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EXPERIENCES IN THE UTILIZATION OF DEPED-TAILORED GRADE 7 READING RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT

Reading plays a vital role in academic development, especially in Grade 7 where learners transition from learning to read to reading to learn. This study evaluates Grade 7 reading materials used in DepEd-Tandag City Division, focusing on their relevance, quality, and effectiveness. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 316 students and 13 teachers across nine secondary schools via stratified random sampling, surveys, and focus group discussions. Results indicate the materials support literacy and critical skills but have limitations in engagement, vocabulary complexity, and cultural relevance. Both learners and teachers suggest enhancements for clearer content, improved visuals, and more relatable themes. This study recommends the development of inclusive, culturally relevant, and accessible reading materials aligned with DepEd standards to foster better reading comprehension.

KEYWORDS: *Reading Materials, Grade 7, DepEd Standards, Reading Comprehension, Mixed-Methods Research*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading plays a vital role in the academic development of learners, especially in Grade 7, where students transition from learning to read to reading to learn. The availability and quality of reading materials influence learners' fluency, comprehension, and engagement. Scholars emphasize the importance of reading materials in enhancing literacy and academic performance. Despite this, data shows the Philippines ranks low in reading proficiency. This study evaluates Grade 7 reading materials in the Tandag City Division to enhance comprehension and engagement.

The study is grounded in theories such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the ADDIE instructional design model, and Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading, which emphasize the interactive process between the reader and text and the importance of appropriately challenging learning materials.

2. OBJECTIVES

This study aims to evaluate and enhance Grade 7 reading materials used in DepEd-Tandag City Division, focusing on: 1) factors influencing reading interests of learners and teachers; 2) challenges associated with existing materials; 3) alignment with DepEd standards in content, format, and organization; and 4) recommendations for improvement.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods design combining quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group discussions. It was conducted in nine secondary schools in Tandag City Division. Stratified random sampling selected 316 Grade 7 students, and all 13 Grade 7 English teachers participated. Data analysis included frequency counts, percentages, and thematic analysis of qualitative data.

4. SAMPLING DESIGN

Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation of students across schools and genders. Complete enumeration was done for Grade 7 English teachers. This approach guarantees generalizable and balanced insights.

5. STATISTICAL DESIGN

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentage computations. Qualitative data from focus group discussions were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights.

6. GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The study was limited to the DepEd Tandag City Division secondary schools within Surigao del Sur province, Philippines.

7. RESULTS

Teachers generally view the Grade 7 reading materials as effective and aligned with DepEd standards, with strengths in content appropriateness and literacy promotion. However, areas such as visual clarity and moral resolutions need improvement. Students find language and illustrations understandable but report difficulty completing activities and notice some errors. Factors influencing reading interest include home support, teacher enthusiasm, technology, peer influence, and environment. Challenges include vocabulary difficulty, engagement, cultural representation, and resource availability.

The reading material was assessed using a DepEd Evaluation Sheet, covering four key factors: Content, Format and Technical Design, Presentation and Organization, and

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Accuracy and Recency of Information. Table 3 presents the evaluation results regarding the appropriateness of reading resources based on DepEd content standards, while Table 4 presents the results based on the students' perception.

The table below presents the perceptions of Grade 7 teachers on the effectiveness of the reading materials used in class. The data were gathered through frequency counting and percentage analysis, focusing on four key factors: content, format, technical design/specifications, presentation and organization, and the accuracy and recency of information. This breakdown provides insights into which aspects of the materials meet instructional goals and where improvements may be needed.

