

Adopt-a-Struggling Reader: The Case of Non-Specialized English Teachers

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ABSTRACT:

This study explored the lived experiences of non-specialized English teachers teaching reading to struggling readers. Specifically, it aimed to answer key questions regarding the challenges encountered by non-specialized English teachers, their coping mechanisms, and a description of their mechanisms. Additionally, the research explored the early stages of the Adopt-a-Struggling Reader Program, offering insights into its perceived effectiveness and the challenges faced during its pilot implementation.

This study utilized a case study design to provide an in-depth exploration of how non-specialized English teachers describe the realm of teaching reading, shedding light on their personal experiences and perspectives. Through the utilization of semi-structured interviews, the researcher gathered rich and insightful data from a group of six junior high school teachers affiliated with Santa Maria National High School. The data gathered were examined using a thematic analysis.

The study exposed several key challenges faced by the participants in their efforts to assist struggling readers, including time constraints, scarcity of suitable reading materials, and difficulty of engaging disinterested students. Amid these obstacles, the teachers showcased remarkable resilience through their deployment of coping mechanisms such as an exceptional level of patience and understanding, creating a supportive learning environment, and employing differentiated reading strategies. Non-specialized English teachers described their mechanisms as adaptive and personalized, with a noticeable theme of building strong foundation while having adaptation. Furthermore, the study highlighted the participants' perceptions regarding the early implementation of the Adopt-a-Struggling Reader Program by non-specialized English teachers. Among these perceptions were the positive impact of peer collaboration and the need for professional development to improve their teaching practices and enhance student outcomes. Based on aforementioned results, the following recommendations are forwarded to allocate time and rewards, provide reading resources, offer specialized training, and implement structured lesson plans.

Keywords: non-specialized English teachers, adopt-a-struggling reader, challenges, coping mechanisms, struggling readers, strategies

INTRODUCTION

Reading plays a pivotal role in achieving academic success, acting as a fundamental skill essential for grasping a wide range of subjects across various disciplines. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) is committed to enhancing literacy across all educational levels. Despite these efforts, recent assessments reveal significant literacy gaps, particularly in reading comprehension, which impact students' overall academic performance.

To address this pressing issue, the "Adopt-a-Struggling Reader" program has been introduced, targeting students who face challenges in reading. This initiative encourages non-language teachers to volunteer their time to provide support to these struggling readers during their free periods, creating additional opportunities for learning outside of traditional language classes. However, this approach presents its own set of challenges. Educating students in areas that fall outside one's area of expertise can lead to confusion and difficulty in effectively conveying reading concepts. This scenario necessitates a careful evaluation of a teacher's adaptability as well as their capacity for patience, particularly when they are tasked with guiding students who may be significantly behind their peers in reading skills (Mallillin, 2019).

Therefore, it is deemed necessary to examine the practices of non-specialized teachers regarding reading instruction and how their instructional practices affect student outcomes in reading. Moreover, assess the availability and adequacy of support and resources in teaching reading such as professional development training or instructional materials. Dealing with nonreaders to improve their reading comprehension during lessons can be challenging, thus investigating effective strategies for promoting a positive reading culture in classrooms led by non-specialized teachers is also essential.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher utilized a case study design to facilitate a thorough and nuanced investigation into the lived experiences of non-specialized English teachers as they handle the complexities of teaching reading to struggling readers. This methodological approach, as articulated by Creswell (2002) and Patton (1990), entails an extensive examination of a particular educational system. By engaging in rigorous data collection, the researcher sought to unveil the intricate aspects of instructional practices and the various factors that impact the dynamics of teaching and learning in this context. To ensure a focused and relevant study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select a specific group of participants, consisting of six Junior High School teachers who each possessed at least five years of teaching experience. This selection criterion prioritized those directly involved in the Adopt-a-Struggling Reader Program, thereby providing a rich context for the investigation. Data collection unfolded over three distinct phases. Initially, the researcher sought and obtained administrative approval, ensuring that ethical standards were met and that the study was conducted with institutional support. Following this preparatory step, the semi-structured interviews were conducted, allowing for a flexible yet focused discussion that encouraged participants to share their experiences and perspectives openly. Finally, the transcribed interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. This analytical process involved meticulously examining the transcripts to identify recurring themes and significant insights, providing a clearer understanding of the nuanced experiences of the teachers involved in the program and the broader educational implications of their practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Non-specialized English teachers describe their journey as filled with considerable challenges, such as time constraints, scarcity of suitable reading materials, and difficulty of engaging disinterested students. Despite these hurdles, they exhibit remarkable resilience and flexibility by employing coping mechanisms like maintaining an exceptional level of patience and understanding, creating a supportive learning environment, and utilizing differentiated instruction to address the diverse needs of their students while guiding them to improve their reading skills.

