



KEY STAGE 2 LEARNERS' READING DIFFICULTIES AND SCHOOL'S INTERVENTION: BASES FOR AN ENHANCED READING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Reading proficiency is essential for academic success; however, many Key Stage 2 learners at Tigbauan Central Elementary School struggle with decoding, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension due to gaps in foundational literacy skills and weak comprehension strategies. Emotional factors, such as reading anxiety and low self-confidence, further limit learner engagement and performance. Despite challenges, including absenteeism and limited resources, teachers continue to support learners through differentiated instruction, innovative strategies, and ongoing professional development. To address these concerns, the study proposes the Integrated Literacy Support Program (ILSP), a learner-centered framework that integrates systematic assessment, structured phonics and comprehension instruction, technology-assisted learning, motivational support, and strengthened home-school collaboration. The findings emphasize the need for consistent, collaborative, and holistic interventions to improve reading proficiency and support long-term academic success among Key Stage 2 learners.

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Keywords: *Key stage 2 learners, reading difficulties, school's intervention, enhanced reading program*

INTRODUCTION

In today's educational landscape, many learners experience significant reading difficulties that hinder both their academic performance and personal growth. These challenges may manifest in several ways, including struggles with word recognition, limited comprehension skills, slow reading fluency, and difficulties in decoding text (Snowling & Hulme, 2021). Research has identified various factors contributing to these problems, such as learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia), insufficient early literacy exposure, and ineffective instructional practices (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2023). Furthermore, the increasing reliance on digital learning has magnified literacy gaps, particularly among learners with limited access to resources or personalized support (Mol & Bus, 2021).

The consequences of persistent reading difficulties extend far beyond the classroom. Learners who struggle to read often experience lower self-esteem, decreased motivation, and reduced opportunities for future academic and career success. Hence, addressing these difficulties through targeted interventions and evidence-based instructional strategies remains essential to ensuring that all learners develop foundational literacy skills necessary for lifelong learning (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2023).

This study entitled "Key Stage 2 Learners' Reading Difficulties and School's Intervention: Bases for an Enhanced Reading Program" was conceptualized. It seeks to

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identify the specific reading difficulties faced by learners in Key Stage 2 particularly in phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary and examine the effectiveness of the school's existing interventions.

These gaps are often rooted in inadequate instructional support, limited access to reading materials, or socioeconomic challenges that hinder literacy development.

By analyzing these issues, the study aimed to propose an enhanced reading program that is responsive to the learners' unique needs and strengthens the interventions already in place. Furthermore, it may provide opportunities for teacher professional development, equipping educators with the tools and strategies necessary to effectively address reading challenges and improve literacy outcomes in the school.

The researcher was motivated to conduct this study after observing firsthand reading challenges faced by many Key Stage 2 learners in the school. Some learners struggle to decode even simple words, while others find it difficult to comprehend passages or read with fluency, which often leads to frustration, low confidence, and disengagement from learning. Despite the school's interventions, gaps in reading performance remain evident.

This inspired the researcher to pursue the study with the hope of developing a more contextualized and enhanced reading program that would not only support struggling readers but also empower teachers in delivering more effective literacy instruction.

Furthermore, this study represented both a response to the pressing need for improved reading support and a personal commitment to helping learners overcome barriers that limit their academic and personal success.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants of the study, data gathering procedure, research instrument, data analysis and the ethical consideration.

Research Method

The study utilized a qualitative research method through in-depth interviews to explore reading difficulties and evaluate school interventions. Qualitative research was particularly appropriate for this study as it sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights rather than quantify data.

To guide the interviews, the researcher prepared a structured or semi-structured questionnaire containing open-ended questions, which participants were allowed to review beforehand. This approach encouraged thoughtful, reflective responses and helped participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences. The participants were purposefully selected based on their direct involvement with or knowledge of the issue, including students experiencing reading difficulties, teachers implementing reading programs, and school administrators overseeing literacy interventions. Data collected from the interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis, involving transcription of responses, identification of recurring patterns, coding into categories or themes, and interpretation of findings to inform the development of an enhanced reading program.

