RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM IN ELEMENTARY READING USING BLENDED LEARNING: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Gina S. Balili[1]

[1]*Student, Graduate School, The Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.*

ABSTRACT

 Reading is important because it develops your mind and gives you excessive knowledge and lessons of life. It helps you understand the world around you better. It keeps your mind active and enhances your creative ability. Reading improves your vocabulary and develops your communication skills. It helps you learn how to use your language creatively. Not only does it improve your communication but it also makes you a better writer. Good communication is important in every aspect of life. The ability to read is an important skill in today's modern world where so much information is transmitted in written form. People must have reading skills whether they are in school or not. This is a challenge to teachers at the elementary level on how they nurture learners to learn proper reading in their respective grade levels. This need is evident as educational studies on how to teach reading in a specialized classroom setting like the elementary classroom that indicated that teachers do not spend enough time teaching reading strategies determined that teachers often have only limited knowledge about how to teach reading strategies and tend to draw from what they learned in their own school experiences when comprehending texts. Strategies such as summarizing or asking questions are commonly used by teachers to assess reading comprehension, but they are rarely taught how to improve it. Indeed, on an overall basis, reading instruction in a regular classroom setting often fails to reflect scientifically-based practices. Lack of student interest and motivation can be quite a challenge for teachers to combat.

 KEYWORDS: *Reconstruction, program, elementary, reading, blended, learning, qualitative*

INTRODUCTION

Reconstruction program in Elementary reading in the Philippines is a professional program where teachers have an adept background and training in honing the reading abilities of students in general and assists struggling readers to improve themselves. Although majority of the work of a remedial reading teacher revolves on providing instruction for struggling readers, he or she is also tasked to serve as a focal person to teachers to further hone their pedagogical practices related to literacy education.

Teachers had to carry out learning activities without the usual face-to-face lessons, learners had to self-regulate at home, and parents had to support their children's learning more than before. How these learning conditions affected students' achievement is of considerable interest for educational policy, administration, and practice. This is especially true for reading literacy, a key competence that influences students' achievement in other subjects and enables them to participate in society throughout their entire life course. Additionally, there is reason to assume had a differential effect on students. Even within a given education system, certain groups of students might have been affected more severely than others (Peyrard, 2021).

In America, the competencies and requirements of being a remedial reading in both face-to-face and blended learning teacher are set by the publication Standards for Reading Professionals (IRA, 2018). The stipulated standards are bases for differentiating remedial reading teachers from regular reading classroom teachers. Since they are considered education professionals, it is clear in the Standards that those without appropriate credentials, degrees, trainings, and backgrounds and those who cannot show advanced skills in literacy education are not legible to be remedial reading

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teachers. If classroom teachers cultivate their skills in teaching reading, a remedial reading teacher needs a serious, systematic and meticulous groundwork in order to become one.

Furthermore, the Standards requires remedial reading teachers to possess graduate degrees in literacy education in order to preserve and to enhance their professional integrity. They need to have affluent classroom experiences in order to exude flexibility in handling different students with reading difficulties and must have the strong credibility to maintain professionalism at all times. Because of the important roles vested to a remedial reading teacher, every school in the US makes it a point to have one or two remedial reading teachers and therefore, they have available allocations for such position (Rizon, 2018).

In the Philippines, the problem of students in reading is not a new issue. In fact, certain studies reveal that the reading problems of Filipino students seemed to be perennial (Alayon, 2019). Due to such problems, reading and literacy instruction have always been the top priority in all Philippine curricula. Umali (2019) labels that reading instruction in the Philippines can be distinguished into two facets: (1) the regular reading class which is embedded in the standard curriculum, and (2) the remedial reading class which is a separate subject given to those students who need help in correcting and improving their reading difficulties. The remedial reading class in the Philippines is a pull-out type since it is not integrated within the regular reading class of the students.

The practice of remedial reading has been in the limelight for a long time in the Philippine education sector. In fact, the study of Genero (2017) presents how elementary schools and high schools in the country devised their own remedial reading programs to assist struggling readers. He explains that the principals of the schools encourage their teachers to assess their students reading level so that they can provide the proper interventions for them. Although, remediation for struggling readers has been practiced in the Philippines for decades, its optimization has reached its prime only through the Department Order (DO) 45, series of 2022 Reading Literacy Program in the Elementary Schools - Remedial Instruction Programs in High School of the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd).

Rio (2018) enumerates the typical duties of remedial teachers in the Philippines: (1) work very closely with the principal, students' teacher and the rest of the staff, (2) assess the students' levels of functioning in reading, (3) provide remediation for students who are struggling in reading their first or second language, (4) conduct the pre-tests and post-tests to see where the students' strengths and weaknesses are, and (5) work one-on-one with any of the students who are struggling in those two main areas of academia. Additionally, she adds these outside-the-classroom duties of remedial reading teachers: (1) work cooperatively with the staff, especially during staff development and trainings, and create activities based on the curriculum that will help the remedial students, (2) maintain the data collection for the classroom teachers, (3) manage students' records in a timely and appropriate way, (4) assist the staff in any other way, and (5) counsel children with special needs and work closely with their parents. These duties were based upon Rio's experiences as a remedial reading teacher in the public school.