Challenges that Non-Specialized English Teachers Encounter in Handling Struggling Readers

Non-specialized English teachers, who may not have extensive training in specialized reading instruction, often encounter considerable challenges when tasked to teach struggling readers.

Several key challenges encountered by non-specialized English teachers include time constraints, scarcity of suitable reading materials, and difficulty in engaging disinterested students.

Time Constraints

Time constraints pose a significant challenge for non-specialized English teachers, particularly in meeting the needs of struggling readers. Limited time can severely impact their ability to deploy effective instructional strategies and offer personalized support.

As one of the participants verbalized:

“Kaya pag lunch break or after na lang ng class nila sa afternoon ako nagpapabasa, kaya kulang yong time talaga” (I ask the struggling readers to read during their lunch break or after their afternoon class, which limits the time available.)

Another said:

“Kunti na nga lang yong oras para magbasa sila, sometimes hindi pa sila sumisipot or tinatamad sila.” (They only have little time to read, sometimes they don't show up yet or they are lazy.)

Insufficient time talaga lalo na sa akin na 6 ang teaching loads per day (It's insufficient time, especially for me who has 6 teaching loads per day.)

Another said:

There should be enough time allotted to the program.

“Ang problem doon ay kulang yong time namin kada session” (The issue at hand is that we lack sufficient time during each session)

Moreover, one participant emphasized:

“Yong kakulangan ng oras na turuan sila.” (Due to the lack of time available for teaching them)

Time constraints are evidently being faced by teachers when teaching struggling readers. One participant noted that their interactions with these students are limited to brief periods, such as lunch breaks or after-school sessions, which can greatly reduce the effectiveness of the instruction. Another participant observed that inconsistent attendance and reluctance from students further diminish the potential impact of these efforts. The demanding nature of the teachers' schedules exacerbates the problem, with one participant reporting six teaching loads daily, leaving little time for focused reading instruction. Another participant highlighted the urgent need for more dedicated time specifically for reading instruction, as the lack of sufficient time can negatively affect students' learning experiences and impede effective teaching. Without adequate time, it becomes challenging to meet the needs of struggling readers and implement comprehensive instructional strategies, resulting in less effective teaching and diminished learning outcomes. Interactive teaching, unlike traditional lecturing, usually requires more preparation time (Brownell & Tanner, 2017), which further strains the already limited time available for targeted reading instruction.

The result of this study is corroborated by the investigation conducted by Adao et al. (2023), which focuses on investigating educators' obstacles, skills, and needs when teaching students who struggle with reading. Therefore, when struggling readers have only a restricted amount of time available to dedicate to reading and immersing themselves in a particular piece of literature or text, it can significantly impact the overall

reading experience and how effectively they are able to absorb and comprehend the content presented to them.

Scarcity of Suitable Reading Materials

A significant challenge highlighted by the participants in the study is the scarcity of suitable reading materials that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of struggling readers. The absence of appropriately designed content means that teachers and educators are left with limited options to support these learners effectively, ultimately impacting their progress and confidence in reading (Mohammed & Amponsah, 2018).

One of the participants said:

“Lack of reading materials, sa reading kasi mahirap kapang deritso ka na agad sa books.” (Lack of reading materials; in reading, it's difficult to jump straight to books right away.)

