Challenges and coping strategies of newly-hired public elementary school teachers toward literacy instruction

Jariza M. Calma[1]*, Jeger P. Paragas[2]

[1]Bagong Buhay F. Integrated School, San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan, Philippines
[2]Umingan National High School, Umingan, Pangasinan, Philippines
*Correspondence: jangcalma119@gmail.com

Abstract: This study explored the challenges and coping strategies of newly hired public elementary school teachers toward literacy instruction. It aimed to identify common difficulties these teachers face and their coping mechanisms and assess the relationship between their profile variables and the challenges encountered. It used both surveys and interviews to gather data. A survey was administered to 60 newly hired teachers from various public elementary schools in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson's r, Spearman's rho, and point-biserial correlation. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The study revealed that teachers commonly face challenges with diverse student reading levels, insufficient teaching materials, and a lack of training in literacy techniques. In numeracy, challenges include a lack of manipulatives, difficulties with abstract math concepts, and inadequate training. To overcome these issues, teachers use methods like read-aloud sessions, storytelling, and digital resources for literacy, as well as manipulatives, practical examples, and math games. Additionally, the study highlights that pursuing further education helps teachers better manage these challenges.

Keywords: *beginning teachers, literacy training, professional development, quality education*

Introduction

In public elementary education, the pursuit of quality teaching and learning in fundamental subjects like literacy is a cornerstone for the holistic development of young learners. However, amid this noble endeavor, educators face challenges that necessitate insightful initiatives to ensure effective pedagogy and pupil achievement (Agayon et al., 2021; Cahilog et al., 2023). Understanding the complexities of these challenges is paramount for devising interventions and fostering an environment conducive to optimal learning outcomes.

As frontline facilitators, teachers encounter multifaceted obstacles ranging from resource constraints to pupils' diverse learning needs. Such challenges can impede the delivery of high-quality instruction and hinder pupils' mastery of foundational skills. The ever-evolving educational landscape also demands continuous adaptation and innovation (Zakaria et al., 2022). In this dynamic context, initiatives emerge as catalysts for progress, offering avenues to address existing challenges and enhance the value of teaching-learning experiences.

These initiatives encompass a spectrum of strategies, including professional development programs, curriculum enhancements, and technology integration. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives hinges upon their alignment with the specific needs and realities faced by public elementary teachers. Thus, a comprehensive exploration of challenges and initiatives becomes imperative to inform evidence-based practices and policy decisions to elevate educational standards. By examining the challenges public elementary teachers encounter in fostering quality teaching and learning in literacy instruction, alongside an exploration of innovative initiatives, this study endeavors to contribute valuable insights to the educational discourse.

Shedding light on the specifics of this dynamic landscape, it seeks to empower educators, policymakers, and stakeholders with the knowledge and tools necessary to collaborate towards enhanced educational outcomes for all learners.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Albert Bandura, offers a strong framework for understanding how newly hired public elementary school teachers deal with the challenges of literacy instruction. SCT emphasizes self-efficacy's role in teaching and external factors' influence on teacher performance. It also highlights the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modeling in how people acquire and maintain behaviors. It focuses on the interplay between personal, behavioral, and environmental influences.

Self-efficacy is vital in how teachers approach their challenges. Newly hired teachers with high self-efficacy will likely be more confident in managing these challenges and implementing effective teaching strategies. Conversely, teachers with lower self-efficacy may struggle more with these challenges, negatively impacting their effectiveness in literacy instruction. Observational learning is another vital component of SCT. Newly hired teachers often learn by observing their more experienced colleagues. This process allows them to adopt successful practices and avoid common mistakes. New teachers can refine their methods and strategies by observing how other teachers handle literacy instruction. This aspect of SCT highlights the importance of mentorship and peer support in facilitating effective teaching practices.

