

Macro and micromanagement practices of reading comprehension programs in selected grade schools in the post-pandemic

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 24 April 2023
Accepted: 28 June 2023
Available online: 31 July 2023

doi: 10.59400/fls.v5i2.1664

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ABSTRACT: After years in distance learning, grade school teachers are now facing the threat of declining reading comprehension among elementary pupils in post-pandemic settings. Teachers observed a spike in the number of non-readers and frustrated readers in intermediate grade levels. Teachers expressed concerns about the state of the education system in the aftermath of the pandemic. The purpose of this exploratory study was to establish an understanding of the challenges and mechanisms of macro- and micro-management strategies of grade school institutions. There were six teachers and six reading coordinators who participated in the study. The findings suggested that while reading comprehension was a problem before the pandemic, teachers realized a surge in the number of non-readers after opening back to face-to-face classes. This was an unanticipated phenomenon that called the academic institutions to respond immediately. Significant mechanisms of reading comprehension programs were profiling, initial detection, policy-based initiatives, and institution-based design. Collaborative and collective responsibility represented macro-management practices, while initiative and responsiveness reflected micromanagement practices. These practices and strategies provided conceptual and phenomenological underpinnings relevant to early-education reading comprehension.

KEYWORDS: collaboration; management practices; reading comprehension; responsiveness; school programs

1. Introduction

COVID-19 unexpectedly shaped the education system. Teachers observed a decline in the reading competencies of their pupils after years of distance learning (Sucena et al., 2023). The aftereffects of the pandemic threatened the pupils' development and success. Comparing the performance of pupils from pre-pandemic settings, today's pupils had a higher likelihood of experiencing reading difficulties (Amplify, 2022; McGinty et al., 2021). One major factor for this detrimental effect was insufficient teacher-student contact and less engagement (Ramadhianti and Somba, 2023).

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has implemented various programs to foster a culture of reading and enhance the reading proficiency of young Filipino learners (Abril et al., 2022). Despite several years of implementing reading programs at the elementary level dating back to 2011, educators still face concerns, uncertainties, and challenges regarding the program's efficacy, e.g., PHIL-IRI (Abril et al., 2022). During the pandemic, Grade 2 Filipino learners from the study of Lumapenet (2022) manifested very serious difficulty in phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading

comprehension with low difficulty in phonological awareness. Hence, there is a need to determine the micro and micromanagement practices of grade schools in the country. Recent studies indicated that low reading comprehension cause learners not to follow their teachers' instructions (Abbas, 2021; Agayon et al., 2022).

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of teachers in implementing reading comprehension practices and strategies in Dapitan City. Ecological Systems Theory was used to harness the direction of this study as this allows the researchers to "examine more complex relationships among ecological systems" (Neal and Neal, 2013). Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the development of a child is perceived as a multifaceted network of connections that are impacted by various environmental elements. These elements can be the immediate domestic and educational surroundings to broader cultural norms, regulations, and customs (Guy-Evans, 2020; Neal and Neal, 2013).

Bronfenbrenner acknowledged that a child's development is influenced by various interconnected aspects of their life (Guy-Evans, 2020). He went beyond focusing solely on individual growth and considered the broader factors and circumstances that shape development, which he referred to as the child's ecological context. In 1977, Bronfenbrenner proposed that the child's environment can be understood as a series of nested structures, with each level contained within the next (Neal and Neal, 2013). In this study, the researcher categorized these structures into micro- and micromanagement practices, where micro practices involved in-classroom settings and micro practices involved institutional and community practices.

Cognitive and linguistic competencies of students, e.g., working memory, inference, vocabulary, attention, and comprehension monitoring, have a fundamental role in reading and listening (Kim, 2015; Kim and Phillips, 2014; Krenca et al., 2023; Spencer and Wagner, 2018; Strasser and Rio, 2014). Skilled readers and listeners are competent in detecting an imbalance in comprehension, such as resolving apparent inconsistencies with their initial comprehension. Skilled readers use methods to restore coherence in their knowledge, such as re-reading text sections to assess and validate meanings. On the other hand, those with poor monitoring skills may ignore indications that their comprehension has lapsed and neglect to initiate corrective actions (Krenca et al., 2023).

Some literature outlined the different conditions in developing school programs. For instance, as McNamara and Kendeou (2011) note, educators should start teaching comprehension abilities to young children. Second, instruction should concentrate on the processes rather than emphasizing the result (i.e., reading performance). Third, scaffolding is essential for drawing inferences when the text is unclear. Fourth, comprehension is a collaborative process that depends on the reader and the assigned reading material.

The effective delivery of reading programs in schools is undoubtedly influenced by the competence of teachers in teaching learners how to read (Cabalo and Cabalo, 2019). The study of Kashef et al. (2012) investigated how teaching methods affected the reading abilities of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students. The outcomes showed that the treatment significantly affected the children's reading abilities. Another study by Rahman (2012) examined how traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM) education affected engineering students' reading comprehension methods. The findings showed that teaching reading comprehension strategies increased the learners' reading abilities in the experimental group. The effects of strategy education in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and ESP were also investigated by Dhieb-Henia (2003). The findings showed that students' reading comprehension had improved. In the context of EFL, metacognitive reading teaching aids students in developing effective

reading strategies, claim Ahmadi et al. (2013).

Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018) carried out a study with Arab EFL students. In their findings, students experienced specific reading challenges, which may impact their English competence and academic achievement. To address these challenges, education legislators, English teachers, private and public schools, and EFL learners collaborate to be responsible for policy governing learning and implementation (Al-Jarrah and Ismail, 2018; Ramadhianti and Somba, 2023).

Furthermore, a study discovered that applying a reading strategy can improve EFL students' reading performance. The more pupils who use the problem-solving method in reading exercises, the higher their reading comprehension achievement (Par, 2020). On the other hand, the structure of the institutions especially involving the relationship, social influences, socialization patterns, and emotional responses, also contribute to the capacity of teachers to implement teaching strategies and be innovative (Berkowitz et al., 2020; Westrupp et al., 2022).

This study focused on the challenges, reading programs, and management strategies of grade school institutions in responding to the reading difficulties of pupils. Notably, the design and implementation of reading programs depend on the needs of the pupils. Hence, understanding the different challenges in reading comprehension provides the foundation for reading policies and programs.

2. Literature review

2.1. Ecological systems theory in education

Bronfenbrenner's EST is a widely utilized theoretical framework for understanding individuals within ecological settings (Neal and Neal, 2013). The concept of EST has been utilized to emphasize the significance of setting-level factors facilitating the development of contextual frameworks to elucidate diverse phenomena, including psychosocial and academic outcomes among adolescents (e.g., Seidman, 1991). The perspective put forth by Bronfenbrenner (1979) bears some similarity to the theories of social learning by Bandura and sociocultural theory by Vygotsky, both of which acknowledge the environment as a critical factor in development (Guy-Evans, 2020).