The participant's statement reflects the idea that without sufficient reading materials, it can be challenging for individuals to engage with books directly. It suggests that a gradual approach to reading, possibly starting with simpler materials or supplementary resources, is necessary before tackling more complex texts. This implies that a lack of foundational reading materials can hinder one's ability to progress in reading comprehension and literacy skills.

One participant mentioned:

“Meron din ibinigay na materials na gagamitin at ibibigay sa mga bata, pero kulang kulang kasi iba iba sila ng level.” (They also provided materials to use and give to the kids, but it's lacking because they have different levels.)

This statement underscores that while some materials are available, they fall short of adequately addressing the diverse reading levels of students. This indicates a pressing need for a wider variety of resources tailored to different skill levels to effectively meet the specific needs of each struggling reader. Materials that match a student's reading level are more likely to capture their interest, as the content is both accessible and relatable. A variety of teaching strategies is essential to support students in improving their performance (Sambayon et al., 2023).

Furthermore, one of the participants noted:

“Hindi lamang iyon, they gave us reading materials as well, but it's not enough.” (Not only that, they gave us reading materials as well, but it's not enough.)

The participant acknowledges that while some reading materials have indeed been provided, these resources do not adequately address the comprehensive needs of those who are facing difficulties with reading proficiency. The situation reveals a gap between the support that is offered and the actual requirements of the readers, indicating that without adequate resources, the potential for development and literacy advancement remains significantly hampered.

The research findings align with Dagada's (2022) study, which identifies a significant barrier to reading instruction: the scarcity of suitable reading materials. This shortage impedes teachers' ability to effectively teach reading skills. Dagada emphasizes the need for diverse, high-quality reading resources in schools to support varied learner needs, particularly for struggling readers. Addressing these resource gaps is crucial for fostering an environment that promotes comprehensive literacy development.

Difficulty of Engaging Disinterested Students

The participants struggle with engaging disinterested students who lack enthusiasm for reading due to feeling overwhelmed and inhibited by shyness.

As verbalized by one of the participants:

“Meron din yong iba talagang nahihya sila lalo na yong talagang walang wala as in sa edad nilang iyon at nasa high school na pero hindi parin marunong magbasa.” (There are also some who are really shy, especially those who have nothing at all—those who, despite their age and being in high school, still don't know how to read.)

This means that shyness and a lack of enthusiasm often stem from a lack of confidence. Teachers may need to focus on building students' self-esteem and confidence in their reading abilities. This could involve positive reinforcement, celebrating small successes, and providing opportunities for low-stakes, enjoyable reading experiences. If a student is rewarded for doing an excellent job, the chances of them continuing to engage in positive behavior may increase (Ismail, 2023).

The participant's statement stresses a critical challenge in teaching struggling readers: the emotional and psychological barriers related to shyness and embarrassment. It particularly highlights the difficulties faced by high school students who, despite their age, still struggle with fundamental reading skills.

Moreover, another participant mentioned:

“I think their low self-esteem because they feel ashamed and lack of interest.”

The statement suggests that the participant believes low self-esteem is linked to feelings of shame and a lack of interest. This implies that when individuals feel ashamed of themselves or their abilities, it can lead to diminished self-esteem. Additionally, a lack of interest may further contribute to this low self-esteem, as it can result in disengagement from activities or experiences that could otherwise foster a sense of accomplishment and confidence (Rone et. al, 2020). Overall, the significant statement highlights the interplay between emotional states and self-perception indicating that addressing these feelings could be important for personal development.

One participant stated:

“Yong kawalan nila ng interest na matuto, yong parang napipilitan lang sila.” (Their lack of interest in learning, as if they are just being forced to do it.)

The statement indicates that a significant number of students' view reading activities as obligatory tasks rather than valuable opportunities for their personal growth and enrichment. This perspective leads to an approach characterized by a sense of duty; students feel compelled to complete reading tasks out of necessity rather than a genuine interest or excitement for the material. When reading is perceived merely as a chore, it transforms the activity from an engaging exploration of new concepts and information into a monotonous requirement that must be fulfilled.

