

Pedagogical Competence in Brigada Pagbasa: Basis for A Proposed Training Manual

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the pedagogical competence of teachers in decoding, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding and its relationship with the FLAT performance of Grades 1, 2, and 3 learners in Las Nieves District 1. The study utilized secondary data from the FLAT performances during the 1st and 2nd quarters of SY 2023-2024, involving 250 Grade 1, 100 Grade 2, and 100 Grade 3 pupils. A researcher-made instrument validated by experts and tested for reliability was used to assess the pedagogical competence of teachers. The results showed that teachers' competence in developing decoding skills and phonics instruction was excellent across all grades. The competence in contextual understanding was rated as very satisfactory. A significant relationship was found between the FLAT performance of Grade 1 pupils and teachers' competence in decoding ($p=.238$; $p=.000$), phonics instruction ($p=.209$; $p=.001$), and contextual understanding ($p=.235$; $p=.000$). Similarly, for Grade 2 pupils, their FLAT performance showed a very significant relationship with teachers' competence in decoding ($p=.238$; $p=.000$), phonics instruction ($p=.209$; $p=.001$), and contextual understanding ($p=.235$; $p=.000$). However, for Grade 3 pupils, no significant relationship was found between their FLAT performance and teachers' pedagogical competence, as indicated by p -values beyond the .05 level of significance.

KEYWORDS

Pedagogical competence; FLAT performance; decoding; phonics instruction and contextual understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a basic skill that is essential to all elements of life. It is a fundamental component of all learning linked to academic success, job success, and the ability to fully engage in many aspects of life (Crawford et al. 2021). A strong foundation in literacy and numeracy is essential for personal growth and national development. Effective reading teachers raise awareness and proficiency through every layer of language organization, including sounds, syllables, meaningful parts (morphemes), phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and various genres of text. Their teaching strategies are explicit, systematic, and engaging. (Moats, 2020).

In 2019, the Department of Education (DepEd) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF) for the Brigada Pagbasa Program. The Brigada Pagbasa (BP) was launched as a form of an after-school reading program in response to Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa or DepEd 3B Initiative issued under DepEd Memorandum 173, s. 2019. In this memorandum, the DepEd admitted that the actions put in place to improve the reading abilities of the learners are still insufficient based on the results of the national assessments for learners. In Brigada Pagbasa, all

implementers are encouraged to conduct this partnership initiative for reading which serves as a platform to synergize education-related endeavors and immediately address

literacy and numeracy learning gaps. This reading advocacy serves as an avenue for all stakeholders to contribute possible solutions to improve the country's education system and shall continue with an aim to engage more education partners, and experts to intensify this after-school reading program.

It is inspiring to see how this initiative has gained momentum and positively impacted education in the country, offering hope to improve learning outcomes in the future. Eventually, this initiative will positively impact the findings of the pre-assessment on FLAT (Functional Literacy Assessment Tool conducted by Subait Elementary School for the School Year 2023-2024).

The result of the FLAT assessment revealed that among the 31 Grade 1 pupils, 29% or 9 out of 31 were below letter level; they were unable to identify 4 out of 5 letters in the tool. 71% or 22 out of 31 pupils were at letter level. None of them reached the word level or the local material level. A significant portion of pupils (29%) struggle with essential letter recognition, with the majority (71%) able to identify letters but have yet to progress to word-level literacy. For Grade 2, out of 32 pupils, there were still 19% or 6 out of 32 pupils were at below letter level, and 12% (4 out of 32) were at letter level, for Grade 3, out of 22 pupils, there were 27% (6 out of 22) who were at letter level and only 18% or 4 out of 22 were able to reach story plus comprehension level, it means they were able to answer two fact retrieval questions. These results suggest that there are still notable proportions of pupils in each grade who need additional support to enhance their literacy skills.