For newly hired teachers, the teaching environment, including factors such as school culture, administrative support, and available resources, interacts with their personal beliefs and behaviors at work. This interaction affects their ability to manage challenges and improve their teaching practices. SCT helps us understand the coping strategies that newly hired teachers employ in response to challenges. These strategies are shaped by their self-efficacy and observations of others' practices. Effective coping can lead to positive behavioral changes and improve literacy instruction.

Research Questions

This study described newly hired public elementary school teachers' challenges in literacy instruction and their coping strategies. Specifically, this study answered the following research questions:
1. What challenges do these teachers face in literacy instruction, particularly in reading and writing?
2. What coping strategies do newly hired public elementary school teachers employ to address the identified challenges in literacy instruction?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the teachers' challenges and their profile variables?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed mixed methods, comprising quantitative (descriptive and inferential) and qualitative approaches, to investigate newly hired public elementary school teachers' challenges in literacy instruction and coping strategies. The quantitative approach involves a survey questionnaire administered to 60 newly hired teachers from various public elementary schools in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan. The survey identifies and quantifies these teachers' challenges in literacy instruction, particularly in reading and writing. The survey also gathers data on teachers' coping strategies to overcome these challenges. This data was analyzed descriptively to identify the most common and effective strategy.

The study uses inferential statistical techniques, particularly correlation analysis, to explore the relationship between teachers' challenges and their profile variables. This study's design helped the researcher identify profile variables influencing teaching and learning literacy instruction challenges. The qualitative approach is incorporated to gain more profound information about the teachers' challenges and coping strategies, which the survey may not fully capture. This is achieved through interviews with a purposive sample of five teachers selected from the original 60 participants.

Study Participants

The participants were 60 newly hired public elementary school teachers (teaching for three years or less) from San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan (Table 1). Five of these teachers were chosen for in-depth interviews. The study employed a stratified sampling technique to ensure that each grade level was adequately represented in the sample, which allows more precise comparisons and analysis across different grade levels. Ten teachers are selected from each grade level (each stratum). A convenient sampling technique was employed for the interviews to choose the five teachers based on their willingness and availability to participate.

Table 1. Profile of the teacher-participants (n= 60).

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Female	42	70.0
	Male	18	30.0
Age	25-30 years old	25	41.7
	31-35 years old	20	33.3
	36-40 years old	10	16.7
	41 years old and above	5	8.3
Highest Educational Attainment	Master's degree	5	8.3
	With MA/MS units	35	58.3
	Bachelor's degree	20	33.3

Instrumentation

A survey questionnaire was developed to collect data for this study, comprising three main sections. The first section featured a checklist of typical challenges faced by teachers in literacy instruction, where participants were asked to select all challenges that applied to them. The second section presented another checklist. This time focused on teachers' coping strategies to address these challenges, with participants selecting all methods relevant to their experience.

A validation process was undertaken to ensure the validity of the survey questionnaire and interview questions. The initial draft of the survey questionnaire and interview questions was reviewed by experts in the field of education, including three Master Teachers. These experts assessed the questionnaire for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the research problems. Based on the feedback from the validators, the questionnaire and interview protocols were finalized. Necessary adjustments were made to ensure the instrument was clear, concise, and capable of capturing the required data accurately.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data gathering, a formal request to conduct the study was submitted to the offices of the Schools Division Superintendent, School District Supervisor, and School Principal for approval. Upon securing the necessary permission, the researcher sent the questionnaire to the teachers. Surveys were distributed electronically via Google Forms. For the interview, the researcher asked five teachers who agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. These interviews were scheduled at the teachers' convenience and conducted face-to-face. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent to guarantee correct transcription and analysis of the data.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey were analyzed using descriptive (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistical methods to understand the challenges and coping strategies of newly hired public elementary school teachers in literacy instruction. Correlation analyses were used to determine the relationships between the challenges, coping strategies employed, and teacher profile variables. The point-biserial correlation was used to measure the relationship between a binary variable (sex) and a continuous variable (frequency of challenges faced in teaching literacy). Pearson's r was used to assess the relationship between teachers' age and the number of challenges they report in teaching numeracy. Spearman's rho examined the relationship between teachers' highest educational attainment (an ordinal variable) and their coping strategies.

