



TEACHERS' READING STRATEGIES DURING CATCH-UP FRIDAYS: BASES FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATION

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to find out the teachers' reading strategies during Catch-up Fridays as bases for policy recommendations in the school district of Oton during the school year 2023-2024. The study used the phenomenological approach under qualitative research. The participants of the study were the 35 selected kindergarten to grade 6 teachers taken purposively. The instrument in gathering data was a researcher-made interview guide. Permits were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. Based on the results of the study, the teachers' reading strategies used during Catch-up Fridays were game-based strategy, guided reading, and individual, paired, and group reading. These reading strategies were implemented through assessing students' reading levels, providing them suitable activities and materials, and creating routines and giving them instructions. On the other hand, the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of Catch-up Fridays were time constraints, preparation of instructional materials, and learners' attention spans. They cope with these challenges through commitment and collaboration.

Keywords: *Teachers' Teaching Strategies, Catch-up Fridays, Policy Recommendations*

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant foundations for a child to develop is reading. It can be considered as a lifelong skill for individuals wherever or whenever they could be in any part of the world. Reading was once branded as an adaptive ability via accident or as long as learners are ready to welcome reading, however this is not the scenario anymore in the actual classroom set-up. Nowadays, teaching reading becomes a challenge to every teacher since reading does not start at the comfort of the home but instead only at school. This can be a consequential challenge for every teacher to overcome in the field.

The Department of Education (DepEd) is fully adhered to delivering high-quality, up-to-date, all-encompassing, and adaptable education to all. In this MATATAG Education Agenda, commitment is outlined with the goal of developing skilled individuals who are well-prepared for employment and are proactive, responsible individuals equipped with substantial competencies and effective skills that lead to constant learning (DepEd Memorandum No. 54, series of 2023). Recently, DepEd undertakings offer avenues to improve students' academic performance, focusing on addressing challenges such as low reading proficiency levels as indicated by national and international extensive assessments.

The 2022 PISA results placed the Philippines in the lowest rankings, achieving a score of 24.00% in Science, scoring 23.00% in English (Reading) and garnering 16.00% in Mathematics. These scores suggest that in these core subjects, students have only reached basic proficiency levels. It is worth noting that the reading score is at 23.00% which extremely need to improve the reading and comprehension skills of all learners.

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The "Catch-up Fridays" project, initiated by the Department of Education (DepEd), is in line with these priorities. The national implementation of this initiative began on January 12, 2024, encompassing both primary and secondary schools as well as community learning centers (CLCs). "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR) activity is observed every Friday throughout the entire academic year, aiming to promote a culture of reading and learning. This program focuses on two sub-programs known as enrichment and intervention. A series of activities are prepared and conducted every Friday of the week to address the learning gaps. Moreover, Catch-up Fridays can be a source for gathering valuable feedback from field implementers regarding the program's guidelines.

In addition, gathering students' perspectives on implementing the project provides an opportunity to ensure the program's progress and importance in meeting educational goals. (DepEd Memorandum No. 001, series of 2024).

In the Philippines, the government is prioritizing the improvement of literacy by investing in efforts and finances to teach people how to read and write. Teachers are required to employ diverse, appropriate, and efficient approaches and tactics to enhance the teaching of reading skills. Every student's reading-related issue should be carefully addressed, and relevant strategies should be put in place for their implementation.

The Department of Education (DepEd) formulated multiple reading programs to lessen the number of non-readers and slow-reader nationwide. Subsequent trainings, seminars and orientations were also conducted to teachers to adapt and practice different reading strategies

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and approaches that could help every non-reader and slow reader to learn how to decode, read, and comprehend well.

In the District of Oton, it has empirically observed that teachers utilized numerous reading strategies that suit to their learners' interest and needs during Catch-up Fridays. While this program has been running for more than two months, there has been a dearth of studies conducted and published in its relevance. Despite there are news features published by the Philippine Information Agency and the Philippine News Agency—both owned by the Philippine government, no official or formal study regarding the teachers' reading strategies during Catch-up Fridays is available at hand.

Thus, the purpose of the study was to determine the reading strategies used by the teachers during Catch-up Fridays, the challenges they encountered, and their coping mechanism in its implementation. Furthermore, to enhance the teachers' reading strategies during the implementation of the Catch-up Fridays, the study sought to formulate policy recommendation that can be utilized in improving students' reading abilities and addressing learning gaps.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants of the study, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis used in this study.

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The purpose of this study was to determine the teachers' reading strategies in the District of Oton during Catch-up Fridays as basis for policy recommendation during the school year 2023-2024

Research Method

The study used descriptive research method using in-depth interviews. The interviewer and the participants met personally to answer questions about teachers' reading strategies during Catch-up Fridays. The aim was to get their views and experiences through their response to the questions.