This result is closely aligned with the findings from the research conducted by Taganas & Jancinal (2024). Both studies underscore a common theme: the challenge posed by a lack of interest among students. This issue significantly impacts the ability of teachers to effectively teach and engage students who are facing difficulties in reading. Taganas & Jancinal's in-depth exploration revealed that even the most highly committed reading coordinators grapple with the task of motivating students who are often disinterested or disengaged from the reading process. Furthermore, both studies call attention to the necessity of developing targeted strategies that can rejuvenate students' interest in reading and foster a more engaging learning environment. Additionally, Boyes et al. (2020) noted that having reading difficulties can severely affect self-esteem, as students often navigate their school experience painfully and fearfully due to these challenges.

Coping Mechanisms of Non-specialized English Teachers in Teaching Reading to Struggling Readers

Non-specialized English teachers frequently rely on adaptive strategies to address the challenges of teaching struggling readers. These adaptive coping strategies are vital for successfully managing difficult situations, as they enable individuals to respond with agility and creativity.

Exceptional Level of Patience and Understanding

The results of the study show that teachers who assist struggling readers consistently display a remarkable degree of patience and understanding. Teachers with high emotional competence, particularly those who are patient and understanding, are especially successful in creating positive learning atmospheres (Nwoko et. al, 2023).

One of the participants verbalized:

“We teachers, especially in the lower grades, should lengthen our patience.”

It implies that the participant highlighted the necessity of approaching these students, particularly those in lower grades, with considerable patience and understanding due to their slower progress. This patience is crucial for effectively supporting struggling readers.

One participant also stated:

“I experienced how to hold my temper more than usual.”

This suggests that the participant indicated that guiding these readers required him to control his temper more than he typically would in other circumstances. Therefore, teachers who exhibit a calm and patient attitude can have a profound impact on their student's academic achievement and behavioral development.

Moreover, one of the participants mentioned:

“We should be patient in teaching struggling readers.”

It implies that the process of teaching struggling readers requires time, persistence, and a calm approach. The participant acknowledges that these students may not grasp reading skills as quickly as their peers, and therefore, teachers must be patient (Binay-an, 2022), allowing students the time they need to learn and progress at their own pace.

Furthermore, one participant said:

“I need to have lots of patience and be positive always.”

It suggests that the participant recognizes the challenges involved in teaching students who find reading difficult and understands that progress may be slow. The emphasis on patience indicates a commitment to providing consistent support, while the focus on positivity underscores the importance of encouraging and motivating students, even when they face setbacks. It reflects the participant's belief that a positive and patient mindset is essential for creating an environment where struggling readers can succeed.

Lastly, other participants also said:

“I considered patience as the most vital weapon.”

“Ako as their facilitator naging pasensyoso ako.” (As their facilitator, I became patient.)

It implies that the participants emphasize its power and necessity in overcoming the challenges associated with helping students who struggle with reading. It also suggests that the participants see patience not just as a virtue but as an essential tool that equips them to persist in the face of difficulties, allowing them to support and guide their students toward improvement and success.

In the conducted study, the findings paralleled those of Reyes et al. (2023), where the focus was on investigating the strategies, challenges, and coping mechanisms employed by teachers to assist struggling

readers in adapting to the new normal educational landscape. The ability of teachers to remain patient and understanding not only fosters a supportive learning environment but also cultivates a sense of empowerment and encouragement among struggling readers. By exercising patience, teachers can tailor their instructional approaches to cater to the diverse needs of students, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and effective learning experience.

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

The significance of creating a supportive learning environment offers positive reinforcement to struggling readers. A supportive educational setting includes robust interactions between teachers and students, clear feedback, and the creation of a space where students feel safe and valued (Montiero, Carvalho, & Santos, 2021).

The importance of a supportive learning environment when teaching reading to struggling readers is highlighted.