Results and Discussion

Challenges Faced by the Newly-hired Teachers in Literacy Instruction

The most frequently reported challenge in literacy instruction, particularly in reading and writing, is the difficulty of addressing varying reading levels among students within the same classroom (Table 2). This issue highlights the complexities of catering to a wide range of reading abilities simultaneously, which makes it challenging for teachers to deliver practical, individualized instruction. The second most common challenge, identified by 48 teachers (Rank 2), is the limited access to age-appropriate reading materials, such as storybooks and phonics readers. This lack of resources can impede teachers' ability to engage students and support their reading development effectively. Inadequate training in teaching phonemic awareness and decoding skills, reported by 45 teachers (Rank 3), is another significant issue. Proper training in these foundational skills is crucial for effective reading instruction, and the lack of it suggests a need for improved teacher preparation in these areas.

These findings are supported by the qualitative data from interviews, where teachers consistently highlighted the difficulty of managing varying reading abilities among pupils. As one teacher expressed, *"Napakahirap po talaga magturo sa isang klase na may iba't ibang lebel ng pagbasa. Lalo na po kapag napakarami ng handle mong bata.*

Hindi po sapat ang oras para makapagbigay ng atensyon sa bawat estudyante." (It's really difficult to teach a class with different reading levels, especially when you have a large number of pupils to manage. There is not enough time to give individual attention to each pupil). Interviews also revealed that teachers find it challenging to look for materials that suit the needs of their pupils. One teacher shared, *"Minsan po, kinukulang talaga ang mga libro namin. Ang iba naman ay hindi talaga akma sa edad ng mga bata. Kailangan po namin ng mas maraming materyales na makakatulong sa kanilang pagkatuto"* (Sometimes, we really don't have enough books. Some of the ones we have are not suitable for the children's age. We need more materials to help with their learning). Additionally, another teacher mentioned, *"Kulang na kulang po ang aming training. Sana po ay mapadala rin kami ng aming mga schools sa mga reginal and national training na makakadagdag sa kaalaman namin sa pagtuturo."* (Our training is very insufficient. We hope that our schools will also send us to regional and national trainings to improve our teaching skills).

Table 2. Frequency distribution of newly-hired teachers' challenges in literacy instruction (n=60).

Indicators	Frequency	Rank
1. Difficulty in addressing diverse reading and writing levels within the same classroom.	50	1
2. Limited access to age-appropriate reading and writing materials.	48	2
3. Inadequate training on phonemic awareness, decoding strategies, and writing instruction.	45	3
4. Challenges in fostering a love for reading and writing among students.	42	4
5. Lack of effective strategies for teaching reading comprehension and writing skills.	40	5
6. Insufficient resources for developing vocabulary and writing proficiency.	38	6
7. Difficulty in engaging pupils who are reluctant readers or writers.	35	7
8. Limited support from parents in reinforcing reading and writing skills at home.	34	8
9. Lack of individualized support for pupils with reading and writing difficulties.	32	9
10. Difficulty integrating literacy instruction, including writing, with other subjects.	30	10
11. Insufficient time allocated for reading and writing instruction.	28	11
12. Limited availability of professional development opportunities in reading and writing instruction.	25	12
13. Challenges in using technology to enhance reading and writing instruction.	22	13
14. High pupil-to-teacher ratio impacting individualized reading and writing instruction.	20	14
15. Difficulty in assessing and tracking progress in reading and writing effectively.	18	15

