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Supplementary materials to address reading difficulties

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Abstract

Reading is a foundational skill essential for lifelong learning and academic achievement. Despite global literacy initiatives, millions of learners continue to struggle with decoding, fluency, and comprehension, limiting their educational opportunities. UNESCO (2023) reports that 773 million individuals worldwide lack basic literacy skills, with children in low- and middle-income countries disproportionately affected. In the Philippines, reading proficiency remains a pressing concern, as evidenced by the Programmed for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 results, which ranked Filipino learners among the lowest in reading comprehension. This study, titled “*Supplementary Materials to Address Reading Difficulties*”, focuses on Grade 3 learners in Tabaco West District, Albay, where persistent reading challenges hinder academic performance. By developing contextualized instructional materials, the study aims to support teachers in addressing decoding, fluency, and comprehension difficulties. Grounded in international, national, and local perspectives, intervention seeks to improve reading outcomes and contributes to the holistic development of learners.

Keywords: Reading Difficulties; Literacy Intervention; Supplementary Materials

1. Introduction

Reading is one of the most critical skills learners must acquire to succeed academically and function effectively in society. The Department of Education (DepEd) underscores the importance of reading proficiency, implementing programs such as Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) and the “Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa” (3Bs Initiative). However, many Grade 3 learners continue to read below grade level, a concern that requires urgent intervention. By Grade 3, students are expected to master decoding, fluency, and comprehension (DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2019), yet persistent difficulties remain evident.

Reading challenges manifest in several ways: decoding, or the ability to sound out words; fluency, which involves reading with speed, accuracy, and expression; and comprehension, the capacity to understand and interpret text. These difficulties may stem from personal factors such as cognitive delays, environmental constraints like limited access to reading materials, or instructional gaps including ineffective teaching strategies. In the Bicol region, particularly Tabaco West District, teachers report that struggling readers often lag in other subjects, underscoring the need for targeted interventions. This study proposes the development of supplementary materials tailored to the local context, aiming to strengthen literacy instruction and enhance learners’ overall academic performance.

2. Materials

The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative sources to capture the reading difficulties of Grade 3 learners. The primary material was the Beginning of School Year CRLA assessment results, which provided data on decoding, fluency, and comprehension levels. Supplementary materials included semi-structured interview guides and data recording

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sheets designed to document teachers' observations and instructional practices. These instruments were validated by a panel of experts, including Master Teachers, School Heads, and the District Supervisor, ensuring content accuracy and relevance. Additionally, the researcher developed contextualized supplementary reading materials tailored to the learners' needs. These materials consisted of leveled texts, practice exercises, and comprehension activities aligned with the identified difficulties. Validation checklists were also employed to evaluate the clarity, suitability, and effectiveness of the developed materials. Collectively, these resources provided a comprehensive foundation for analyzing learners' challenges and designing instructional interventions responsive to the local context.

3. Methods

The study employed a descriptive-developmental design, implemented in two phases. In the descriptive phase, the researcher collected CRLA assessment results to determine learners' reading levels and conducted semi-structured interviews with Grade 3 teachers to gather insights on observed difficulties and classroom interventions. These data provided a clear profile of decoding, fluency, and comprehension challenges. In the developmental phase, supplementary reading materials were designed based on the findings. The materials were contextualized to the learners' proficiency levels and validated by reading specialists and experienced educators using standardized evaluation checklists. Ethical procedures were strictly followed: permissions were secured from school authorities, teachers were informed of the study's purpose, and confidentiality was maintained. Responses were reported in aggregate form to ensure anonymity. This systematic approach allowed the researcher to describe existing reading challenges and develop instructional resources that directly addressed learners' needs while ensuring validity and ethical compliance.

4. Results

The descriptive phase revealed that a significant number of Grade 3 learners in Tabaco West District struggled with decoding, fluency, and comprehension. CRLA assessment results showed that many pupils read below grade level, with decoding difficulties being the most prevalent, followed by challenges in fluency and comprehension. Teacher interviews confirmed these findings, highlighting that struggling readers often lagged in other subjects such as numeracy and science. Teachers also reported limited resources and overcrowded classrooms as compounding factors. Based on these results, supplementary reading materials were developed and validated. The validation process indicated that the materials were clear, appropriate, and effective in addressing learners' needs. Feedback from reading specialists emphasized the contextual relevance of the materials, noting their alignment with learners' proficiency levels. Overall, the results underscored the urgent need for targeted interventions and confirmed the potential of supplementary materials to improve reading outcomes.

5. Discussion

The findings highlight the persistent reading difficulties faced by Grade 3 learners, particularly in decoding, fluency, and comprehension. These challenges mirror national and international reports, such as PISA 2018, which identified Filipino learners as struggling in reading comprehension. The study confirms that environmental and instructional factors such as limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient parental support exacerbate these difficulties. The development and validation of supplementary materials demonstrated that contextualized interventions can effectively support struggling readers. Teacher feedback and expert validation affirmed the materials' relevance and potential to enhance literacy instruction. Importantly, the study bridges the gap between policy initiatives, such as DepEd's ECARP and 3Bs, and classroom realities by providing practical tools tailored to local needs. The discussion emphasizes that early literacy intervention is critical to preventing long-term academic struggles. By equipping teachers with responsive materials, the study contributes to improving reading proficiency and fostering holistic learner development.

6. Conclusion

This study highlighted the persistent reading difficulties faced by Grade 3 learners in Tabaco West District, particularly in decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Findings from the CRLA assessment and teacher interviews confirmed that many pupils continue to read below grade level, which negatively impacts their performance in other subject areas. Environmental constraints, limited resources, and instructional gaps further compound these challenges. To address these issues, supplementary reading materials were developed and validated, ensuring contextual relevance and alignment with learners' proficiency levels. The validation process affirmed the materials' clarity, appropriateness, and potential effectiveness in supporting literacy instruction. Overall, the study demonstrates that targeted, localized

interventions can bridge the gap between national literacy policies and classroom realities. By equipping teachers with responsive instructional tools, the research contributes to improving reading outcomes and fostering holistic learner development, underscoring the importance of early literacy intervention in preventing long-term academic struggles.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest should be disclosed.

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