As one of the participants emphasized:

“It’s hard to motivate struggling readers, kaya sometimes, nagbibigay ako ng reward.” (It’s hard to motivate struggling readers, that’s why I sometimes give rewards.)

Another said:

“No matter how small their improvement is, I still give praises to them and appreciate their efforts.”

Also, one of the participants verbalized:

“Giving words of encouragement, sinasabihan ko sila na kailangan nilang matutong magbasa.” (Giving words of encouragement, I tell them that they need to learn how to read.)

Moreover, another said:

“I encouraged the struggling readers by telling them the possible negative effects if they don’t know how to read.”

“Pero lagi ko silang sinasabihan na hindi ko sila matutulungan kung hindi nila susubukang magbasa.” (But I always tell them that I won’t be able to help them if they don’t try to read.)

It suggests that participants create a nurturing learning atmosphere when teaching reading to struggling readers. One participant employed rewards as a method to motivate students, while another concentrated on recognizing and praising even the smallest advancements in students' reading skills. Providing constructive feedback enables students to see their progress and pinpoint areas that need improvement, which can greatly enhance their overall academic success. Furthermore, one participant provided verbal encouragement, highlighting the significance of mastering reading. Both verbal encouragement and supportive feedback are crucial for establishing a positive learning environment, which boosts student motivation and involvement. Additionally, the other participants communicated the potential negative consequences of not acquiring reading skills. This approach, coupled with the emphasis on students' self-initiative, underscores the importance of students' efforts in their learning process (Moneva, Arnado, & Buot, 2020).

This aligns perfectly with the observations made in the research conducted by Reyes et. Al (2023). The implication of fostering a supportive learning atmosphere should not be underestimated, especially when it comes to addressing the needs of struggling readers within the educational landscape. By creating an environment where students feel valued and supported, teachers can significantly enhance their coping mechanisms and overall ability to engage effectively with learners facing challenges in literacy acquisition.

Employing differentiated instruction

The participants utilized differentiated instruction to address the distinct and diverse needs of struggling readers. This approach aims to tailor instruction to align with each student's specific skill levels and learning preferences.

One of the participants verbalized:

“Pwede rin na ang gagamitin ay yong mga pang beginning readers na materials.” (It is also possible to utilize materials designed for beginning readers.)

This implies that beginner reading materials serve as an effective and practical solution for meeting the specific needs of struggling readers, especially for those who face challenges with fundamental word recognition skills. By focusing on simple vocabulary, clear illustrations, and relatable content, beginner reading materials can help build confidence and motivation in struggling readers. Additionally, children need to develop quick and efficient word recognition skills to focus on understanding the meaning of what they are reading (Goyja, 2023).

One participant stated:

“The repeated reading wherein read and read until reaching the needed level of fluency.”

The significant statement underscores the importance of the repeated reading technique in supporting struggling readers. Through repeated reading, students can develop automaticity with words, which enhances their reading speed, accuracy, and overall comprehension. This method is especially advantageous for struggling readers, as it offers them multiple opportunities to interact with the text, gradually improving their reading fluency and confidence (Holder, 2017).

Furthermore, one of the participants mentioned:

“I used flash cards, yong ipapakita ko yong flash card then babasahin nila yong word na naka print doon.” (I used flashcards, I showed the flashcard to them, and they read the word printed on it.)

The participant utilizes flashcards. This implies that the participant depends on flashcards as a key method to support readers who are having difficulties. By regularly displaying printed words on flashcards, the participant helps students practice recognizing words and broadening their vocabulary. This repetitive practice is crucial for improving reading skills, as it enhances students' familiarity with words and elevates their overall reading fluency (Alanazi, 2017).

Another statement from the participant:

“Kaya nagsimula talaga kami sa familiarization ng alphabet then talagang syllabication kami.” (We initially started with familiarizing the alphabet before moving on to syllabication.)