The ecological approach in classroom management includes setting an environment for conducive learning. An example of instructional materials that exhibit high continuity entails teacher-led activities such as reading aloud to the students, demonstrating a concept, or playing audio recordings (Doyle, 2013). These activities involve a consistent and uninterrupted source of information transmission. Studies carried out at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education have revealed that elementary and junior high school educators who excel at classroom management possess a solid ability to establish clear guidelines and procedures at the start of the academic year (Emmer et al., 1980; Emmer and Gerwels, 2002; Evertson and Emmer, 1982). These teachers implement the guidelines and procedures on the first day and integrate them into a practical framework and deliberately instruct students on how to follow them.

In a larger ecological context, participation in "structurally different settings," especially engaging in learning with "more mature or experienced" people, enhances student development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Initially, their development increases "as a function of the number of supportive links existing between that setting and other settings (such as home and family)" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Chen et al., 2021). The involvement of community partners in the lives of students has been observed to create new settings that facilitate student development (Leonard, 2011). This is particularly relevant when

students interact with matured or experienced individuals, e.g., *teachers*, and *reading coordinators*. In addition, promoting student development can be facilitated through supportive communication between the settings. As previously described, the investments made at the microsystem level represent a positive advancement towards promoting student development (Guy-Evans, 2020; Leonard, 2011). However, it remains unclear as to what the most effective means of engaging many students may be.

This study utilized the ecological perspective in analyzing the reading practices of grade schools in the Philippines. Micromanagement practices are the classroom strategies set by teachers; micromanagement practices are the institutional strategies that involve the school administration, reading coordinators, and teachers.

2.2. Reading programs and practices in the Philippines

In the Philippine educational system context, a significant issue involves Filipino children in reading. This concern is notably associated with suboptimal academic outcomes, particularly in public schools. For instance, the academic performance of Grade 5 students was evaluated in selected schools across six Southeast Asian countries. Apparently, the Philippines ranks as the second-lowest performer in reading, with an efficiency score of 10%, just above Laos having an efficiency of only 2% (UNICEF, 2020).

In a recent study conducted by Rivera and Aggabao (2020), it was discovered that Grade 5 students exhibited challenges in their reading abilities, specifically in word recognition and reading comprehension. Developing reading ability is crucial for students to acquire knowledge and improve their learning skills. The acquisition of reading proficiency is a crucial factor in the educational advancement of children, as well as in cultivating their aptitude for literacy and active participation in society (Department of Education, 2019). Because of that, the DepEd introduced different reading programs that the grade schools are mandated to follow and implement (Abril et al., 2022; Mondigo, 2022).

DepEd in the Philippines mandated the implementation of the Informal Reading Program (Phil-IRI) in all public schools nationwide. Its purpose is to address concerns regarding the improvement of literacy. DepEd Order No. 14 (2018) specifies the processes for implementing the Phil-IRI in elementary and secondary schools nationwide, focusing on students in Grades 3–6. The document outlines the responsibilities of educational leaders at various levels and emphasizes the need to use this tool effectively. The PhilIRI program incorporates graded passages to assess learners' competency in silent reading, oral reading, and reading comprehension (Abril et al., 2022). Assessments are significant techniques in measuring kids' reading proficiency. This data is the foundation for designing supplemental reading programs focused on improving their skills.

DepEd Order No. 14, series 2018, drafted the revised guideline of PHIL-IRI, introducing the reading program to the secondary level. In the present context, despite the implementation of reading programs at the elementary level, many students who have completed primary education continue to be categorized as slow or non-readers. The current state of the educational system suggests persistent challenges in enhancing literacy skills, particularly among students who struggle with reading and writing (Abril et al., 2022; Mondigo, 2022). These learners often exhibit inadequate reading comprehension and struggle to keep up with their peers.

Within three years, the Philippine Department of Education, with the assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), amassed information on the reading proficiency of 8877 young students in the early primary grades (Pouezevara, 2016). The data was gathered in English, Filipino, and four native languages, which varied according to the region. The assessments provided a

chance to customize and improve the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), widely acknowledged globally, to suit the requirements of local languages and data. The purpose of developing the EGRA was to establish a dependable and sound evaluation of aptitudes that has a role in developing reading abilities (Dubeck and Gove, 2015). EGRA serves multiple purposes beyond the assessment of discrete skills through its specific subtasks. The first utility of this measure lies in its potential to establish a foundational level of proficiency in reading acquisition during the early stages (UNESCO, 2014; Concern Worldwide, 2014; Halliday et al., 2012).

Different institution-level strategies were implemented in the Philippines, i.e., PHIL-IRI and EGRA. This study wanted to explore how teachers implement them within micro- and micromanagement levels. This study determined how teachers utilize their data, develop programs, and integrate specific reading guidelines.

2.3. Opportunities in reading practices

Ecological perspective can be integrated into maximizing the reading competence of learners. Rendon and Agdana (2022) suggested that administrators can increase the number of teachers and implement supplementary programs for multigrade schools, teachers, and pupils. This is because multi-grade classes are not regarded as ideal learning environments. As suggested, the school administrators should prioritize fostering strong collaboration and communication with their teaching staff (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Similarly, collaborative efforts and administrative support can be efficacious strategies to aid classroom educators in their reading instruction (Rendon and Agdana, 2022).

The study of Valentin and Casipit (2019) suggested that the learners experienced insufficient assistance during the instruction of reading. While acknowledging some level of support, the learners highlighted the irregularity of such support, particularly in the context of reading intervention. Adequate administrative support provides sufficient resources and materials to enable teachers to perform their duties effectively, prompt feedback, and ample opportunities for professional development.

Educators are encouraged to explore innovative and practical approaches and methods suitable for the academic level of multi-grade pupils. The primary focus of these perspectives is to enhance lexical proficiency, comprehension of written texts, and grammatical accuracy, specifically in terms of subject-verb agreement (Rendon and Agdana, 2022). Parents provide ongoing support and encouragement to their children in utilizing the English language at home (Chavez, 2022; Neuman and Celano, 2012; Senechal and Young, 2008). Bilingual parents in the Philippines think that learning English can help a person in their future work because it has practical applications in real life (Chavez, 2021). This can be achieved through regular communication in English, which can help learners become more comfortable with speaking the language (Çaliskan and Ulas, 2022; Hindin and Paratore, 2007; Steiner, 2014; Steiner et al., 2022).