The effectiveness and utility of Brigada Pagbasa's purpose have yet to manifest fully and permanently, which heavily relies on the pedagogical competence of its facilitators, the teachers themselves. Along this line of thought, this study on pedagogical competence in Brigada Pagbasa in terms of decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextualizing understanding was undertaken. This study endeavored to ascertain the pedagogical competence of teachers in the Brigada Pagbasa as basis for a proposed training manual.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study on the pedagogical competence in Brigada Pagbasa is anchored on Jerome Bruner's Scaffolding Theory. This theory posits that when learners are given the support (or the scaffolds provided by the teacher) they need while learning something new, they stand a better chance of using that knowledge independently. The theory holds a foundational concept in educational psychology that emphasizes the importance of providing appropriate support to learners as they acquire new skills and knowledge. This theory suggests that learners are more likely to succeed in mastering new concepts when they receive structured guidance and assistance from a knowledgeable mentor, the teacher.

In the context of Brigada Pagbasa, scaffolding is crucial for effectively developing reading skills among learners. As conceptualized by Jerome Bruner, scaffolding involves providing structured support to learners as they engage in reading activities. This support helps learners gradually transition from needing assistance to becoming independent readers. This scaffolding process is an active process of learning and engagement between the teacher and the learners.

In decoding instruction, for instance, learners are taught to recognize and understand the symbols that make up the written language, such as letters and words. This involves identifying letters, understanding their sounds, and recognizing word patterns. The active engagement in decoding, activities like matching letters to sounds, blending sounds to form

words, and segmenting words into individual sounds engage learners actively. Games, flashcards, and interactive reading sessions can make this process enjoyable and effective. Moreover, learners practice decoding through repeated exposure to written text. Reading simple sentences and stories helps them apply their decoding skills in meaningful contexts, reinforcing their understanding of how symbols combine to convey meaning.

Along with phonics instruction, this involves systematically teaching the relationship between letters and sounds. This helps learners decode words by sounding them out, a fundamental skill for early reading. Phonics instruction uses symbols to represent sounds, assisting learners to understand how letters and combination of letters correspond to specific sounds. For example, teaching the sound of 'a' in 'cat' or 'e' in 'bed' helps build their phonemic awareness. Engaging learners in phonics games, songs, and hands-on activities, such as constructing words with letter tiles or writing words in sand, makes learning phonics interactive and fun. This active participation enhances their grasp of phonics rules.

Along with instruction for contextualized understanding, which denotes cultural and contextual relevance, reading materials and activities are tailored to be culturally relevant and contextually meaningful to the learners. This relevance helps learners connect what they are reading to their own experiences and backgrounds, making the learning process more relatable and compelling.

By incorporating scaffolding techniques into reading instruction, teachers can provide students with a supportive and adaptive learning environment that fosters a deep understanding of decoding, phonics, and contextualized comprehension skills. As learners are gradually released from scaffolding, they develop the autonomy and confidence to read and comprehend complex texts independently, ultimately becoming proficient readers who can effectively decode, phonically decode, and critically think about the texts they encounter.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized an Explanatory sequential mixed method research design as it allowed the researcher to explore reality from multiple perspectives, combining both qualitative and quantitative standpoints. This approach enabled the researcher to collect and analyze data holistically, generating comprehensive knowledge claims. By using a sequential design, the researcher first established relationships between variables through the quantitative method and then deepened their understanding through the qualitative method. This combination of methods enhanced the validity and reliability of the research findings. Additionally, mixed method designs facilitated triangulation, where different methods were used to cross-validate findings, further strengthening the research outcomes. The integration of different methods also allowed for a unified causal inference, where one method was used to establish the final inference, and the other supported and refined the analysis.

In this study, the researcher collected quantitative data and examined the relationship between the pedagogical competence of teachers in Brigada Pagbasa along decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding instruction, and the FLAT Performance of the learners. Then the researcher collected qualitative data from an open-ended question about the challenges encountered in developing decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding instruction.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Las Nieves District 1, Las Nieves, Agusan Del Norte. Las Nieves is a 2nd class municipality and a landlocked municipality in the coastal province of Agusan del Norte. It is bounded by Butuan and Buenavista, Agusan del Norte to the north, the municipality of Sibagat, Agusan del Sur to the northeast, Bayugan to the east, the municipality of Esperanza, Agusan del Sur to the south and municipality of Claveria, Misamis Oriental to the west. The municipality has a land area of 582.69 square kilometers or 224.98 square miles which constitutes 22.31% of Agusan del Norte's total area. Las Nieves is politically subdivided into 20 barangays. Each barangay consists of puroks while some have Sitios.