In any classroom, learners exhibit a wide range of reading abilities. According to Schaffer and Schirmer (2010), while some pupils may read at an average level, others might be significantly ahead or behind. This diversity makes it challenging for the teachers to provide instruction that effectively meets each pupil's needs. Addressing varied reading levels requires individualized attention, which can be particularly demanding for teachers. Seifert et al. (2016) found that catering to the specific needs of each pupil, whether they are first-language (L1) or second-language (L2) learners, is vital in effective literacy teaching. This complexity highlights why managing diverse reading abilities is a significant challenge for teachers. Another challenge teachers face is limited resources or materials that cater to different reading levels and inadequate training in phonemic awareness and decoding strategies. Studies further support these findings. Kim and Quinn (2013) and Neuman and Celano (2012) found that many teachers struggle with insufficient access to age-appropriate reading materials, which impacts their ability to address diverse reading levels and engage pupils effectively. These challenges teachers face may further explain the difficulties reported among learners (Idulog et al., 2023).

Additionally, Hindman and Wasik (2012) highlighted that many teachers lack training in essential literacy skills. Both factors contribute significantly to teachers' challenges in addressing their pupils' varied reading abilities. These studies underscore the need for improved resources and enhanced training opportunities to better support teachers in overcoming these challenges. On the other hand, the data in Table 2 reveal that assessing and tracking reading progress effectively is the least frequently reported challenge, with only 18 teachers (ranked 15th) citing it as an issue. The high pupil-to-teacher ratio impacting individualized instruction, reported by 20 teachers (ranked 14th), and the challenge of using technology to enhance literacy instruction, noted by 22 teachers (ranked 13th), were also among the less frequent difficulties identified. These suggest that while these challenges are recognized, they are less commonly reported as significant than other concerns.

The qualitative data from the interviews also supports these findings. Teachers confirmed that they have existing instruments for assessing their pupils' literacy levels and that they receive sufficient training on the use of technology. One teacher mentioned, *"Pinagbabasehan po namin ang result ng PhilIRI. Nalalaman namin kung sino sa mga pupils ang hindi pa gaanong marunong magbasa."* Additionally, one teacher mentioned, *"Karamihan po sa mga trainings na dinadulan namin ngayon ay related sa paggamit ng technology sa pagtuturo gaya po ng paggamit ng online platforms sa pagtuturo. Nakakatulong po ito dahil nasa digital age na tayo. "* (Most of the trainings we attend now are related to using technology in teaching, such as using online platforms. This helps because we are now in the digital age).

The DepEd currently uses established standardized tools to assess pupils' literacy skills. One primary tool is the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). Abril et al. (2022) have shown that Phil-IRI systematically measures pupils' literacy skills and helps teachers track their progress accurately. This makes it easier for teachers to assess their pupils' literacy levels, which is why some teachers do not find this challenging. DepEd is also addressing high pupil-to-teacher ratios through the deployment of pre-service teachers. Based on DepEd Order No. 3, s. 2007, one of the goals of deploying pre-service teachers from tertiary institutions to classrooms is to assist regular teachers with classroom management and individual pupil support. Studies by Sharples et al. (2016) and Balshaw (2002) confirm that teaching assistants are significant for managing classrooms with large pupil populations. DepEd recruits and hires more teachers to ensure manageable class sizes. This makes the concern about the high pupil-to-teacher ratio less challenging for some teachers. Lastly, the possible reason why teachers find using technology to enhance literacy instruction less challenging is because technology is increasingly integrated into the 21st-century education system. The DepEd offers continuous professional development opportunities and training to help educators effectively use technology in their classrooms. One of these is the training on Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN) Digital program, which, according to Oakley et al. (2018), offers technology-supported professional development for K-3 teachers. The ELLN Digital provides access to various digital resources for early literacy instruction, including e-books, online literacy games, numeracy activities, and other resources designed to make learning more engaging for the pupils.

Coping Strategies for the Challenges Faced in Literacy Instruction

Incorporating read-aloud sessions and storytelling was the most commonly used coping strategy for addressing literacy teaching challenges (Table 3). This indicates that most teachers find these strategies effective in supporting pupils' literacy development. This also shows that the teachers acknowledge the importance of interactive and narrative-based approaches in teaching literacy. Furthermore, this is closely followed by using digital resources and interactive reading programs, with 53 teachers (ranked second) adopting this strategy and using educational technology to support literacy development, with 45 teachers (ranked third). This suggests that many teachers consider modern and interactive techniques, such as digital tools and technology, very effective in enhancing pupils' literacy skills.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of the coping strategies for the challenges faced in literacy instruction (n=60).