It implies that the participant underscores the significant impact of two fundamental instructional strategies: alphabet familiarization and syllabication, in the context of teaching reading skills. Through the use of alphabet familiarization, the participant aimed to ensure that students developed a solid understanding of the individual letters of the alphabet. When struggling readers can identify letters and their sounds, they can quickly read simple words (Stanley & Finch, 2018). In addition to alphabet familiarization, the participant also implemented syllabication as a key method within their teaching framework. Syllabication involves breaking words down into their constituent syllables, which serves to enhance students' phonemic awareness and effectively improves pupils' reading skills (Alagbela, 2021).

Furthermore, one of the participants articulated:

“I read the word first and I let them repeat the words I read.”

This means that the participant utilizes the "read after me" technique, where they read a passage aloud for the students, who then repeat the reading themselves. This method is effective for reinforcing correct

pronunciation and reading fluency (Van Erp, 2021).

This aligns with the findings of Bogaert et al. (2023), indicating that implementing differentiated instruction proves to be beneficial for improving the reading skills of students who are facing challenges. Both studies emphasize the importance of personalized approaches to meet the diverse needs of learners. Potot et al. (2023) similarly conclude that differentiated instruction is an effective strategy for enhancing the reading skills of struggling readers. Moreover, teachers are encouraged to incorporate interactive instructional reading materials into their teaching methods to improve learners' abilities in word recognition and reading comprehension (Calam, Salinas, & Laput, 2022).

Adaptive and Personalized Mechanisms in Teaching Reading to Struggling Readers

Non-specialized English teachers encounter significant challenges in addressing the diverse needs of struggling readers. The challenges are varied student reading abilities, backgrounds, and levels of motivation that characterize their classrooms. With these, the participants adopt a range of mechanisms designed to meet the unique needs of each student in enhancing reading.

They personalized their own instruction which is evident as they teach students facing difficulties in reading comprehension, fluency, and confidence. This also requires them to be adaptive in their approach. The participants often employ methods that engage their students on different levels. The mechanisms described by these teachers include the use of visual aids, like pictures, and varied reading materials that are both level-appropriate and aligned with students' interests.

The mechanisms that non-specialized teachers not only affect students' reading skills but also shape the emotional and psychological atmosphere of the learning environment. They observe improvements in their students' reading abilities. They even often experience a mix of emotions—ranging from the fatigue of the challenging process to the satisfaction of seeing their efforts transform into their students' success.

Building Strong Foundation while Having Adaptations

The non-specialized language teachers enhance the reading skills of students who have consistently engaged in regular reading practices. It also involves personalized instruction, frequent reading practice, and the use of engaging materials that match students' interests and reading levels.

As one of the participants said:

“It’s very helpful if they know the correct sound of their alphabet, it helps.”

They recognize the importance of knowing the correct sounds of the alphabet underscores a focus on foundational literacy skills. This is essential for students who are behind, as mastering these basics is crucial for further reading development. Systematic phonics instruction is widely acknowledged as the most effective method for teaching learners to decode words, thereby establishing a strong reading foundation (Emboscado, 2023).

Another verbalized:

“Grade 8 na siya pero di pa niya maidentify yong buong alphabet so need to use pictures, at least nasabi niya kung ano yong nasa picture.” (He’s in 8th grade, but he still can't identify the entire alphabet, so we need to use pictures. At least he can say what’s in the picture.)

The use of pictures to help a student who has difficulty identifying the entire alphabet reflects a practical adaptation. This approach shows how teachers use visual aids to bridge gaps in understanding and support learning in a tangible way. Pictures are essential for effective vocabulary memorization, as they should depict word meanings without ambiguity (Pushpanathan, 2017).

They use diverse reading materials to keep students active and engaged shows a commitment to making learning enjoyable and relevant. This variety helps maintain student interest and participation, which is important for their overall progress and enjoyment of reading sessions. Teachers must employ effective reading strategies to maintain high levels of motivation and engagement among learners (Alghonaim, 2020).

The teachers' observation highlights trying their best and showing incremental improvements emphasizing the focus on monitoring progress and acknowledging effort. This helps in encouraging students and recognizing their achievements, no matter how small.