This method emphasized understanding the social and educational context of the participants, capturing their lived experiences, and ensuring that their perspectives guided recommendations. According to the Wallace Foundation (2022), qualitative approaches such

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as in-depth interviews are effective in obtaining the essential views of participants, providing rich information that can shape meaningful and contextually relevant interventions.

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological research design, which was a qualitative approach that focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individuals. Phenomenology is grounded in philosophy and sought to explore how people perceive, interpret, and make sense of their experiences in the world. The goal of this approach was not to generalize findings to a larger population, but rather to gain deep insight into participants' subjective experiences and the meanings they attached to them. By focusing on the perspectives of individuals, phenomenology allowed researcher to uncover how participants experience phenomena in ways that may differed from commonly held assumptions or societal norms (Mckoy & Boyd, 2023).

In the context of this study, phenomenological design helped the researcher understand the unique experiences of students facing reading difficulties and how they perceived the interventions implemented by their school. This approach enabled the researcher to capture the complexities, emotions, and personal interpretations of participants, providing a rich and nuanced understanding that informed the development of a more effective and tailored reading program. Through this design, the study highlighted the voices of participants, ensuring that their perspectives are central to identifying challenges, evaluating existing strategies, and suggesting meaningful improvements in literacy interventions.

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Participants of the Study

The study involved fifteen (15) teachers from grades four, five, and six, with five (5) teachers selected from each grade. Participants were chosen purposively based on their current teaching assignments and a minimum of two years of experience to ensure familiarity with the curriculum and classroom practices. Both male and female teachers were included, and all held at least a bachelor’s degree in education or a related field. This selection provided a balanced representation of upper primary education, allowing the study to explore instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement across the three grade levels.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling design was used to select the participants of the study. Creswell (2020) emphasized that purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research because it helps identify specific cases that can provide detailed information on the research topic. Creswell (2022) further highlighted that while purposive sampling does not aim for statistical generalization, it can provide in-depth insights, particularly when the research focused on case studies, ethnographies, or phenomenological research. In this study, participants will be selected based on their ability to best represent the target population—learners with reading difficulties.

The inclusion criteria for participants will be carefully defined to ensure relevance and richness of data. Specifically, participants had to: 1) Be identified by educators or assessment tools as having reading difficulties; 2) Be within the specific age or grade range

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targeted by the study (e.g., primary school learners aged 7–12 years); 3) Be willing and able to participate in interviews, observations, or reading assessments, ensuring meaningful engagement with the research process; and
4) Have sufficient cognitive and language abilities to respond to research activities, allowing the collection of accurate and detailed information.

By applying these inclusion criteria, the study ensured that selected participants could provide rich, detailed insights into the challenges and experiences of learners with reading difficulties, aligning with the goals of qualitative inquiry.

Research Instrument

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire. A panel of experts validated the researcher-made interview guide. All comments and suggestions relative to the validation of the tool were considered by the researcher.

The questionnaire was composed of questions focused on the purpose of study. The questionnaire was used for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants.

Voice and video recorders were used to capture all the proceedings during the in-depth interview. It was also used for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants. Thematic analysis was employed to condense and interpret the study's findings.

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Validity of the Research Instrument

A panel of experts validated the researcher-made interview guide for face and content validation. All comments and suggestions relative to the validation of the tool were considered and integrated. The validation was to ensure that the questions would gather the needed information to answer the research questions.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher sought permission of the Dean of the Graduate School to conduct interviews to the target participants of the study. The researcher was also requested from the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent, Schools Division of Iloilo to conduct the study among the identified teachers in the Municipality of Tigbauan. Upon approval, the researcher personally conducted the study.

Prior to the conduct of the interview, the researcher required the participants to sign the informed consent form and were oriented that the entire process would be recorded with confidentiality assured.

Using in-depth interview, voice and video recorders were provided to completely capture the interview's words. The researcher consolidated all the collected data after series of interviews.