Currently, Las Nieves Municipality is composed of three (3) districts-Las Nieves District 1, Las Nieves District 2, and Las Nieves District 3. Las Nieves District 1 is comprised of ten (10) elementary public schools namely: Agyabao Elementary School, Bonifacio Elementary School, Katipunan Elementary School, Las Nieves Central Elementary School, Malicato Elementary School, Marcos Calo Elementary School, Sagbuc Elementary School, San Roque Elementary School, Subait Elementary School, and Tinucoran Elementary School.

The study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024 in Las Nieves District 1, which includes ten elementary schools. It involved all Grade 1, 2, and 3 pupils, along with their teachers. Specifically, from the 273 Grade 1 pupils, samples of 250 were selected. Among the 286 Grade 2 pupils, 100 were chosen as samples. For Grade 3, out of 306 pupils, 100 were taken as samples for the study. The following Table shows the distribution of population and sample per grade level.

Sampling Design

This study utilized Cluster Sampling with a systematic random start. It is a statistical technique used to select a sample from a larger population by dividing the population into smaller, distinct groups known as clusters. Instead of sampling individuals from the entire population, entire clusters were randomly selected, and data were collected from all members within those clusters. This method was especially useful when dealing with large populations or when it's impractical to create a complete list of the entire population. In this study, the researcher chose ten (10) elementary schools and got a certain number from each school to be the sample.

Research Instrument

This study utilized a researcher-made instrument for data gathering for the pedagogical knowledge competence of teachers. Part 1 of the instrument measured the level of pedagogical competence of teachers along decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding instruction and Part 2 determined the challenges encountered by the teachers in developing reading in terms of decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding instruction.

For the FLAT performance gained by the learners, this study utilized the secondary data for the learners in Grades 1, 2, and 3 learners in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2.

The study used a researcher-made instrument. To secure the validity of the research instrument, the researcher submitted the tool to the dean of the graduate school/ internal evaluator for checking and modifications, then it was reviewed and validated again by the three (3) experts of Las Nieves District 1- the School Principal II, the Master Teacher, and the internal evaluator in the Graduate School. One of the validators suggested separating statement indicators 5 and 7 of the pedagogical competence of teachers in terms of

contextual understanding as they are double-barreled. The Research Chairperson also recommended rephrasing statement indicator 9 of the pedagogical competence of teachers in terms of contextual understanding that it should be more specific not just “pay attention”. The researcher considered all suggestions and recommendations on the process of validation.

After the validity of the survey questionnaire was secured, the instrument was tried out on thirty (30) teachers in other schools to secure at least a 0.70 Cronbach Alpha Value for reliability. The researcher allowed the respondents to answer the following questions using the 5-likert scale, always, almost always, sometimes, rarely, and never. Data were collected, tabulated, and analyzed using a 5-point Likert scale in 30 survey items. The Cronbach Alpha Value across decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding instruction ranges from 0.695-0.838, therefore it was accepted. After the reliability of the research instrument was achieved, final administration followed.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher asked permission from the Schools Division Superintendent through the Public Schools District Supervisor to allow her to administer the questionnaire. When permission was granted, the data gathering activity followed, and upon retrieval of the same, the data were sorted out, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. With proper caution for safety, the researcher administered in person the survey questionnaire to the participants. A brief orientation on the nature of the study and on how to accomplish the research questionnaire was done with the participants. Furthermore, the researcher assured them that the data obtained from them were used only in the present study and it adhered to the existing guidelines of the Data Privacy Act. After filling out, instruments were retrieved and checked for possible missing information. For the secondary data, the FLAT results of 1st and 2nd Quarter examinations, furnished by the District Reading Coordinator were utilized.