As one of the participants said:

“Then yan yong time na makikita mo talaga na they're trying their best.” (Then that's the time you can see that they're trying their best).

Another verbalized:

“Pero most of the time nakikitaan ko yong bata ng kunting improvement, basta ang pagod pag nakita ko ang yong magandang resulta, it's a mixed feelings talaga.” (But most of the time, I see some improvement in the child. Even though it's tiring, seeing the good results makes it all worthwhile. It's truly a mixed feeling.)

One participant also said:

“Kahit na nahihirapan sila alam kong nag-eeenjoy sila kasi active sila during sessions, at dahil yon sa mga varied reading materials.” (Even though they are struggling, I know they are enjoying it because they are active during the sessions, and that's due to the varied reading materials.)

One participant highlighted the determination and motivation demonstrated by struggling readers, even when they face challenges in their reading journeys. Another participant noted that, despite being in grade 8 and struggling with reading, these students show improvement by utilizing visual aids like pictures to understand word meanings. This description was supported by other participants who observed noticeable progress in struggling readers following the introduction of various teaching strategies designed to address their individual needs. It implies that there is a significant improvement in the reading abilities of struggling readers when they are regularly exposed to a variety of reading strategies guided by their teacher. Various strategies are effective interventions for enhancing students' reading skills (Albia & Sonsona, 2021).

The findings of this study align closely with the conclusions drawn in the research conducted by Dolba et al. (2022). The teaching practices implemented by educators for students identified as nonreaders were not only successful but also significantly impactful. The strategies employed by these teachers proved to be highly effective in facilitating reading instruction, ultimately contributing to an observable improvement in students' reading abilities. Effective teaching methodologies tailored for nonreaders can lead to substantial gains in reading competency, reinforcing the importance of targeted instructional approaches in educational settings.

Implementation of the Adopt-A-Struggling Reader Program in its Pilot Years

The Non-specialized English teachers describe the implementation of the Adopt-a-Struggling Reader Program in its pilot years as characterized by the positive impact of peer collaboration and a clear need for professional development.

They have found peer mentoring and coaching to be highly beneficial. Guidance from Head Teachers and experienced colleagues has been instrumental in developing effective reading intervention strategies. This

collaborative support helps teachers overcome challenges and enhances their ability to assist struggling readers. Collaboration is crucial for teachers' professional development, as it provides opportunities for ongoing reflection and enhancement of teaching practices (De Jong, Meirink, & Admiraal, 2019). The participants have emphasized the necessity of attending seminars and workshops focused on reading strategies. They emphasized that these professional development opportunities are crucial for acquiring new techniques and approaches to teaching struggling readers. Seminars are seen to stay updated on best practices and to gain additional insights that can enhance teaching effectiveness. Mufida, Arafat, and Puspita (2021) emphasize that such involvement in seminars is crucial for improving teachers' performance and overall instructional quality.

Positive Impact of Peer Collaboration

Specialized technical support was provided to participants responsible for teaching reading to struggling readers.

One of the participants mentioned:

“I was given background information about the students to undergo the program.”

It implies that the participants received essential background information from the adviser, which was instrumental in crafting a reading intervention plan tailored to the specific needs of struggling readers. Understanding a student's background is critical for addressing their unique challenges effectively.

Other participants mentioned:

“Peer mentoring and coaching from Head Teachers and colleagues”

“Peer mentoring and coaching after they give the names of those struggling readers”

It suggests that the participants emphasized the significant role that peer mentoring played in the support they received. They specifically noted that mentoring and coaching from Head Teachers and colleagues were particularly valuable after identifying the struggling readers. This indicates that peer mentoring offers crucial guidance and collaborative support, which is vital for developing effective strategies to help students with reading difficulties.

Moreover, the other participant verbalized:

“Nagbigay din yong mga kasamahan namin ng mga reading materials na pwede naming magamit.” (Our colleagues also provided us with reading materials that we can utilize.)