This study aimed to determine what personal strategies teachers implement in their classrooms. This study utilized the ecological perspective in exploring the experiences of teachers in teaching while implementing reading programs. These practices served as a basis for practices that other teachers can also implement in their academic setup.

3. Research questions

Below are the specific objectives of the study.

- 1) To determine the challenges of selected grade school teachers.

- 2) To determine the programs implemented by the grade schools.
- 3) To determine the micro and micromanagement practices of grade schools.
- 4) To determine the emerging reading programs and practices in schools.

4. Methods

This study explored the macro and micromanagement strategies used in reading comprehension programs in the post-pandemic setting. The narratives gathered in the study provide data on the experiences of teachers and reading coordinators in implementing reading programs at the grade school level. This study used narratives to categorize the programs based on their thematic characteristics and purpose. Such an approach contextualized the macro and micromanagement practices linking the theoretical components of learning to real-life situations.

4.1. Research design

This study followed the exploratory design by Ivankova et al. (2011). Exploratory designs aim to establish the background of the field of study and define the scope of such study. Swedberg (2020) described exploratory as “an attempt to discover something new and interesting” (p. 1). An in-depth analysis of teachers’ narratives concerning their pupils’ reading comprehension provides the extent of the problem, which can further be used to model academic and intellectual approaches. Such design used themes from the narratives to assess common conditions and similar contexts (Chavez et al., 2023a; Chavez et al., 2023b).

4.2. Sampling and participants

There were six schools participated in the study. In selecting the elementary schools, the researcher randomly selected the prospective schools. All public elementary schools in Dapitan City had an equal chance to be selected. Six reading coordinators and reading comprehension teachers were selected in each elementary school.

Convenience sampling was employed in the study to collect data from the specified number of teachers. According to Hassan (2022), convenience sampling is a “non-probability sampling” that utilizes samples based on their “availability and willingness to participate”. There was a total of twelve (12) participants in the study—six reading coordinators and six reading comprehension teachers (**Table 1**). These participants were teachers in-charge in improving the reading comprehension of their pupils. They were at least one year as reading coordinators or reading comprehension teachers.

Table 1. Research participants.

Participants	<i>n</i>
Reading coordinators	6
Reading comprehension teachers	6

During the interview, the researcher collected the demographics of the participants. Their demographics are summarized in **Table 2**.

4.3. Instrument

The instrument of this study was validated by three reading programs experts and educational managers to capture a deeper analysis of the reading programs management practices through the

exploratory design of the study through an interview (Aguirre et al., 2023; Chavez, 2022). The instrument is based on the research objectives and expanded to the scope of the study by constructing them into specific questions to capture relevant information. The instrument is presented in **Table 3**.

Table 2. Teaching demographics.

Code	Name	Gender	Teaching Demographic
Participant 1	Sheryl	F	A grade school teacher who participates in designing the reading programs using reading reports from the English teachers in their school
Participant 2	Mark	M	A reading coordinator in a district school; reading teacher for Grade 3
Participant 3	Vincent	M	An English teacher in DepEd since 2013; their school implement shifting of classes
Participant 4	Steph	F	A reading coordinator who has been in the position since 2018
Participant 5	Jessica	F	A reading teacher in Grade 5 who has been in teaching service since 2004
Participant 6	Santiago	M	A reading teacher in Grade 6 top section
Participant 7	Angelic	F	A reading coordinator for 5 years now, their school implement shifting of classes
Participant 8	Rebecca	F	A Teacher III who has been employed in DepEd since 2008; a Grade 5 teacher
Participant 9	Sharon	F	A reading coordinator at a central school
Participant 10	Brian	M	A reading teacher for Grade 2 pupils; he implements remedial sessions for frustrated readers
Participant 11	Rizza	F	A reading coordinator in a district school, she manages the outputs of the teachers after reading evaluation
Participant 12	Jerico	M	A reading coordinator, their school conduct programs outside; he has been in service since 2012

Table 3. Research instrument for one-on-one interview.

Code	Name	Gender	Teaching Demographic
Participant 1	Sheryl	F	A grade school teacher who participates in designing the reading programs using reading reports from the English teachers in their school
Participant 2	Mark	M	A reading coordinator in a district school; reading teacher for Grade 3
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Participant 6	Santiago	M	A reading teacher in Grade 6 top section
Participant 7	Angelic	F	A reading coordinator for 5 years now, their school implement shifting of classes
Participant 8	Rebecca	F	A teacher III who has been employed in DepEd since 2008; a Grade 5 teacher
Participant 9	Sharon	F	A reading coordinator at a central school
Participant 10	Brian	M	A reading teacher for Grade 2 pupils; he implements remedial sessions for frustrated readers
Participant 11	Rizza	F	A reading coordinator in a district school, she manages the outputs of the teachers after reading evaluation
Participant 12	Jerico	M	A reading coordinator, their school conduct programs outside; he has been in service since 2012

4.4. Data gathering procedure

The researcher requested permission from the participating grade school institutions in Dipolog City. Participants were given a copy of the approval letter. Attached to it was the purpose of the study, the ethical conditions, and the voluntary clause for participation. Upon signing, the researcher set a date for a one-on-one interview. The interview was conducted through phone calls, and the responses were audio recorded. The data-gathering procedure was conducted from January 2023 to March 2023.

4.5. Data analysis

Narratives from the reading comprehension teachers and reading coordinators were the primary data in this study. This study used an unstructured research instrument to collect the participants' narratives through one-on-one interviews. As described by Zhang and Roberts (2009), unstructured interviews are "...natural extension of participant observation, because they so often occur as part of ongoing participant observation....".

This study explored the experiences of grade school teachers in implementing reading programs and crafting their classroom reading practices. Narrative data is enough to describe their experiences which can then be used to apply certain modifications based on school cases. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze and interpret the data through coding and translation (Nowell et al., 2017).

5. Results

5.1. Challenges in reading

The differences in the reading comprehension skills of pupils before and after the pandemic were prominent. All eight participants were certain that the comprehension skills of the pupils had declined over the past years.

Theme 1: Lack of teacher-learner contact

One reading coordinator revealed that the number of pupils who are not good at reading was higher than those who are fluent. Two participants see teacher-pupil contact as an essential factor for this problem. Furthermore, because distance learning delimits the teachers to contact and guide their pupils, the teachers need to be capable of diagnosing the comprehension of their pupils.

