in secondary education.

Hence, this study explored the reading intervention practices and instructional experiences of teachers in addressing reading gaps among struggling Grade 7 readers at Gamu Agri-Fishery School.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore the reading intervention practices and instructional experiences of teachers in addressing reading gaps among struggling Grade 7 readers.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. examine the reading intervention practices utilized by teachers in supporting struggling Grade 7 readers;
2. explore teachers' instructional experiences during the implementation of reading intervention activities;
3. determine the classroom challenges encountered by teachers in implementing reading interventions; and
4. identify teachers' coping mechanisms and instructional adaptations in addressing learners' reading difficulties.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and understand teachers' lived instructional experiences in implementing reading intervention practices among struggling Grade 7 readers.

Participants and Locale of the Study

The participants consisted of eight purposively selected Junior High School teachers from Gamu Agri-Fishery School who were actively involved in reading remediation and literacy intervention programs for struggling Grade 7 learners.

Data Collection Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather in-depth information regarding teachers' intervention practices, instructional experiences, classroom challenges, and learner responses during reading intervention implementation. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. Coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation were conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles including confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and respect for participants' rights throughout the conduct of the research.

Results and Findings

Theme 1: Differentiated and Scaffolded Reading Intervention Practices

Participants consistently described the implementation of differentiated and scaffolded reading intervention practices in addressing the needs of struggling Grade 7 readers. Teachers emphasized guided reading, repeated reading, peer tutoring, vocabulary enhancement, phonics-based instruction, contextualized reading materials, and individualized remediation sessions as effective intervention strategies.

One participant shared:

"Mas natututo ang struggling readers kapag ginagabayan sila step-by-step habang nagbabasa."

Another teacher explained:

"Repeated reading activities improve learners' fluency and confidence."

Participants highlighted that guided and scaffolded reading activities helped learners gradually improve word recognition, pronunciation, comprehension, and vocabulary skills. Teachers observed that individualized assistance and differentiated activities enabled struggling readers to progress according to their learning pace and reading abilities.

Several participants also emphasized the effectiveness of peer tutoring and collaborative learning in encouraging learner participation and reducing reading anxiety.

One participant remarked:

"Kapag may peer assistance, mas nagiging confident silang magbasa."

The findings indicate that scaffolded and learner-centered reading interventions support literacy development, learner confidence, and reading engagement among struggling Grade 7 readers. These findings align with previous studies emphasizing guided reading, scaffolding, and repeated practice as effective strategies for struggling readers.

Theme 2: Challenges in Implementing Reading Intervention Programs

Participants identified several instructional and contextual challenges affecting the implementation of reading intervention programs. Common concerns included limited instructional time, inadequate reading materials, overcrowded classrooms, varying learner abilities, learner disengagement, and insufficient parental support.

One participant stated:

"Limited time makes it difficult to conduct individualized reading sessions."

Another teacher shared:

"Some learners lose motivation because they feel embarrassed about their reading difficulties."

Participants explained that struggling readers often demonstrated low self-confidence, reading anxiety, and reluctance to participate during remediation activities. Teachers also observed that some learners lacked foundational literacy skills necessary for comprehension and fluency development.

Several participants emphasized that limited parental involvement negatively affected learners' reading progress and consistency in practicing reading skills at home.

One participant remarked:

"Parental support is important because reading improvement continues outside the classroom."

Participants further identified resource limitations such as insufficient reading materials, outdated intervention resources, and lack of multimedia facilities as barriers to effective implementation.

The findings suggest that institutional limitations, learner-related factors, and contextual challenges significantly affect the effectiveness of reading intervention programs in public secondary schools. These findings are consistent with studies identifying resource shortages, learner motivation issues, and parental support gaps as major barriers to literacy development.

Theme 3: Improving Learner Engagement and Reading Confidence

Participants consistently perceived that reading intervention activities positively influenced learners' confidence, participation, motivation, and classroom engagement. Teachers observed that struggling readers gradually became more willing to read aloud, participate in discussions, and complete reading-related tasks after sustained intervention activities.

One teacher remarked:

"Unti-unting nagiging confident ang learners habang gumagaling ang kanilang reading skills."

Another participant explained:

"Interactive reading activities motivate learners to participate more actively."

Participants highlighted that contextualized reading materials, collaborative activities, and positive reinforcement

encouraged learners to engage more actively during reading sessions. Teachers observed improvements in learners' reading fluency, comprehension, and classroom participation over time.