Table 1
Teachers Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Grade 7 Reading Materials

Criteria	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Factor 1: Content				
1. The RR is/are appropriate for the learner's reading ability level.	10	77%	3	23%
2. The RR is appropriate for the intended Reading Profile.	13	100%		
3. The RR purposively promotes literacy.	9	69%	4	31%
4. The RR is consistent with the DepEd social content guidelines.	13	100%		
The Philippine Nation and Society				
Citizenship and Social Responsibility				
Individuals and Social Identity				
Media, Technology, and Communication				
Gender				
Social Institutions				
Health, Nutrition and Wellness				
Environment				
5. The RR enhances the development of desirable values, traits, and skills such as:				
A. Love for Reading				
Adaptability, Managing Complexity, and Self-direction	13	100%		
The Philippine Nation and Society	10	77%	3	23%
B. Information, Media, and Technology Skills				
Visual and Information Literacy	11	85%	2	15%
Multicultural Literacy and Global Awareness	12	92%	1	8%
Media Literacy	10	77%	3	23%
C. Life and Career Skills				
Flexibility and Adaptability	11	85%	2	15%
Social and Cross-cultural Skills	11	85%	2	15%
Initiative and Self-direction	9	69%	4	31%
Leadership and Responsibility	10	77%	3	23%
Productivity and Accountability	9	69%	4	31%
D. Effective Communication Skills				
Teaming, Collaboration, and Interpersonal Skills	12	92%	1	8%
Personal, Social, and Civic Responsibility	8	62%	5	38%
Interactive Communication	10	77%	3	23%
6. The plot/story line/reading selection/article:				
6.1 Is appropriate to the intended readers.	13	100%		
6.2 Makes use of familiar objects, themes, or actions to introduce/develop concepts and learnings.	13	100%		
6.3 Stimulates critical thinking.	13	100%		
6.4 Has a logical flow.	13	100%		
6.5 Allows the reader to reconnect with the emotion/s conveyed	13	100%		
6.6 Ends with a resolution of the conflict introduced and emphasizes the moral of the lesson.	8	62%	5	38%
7. The visuals:				

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7.1 clarify the story.	8	62%	5	38%
7.2 are easily recognizable, attractive, and appealing.	8	62%	5	38%
7.3 are appropriate to the target readers.	13	100%		
8. Adequate warning/cautionary notes are provided in topics and activities where safety and health are of concern.	8	62%	5	38%
Factor 2: Format and Technical Design/Specifications				
For Print RRs:	13	100%		
1.1 Size of letter is appropriate to the target reader.	13	100%		
1.2 The typeface (e.g., Alfabeto or Century Gothic) is easy to read. Spaces between letters and words facilitate easy reading.	13	100%		
2. Design and Layout	8	62%	5	38%
2.1 Layout is appropriate to the target reader.	13	100%		
2.2 Cover is appropriate to the target reader.	13	100%		
2.3 The pages observe appropriate balance of illustrations and text.	8	62%	5	38%
3. Paper and Binding	13	100%		
3.1 Paper used facilitates ease in reading	13	100%		
3.2 Binding is durable and can withstand frequent use.	13	100%		
3.3 Size of the RR is appropriate and relatively easy to handle.	13	100%		
3.4 Printing is of good quality (i.e., no broken letters, even density, correct alignment, properly placed screen registration, no misprints).	13	100%		
For Non-Print RRs:				
1. Volume and quality of sound is appropriate.	12	92%	1	8%
2. Pacing is effective and appropriate to instructional purposes	12	92%	1	8%
3. Audio-visual effects (music, sound, graphics, etc.) are appropriate and effective for instructional purposes.	12	92%	1	8%
Factor 3: Presentation and Organization				
1. Presentation is engaging, interesting, and understandable by the intended readers.	8	62%	5	38%
2. There is logical and smooth flow of ideas.	10	77%	3	23%
3. The RR is/are aligned with the guidelines issued by the DepEd in terms of:	13	100%		
3.1 Readability Index	13	100%		
3.2 Language used	13	100%		
3.3 Text types/structure/organization	13	100%		
4. For Non-Print RRs, length of the video recording is appropriate to the attention span of the target learner.	11	85%	2	15%
Factor 4: Accuracy and Recency of Information				
The RR is free from:				
1. Conceptual errors	11	85%	2	15%
2. Factual errors	13	100%		
3. Grammatical errors	12	92%	1	8%
4. Computational errors	13	100%		
5. Obsolete information	13	100%		
6. Substantial mechanical errors	13	100%		