"Before the pandemic, the pupils were more effective in reading. One reason why pupils were not effective during the pandemic was because there was no contact between teachers and learners. Now, many children were left behind. There are different manifestations as to why learners were lagging. One of those is that they are not able to read. Approximately 60% of our pupils are not good at reading; they are frustrated. Some children can read, but they cannot comprehend. Some can read syllables, but some cannot." [Sheryl, Participant 1]

"Actually, one thing that was lost during the pandemic was teacher guidance. That's been a factor in decreasing reading comprehension. Pupils do not have a teacher instructing them one-on-one, face-to-face, that mainly contributed to this problem." [Brian, Participant 10]

Theme 2: Incompetence

Another concern of the teachers was the incompetence of late elementary pupils in reading comprehension. One teacher observed that after the pandemic, even pupils in fifth grade were not able to read, utter syllables, say basic words, and understand simple sentences. One teacher also highlighted that she needed to translate the sentences, i.e., Filipino or Cebuano, for her to understand. This forced the

teachers to return to basic principles of teaching how to read, like phonetics and letter cognition.

“The number of independent readers in our school was very low. During the pandemic, we don’t know the performance of the pupils. Before the pandemic, we have good readers; when they are at higher grade levels, we are more on comprehension. Now, there are pupils in Grade 5 who cannot read. Major problems we have are the application like writing as well as comprehension.” [Rebecca, Participant 8]

“I think the reading comprehension of the kids now after the pandemic is fluctuating. I think it decreased significantly. Our students are at a frustration level. They know how to read, but they misuse words. We have comprehension tests to test the ability of the kids to comprehend. Others can get one point out of 78 questions.” [Brian, Participant 10]

“Before the pandemic, children’s comprehension was good; after the pandemic, many pupils cannot even read. They cannot read the sentence, and they cannot answer the questions. You have to translate the sentences.” [Angelic, Participant 7]

“After the pandemic, there are students who are not able to read even simple words. We are stressed because of the number of students who cannot read. Compared to before the pandemic, although there were lagging readers, they are only slow readers. But now, we have non-readers. We find it difficult to adjust with the children; we need to return to phonetics. Our frustration, we need to go back to readings lessons in Grade 4.” [Jessica, Participant 5]

Generally, there were four significant concerns of reading teachers in the post-pandemic setting—(i) phonetics, (ii) vocabulary, (iii) cognition, and (iv) application—without one of these impacting the comprehension of their pupils.

5.2. Reading programs implemented

Grade school institutions established strategies to teach the pupils how to read. Notably, these strategies had different levels of complex implementation. It is important to note that most institutions adapt their strategies based on the framework outlined by the education department.

Theme 1: Brigada Pagbasa

Two grade schools adopted the *Brigada Pagbasa*, which aims to connect to the community and teach the pupils how to read. In this program, the institutions tap the stakeholders, i.e., local government, barangay, and organizations, within the community, to develop strategies and interventions for developing the reading skills of the pupils.

“We have a reading program adapted by DepED to help students read. We have that Brigada Pagbasa; we ask the students to read, and we will assess the students if they are slow readers.” [Vincent, Participant 3]

“We have one program that is Brigada Pagbasa, aiming to gather the members of the community to help the children read.” [Angelic, Participant 7]

Theme 2: Phil-IRI and EGRA

Phil-IRI and EGRA are two of the most widely used reading programs and assessment strategies in grade school institutions. Three reading teachers implemented Phil-IRI in their respective schools, and one reading teacher used both Phil-IRI and EGRA. These reading assessment programs were established by the DepED and were widely used in assessing the reading skills of the pupils. EGRA was adapted for pupils in the early elementary level, which focused on learning word recognition and phonetics, while Phil-IRI focused on improving the cognition of the pupils and is usually applied at higher

levels.

“We have different approaches in teaching pupils how to read—we use Phil-IRI and EGRA as our program. In EGRA, we let our pupils identify the letter, the sound, the syllables, words, and phrases. We do this program individually, by section, and what results we have, we submit it to our chairman.” [Rizza, Participant 11]

“We are implementing Phil-IRI in our school. We are using the data we collect to improve our teaching practices. The data we collected also showed a decrease in the number of pupils who can read. Since we open our classrooms for face-to-face classes, we initially had our Phil-IRI once.” [Sharon, Participant 9]

Theme 3: Initial reading skills diagnosis (iCare)

One institution established a unique reading comprehension program for the pupils. This initially diagnoses the reading skills of the pupils. Teachers had to make diagnoses of the children, which then were used to profile the skills of the pupils. The diagnosis became the basis for further interventions that the pupil will undergo.

“We have our intervention in terms of reading comprehension. We have the program Children Are Readers every day (iCare). It is designed to help the children to read. If a pupil is a frustrated reader, we return to set one; we will focus on reading short articles.” [Rebecca, Participant 8]

5.3. Management practices in grade schools

5.3.1. Micromanagement practices

As per the macro-management strategies, the grade school institutions carried organizational networks that involved multi-level implementation. Micromanagement practices involved the use of specific guidelines from the division office, DepEd, and other education organizations and adapting this to their schools.

Theme 1: Setting reading goals

One teacher said that in developing their strategies, they initially *set their reading goals*. They categorize their learners from independent to frustrated (see Phil-IRI) to give them different reading exercises. Conceptually, this was profiling of the pupils based on their initial reading competency.

“We have different approaches in our situation. We need to cater to our learners’ individual needs. In my case, I categorize my learners—those in independent, and frustrate—I separate them and give them different exercises, and activities. I’m sure that in our school, we implement different programs to cater to the needs of the learners. We use the Phil-IRI materials in assessing our learners. We set our reading goals.” [Sheryl, Participant 1]

Theme 2: Use of reading framework

One institution used a framework released by the education division in developing their reading interventions. The administration had clear participation in the intervention, and their school principal assisted the teachers in conducting the intervention. The results of that intervention were reported and forecasted to monitor the improvement of their pupils. Conceptually, this was a forecast of intervention results to make further adjustments in the interventions applicable to the performance of the pupils.

“We have a reading program in our school. It’s under the reading program of our division. There is a framework to be followed. In our school, the teachers are conducting the intervention but with the guidance of the school heads and the principal. Most of the work goes to the language teachers. The monitoring usually, the principal will check how many improved their reading compared to last quarter. We assess the pupils in every periodic and monitor their number.” [Sharon, Participant 9]

5.3.2. Micro-management strategies

Within the context of micro-management, classroom set-up was used in teaching the pupils. Micro-management strategies involve the participation of teachers to teach their pupils in their specific teaching approach.

Theme 1: Extended teaching to higher grade levels

One teacher revealed that some English teachers, especially those at higher levels, were also teaching the pupils how to read. She argued that English teachers are essentially not reading teachers because English teachers are trained to teach morphology and structures of sentences rather than phonetics and vocabulary.