Indicators	Frequency	Rank
1. Incorporating read-aloud sessions, storytelling, and shared writing activities.	56	1
2. Using digital resources and interactive programs to enhance reading and writing skills.	53	2
3. Utilizing educational technology to support both reading and writing development.	45	3
4. Creating a print-rich classroom environment with diverse reading and writing materials.	42	4
5. Implementing guided reading and writing groups to cater to different skill levels.	40	5
6. Organizing parent involvement programs to support reading and writing at home.	38	6
7. Using formative assessments to tailor reading and writing instruction to individual needs.	35	7
8. Engaging in peer collaboration and sharing best practices in reading and writing instruction.	34	8
9. Participating in literacy-focused professional learning communities for reading and writing.	32	9
10. Providing one-on-one support for struggling readers and writers.	30	10
11. Developing and utilizing customized literacy materials and activities for reading and writing.	28	11
12. Encouraging pupil-led book clubs, reading groups, and writing circles.	26	12
13. Offering differentiated reading and writing assignments to meet various skill levels.	24	13
14. Developing literacy centers with interactive reading and writing activities and games.	21	14
15. Implementing guided reading and writing groups to cater to different skill levels.	18	15

Data from the interviews affirm these findings. Common themes from the qualitative data include using interactive activities such as read-aloud sessions and storytelling and incorporating digital resources. One teacher noted, "*Madalas naman kaming nagkakaroon ng read-aloud sessions sa klase. Karamihan saamin ay gumagamit na rin ng TV sa pagtuturo. Instead na flashcards, o magsulat kami sa blackboard, sa TV nalang.*" (We often have read-aloud sessions in the classroom. Most of us also use the TV to teach. Instead of using flashcards or writing on the blackboard, we use the TV instead) Another teacher mentioned, "*Maraming educational stories and videos from Youtube na pwede idownload. Ginagawa ko po ito kapag ang lesson ay kailangan ng storytelling. Nakakatulong kasi ito para mas maengganyo ang mga bata na magbasa at makinig sa kwento.*" (Many educational stories and videos on YouTube can be downloaded. I use these when the lesson requires storytelling, which helps engage the children more in reading and listening to stories.)

Studies also reveal that teachers often use read-aloud sessions and storytelling to cope with the challenges in literacy teaching because these strategies make learning fun and engaging. According to Clark and Douglas (2011), interactive read-aloud, where teachers model reading strategies and involve pupils in discussions, makes reading

sessions more dynamic. Furthermore, Cariño et al. (2024) emphasize that digital storytelling can make literacy learning more engaging and interactive for pupils. The study emphasizes using digital tools such as video editing software, digital images, and audio recordings, which help pupils express their creativity and improve their literacy skills in a modern and tech-savvy way. Clark and Douglas (2011) also highlighted that technology, such as e-books and educational games, adds a modern, interactive element to literacy teaching. This supports the finding that incorporating these engaging methods helps overcome challenges in teaching literacy.

In contrast, the least frequently used coping strategies among teachers are implementing literacy interventions and remediation programs (ranked 15th), developing literacy centers (ranked 14th), and offering differentiated reading assignments (ranked 13th). This indicates that teachers are less likely to use strategies such as literacy interventions and remediation programs, developing literacy centers, and offering differentiated reading assignments. These less frequently employed strategies suggest a lower emphasis or availability of resources and support for these approaches in addressing literacy challenges.