Based on the table, teachers generally view the Grade 7 reading materials as effective and in line with DepEd standards, particularly in content, structure, and technical quality, with 100% of respondents affirming their appropriateness for the intended reading profile and consistency with social content guidelines. Many teachers appreciated that the materials

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promote literacy (69%) and support values like love for reading (100%) and communication skills (92%). The materials were also noted to be free from factual (100%), grammatical (92%), and mechanical (100%) errors. However, some areas needed improvement; only 62% found the visuals clear and engaging, and the same percentage felt the materials ended with a strong moral resolution. Additionally, lower ratings were given for promoting civic responsibility (62%) and learner autonomy (69%). While the materials are on the right track, teachers believe they could be more engaging and meaningful using better visual design, stronger value integration, and more emotionally resonant storytelling.

Moreover, Halterman (2023) and Smith et al. (2023) present an additive view by highlighting teacher instructional practices and teacher knowledge. Halterman (2023) further maintained that teachers need to have a strong foundation in reading pedagogy and continuous professional development. This aligns with Smith et al.'s (2023) survey of Australian elementary teachers, which revealed that educators held diverse beliefs about how reading comprehension should be developed and which instructional practices should be employed. These results are consistent with the use of specific teaching strategies highlighted in Baldevarona's (2020) and Inding's (2020) studies, where the application of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) enables the determination of students' reading levels and, consequently, the implementation of individualized instruction. These studies collectively demonstrate how crucial a teacher's knowledge and teaching method are to enabling students to develop strong reading comprehension skills.

Teachers consider the Grade 7 reading materials effective, particularly in how they are designed and how well they adhere to DepEd standards. Some teachers noted areas of improvement, though, especially when it comes to assisting students in learning valuable life skills such as leadership, initiative, and social responsibility. These are the types of skills that extend beyond the classroom and set students up for real-life situations. This indicates that although the materials are strong in a variety of ways, there is still potential for development. Including more activities or content that develop these life and career skills may enhance the materials so that they become more significant and relevant to learners' overall development.

On the other hand, Table 2 presents the thoughts of the learner on the criteria, like the usefulness of reading materials and it comprises two answers under "Yes" and "No," respectively, along with their percentages, which provide learners' experiences and satisfaction when using the reading materials in their studies.

Table 2
Learners' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Reading Resources

PARTICULARS	YES	Percentage	NO	Percentage
1. I can understand the language.	277	88%	39	12%
2. I can easily understand the instructions.	255	81%	61	19%
3. I can easily accomplish the activities.	175	55%	141	45%
4. I can perform the activities on a required period of time.	119	38%	197	62%
5. The illustrations/pictres are interesting.	272	86%	44	14%
6. The illustrations/pictures helpful to me in understanding the lessons and activities.	277	88%	39	12%
7. The illustrations/pictures are clear.	224	71%	92	29%
8. The lay out of the LR attractive, orderly and consistent.	205	65%	111	35%
9. The LR are free from offensive content on gender, cultural race.	186	59%	130	41%
10. There are errors found in the LRs? (please specify)	186	59%	130	41%

According to the feedback of the learners, most of them think that the reading materials are easy to comprehend and visually appealing. An overwhelming 88% claimed to have comprehended the language used, while the same number also claimed that the illustrations helped them learn the lessons. Numerous others also believed that the images were interesting and clear, demonstrating that visuals significantly contribute to holding their attention. However, a few students reported that they find it difficult to complete the activities, with only 55% reporting that they can easily do them, and only 38% reporting that they can complete them within the allotted time. This means that there could be some tasks that are too difficult or time-consuming. Even if 65% of the respondents enjoyed the format and 59% thought the materials were offensive-free, 41% observed that there were mistakes in the materials. It means that while the reading materials are mostly utilitarian, it is achievable to make the content more accurate and sensitive, as well as the activities clearer and paced.

Student feedback indicates that the reading materials work well in general, with 88% finding the language clear and the images interesting, making it easier for them to understand the content. However, most students are not comfortable with the activities; only 55% find them easy to accomplish, and only 38% can finish them on time, implying the activities are too complex or take too long. While 65% of the students prefer the design, there is room for improvement because others do not consider it pretty. Additionally, 41% pointed out errors in the materials, suggesting a need for better accuracy and sensitivity. To make the materials more effective, simplifying the activities, improving the layout for everyone, and fixing the errors would make for a more enjoyable and productive learning experience.