Statistical Treatment

The following statistical tools were used in the data analyses of the study:

The Weighted Mean was utilized to determine the level of the teacher’s pedagogical competence in decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding instruction. The Frequency and Percentage were utilized to determine the level of Functional Literacy Assessment Test (FLAT) performance of Grades 1, 2, and 3 pupils.

The Correlation Analysis was utilized to determine the significant relationship between the level of pedagogical competence of teachers and the FLAT Performance of Grades 1, 2, and 3 pupils.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The FLAT or Functional Literacy Assessment Tool has been developed and used by the Department of Education (DepEd) as a gauge to assess the reading performance of pupils. It has six (6) performance levels, starting with below letter level as the lowest, then letter level, word level, paragraph level, story level, and story plus comprehension level.

Table 1. Level of FLAT Performance of the Grades 1-3 Pupils in the 1st Quarter

Performance Level	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Below Letter	22	8.8	4	4.0	0	0
Letter	112	44.8	20	20.0	19	19.0
Word	79	31.6	25	25.0	26	26.0
Paragraph	31	12.4	21	21.0	21	21.0
Story	5	2.0	14	14.0	18	18.0
Story+ comprehension	1	.4	16	16.0	16	16.0
Total	250	100.0	100	100.0	100	100.0

Table 1 reveals the FLAT performance level of Grades 1, 2, and 3 in the first quarter of the School Year 2023-2024. It can be gleaned from the table that among Grade 1 pupils, there are 112 pupils, or 44.8% who are at the letter level. This is typically described as the stage at which pupils demonstrate proficiency in recognizing and understanding individual letters of the alphabet. At the letter level, individuals are expected to identify and differentiate letters, understand their corresponding sounds, and begin forming simple words using these letters. Barely, 4% or 1 pupil out of 250 reached the story plus comprehension level which typically indicates a stage where a pupil not only demonstrates the ability to decode and understand individual words and letters but also exhibits comprehension skills at the level of understanding short passages or stories. At this level, the pupil is expected to read short stories or passages and demonstrate comprehension by answering questions about the text's content, main ideas, characters, plot, and other text elements. This level assesses basic reading skills and the ability to understand and interpret written material, which is crucial for functional literacy in various real-life contexts.

For Grade 2 pupils, the data show that 25 out of 100 sampled pupils (25%) have achieved a high word performance level, indicating that many are performing well in literacy, particularly in word recognition and usage. This level typically describes the stage where pupils demonstrate proficiency in recognizing and understanding individual words. The dominance of the word level suggests that most Grade 2 pupils have developed basic decoding skills and can recognize words independently, likely due to continued phonics instruction and exposure to print materials. However, the presence of 4% of pupils at the below-letter level indicates that some learners still struggle with foundational literacy skills. This may be attributed to difficulties in early reading development, lack of prior reading experiences, or individual learning challenges. The data suggest that while most Grade 2 pupils are progressing in reading, a small percentage continue to experience difficulties in letter recognition, which can impact their overall literacy growth.

Among Grade 3 pupils, 26 out of 100 pupils (26%) belong to the word level category, indicating that a significant number of learners have developed strong word recognition skills. This suggests that most pupils at this level can decode and understand individual words, which may be due to continuous exposure to reading materials, phonics instruction, and reinforcement of literacy skills in previous grade levels. On the other hand, no pupils remained at the below-letter level, highlighting that all Grade 3 learners have acquired at least basic letter recognition and reading skills. This could be attributed to the cumulative effect of early literacy instruction and intervention strategies that helped struggling readers in earlier years. The absence of pupils in the lowest category reflects the natural progression of literacy development, where learners gradually build upon their reading foundations as they advance through grade levels.