“The class advisers will implement this because it’s our role to guide them. For remediation, there are pupils who will be left to have the intervention. We allot time when doing this intervention. We often do this this afternoon, after the classes. This happens after the evaluation of the pupils.” [Brian, Participant 10]

“Our strategy is that if a student is a non-reader, one-on-one by schedule until such time the student will recognize some words. In terms of monitoring, I do increase the level of difficulty. We also have our periodic report as part of our monitoring.” [Vincent, Participant 3]

“As much as possible, if I don’t have any activities to be done, I do assess my pupils every day. It’s my reading goal every day. I’m monitoring individual-wise. For other sections, I also monitor.” [Steph, Participant 4]

Theme 2: Hands-on teaching

Another important component of micro-management strategies was individual-level interventions. This engaged the teachers and advisers to practice, monitor, and assess their pupils in a given timeframe. The one-on-one reading intervention was the most widely used strategy by grade school teachers. Six of them approach one-on-one intervention differently. For instance, one teacher utilized 10-15 minutes per day for each pupil. One teacher used *the mango approach*, which was making sounds in each letter of the word, and the pupils will say the word based on the sounds of the individual letters. One teacher would choose to utilize peer teaching, where she assigns one pupil to teach his/her classmate. These strategies were the individual implementation of their determined reading strategies established by their institutions.

“In my class, I do consistently practice reading. For example, 10 to 25 minutes per day, I think it’s already enough. I do 10 to 15 minutes in the morning and 10 to 15 minutes before going home. In those minutes, it would really help them learn how to read. In these classroom programs, the endpoint is to make the learners be independent readers.” [Sheryl, Participant 1]

“For this year, we conducted EGRA. I found out that there were only four readers in my class out of 35 pupils. I went down to the reading of letters, sounds, and syllables. We utilized the mango approach for Filipino and the fuller approach for English. We conduct one-on-one reading activities because it’s difficult to conduct by group. We spend time to assess if a learner can read.” [Mark, Participant 2]

“So far in my class, I don’t have frustrating readers because I’m handling higher sections. But if I have students who are frustration readers, I will do peer teaching. During recess and free time, you’ll ask a student who is a fluent reader to teach those who are not able to read.” [Santiago, Participant 6]

5.4. Emerging management strategies

5.4.1. Macro-management strategies

In macro-management strategies, different approaches were used by the institutions. These emerging

management strategies were mostly categorized on their extensive and often beyond the scope of their primary reading strategies.

Theme 1: Homogeneous classrooms

One institution realized the need to implement homogeneous classes which profile their pupils based on their reading skills. Certainly, the education department instructed the schools to not homogenize their pupils. However, the grade school institutions saw the need for such an approach when it comes to reading comprehension because it balances the skills of their pupils. Two teachers revealed their institutions used such an approach because *clustering the pupils* makes it easier for teachers to teach and focus on improving the reading skills of children.

“Since our pupils are assessed, we can group them in one section to have homogeneous reading levels. Since we are in shifting of classes, some students will have intervention in the afternoon while others are in the morning.” [Vincent, Participant 3]

“Mostly, our classrooms are heterogeneous. In our school, we also have a homogeneous classroom for frustrated readers. Some of them do not know how to read or even know the sound. What’s good is that, because there is a clustering of students, it is easy for teachers to teach the pupils.” [Sharon, Participant 9]

“We have six things to develop—from the basic (phonetics) to fluency (comprehension)—the teacher will begin from that. It’s progressive; if the pupils know the sound, it’s easy to teach them. It’s good to homogenize because the strategy that the teacher will implement in that class will aid the needs of all the pupils.” [Jessica, Participant 5]

Theme 2: Monitoring progress

The emerging strategies were potential approaches that the teachers and institutions might utilize or modify. These strategies were plans, proposals, or implementation strategies that served as the extension of the reading comprehension strategies. One teacher revealed that their strategy, i.e., iCare, does not have a monitoring mechanism. Hence, she proposed the establishment of a reading corner contest that encourages the teachers to forecast their results from the Phil-IRI assessment.

“Currently, we do not have monitoring; the intervention does not have any monitoring mechanism. So, I proposed to have a reading corner contest; from there, we have the Phil-IRI results stating the frustration readers, and randomly calling them for assessment. The criteria are that 50% improvement of the pupils.” [Santiago, Participant 6]

Theme 3: Home visits

Two institutions were planning to implement home visits and outreach activities. The teachers considered this as an important component to improving the reading competencies of their pupils. This also provided them with data on the interests of the children and prepared specific reading materials for them.

“We are planning to have home-visit to teach students. Before we have our reading programs, we call all the parents to inform them about the intervention.” [Mark, Participant 2]

5.4.2. Micro-management strategies

Theme 1: Visual learning approach

One teacher observed the need to have reading materials that are mostly visuals. She realized that some of their pupils do not even know what an eggplant is. Because of that, they were integrating their

teaching strategies through visuals to increase the cognition of their pupils.

“We wish to have digital resources in teaching the students. Usually, those who are not able to read are those who do not have any digital resources in their homes. The students, especially those who are slow and frustrated readers, are more on visuals. We can present their stories so their macro-skills will be enhanced. Some of our reading materials do not have visuals; it makes the students feel bored in reading.” [Steph, Participant 4]

“We give the children charts and reading materials as an extension of our program. Sometimes, we let the parents copy the chart to follow up on the progress of their children.” [Jerico, Participant 12]

Theme 2: Visualization, connection, and prediction activities

Teachers manifested competencies in selecting strategies that work for them. For instance, one teacher utilized visualizing, connection, and predictions in teaching their pupils. Such an approach falls under cognition and application because of its purpose to imprint complex learning to pupils other than its forms and phonetics.

“I use reading comprehension strategies such as visualizing, connections, and predictions so that they can understand and remember what they are reading. I know in that way they will be able to develop their reading.” [Angelic, Participant 7]

Theme 3: Parental engagement

Some teachers saw the importance of parental engagement in improving the comprehension of their children. As part of their extended strategies, the teachers also provide instructional materials for the parents to be used to teach their children at home. While this helped the pupils improve their reading competencies, it also helped parents monitor the learning of their children.