Although Rio (2018) was able to enumerate the typical roles of a remedial reading teacher, its status as a professional position in schools is still unrecognized in the Philippines. Although there are teachers who provide assistance and support to students with reading difficulties, there is no existing allocations for such position. Hence, being a remedial reading teacher is considered an extra workload for teachers and is not compensated for doing the roles and responsibilities entrusted to them as opposed to the recognition given to this job in the US and other foreign counties.

Not only this, the qualifications of a remedial reading teacher is not even concrete and clear. In fact, the usual practice of local schools is that the classroom reading teachers are also the remedial reading teachers of identified students with reading difficulties. Even though the DepEd in the Davao City division provides trainings for remedial reading teachers, the agency doesn't have any uniform, clear and organized guidelines as to how remedial reading instruction should be done in schools (Batan, 2018).

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
The specifics of the research methods will be explained in the next part so that researchers in the future might extrapolate the findings of this study to different contexts. Transferability, the qualitative counterpart of external

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validity in post positivist research, will be developed by detailed and meticulous discussions of the study's time, place, context, and culture (Mertens, 2005). This section will address the following topics: (a) the interview technique; (b) the researcher's function; and (c) the sample strategy and ethical issues.

To generate targeted, qualitative, textual data, semi-structured interviews combine the adaptability of unstructured, open-ended interviews with directionality and an agenda (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to gather information about how elementary instructors enhance the quality of reading instruction for indigenous students. They also described their experiences, tactics, and results when they attended classes to support students' reading comprehension abilities.

An interview guide was utilized to make sure that all of the participants provided the same information. In addition to the open-ended questions and subjects provided in the interview guide, the interviewer additionally probed, explored, and asked follow-up questions to get further information and details on specific themes. The interview guide made conducting in-depth, methodical interviews with multiple participants easier.

All interviews must be conducted virtually via Google Meet at a time that works for the participants, as qualitative research examines subjects in their natural environments. For transcription purposes, all interview sessions were taped. When necessary, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews following transcription to elucidate meaning or delve deeper into particular topics.

Respondents and Sampling
Ten participants in all are included in this study and will participate in the focused group discussion and in-depth interview. Four of them will participate in focus group discussions (FGD), while the remaining six will participate in in-depth interviews (IDI). All information acquired during the FGD and IDI will be transcribed and converted into an organized summary of the participants' answers.

In 2017, Participant 1 obtained her license to teach in public schools. She is currently an elementary school English teacher who teaches reading to students. Participant 2 works as a licensed professional teacher at one of Davao City's public schools. Programs for remedial reading and laboratories fall under her purview. Participant 3 has over nine years of experience as a licensed professional teacher at a public school, where she teaches elementary grades of IP students.

Participant 4 is a licensed professional teacher. She experienced 4 years in a public-school teaching English. And 5 years in public school teaching Elementary grade with all the subject areas. Participant 5 is a licensed teacher teaching in a public school and taught General education subjects for 4 years in Grade 6.Participant 6 is a licensed teacher. She taught grade 6 pupils in a public school with more than 200 Grade 6 learners. Participant 7 is also a licensed teacher. He is teaching in a public school for almost 6 years. As an English teacher, he is assigned in teaching reading to grade 6 students. Participant 8 is a licensed teacher in one of the public schools in Davao City. Currently, he is the language teacher of the grade 6 students. Participant 9 is teaching English in the Elementary unit for almost 3 years. She is a licensed teacher and currently enrolled her Master of Arts in Educational Management in one of the private schools in Davao City. Participant 10 is a private school teacher in Davao City. He is in the teaching profession for almost 7 years and currently teaching reading to grade 6.

Data Analysis
Teachers who were interested in taking part in the study were invited via a Google Meet virtual conference. Teachers who expressed interest were asked to attend a scheduled meeting and fill out a brief demographic assessment. Qualitative researchers typically use fewer participants than quantitative researchers do because of costs and time constraints (Patton, 2005).

In order to take part in the study, teachers were invited via a virtual conference called Google Meet. Teachers were invited to participate in a planned meeting and to fill out a brief demographic survey if they were interested. Qualified researchers typically use fewer participants than their quantitative counterparts due to cost and time constraints (Patton, 2005).

The researcher used the seven steps of data analysis described by Marshall and Rossman (2006) as a guide to help with data distillation, data break-down into manageable chunks, interpretation, and meaning extraction from participant comments. As per Marshall and Rossman's (2006) findings, the process involved seven distinct stages: (a) data organization; (b) data immersion; (c) category and topic generation; (d) data coding; (e) interpretation utilizing analytical memoranda; and (f) search for alternative interpretations.

Data analysis first begins with organizing the data. The organization of the data involved keeping information provided by each participant separate and in sequence with the order of the interviews. The process of organizing the data allowed it to remain manageable, easily accessible, and readily available. The digital audio files from the interviews were carefully transcribed into written form. Electronic folders were established to create an organization for the data collected from each participant.