Data Analyses

The information was gathered from the 15 (fifteen) participants with their detailed responses about the learners reading difficulties at Tigbauan Central Elementary School. The interviews were conducted with the participants at a time. The semi-structured interviews

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were analyzed using the steps in thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher closely examined the data to identify common themes-topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that emerged repeatedly.

According to Braun and Clarke (2020), thematic analysis is a qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within a data set. It enables researchers to organize and describe data in rich detail while interpreting various aspects of the research topic. These steps include: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to determine the reading difficulties of Key Stage 2 learners and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's remediation interventions as a basis for an enhanced reading program.

The study utilized a qualitative research method through in-depth interviews and employed a phenomenological research design.

The study involved fifteen (15) teachers from grades four, five, and six, with five (5) teachers selected from each grade. Participants were purposively chosen based on their current teaching assignments and a minimum of two years of experience to ensure familiarity with the curriculum and classroom practices. Both male and female teachers were included, and all held at least a bachelor's degree in education or a related field.

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This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire. A panel of experts validated the researcher-made interview guide for face and content validity.

Permits from the individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher also sought permission from the Dean of the Graduate School to conduct interviews with the target participants. Additionally, approval was requested from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Schools Division of Iloilo to conduct the study among the identified teachers in the Municipality of Tigbauan.

Upon approval, the researcher personally conducted the study. Prior to the interview, participants were required to sign an informed consent form and were informed that the entire process would be recorded with confidentiality assured.

Using in-depth interviews, voice and video recorders were provided to capture the interview's content accurately. The researcher consolidated all collected data after a series of interviews.

The interviews were conducted with the participants individually. The semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the steps in thematic analysis.

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

Reading difficulties of learners are complex and cannot be attributed to a single cause. Instead, they stem from a combination of: foundational literacy deficits to grasp on phonics principles. These interact with one another that may lead to slow reading, which then reduces comprehension and lowers confidence. Reading difficulties should be understood as multidimensional, requiring comprehensive assessment and intervention approaches.

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The interventions provide targeted practice in phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. This further ensure that learners receive the appropriate level of support based on their needs. Importantly, interventions must be consistent, evidence-based, and continuously monitored for effectiveness.

Teachers play a central role in addressing reading challenges that successful literacy support depends significantly on teachers' understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction and their classroom management strategies that promote engagement. Ongoing professional development equips teachers with updated pedagogical strategies, and professional learning communities that will enhance collective problem-solving and instructional innovation.

A holistic literacy program should address foundational skills, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension simultaneously while incorporating emotional and motivational support mechanisms, including parental engagement components, structured teacher support and training, ongoing assessment and progress monitoring, and consistency and continuity across grade levels. Such integrated approaches not only improve reading fluency and comprehension but also build learners' confidence, independence, and long-term academic resilience.

For Key Stage 2 learners in particular, early and systematic intervention is crucial to prevent reading difficulties from widening into broader academic gaps, and sustained support ensures that learners transition successfully into higher grades with the literacy skills necessary for content-area learning.

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Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

Schools should provide systematic phonics instruction, decoding strategies, vocabulary-building activities, and guided reading sessions to improve learners' literacy skills and overall comprehension.

Teachers are encouraged to implement repeated reading, read-aloud activities, and choral reading to enhance learners' fluency, pronunciation, intonation, and engagement with texts.

A supportive and encouraging classroom environment should be fostered to reduce reading anxiety, build learners' confidence, and promote positive attitudes toward reading.

Parents should be actively involved by encouraging regular home reading, utilizing take-home materials, and maintaining open communication with teachers to reinforce school-based literacy interventions.

The integration of interactive platforms, educational videos, digital texts, and visual aids is recommended to enhance learner engagement, motivation, and opportunities for reading practice.

Learners should be grouped according to reading level to allow for targeted instruction. One-on-one support should be provided when necessary, and teachers should receive ongoing professional development to effectively implement evidence-based reading interventions.

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INSTABRIGHT e-GAZETTE

ISSN: 2704-3010

Volume VII, Issue III

February 2026

Available online at <https://www.instabrightgazette.com>



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