This statement highlights the collaborative nature of the teaching environment, where peers contribute by sharing resources that can aid in instruction. By sharing reading materials, colleagues not only support one another but also enhance the collective ability to address the diverse needs of struggling readers, fostering a more effective and supportive educational environment. Additionally, sharing expertise among colleagues promotes professional growth and builds confidence, as educators learn from different perspectives and improve their teaching strategies (Bouchrika, 2024).

The findings from the current study align closely with those of Kamal & Lin (2021), underscoring the critical need to offer enhanced assistance to teachers who are teaching reading to struggling readers. This support may encompass various forms, including but not limited to specialized technical guidance provided by colleagues who can share best practices, troubleshoot challenges, and offer mentorship to ensure teachers are equipped to navigate the evolving landscape of education effectively. Recognizing the complexities and demands faced by modern educators, it becomes increasingly evident that fostering a collaborative environment where teachers can exchange knowledge and receive ongoing support is essential for their professional growth and overall well-being.

Need for Professional Development

The study reveals that participants recommended attending seminars focused on reading strategies to improve their effectiveness in teaching struggling readers. Here are several remarks from the participants highlighting the significance of attending seminars:

“We should attend seminars or workshops about teaching struggling readers.”

“Maganda pa rin kasi pag may seminars about sa mga strategies.” (It would be nice if there were seminars about strategies)

“To gain other approaches on how to handle struggling learners by attending seminars.”

It indicates that the participants are confident that these seminars will offer important insights and strategies to better assist learners who encounter difficulties in reading. Additionally, it implies that the participants see value in further training and professional development. By participating in these seminars, teachers can acquire various perspectives and techniques that are especially helpful in meeting the diverse needs of struggling readers (Anane & Kuranchie, 2022).

The findings from the study collectively illustrate a significant and pervasive theme that resonates with the research conducted by Haile and Mendisu (2023). The study emphasizes the value of engaging in targeted training programs or attending specialized seminars tailored to equip teachers with the necessary tools and strategies to effectively teach reading to struggling readers. Through comprehensive training and ongoing professional development endeavors, educators are better equipped to address the diverse needs and challenges presented by students with reading difficulties, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Dayagbil and Alda (2024) highlight that professional development provides teachers with essential skills to navigate the changing educational landscape and maintain high-quality teaching and learning. Similarly, Perez and Dela Cruz (2024) found that seminars significantly enhanced the teaching performance of higher education faculty, especially for new or inexperienced instructors. These findings underscore the importance of professional development in fostering a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

After a thorough analysis of the data and evidence presented, the following is the conclusion that has been derived:

1. The participants faced several significant challenges while endeavoring to teach reading to struggling readers. These obstacles included time constraints, scarcity of suitable reading materials, and difficulty of engaging disinterested students.
2. The participants employ a variety of coping mechanisms to effectively address the challenges they encounter when teaching reading to struggling readers. These coping mechanisms showcase the teachers' exceptional levels of patience and understanding, creating a supportive learning environment, and differentiated reading strategies.
3. The strategies used by non-specialized English teachers greatly impact their teaching methods, leading to noticeable enhancement in students' reading skills.
4. In the initial stages of implementing the "Adopt a Struggling Reader" program during its pilot years, teachers observed the importance of collaborative assistance from colleagues and the need to attend seminars to enhance the effectiveness of the program.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. The Department of Education should prioritize the needs of struggling readers by allocating sufficient time for targeted interventions that do not impede on their meal breaks. On the other hand, teachers should be given rewards or incentives for rendering services beyond six hours of teaching load.
2. Teachers should have a plentiful supply of appropriate reading resources that are easily accessible and abundant enough to address the diverse needs of struggling readers appropriately.
3. Teachers should undergo a comprehensive range of specialized training courses and engaging seminars focusing on various innovative reading strategies and interactive methodologies that can effectively support struggling readers in their journey toward enhanced reading proficiency. Collaborative expertise is also encouraged highlighting the best practices in teaching reading.
4. Teachers should implement structured lesson plans to address the challenges of teaching struggling readers.

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