Several participants also emphasized the importance of creating supportive and non-threatening learning environments for struggling readers. Teachers explained that encouragement, patience, and emotional support helped reduce learners' fear of making mistakes while reading.

The findings reveal that supportive and learner-centered intervention practices strengthen learners' reading confidence, motivation, and participation. These findings align with studies emphasizing the role of positive reinforcement, contextualized materials, and collaborative learning in improving reading engagement among struggling readers.

Theme 4: Teacher Adaptability, Commitment, and Instructional Resilience

Despite instructional and contextual challenges, participants demonstrated strong adaptability, commitment, and resilience in sustaining reading intervention programs. Teachers explained that they improvised instructional materials, adjusted intervention strategies, utilized contextualized texts, and modified classroom activities according to learners' literacy levels and needs.

One participant shared:

"We modify reading activities depending on learners' abilities and interests."

Another teacher stated:

"Patience and consistency are important in helping struggling readers improve."

Participants emphasized that dedication, persistence, and emotional support were essential in addressing literacy gaps among struggling readers. Teachers observed that continuous encouragement and individualized learner support positively influenced learners' reading development and classroom participation.

The findings suggest that teacher adaptability and instructional resilience significantly contribute to sustaining meaningful reading intervention practices in public secondary schools.

Discussion

The findings revealed that teachers at Gamu Agri-Fishery School employ differentiated, scaffolded, and learner-centered reading intervention practices that strengthen literacy development among struggling Grade 7 readers. Guided reading, repeated reading, peer tutoring, and individualized remediation sessions supported improvements in learners' fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, and confidence. These findings align with previous studies emphasizing scaffolded and differentiated reading interventions as effective literacy support strategies for struggling readers.

The findings further support the constructivist perspective of Lev Vygotsky, which highlights the significance of scaffolding, guided assistance, and social interaction in cognitive and literacy development. Likewise, the findings align with the experiential learning framework of David Kolb, emphasizing active participation and repeated practice in skills acquisition.

The study also revealed that reading intervention activities positively influenced learners' confidence, motivation, and classroom engagement. Teachers observed that struggling readers became more participative and less anxious when exposed to supportive and collaborative reading environments. These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing that contextualized and interactive intervention practices improve learners' reading motivation and participation.

However, the study identified several barriers affecting effective implementation of reading intervention programs, including limited instructional time, inadequate reading resources, learner disengagement, varying literacy levels, and insufficient parental support. These findings corroborate previous Philippine studies highlighting institutional constraints and learner-related challenges in literacy intervention programs.

Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated adaptability, creativity, and commitment in sustaining intervention programs through instructional modifications, contextualized materials, and individualized learner support. The findings underscore the importance of teacher resilience and instructional flexibility in bridging literacy gaps among struggling secondary readers.

Conclusion

The study explored the reading intervention practices and instructional experiences of teachers in addressing reading gaps among struggling Grade 7 readers at Gamu Agri-Fishery School. Findings revealed that teachers employ scaffolded, differentiated, and learner-centered intervention strategies that strengthen learners' reading fluency, comprehension, confidence, and classroom participation.

Teachers perceived that guided reading, repeated reading, peer tutoring, contextualized materials, and individualized remediation significantly contributed to learners' literacy development and reading engagement. However, instructional and contextual challenges related to limited resources, learner motivation, inadequate instructional time, and parental support affected intervention implementation.

Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated adaptability, commitment, and instructional resilience in sustaining meaningful reading intervention programs. The study concludes that effective reading intervention practices require

collaborative support systems, adequate instructional resources, contextualized learning materials, and sustained professional development opportunities for teachers.

Implications of the Study

The findings provide important implications for school administrators, curriculum planners, literacy coordinators, and policymakers. Schools may strengthen literacy intervention programs by providing adequate reading materials, technology-assisted literacy resources, and sustained support systems for struggling readers.

Professional development programs focusing on secondary reading intervention strategies, differentiated instruction, literacy assessment, and learner-centered remediation practices may further strengthen teachers' competencies in addressing reading difficulties among adolescent learners.

The study also highlights the importance of parental involvement and community support in sustaining learners' reading development. Schools may establish collaborative literacy programs that encourage home-school partnerships and continuous learner reading engagement outside the classroom.

Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving larger participant groups, mixed-methods approaches, and comparative analyses across different educational contexts to further examine reading intervention practices and literacy development among struggling secondary readers.

Conflicts of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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