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This is supported by a study by Smith et al. (2023) surveyed 284 Australian elementary teachers regarding their beliefs about how children develop reading comprehension skills in the first seven years of schooling. The study revealed that teachers held many beliefs about effective instructional practices, with some adopting a "student-centered" approach. The findings from this study echo the results of the current research, which suggest that the design and implementation of reading materials should consider students' varying needs. While most students found the language of the reading materials easy to understand, a significant portion struggled with completing the activities, indicating a need for a more personalized approach to material development.

The data shows that the reading materials do a good job with clear language and engaging visuals, but the activities are proving tricky for many students. With only 55% claiming they were easy to complete and just 38% finishing within the time, it suggests that the work might be too hard or take longer than expected. While the majority of students like the format, there is always room for improvement, and the 41% who detected errors suggest the need for more accuracy and cultural sensitivity. To make the materials even more effective, simplifying the activities, refining the layout, and fixing the content errors would be important next steps

Factors that Influence Teachers' Reading Interests

After my interview with them, I identified the following themes that influence teachers to read: **personal motivation and professional growth, supportive work environment, access to reading materials, influence of colleagues and professional networks, time management, and workload**. (T1, T2, T7, T8, T9, T10)

Personal Motivation and Professional Growth. Educators will testify that reading supports individual and professional growth because they are kept in touch with the latest trends in education, have their pedagogy improved, and acquire knowledge so that they feel more confident and able in their work. (T1, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10)

"Reading keeps me on top of the latest trends in education and helps me become a better teacher. It is not just about picking up new teaching strategies. It also helps me grow personally. The more I read, the more confident and inspired I feel in my role." -(T1)

For many teachers, reading is more than just a professional tool. It is a way to grow as a person. It helps them stay up-to-date with new teaching trends, improve their skills, and learn new things. However, it inspires them and boosts their confidence, making them feel more passionate and capable as educators.

This is in consonance with ongoing research by Desserre Mae A. Nimer and Melissa C. Napil (2024), which looked into how Filipino reading teachers have adapted to teaching reading under the "New Normal" learning setting. The study touches on the major points of consideration, such as professionalism, work-life balance, sympathy towards the students' needs, and the implementation of new methods of teaching. It points out how the professional and individual growth of teachers highly relies on their reading and ability to adjust to these shifts. The research also emphasizes the importance of local educational programs that provide teachers with the right resources and support to improve their teaching of reading.

Supportive Work Environment. Responses emphasize how a positive school culture, strong administrative support, and collaboration opportunities can make a big difference. When teachers feel supported, it encourages them to read for personal growth and to enhance their professional skills. A supportive environment truly motivates teachers to engage with reading in meaningful ways. (T2, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10)

"When the school is a nice place to be and the administration is behind us in our professional growth, it encourages me to want to read even more. It is not only so we can be better teachers, but so we can learn and become better people. I like that we get to work with each other as colleagues and share ideas, and it makes reading all the more rewarding and inspiring." -(T2)

When teachers are placed in a favorable school setting where they have plenty of support from administrators and a chance to team up, they are more inclined to read. It is not merely a question of enhancing teaching skills but about personal development too. Having friends to bounce things off of and resources to examine makes reading worth the effort and fun.

This is echoed by Al-Mahdy and Alazmi (2023), who emphasize how important administrative support is in increasing teachers' motivation and enhancing school effectiveness. Research indicates that when school leaders are actively supporting their teachers, it enhances the performance of the students and causes the whole school to function better. This assistance facilitates a healthy school culture that makes teachers commit more to professional development and pedagogy. Ultimately, the study emphasizes that when teachers feel valued and supported, they are more motivated to contribute to the school's success.