Next, the researcher became familiar with the data through extensive reading of the interviews to gain an understanding of the content. This involved reading through the interviews at least three times. Following Hatch's (2002) recommendations for qualitative analysis, the researcher created a sheet of notes for each participant. The summary sheets were a quick way to refer back to the original data as the data analysis continued (Hatch, 2002).

After the initial readings, Hatch (2002) recommends researchers read data through completely with one typology in mind. Typologies as classification systems made up of categories that divide some aspects of the world into parts. According to Hatch (2002), typologies are generated from the theory, common sense, or research objectives. For this study, the researcher used the typologies or themes from the literature review as the constructs through which to view the data.

After reading through the data with each constructor typology in mind, the researcher coded the data into five categories from the literature by taking excerpts of text from the data and identifying them within a particular category.

After everything was coded, the researcher read through the data again while writing analytic memos on her thoughts and insights and began the process of offering interpretations. During this stage, the researcher began to interpret the data to find significance and meaning in the teachers' instructional experiences through pulling salient themes, reoccurring ideas, and patterns of belief that resonated collectively throughout the interviews.

As themes emerged in the data, interpretations started to be offered. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), this aspect of the data analysis enables the researcher to create connections between the interviews and gives the themes and categories context. In order to provide the teachers' teaching experiences context and relevance, the researcher started interpreting the data.

Researchers should be reminded by Rossman and Marshall (2006) that there are always going to be competing theories explaining the data. The researcher paused before continuing, assessing the data in search of more logical answers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the reconstruction program in Elementary reading using blended learning especially during blended learning classes. Analysis of the data revealed three themes; namely, the importance of reading comprehension in blended learning, role of reading strategies in blended learning, and willingness of learners to learn reading.

The data from the interviews were analyzed using a process of thematic analysis facilitated by initial coding of the interview transcripts, identifying preliminary categories, second round coding, refining categories, and recognizing emerging themes. Main themes were identified through the iterative process of coding and categorizing, resulting in the most salient topics in participants' responses to the interview questions. These themes were discovered inductively in a bottom-up manner as emerging from transcript data when analyzed about the research questions. This resulted in the final distribution of themes deemed as most accurately reflecting the reported experiences of the research participants.

The first theme "importance of reading comprehension in blended learning" has four (4) sub-themes namely: expertise in English language, acquisition of intonation, and pronunciation, availability of reading materials, and interest in reading. The second theme immersed is "role of reading strategies in blended learning" with four (4) sub-themes namely, provide more reading activities, improve the art of questioning, collaboration between teachers and learners, and practice reading alone. Finally, theme number three which is "willingness of learners to learn reading" has four (4) immersed themes, to wit: value remedial classes, devotion of teachers, reading is a prophecy, and self-confidence in reading.

Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out what is printed on the page. Through hearing stories, children are exposed to a wide range of words. This helps them build their vocabulary and improve their understanding when they listen, which is vital as they start to read. They need to understand how stories work too. Even if your child does not understand every word, they will hear new sounds, words, and phrases which they can then try out, copying what they have heard.

Teachers make a difference in the success of their students when they hold a fundamental belief that all children can learn to read and when they have the skills and determination to make it happen in blended learning approach. These teachers base their classroom practices on sound reading theory, provide instruction that meets the specific learning needs of their students, create an organized and stimulating learning environment, and regularly assess their students' reading achievement about the expectations of the language curriculum. They do not work alone but see themselves as part of a school team committed to ensuring that every child can read by the end of Grade 6.

Recommendations

This research study shares the reconstruction program in reading of elementary teachers in teaching reading among Elementary learner's value reading comprehension, modification of reading strategies, and imposition of powerful motivation. Just as it informs of the many challenges teachers faced, it exposes numerous areas for further study. The overarching topic of educational disruption could be explored about student achievement, teacher mental health, or teachers leaving the profession.

Within the context of the difficulty in reading among elementary learners and its impact on education, possible directions for research include student attendance, engagement, mental health, and coping strategies. To hone in on student academic progress, the study of the inequities which seemed to be exacerbated during teaching reading, and learning, and the impact of those on the achievement gap in education across the nation could be explored.

Also, worthy of study is how the reading format was beneficial to Elementary students as they did not have to manage the complexities of attending school with their peers every day, were allowed to work at their own pace, and possibly received one-to-one interaction and assistance from their teachers. Additionally, I would recommend studies to examine the impact of reading on parents' perceptions of teachers' roles and responsibilities. Other possibilities might involve the notion of reading student cues while video conferencing, and how adaptations teachers made during reading sessions and learning directly impacted their future practice in either a face-to-face or a distance environment.

 The extreme disruption of poverty among learners opened the floodgates concerning educational topics worthy of pursuit. My study situates itself in the literature with regards to teachers' experiences in teaching elementary learners. Its findings led to several recommendations and possibilities for additional research.

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