“Personally, I also ask the parents to do a follow-up. We have pre-test and post-test, and we have to submit that. I want to spend more time with the pupils given that we have shifting classes. So, I ask the parents if I can individually teach his/her child for an hour.” [Mark, Participant 2]

“I also have a parental engagement where I call the parents when I do an assessment. This is important because parents can help the children at home.” [Steph, Participant 4]

“Beyond the school level, I do outreach activities for the parents. In that way, they can help their children and assess them. It’s an outreach program that aims to capacitate the parents. We also do profiling; we understand the interest of the learners and prepare reading materials for them.” [Jerico, Participant 12]

6. Discussion

6.1. Challenges of selected grade school teachers

Among the selected grade school institutions in Dapitan City, this current study was able to determine several problems in reading comprehension after the pandemic. These are the four major concerns of the teachers and reading coordinators when dealing with the reading comprehension of their pupils (i) phonetics, (ii) vocabulary, (iii) cognitive, and (iv) application. Although these problems are not necessarily new, teachers observed an alarming increase in the number of pupils who cannot read and comprehend texts in higher grade levels, i.e., fifth grade and sixth grade. These problems mainly revolve around phonological awareness, structures, vocabulary and word recognition, and syntactic awareness.

Growing linguistic comprehension requires constructing background information, expanding vocabulary knowledge, improving competency in understanding language structure, and improving

verbal reasoning skills (Daniel and Barth, 2023). Skill in reading comprehension and learning independence from text rely on the development of each of those subskills, the incompetence of which can be deleterious (Daniel and Barth, 2023; Daniel et al., 2021; Wanzek et al., 2016).

Students ages and reading levels at the time of the pandemic may have been significant factors; those who were still learning the fundamentals of reading at the time of the pandemic might have been impacted harder because of the sequential nature of reading and language acquisition (Kuhfeld et al., 2023). This is supported by early data from K-2 pupils who were assessed during the pandemic and determined to have a higher risk of experiencing reading issues than they were before COVID-19 (Amplify, 2022; McGinty et al., 2021). It has also shown in this study that there was a decline in the reading competency of grade school pupils after the pandemic.

Phonics (Sucena et al., 2023) and spelling instruction contribute significantly to students' decoding ability during the early grades (Kuhfeld et al., 2023; Tunmer and Hoover, 2019). Students' ability to decode text lays the groundwork for their future reading fluency. Reading and spelling issues are often attributed to a lack of phonological awareness in children, as this is frequently conceived to be their primary cause (Pfof, 2015; Sucena et al., 2023; Volkmer et al., 2019). The grade school teachers and reading coordinators were aware of the limitations of their pupils who don't know how to utter and write words. The teachers, especially at higher levels, were forced "... to return to phonetics" [Jessica] because "... there are pupils in Grade 5 who cannot read" [Rebecca]. Their observations on their reading performance showed an inability to say the first sounds of letters and syllables and how they were related to other words in a sentence.

It is also essential to determine children who have inadequate vocabulary knowledge but poor text comprehension (Cain and Oakhill, 1999; Cain, 2022; Cain et al., 2004). Reading comprehension difficulties may be caused by deficiencies in basic word reading or vocabulary abilities (Adil, 2022; Ramadhianti and Somba, 2023); nevertheless, for some children, even if word reading is intact, ineffective comprehension is still evident where their vocabulary knowledge is similar to that of peers the same age (Cain, 2022). Some teachers saw an increase in the number of pupils who were not able to recognize even basic English words (based on their EGRA reports). In fact, they need to incorporate pictures while reading like one teacher did for her pupils who don't know what an "eggplant" (or *along* in Filipino) is. One teacher revealed that "... approximately 60% of our pupils are not good at reading" [Sheryl]. This caused teachers to be alarmed by the sudden increase of pupils who are frustrated readers when they started to open for face-to-face classes in School Year 2022–2023.

It is crucial to comprehend the vocabulary used in the text in order to comprehend the specific meaning of the sentences (Adil, 2022; Ramadhianti and Somba, 2023). The role of vocabulary in reading comprehension has been shown to be crucial, as the comprehension of written materials is dependent upon the comprehension of the vocabulary utilized within (Xie and Yeung, 2022). In a study conducted by Babayiğit and Shapiro (2020), a comparison was made between children who spoke only English and children who were bilingual and learning English as a second language (L2). The findings of the study indicate that vocabulary has a significant impact on English reading comprehension in bilingual children. This study among grade schools in Dapitan City indicated that "... there are students who are not able to read even simple words" [Jessica]. One factor for this was their low vocabulary knowledge that sometimes they need to "... translate the sentences" [Angelic].

This study explored the challenges of reading comprehension teachers and reading coordinators in teaching their pupils how to read. They observed an increase in the number of pupils who cannot read

even at higher levels, where they are expected to be proficient in reading. Their experiences varied, which is important in providing vast references of which reading programs and management practices are applicable to use.

6.2. Reading programs implemented in selected grade schools

There were three-four reading programs that were implemented among the grade school institutions in Dapitan City. Specifically, these reading programs can be categorized based on the models constructed from previous studies (e.g., Cavas and Cavas, 2020; Oxford, 1990; Tomlinson, 2014). In that sense, categorizing strategies provided extensive descriptions of the approaches and programs that the institutions used.

The Phil-IRI is a nationwide assessment tool that determines the reading level of students in Grades 3–6. An informal reading inventory, Phil-IRI is made up of different passages with varying levels of difficulty, and its purpose is to evaluate the performance of students in terms of silent reading, oral reading, and listening comprehension (Purcia et al., 2023). The data collected by the Phil-IRI will also be used as one of the bases for the development, design, and rebuilding of the reading instruction provided by the instructors as well as the reading initiatives or activities offered by the school to increase the general reading achievement of the pupils at the institution (Purcia et al., 2023). The Phil-IRI was mostly used by grade school teachers and reading coordinators “*to improve our teaching practices*” [Sharon]. They mostly use it in determining the limitations and challenges of their pupils. The institution institutionalized Phil-IRI to determine the challenges of their pupils and develop strategies and instructional approaches that can help them develop their skills in reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension, word and non-word decoding, and letter–sound association are some of the fundamental reading skills that are evaluated with the EGRA, which is a test that is conducted verbally (Purcia et al., 2023). EGRA is a form of reading practice for beginner readers where they “*identify the letter, the sound, the syllables, words, and phrases*” [Rizza]. The data they collected from EGRA will be submitted to the reading coordinator for evaluation.

Another one of the DepEd strategies is called Brigada Pagbasa, and its goal is to help students improve their reading abilities and become functionally literate with the assistance of community members and other educational partners (Juridico et al., 2023). Its purpose was to encourage and cultivate the burgeoning interest of students in reading while simultaneously assisting them in the acquisition of the fundamentals of reading. The Brigada Pagbasa program ensured that learners were literate, and developed instructional spaces at home, the parents or the guardians, and other partners to facilitate functional educational experiences as well as educational convenience (Department of Education, 2021). Students who are reading comprehension in both English and Filipino are encouraged to participate in the Brigada Pagbasa project. Brigada Pagbasa is being implemented by a grade school institution in Dapitan City “*to gather the members of the community to help the children read*” [Angelic]. Brigada Pagbasa is different from Phil-IRI and EGRA as it incorporates engagement within a community. In implementing Brigada Pagbasa, teachers “*ask the students to read, we will assess the students if they are slow readers*” [Vincent].