Access to Reading Materials. Having easy access to resources like books, journals, and online materials greatly sparks teachers' interest in reading. When these resources are readily available, it is much easier for teachers to explore different topics and stay engaged with new ideas. It removes the barriers to learning and makes reading feel more accessible and enjoyable. (T5, T6, T7, T8, T9)

"When I have easy access to books, journals, and online resources, it makes reading so much more enjoyable. I can explore different topics without any hassle, and it keeps me engaged and excited to learn more." -(T5)

When books, journals, and online resources are easy to access, it boosts teachers' interest in reading. It makes it simple for them to explore different topics and stay engaged, helping them continue learning without frustration. It is all about having the right resources at their fingertips to keep things fresh and exciting.

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This is aligned with the recent study by Shapiro, Lee, and Woo (2024), highlighting just how important it is for teachers to have easy access to various resources, like books, journals, and digital materials. Their research shows that teachers are more likely to bring diverse reading activities into their classrooms when they have these resources. This helps them improve their teaching and supports their growth and development, both professionally and personally.

Influence of Colleagues and Professional Networks. Teachers often find that their colleagues and professional networks greatly influence what they choose to read. When a colleague recommends a great book or discusses new resources, it sparks their curiosity and motivates them to explore fresh ideas. The sense of community and shared enthusiasm keep them engaged and excited to learn more. (T7, T8, T9,)

"Sometimes, it feels like I'm on my own when it comes to finding new reading material. I wish my colleagues would share recommendations or discuss new resources more often that would be really motivating. But I've learned to seek out books and resources on my own, which still helps me grow professionally." -(T7)

When teachers have fellow teachers who exchange book ideas and discuss their reading, it can encourage and make reading more thrilling. However, when that type of interaction is not present, some teachers feel isolated in their reading experience. They still find ways to grow by looking for resources on their own, but it shows how much more inspiring it can be when there is a supportive, reading-minded community around them.

A recent study by Khasawneh et al. (2023) that supports the statement above shows how important it is for teachers to work together and support each other. When teachers are collaboratively sharing resources, talking about teaching strategies, or simply reflecting on their work, it helps them grow professionally and stay motivated. This kind of teamwork builds a strong sense of community, where everyone feels like they are learning and improving together. It is a reminder that teaching does not have to be a solo journey, but being part of a supportive group makes a real difference.

Time Management and Workload. Many teachers admit that juggling a heavy workload with time for reading is not easy. Finding a quiet moment to read can feel like a luxury between lesson planning, grading, and other responsibilities. Still, they recognize that managing their time well is the key when they carve out even a little space in their schedule, reading becomes not just possible, but something they genuinely look forward to for personal and professional growth. (T4, T5, T6, T7, T9, T11, T13).

"With everything on my plate, just like classes, paperwork, and school events. It is hard to find time to read. However, I have learned that managing my schedule well, even just 15 minutes before bed or during a break, can make a difference. Reading helps me recharge and stay inspired, so I make time for it. -(T4)

Finding time to read can be tough for teachers, constantly balancing lessons, grading, and other responsibilities. Still, many try to carve out even a few quiet minutes in their day just before bed, during lunch, or between tasks to reconnect with a good book. It is not always easy, but they know that making time for reading helps them stay inspired, learn new things, and take a well-deserved mental breather.

This is supported by Patkar (2023) captures what many teachers experience daily: the constant juggling of tasks and the challenge of fitting in time to read or grow professionally. The study points out that while the workload can be overwhelming, good time management can make a big difference. When teachers learn how to organize their day better, even small moments can open up for reading and reflection, helping them feel more balanced, inspired, and effective in the classroom.

8. SUGGESTIONS

Recommendations include simplifying vocabulary and activities, improving visuals and layout, incorporating culturally relevant themes, providing teacher training, and integrating digital resources to improve accessibility and engagement.

9. CONCLUSION

Grade 7 reading materials generally meet standards and support literacy but require enhancements for better engagement, cultural relevance, and accessibility. Improving materials will benefit learners and teachers by fostering stronger reading comprehension and motivation.

10. AREA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research could examine digital interventions for reading comprehension and longitudinal effects of enhanced reading materials.

11. FIGURES, TABLES, AND REFERENCES

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