A qualitative research method which in-depth interview involves small number of participants in conducting a lengthy interviewing strategy spend a large amount of time with each participant using a conversational framework. To obtain comprehensive information that enlightens an individual's point of view, emotions, experiences, and logical thought regarding a specific topic or situation an in-depth interview are conducted (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020)

Research Design

The study used a phenomenological approach under qualitative research design. The philosophical approach of phenomenology is utilized in qualitative research. Phenomenology aims to comprehend individuals' perspectives of the world and to highlight the potential differences from commonly accepted views by exploring their subjective interpretations of their experiences. Interviewing the subjects to uncover their impressions is the primary method of conducting phenomenology, and it is commonly applied in fields such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

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According to Smith (2013), the study of structures of consciousness from the first-person perspective is known as phenomenology. The primary feature of an experience is its intentionality, meaning its inherent direction towards something, as it involves experiencing or relating to some entity. An experience is guided towards an object due to its content or significance (which symbolizes the object) along with the suitable enabling circumstances.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were the 35 selected teachers from kindergarten to Grade 6 taken from the official number of teachers in the schools District of Oton, Schools Division of Iloilo.

Five (5) teachers were selected from each grade level totaling to thirty-five (35) in all.

The participants were selected from the total population through purposive sampling. The researcher noted that the participants of the study were teachers teaching reading during Catch-Up Friday in the school year 2023-2024.

Sampling Design

The study utilized a purposive sampling design. A purposive sample is chosen based on specific population characteristics and study objectives, making it a non-probability sample. This type of sampling is also referred to as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling in the study (Creswell as cited by Jordan, 2023)

The researcher gained some insights into the world of his or her participants and describe their perceptions and selections.

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Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made interview schedule as the research instrument. The researcher-made interview guide was validated by a panel of experts. All feedback and recommendations regarding the validation of the tool were taken into consideration.

A voice and a video recorder were used to capture all the proceedings during the in-depth interview. They were also used for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the study's findings.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Prior to the determination of the validity of the interview schedule made by the researcher, the adviser, Dean of the Graduate School, then a panel of jurors who are considered for their expertise in the field of research, testing and assessment, and English, were requested to validate each question for review and modification.

The concept of validity pertains to the accuracy, significance, accuracy, and utility of conclusions drawn by a researcher. Content-related validity evidence requires the content and structure to align with the definition of variables and the sample of participants to be measured, and it also aids in validating the items in the questionnaire (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). Comments, corrections, and suggestions of the panel of validators regarding the interview schedule were considered using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (Appendix A).

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Data Gathering Procedures

Prior to the conduct of the study, the researcher prepared a letter of permission asking to conduct the study address to the schools division superintendent and the school heads.

The research also required the participants to sign an informed consent form. After obtaining the participants' written consent letters for the study, interviews commenced face-to-face on agreed time. Interviews were conducted at a convenient time for each participant. The interview format adopted three different types: open-ended, semi-structured, and structured interviews focusing on the interview questions.

In-Depth interview was done to arrive at the respondent's views about the study. This is necessary to get the ideas of each of the respondent. The discussions were done in actual on the common available scheduled time of all the interviewees. A video recording was done to completely capture the interviewee's words. The researcher consolidated all the collected information after series of interviews using thematic approach.

After completing the interviews, videos and audio-recording were transcribed. The original and translated transcripts were categorized into meaning units (Ratner, 2002) and were thematically analyzed.

As a result, coherent and related comments were classified as a single meaning unit. In a meaning unit, the participants' comments were always included, and if necessary, clarifying questions were included as well.

Finally, ethical issues raised during the conduct of the study were dealt with utmost confidentiality and anonymity to protect the identities of the respondents. The findings were

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presented detailing the teachers' reading strategies during Catch-up Fridays as bases for policy recommendations.

Data Analyses

The collected data was evaluated using a thematic approach. The approach, also known as thematic analysis, is a method used to analyse qualitative data, often used to examine a collection of texts like interview transcripts. Researchers analyse the data to identify recurring themes- common subjects, concepts, and patterns of meaning.

The qualitative analysis technique was used to identify the themes of teachers' reading strategies during Catch-up Fridays as bases for policy recommendation in the Schools District of Oton, Schools Division of Iloilo.

The analysis of themes involves identifying patterns or themes present in qualitative data. Maguire & Delahunt (2017) state that the goal of thematic analysis is to recognize significant or interesting data patterns and utilize these themes to discuss research findings or address specific issues. This process entails summarizing, analysing, and interpreting gathered data to derive meaning from it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The phenomenological study utilized in-depth interviews to find out the teachers' reading strategies during Catch-Up Fridays in District of Oton for school year 2023-2024.

Participants purposively selected were involved in the study of which 35 teachers from kindergarten to grade six in the District of Oton.