In ecological perspective, to put intervention into action and make additional progress toward improving the learners’ reading abilities, the schools will need to carry out a series of activities. Even though the DepEd has required a number of intervention programs to deal with learners’ poor achievement in English, this enduring learning issue persists (Juridico et al., 2023). The fundamental

shifts in the globe over the last few years have had an immense impact on how learning and education are used in everyday life (Erdem, 2019; Juridico et al., 2023). Innovative teaching methods and strategies are required to aid the needs of the students (Joynes et al., 2019).

It has been determined in this study that before developing and implementing specific reading programs, teachers and reading coordinators established preliminaries to be carried out. For instance, one institution develops goals for its interventions, and one institution uses a framework to establish the flow of its intervention. These approaches utilized the components of learner-centered methods where teachers identify the needs of their pupils and develop their competency.

Programs that supported cross-sector collaborations among educational institutions, families, social service organizations, and the private sector focused on the premise that stakeholders working together have a considerably higher potential to assist students and affect academic performance than school-centric methods do. This was done so that schools could focus more on their core mission of educating students (Mayger and Provenzano, 2022; Miller et al., 2013; Riehl and Lyon, 2017).

Major differences in the programs implemented by the academic institutions involved active learning and theoretical intelligence. Most strategies derived from frameworks and policies focused on active learning and student engagement, while institution-based strategies relied on specific needs within their institution. This indicated that while policy-based programs highlighted more on active engagement, social intervention, and numerical assessments, institution-based strategies considered profiling of students as its foundation. Nevertheless, it was not clear which of these strategies are more effective.

6.3. Different management practices for reading

Management practices were the force of institutional reading interventions. Management practices of reading comprehension teachers involved organizational, structural, systemic, and methodological approaches. Through these approaches, the institutions and teaching bodies were able to come up with and manage their interventions effectively.

Research has been conducted in a number of different areas, some of which have concentrated on professionalizing the role of the teacher (Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012; García-Martínez et al., 2022), while others have focused on the importance of effective leadership and management strategies in school management (Harris, 2013), and still others have emphasized empowering additional important individuals to carry out educational responsibilities (García-Martínez et al., 2022; Harris et al., 2019). In a similar vein, there are studies that have adopted a holistic point of view, viewing the entire school as the unit of intervention to bring about improvements.

Administrators play a crucial role in designing and development of a conducive learning and teaching environment, which benefits both students and teachers (Aldosiry, 2022; Billingsley and McLeskey, 2014; Boyd et al., 2011; DiPaola, 2012; Guramatunhu-Mudiwa and Scherz, 2013). Principals who are encouraging and supportive have a direct and indirect, good effect on the development of their pupils and teachers (Aldosiry, 2022; Louis et al., 2016). For instance, Fore et al. (2002) claim that having a principal who is supportive is the most important component in encouraging teachers to stay in the field of special education. One grade school from Dapitan City manifested the ideal setting of a reading practice—coordination and communication. Their teachers implement reading interventions “*with the guidance of the school heads and the principal*” [Sharon]. From an ecological perspective, this is important in education that other grade schools should also follow.

A specific instruction program should prioritize the needs of the students in a specific learning

limitation (Kashef et al., 2012; Khellab et al., 2022). In a theoretical sense, Dudley-Evans et al. (1998) argued that the responsibility of an instructor is to teach the right language programs in accordance with the demands of the students. Since the role of an instructor is to provide students with the necessary language skills, the teacher's responsibility must be appreciated. Teachers should impart language through the cultivation of generic skills, i.e., interpersonal relationships, critical thinking, and problem-solving, to ensure that pupils have the necessary language abilities (Khellab et al., 2022). Grade school teachers recognized their role in improving the reading competency of their pupils because they think "... *it's our role to guide them*" [Brian]. They recognized that "*the endpoint is to make the learners to be an independent reader*" [Sheryl].

Initially, this study categorized macro- and micro-management strategies. Macro-management strategies involved the stakeholders and school administration in implementing the reading initiatives. In contrast, micro-management involves teachers' participation in individualized and modified management within their classrooms. While macro-management was an institution-based strategy, micro-management was a first-hand strategy critically engaging teachers in reading interventions.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to argue that teachers were more exposed to their classroom setups which made them early responders to the needs of their pupils. This made their role critical in implementing reading strategies. Day (1999) and Karlberg and Bezzina (2022) appreciated not just the difficulty of teaching but as well as the necessity of ensuring that educators play an active and central role in the formation of their own professional development. According to Osmond-Johnson et al. (2019), such definitions of professional development enable individuals to better understand the significance of capacity building at a time when educators are placing an emphasis on the empowerment of both group and individual levels while also positioning schools as locations of professional learning. There were different instances that the grade school teachers and coordinators manifested competence in teaching and management. "*We conduct one-on-one reading activities*" [Mark], "*10 to 25 minutes per day... would really help them learn how to read*" [Sheryl], and "*I do assess my pupils every day. It's my reading goal every day*" [Steph] were some of the instances the grade school teachers and coordinators showed competence and motivation in teaching.

The Reading for Understanding Initiative argued that "a major roadblock to teacher uptake of new practices is the accountability infrastructure of reform movements" (Catts, 2022). Assessment allows teachers to learn together while adjusting to the new assessment method. Assessments offer authentic opportunities for all the instructors to have an active role in offering input on their school curriculum and the assessment process (Catts, 2022). Assessments served as the assurance of teachers that their strategies are applicable as they "*cater [their] learners' individual needs*" [Sheryl].

There was a network of relationships between the teachers and school administrators in terms of implementing certain reading comprehension strategies. While macro-management involved major mechanisms of the reading strategies (i.e., forecasting and designing), micro-management focused on central mechanisms (i.e., assessment and implementation). There was also clear participation of both teachers and school administrations in developing optimal approaches and mechanisms for their specific reading comprehension strategies.

6.4. Emerging reading practices of selected grade schools

There were different management practices that had a different perspective on it. These macro- and micro-management strategies were not widely used but implemented by some institutions to extend the

coverage of their reading comprehension programs and initiatives. Generally, these emerging management strategies mainly involve visual learning, home visiting, peer engagement and teaching, homogenizing classrooms, and community extensions.