Studies indicate that some coping strategies, such as implementing literacy interventions and remediation programs, developing literacy centers, and offering differentiated reading assignments, are used less frequently by teachers due to significant resource and time constraints. For instance, setting up literacy centers requires considerable investment in resources, equipment, and space, which may not be readily available. Fletcher et al. (2012) and Clark and Douglas (2011) highlight that creating and implementing differentiated reading assignments can be challenging due to insufficient training and limited resources. Teachers may struggle with formulating assignments that meet their pupils' diverse reading levels. This makes it difficult to use these strategies frequently. The lack of appropriate training and resources adds to the challenge and hinders the frequent use of these coping strategies.

Relationship Between the Challenges Faced by Newly-Hired Teachers and Their Profile

Teachers' highest educational attainment is significantly related to their challenges (Table 4). There is a highly negative relationship between educational attainment and the challenges encountered in literacy instruction. This indicates that teachers with higher academic qualifications tend to face fewer challenges in teaching literacy instruction. In contrast, sex and age are not significantly correlated with the challenges teachers face in literacy instruction. This means that sex and age do not substantially impact teachers' challenges in these areas.

Table 4. Correlational analysis between the challenges the newly hired teachers faced and their profile.

Profile Variables	Test Statistic	Correlation coefficient	p-value
Sex	Point Biserial	.415	.080
Age	Pearson r	.450	.070
Highest Educational Attainment	Spearman rho	-.930	.000

Data from the interviews further affirm this finding. Teachers with advanced degrees and specialized training reported fewer challenges with complex literacy instruction concepts. One teacher shared, *"Hindi lang sa aming school nahahamon ang galing namin sa pagtuturo. Ngayon ay nakaenroll din ako sa Masteral. Ilan sa mga requirement namin ay bumisita sa iba't-ibang schools at magturo. Kaya't mas nahahasa ako, nasasanay na ako sa mga hamon sa pagtuturo ng numeracy at literacy."* (Not only are we challenged in our school, but I am also enrolled in a Master's program. One of our requirements is to visit different schools and teach there. This experience is sharpening my skills and helping me become more accustomed to the challenges of teaching numeracy and literacy). Another teacher emphasized the importance of pursuing graduate studies. She shared, *"Importante na mag-Masters kami. Hindi lang para sa promotion, pero para na rin mas matuto kami ng advanced techniques para makasabay generation ng mga bata ngayon."* (It's important for us to pursue a Master's degree. It's not just for promotion but also to learn advanced techniques to keep up with the current generation of pupils).

The findings imply that teachers encounter much fewer challenges in literacy instruction when they have higher educational attainment. This further shows that higher education gives teachers better knowledge and abilities, which increases their effectiveness in handling and overcoming challenges in literacy instruction. Brown and Smith (2021) also discovered that teachers with higher degrees experience fewer difficulties and are better at addressing different pupil needs. These studies all show that having a higher level of education helps teachers handle teaching challenges more effectively.

Conversely, Headden (2014) points out that changing demographics, including age and sex, affect the teaching profession but do not substantially impact how teachers handle classroom challenges. Tran and Do (2022) also find that teacher characteristics like age, gender, and seniority do not significantly affect teaching effectiveness or the

challenges encountered. These studies suggest that while sex and age influence teaching, they do not impact teachers' difficulties in literacy instruction.

Results of the Interviews with Newly-Hired Public Elementary School Teachers

Difficulty in Addressing Diverse Student Needs
All five participants expressed frustration over the range of literacy abilities within their classrooms. The teachers shared that this was their most significant challenge, as it often required them to juggle multiple instructional strategies simultaneously. This made ensuring that all students progressed in their literacy development challenging. Teachers may utilize techniques such as guided reading to help learners boost their literacy abilities (Hansen, 2016).

"Some pupils still learn the alphabet, while others can read fluently. It is very challenging to meet all their needs simultaneously."
"May mga pupils na mahirap magcatch-up sa ibang classmates nila kasi hindi nila ginagamit iyong language sa bahay nila."
"Nakakastress din minsan, may mga pupils na need talaga ng special attention dahil mas low ang literacy skills. Tapos ang iba, nabobored naman kapag paulit ulit ang lesson."
"I feel like teaching two or three levels in one class. Iyong mga advanced pupils are flying through, habang iyong iba, completely lost. I do not know how to balance the two."
"Iyong malaking gap sa literacy levels nila iyong hardest part for me."