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Interviews were done one-on-one and face-to-face using three different types: open-ended, semi-structured, and structured interviews. The researcher consolidated all the collected information after series of interviews. The original and translated transcripts were categorized into meaningful units (Ratner, 2002) to identify common themes – topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly and were thematically analysed.

Based on the data presented, the following are the findings:

The common teacher’s reading strategies during Catch-Up Fridays were game-based strategy, individual, paired and group reading approach and guided reading.

The implementation of the reading strategies by the teachers during Catch-Up Fridays include the assessment of reading level, creating routines, giving instructions and providing instructional materials.

The challenges encountered by the teachers in implementing those reading strategies were time-constraint, preparation of the instructional materials, and learner’s attention span.

Teachers cope with those challenges through commitment and collaboration.

A policy recommendation was proposed based on the teachers’ reading strategies used during Catch-Up Fridays.

The teachers’ reading strategies help address the learning needs and improve teaching and learning resources during Catch-up Fridays.

These reading strategies include differentiated objectives, activities and games that can cater learners with different reading levels. Emphasizing these techniques during Catch-up Fridays will let learners indulge in the reading and learning process significantly.

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Commonly game-based strategy is effective in classes since it incorporates games in reading to catch the interest of the learners. Also, individual, paired, and group reading are important in honing the reading skills of the learners depending in their reading level and guided reading which enhances the learners spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation and comprehension skills.

Assessment of the reading level, providing suitable activities and materials, creating routines and giving instructions play an important role to help carry out the activities, objectives, and the implementation of Catch-up Fridays efficiently.

As a teacher, it is already prevalent to always begin with an assessment to have a prior knowledge of the learners' academic performance level whether it is in reading or in other learning areas. In connection with this, it will be easy for the teachers to prepare and give suitable learning materials and series of activities to the learners. Similarly, having classroom routines like setting rules, giving instructions and constant classroom practice makes the class flow smooth and organized.

In addition, challenges occur during the implementation of Catch-up Fridays such as time constraints, preparation of the instructional materials and dealing with learners' attention span.

Now, in order for the teachers to cope with these challenges, commitment in service is one way of pushing in continuing to render duties and perform at best during Catch-up Fridays. Moreover, collaboration among parents, co-teachers and their school heads serve as their inspiration to keep moving forward and to work together with joint effort.

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Now, there are three policy recommendations formulated based on the results of the study.

First, optimizing the use and management of time to improve the implementation of teacher’s reading strategies. It is always evident that time serves a significant role to teacher imposing different reading strategies during the conduct of Catch-up Fridays. The next policy is improving the preparation of instructional materials and equipment. Resource materials help teachers and learners develop practical experiences all throughout the class. Also, this enhances the reading strategies of the teacher more effectively. Lastly, identification of policy options on learners’ attention span was highly recommended. Teachers are encouraged to utilize various differentiated activities improve their reading strategies and for learners to address their learning needs.

The proposed policy recommendations based on the teachers’ reading strategies during Catch-Up Fridays help ensure and effectively improve these reading strategies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and insights of the study, the following recommendations are advanced:

Learners should engage and participate actively in the reading activities that will help them improve their vocabulary and develop their reading skills.

Teachers should consider using numerous reading strategies and organize various activities that will cater diverse learners. This is to enrich learners’ learning interests,

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potentials, and experiences. They should collaborate and communicate to their co-teachers and school heads to ask technical assistance or support.

School heads should continue to provide technical assistance, collaborate with their colleagues, mobilize, maximize, and evaluate teachers' reading strategies and learning resources in school for alignment to current curriculum, learning setup and other requirements. They should also map out programs such as Catch-up Fridays and ensure the formulated policy recommendations such as optimizing the use and management of time to improve the implementation of teachers' reading strategies. This could motivate the teachers to work efficiently. School heads should highlight the policy on improving the preparation of instructional materials and equipment of teachers which can ease the burden in time-constraint and financial aspect. Also, this policy supports the implementation of teachers' reading strategies meaningfully and effectively. Lastly, school heads are encouraged to identify policy options on learner's attention span. This could promote manageable and organized class during Catch-up Fridays.

Home learning facilitators should take extra effort to help and guide learners to do their tasks given by their teachers.

Local Government Unit (LGU) should extend assistance to the school through teacher training and provision of the conduct of Catch-Up Fridays to help the school heads promote better education for learners.

The Department of Education curriculum planners should provide support and integrate the proposed policy based on teachers' reading strategies during Catch-Up Fridays.

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The Department of Education officials should provide technical assistance to school heads, as well as to teachers to make additional preparation and address their difficulties in finding solutions and improving the program.

Future researchers may conduct similar or related studies on a wider scope and larger sample size. They may also conduct related studies highlighting the principle of inclusivity of teachers' reading strategies during Catch-Up Fridays to improve teaching and for the development of various reading activities and learning supports.

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