Learner-centered learning and inquiry-based learning, in addition to active learning, require participants who are actively engaged in the learning process. According to Ginting (2021), the participation of learners in their own learning is essential to the achievement of successful learning and to the improvement of their school performance. As a result, he concluded that to achieve effective learning, the learners themselves needed to be interested in and involved in the material. In addition, Al-Shihri (2019) asserts that utilizing active learning as a methodology for instructing English is a method that may be put into practice. One grade school teacher focused on engaging her pupils in an inquiry-based setting “so that they can understand and remember what they are reading” [Angelic]. She implemented strategies like *visualization, connection, and prediction activities* in teaching her pupils how to read. Such an approach was an emergent reading practice as she was the only one who crafted and innovated this.

Angelic used visualization, connections, and predictions as additional components of her teaching strategy. This involved providing visuals, correlating phonologies and sounds, and cognitive guessing. Using the model of language learning strategy proposed by Oxford (1990), this approach can be categorized as a cognitive strategy because of its nature involving mental and intellectual guidance. In contrast, another teacher used peer teaching, where she assigned a fluent reading pupil to teach the frustrated pupils. In Oxford (1990), this strategy falls under the social strategy.

Visual interpretation as a form of strategy is not new in education. Students that have this competence would be able to successfully communicate facts and comprehend abstract concepts, allowing them to integrate new knowledge with the previously acquired information. Learners have various levels of expertise in the subject of English for specific purposes and are more likely to use interpretative techniques (Hyland and Jiang, 2021). Learners can derive understanding from secondary resources such as diagrams and tables with the assistance of these tactics, as well as tie information to the primary source. One teacher observed that “*those who are slow and frustration readers, they are more on visuals*” [Steph]. Because of that, teachers “*give the children charts and reading materials as an extension of our program*” [Jerico]. Observations of grade school teachers indicated that learners are more likely to learn how to read with visuals. This is a new opportunity for grade school teachers to develop practices and programs that covers visual learning.

Three teachers also considered parental engagement as an essential force in improving the reading comprehension of the pupils. Numerous studies that have investigated the impact that parental participation has on reading have produced interesting findings (Çaliskan and Ulas, 2022). For instance, it has been discovered that parents who listen to their children read, read with them, and provide support for them make significant contributions to their children’s literacy development (Çaliskan and Ulas, 2022; Chavez, 2022). These activities have been found to positively affect the speed in reading, lexical and morphological accuracy, and verbal fluency, as well as contribute to children’s ability to read independently (Hindin and Paratore, 2007; Neuman and Celano, 2012; Senechal and Young, 2008; Steiner, 2014; Steiner et al., 2022). Teachers in grade schools were aware of the role of parents in improving the reading comprehension of the pupils. This involved asking the parents to “*do follow up*” [Mark], “*call the parents when [she makes reading] assessment*” [Steph], and “*do out-reach activity for the parents*” [Jerico]. Such approaches were emergent among teachers because these were based on their initiative to

make personal strategies.

In the context of homogeneous classrooms, teachers observed the need to homogenize their pupils based on their initial reading comprehension level and reading competency. This emerging approach can be beneficial in the development of pupils. For instance, Bloom's Taxonomy classified stages of learning that help the teachers "facilitate the exchange of information about their curricular developments and evaluation devices" (Bloom et al., 1956). Such a mechanism of homogeneous learning enables the teachers to monitor, evaluate, and teach their pupils under similar conditions suitable to their level. The teachers homogenize their pupils in one section because "*it is easy for teachers to teach the pupils*" [Sharon], and the strategies they implement will "*aid the needs of all the pupils*" [Jessica].

Some grade school teachers in Dapitan City believed that visual learning, parental engagement, and homogeneous classrooms can help in the development of their pupils in reading and comprehension. Different emerging management practices were utilized by teachers and institutions to extend the coverage of their fundamental reading comprehension programs. One aspect that was clear after establishing the analysis of these management strategies—institutions treat these as supplementary approaches.

6.5. Limitations of the study

A major limitation of the present study was the reliance on narrative data collection. Relying solely on narrative data, such as interviews and observations, may potentially limit the scope and comprehensiveness of the gathered information. Alternative data collection methods, such as surveys or standardized assessments, may have yielded more objective and quantifiable indicators of reading proficiency and management practices.

An additional limitation of the investigation was the incapacity to extrapolate the findings to alternative academic establishments outside of the primary schools situated in Dapitan City. It is important to note that the unique context of Dapitan City, including its demographics and educational policies, may vary from those found in other regions or countries. The findings of this study suggest that the identified practices and challenges may not be generalizable to other grade schools in different geographical locations.

A potential avenue for future research may involve the utilization of a mixed-methods approach, which would entail the integration of both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The proposed methodology would facilitate the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data on reading ability, thereby providing a more holistic comprehension of the scenario.

A comparative analysis of schools with differing management practices may provide insight into the efficacy of various approaches. Through a comparative analysis of schools that have demonstrated successful improvements in reading outcomes versus those that have not, researchers can discern effective strategies and methodologies that may be transferable or modifiable for implementation in other educational settings.

Nevertheless, this paper developed a new narrative for reading management and program implementation. The experiences of the teachers reflect its potential application to other demographical settings. The exploration provides key components on what conditions the teachers experience after the pandemic and how they integrate their practices in mitigating these challenges.

7. Conclusion

The ecological perspective on reading comprehension served as a theoretical direction for the study. The ecological systems theory posits the development of an individual is influenced by his/her environment. This study utilized this ecological perspective to determine the reading programs and management practices of some grade school teachers from Dapitan City.

Post-pandemic posed a threat to the reading comprehension of learners. Early education teachers noted an alarming increase in the number of non-readers and frustrated readers, even in higher grade levels. This calls the academic institutions to intensively implement reading comprehension programs and establish systematic management strategies to mitigate the aftereffects of distance learning modality. It was clear that institutions used both policy-based (e.g., Phil-IRI, EGRA, Brigada Pagbasa) and institution-based (e.g., iCare Program) strategies in improving the reading comprehension of their pupils. Some also utilized extended strategies, which involved community learning, cognitive classroom setup, and visual learning. These strategies were able to support the need for institutions to integrate into more sustainable and conducive reading comprehension programs, especially after the pandemic.

Although this study was able to establish the dimensions of reading comprehension programs and management strategies in a post-pandemic setting, there was also a need to extend the definitions of macro- and micro-management strategies. Institutionalizing further theoretical components that cover linguistics, psychology, education, and learning enables future studies to develop a framework for early education. Future studies should hereby focus on the components of social networks, communication, institutions, organizations, and complex human interactions.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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