Lack of Sufficient Teaching Resources
Another primary concern for the teachers was the lack of teaching resources. Participants reported insufficient or outdated materials, such as textbooks and worksheets, and many used their funds to purchase additional resources. This placed extra financial stress on the teachers and limited the effectiveness of their instruction. The dearth of resources in the classroom prevents learners and teachers from realizing their full potential (Maffea, 2020).

"Wala po talaga kaming enough workbooks or materials. Madalas improvised talaga kung ano ang meron."
"Meron naman (materials), kaya lang outdated na po, and Hindi po enough for each student, so we must share."
"Kumukuha kami madalas sa online sources, printed worksheets po."
"Napapagastos po kami sa printing at minsan pagbili ng mga books para may magamit kami."

Limited Training and Preparation for Literacy Instruction
The teachers reported feeling unprepared to teach literacy, especially to students with lower literacy levels. Their responses revealed a gap between the theoretical knowledge gained during their teacher training and the practical realities of the classroom. Teachers felt they needed specialized training in literacy instruction before entering the profession. Training and development opportunities for novice or beginning teachers would undoubtedly address these concerns (Stewart & 2022). Helping these teachers explore and apply scaffolding would greatly benefit their instructional practices in literacy courses, thereby assisting learners to learn better (Magnusson et al., 2023).

"Noong college, karamihan ng natutunan ko ang theories, pero iba pala ang pag-aapply nito sa klase, mas challenging."
"Natuto ako habang nagtuturo na. Malaki ang pagkakaiba ng teoryang natutunan namin sa school at ang totoong pagtuturo sa mga bata kung paano magbasa."
"Masasabi kong unprepared pa ako siguro. Hindi ako handa sa iba't ibang antas ng literacy na nakita ko sa klase ko. Masyadong pangkalahatan ang training na nakukuha natin at hindi talaga tinuruan ng mga strategies para sa mga estudyanteng hirap sa pagbabasa."
"I wish there was more training specifically focused on new strategies in teaching literacy. My college courses were too broad, wala masyadong enough hands-on experience."

On the Coping Strategies Employed

Collaboration with Colleagues and Mentors
Collaboration with colleagues and mentors was a common coping strategy for all five participants. Teachers reported that seeking advice from more experienced teachers and sharing resources helped them navigate their challenges, mainly when they felt underprepared for certain aspects of literacy instruction. In essence, Mentoring and collaborative teaching are crucial for learners' success in educational environments when there are variances in educators' skills, knowledge, experience, cultural resources, and flexibility (Sachs et al., 2011).

"Palagi akong humihingi ng tulong sa mga kasamahan ko. Nagbabahagi kami ng lesson plans at mga strategies, at malaking tulong ito."
"Hindi ko nararamdaman na nag-iisa ako."
"Malaki ang naitulong ng mentor ko. Mahigit 10 taon na siyang nagtuturo at lagi siyang may magandang payo sa kung paano haharapin ang mahihirap na sitwasyon, lalo na sa literacy."
"May maliit kaming grupo ng mga bagong guro at linguhan kaming nagkikita para pag-usapan kung ano ang epektibo at hindi. Napakalaking tulong nito."
"Kapag hindi ko alam ang gagawin, lumalapit ako sa mga senior teachers"

"Ang pakikipagtulungan sa mga kasamahan ko ang pinakamabisang paraan para makayanan ko ang trabaho."

Differentiated Instruction and Small Group Work

The teachers employed differentiated instruction and small group work to cope with the wide range of student literacy levels. Differentiated instruction helped address learning gaps in various areas (Aguhayon et al., 2023). This approach allowed teachers to provide more personalized support to struggling students while keeping more advanced students engaged with independent tasks. Teachers recognized that this method required extra planning but felt it was worthwhile.

"Marami akong ginagamit na group work. Pinagsasama ko ang mga pupils na may katulad na kakayahan"
"Pinapangkat ko ang aking mga aralin sa pamamagitan ng paglikha ng iba't ibang aktibidad para sa iba't ibang antas. Mas matagal ito, pero nakakatulong ito sa akin na maabot ang mga pupils kong nahuhuli nang hindi pinipigilan ang iba."
"Isinaside ko ang mga estudyanteng nahihirapan at nagtatrabaho ako kasama nila sa maliliit na grupo, habang ang mga mas advanced na estudyante ay nag-aaral nang nakapag-iisa."

Use of Digital Resources

All the teacher-participants reported using digital resources as a coping strategy, especially in response to the lack of physical teaching materials. Digital platforms provide interactive and engaging alternatives to traditional teaching methods (Zakaria et al., 2022), which help students practice literacy more enjoyably. Teachers found these tools particularly helpful for students who struggled with reading. As Pesebre et al. (2024) emphasized, "The more technology is integrated into classrooms, the more it becomes imperative to scrutinize its effectiveness, especially in the foundational years of learning" (p. 201).

"Gumagamit ako ng mga online reading programs para dagdagan ang ginagawa namin sa klase. Talagang nakakatulong ito sa mga pupils ko na medyo mahina magbasa."
"May mga ginagamit akong magagandang educational apps na gustong-gusto ng mga estudyante ko. Interactive sila, nagpapanatili ng kanilang interes at tumutulong sa kanilang pagsasanay sa pagbabasa."
"Effective iyong video at interactive stories mula sa mga educational websites. Maganda ito dahil nakakaengganyo sa mga estudyante, lalo na sa mga nahihirapan sa mga tradisyunal na teksto."
"Ang mga digital resources ay naging malaking tulong. Ginagamit ko sila kapag wala akong sapat na libro o worksheets, at nag-eenjoy ang mga estudyante sa pagbabago mula sa mga paper-based na aktibidad."
"Napakaraming libreng online resources na maaari kong gamitin para magturo ng literacy. Magandang paraan ito para punan ang kakulangan kapag wala akong sapat na pisikal na materyales."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

Teachers encounter difficulty dealing with a wide range of reading levels and lack relevant teaching resources and literacy method training. Teachers frequently use reading-aloud sessions, storytelling, and digital tools to teach literacy successfully. Furthermore, obtaining graduate degrees has been acknowledged as a critical component in preparing instructors to face obstacles in literacy education. The demographics and qualifications of newly recruited teachers underline the importance of promoting teacher progress through graduate degrees and professional development to ensure they are prepared to meet the various classroom requirements. The battle with insufficient teaching materials and varying reading levels emphasizes the significance of providing suitable resources and tools adapted to the developmental requirements of young students. The success of read-aloud sessions, storytelling, and digital resources demonstrates the importance of incorporating these tactics into regular classroom activities, stressing their role in reading skill development. The presence of freshly recruited instructors pursuing graduate studies reflects a dedication to conquering professional hurdles, showing how higher education benefits skill development. These findings highlight the need to equip prospective educators with practical, evidence-based ways to handle real-world classroom difficulties. Furthermore, the use of digital and interactive tools represents a shift in literacy teaching approaches, demonstrating the expanding importance of technology in education.

Recommendations

Schools should promote and assist teachers in seeking additional education and professional development to improve their abilities. Training opportunities in literacy teaching strategies should address the issues of managing varied reading levels and limited resources while assuring the availability of age-appropriate reading materials and interactive tools to promote successful literacy training. Because tactics like read-aloud sessions, storytelling, and interactive activities have shown to be beneficial, schools should prioritize these approaches in training programs and encourage their widespread application in classrooms. Formal mentoring programs should also be implemented to connect newly recruited teachers with experienced educators who can offer assistance and support as they navigate teaching obstacles.

Conflict of Interest

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