Conversely, 16% or 16 out of 100 pupils who have achieved the story plus comprehension level demonstrate advanced reading abilities, capable of understanding and interpreting more complex texts. This disparity underscores the importance of differentiated instruction to cater to the diverse learning needs in the classroom, ensuring that all students receive the appropriate support and challenges to advance their literacy skills effectively. The remaining pupils are progressing through paragraph, story, and story plus comprehension levels, respectively. This distribution of pupils across varying performance levels highlights the individual differences in a heterogeneous class, demonstrating that pupils learn differently and at different paces.

Table 2 in the next page presents the level of the teachers' pedagogical competence in terms of decoding instruction. It is noteworthy that the level of pedagogical competence of teachers in teaching reading, particularly in developing pupils' decoding skills, is excellent across Grades 1, 2, and 3 levels with the average weighted mean ranging from 4.50-5.00. The consistently high levels of pedagogical competence demonstrated by teachers in teaching decoding skills across Grades 1, 2, and 3 underscores the effectiveness of instructional practices in fostering early literacy development. By maintaining a focus on professional development, resource allocation, and collaborative learning communities, educators can continue to enhance decoding instruction and support pupils' reading proficiency growth.

Table 2. Level of the Teachers' Pedagogical Competence Along Decoding Instruction

Indicators	Grade 1		Grade2		Grade3	
	Wtd Mean	Inter-pretation	Wtd Mean	Inter-pretation	Wtd Mean	Inter-pretation
1. I employ decoding technique/s like recognizing consonants and vowels.	4.88	Excellent	4.90	Excellent	4.79	Excellent
2. I employ decoding technique/s like understanding the sound each letter represents.	5.00	Excellent	4.90	Excellent	4.69	Excellent
3. I employ decoding technique/s like blending the sounds together from right to left to say the word	4.79	Excellent	4.60	Excellent	4.80	Excellent
4. I employ decoding technique/s like alphabet mastery.	5.00	Excellent	4.80	Excellent	4.71	Excellent
5. I give enough time for my pupils to recognize letters in the alphabet.	4.88	Excellent	4.90	Excellent	4.91	Excellent
6. I utilize instructional materials that will help my pupils easily associate learning letters in the alphabet.	4.79	Excellent	4.80	Excellent	4.60	Excellent
7. I allow my pupils to read aloud the letters in the alphabet.	5.00	Excellent	4.80	Excellent	4.81	Excellent
8. I do remedial classes for my pupils who have a hard time decoding letters in the alphabet.	4.56	Excellent	4.60	Excellent	4.80	Excellent
9. I let my pupils practice reading frequently in pairs or individually.	4.73	Excellent	4.7000	Excellent	4.71	Excellent
10. I make decoding (or reading) with my pupils fun and enjoyable	4.65	Excellent	4.2000	Very Satisfactory	4.81	Excellent
Overall Weighted Mean	4.83	Excellent	4.7200	Excellent	4.76	Excellent

Legend: 1.00-1.49-Never/Very Poor; 1.50-2.49-Rarely/Poor; 2.50-3.49-Sometimes/Satisfactory; 3.50-4.49-Almost Always/Very Satisfactory; 4.50-5.00-Always/Excellent

The data reveal that among Grade 1 teachers, the indicators "I employ decoding technique/s like alphabet mastery" and "I allow my pupils to read aloud the letters in the alphabet" both have a weighted mean of 5.00, which is rated as excellent. The data suggest that these instructional strategies are highly effective and consistently implemented in the classroom. The perfect score indicates that teachers are successfully helping pupils achieve mastery of the alphabet, a crucial foundational skill in literacy development. Allowing pupils to read aloud the letters in the alphabet not only reinforces their understanding of letter-sound relationships but also builds their confidence and fluency in decoding words. This excellence in teaching practices likely contributes significantly to the learners' overall literacy progress, ensuring that they have a strong basis for further reading and writing skills.

Furthermore, the indicator "I do remedial classes for my pupils who have a hard time decoding letters in the alphabet," with a weighted mean of 4.56, is rated excellent, which means that remedial instruction for struggling pupils is effectively implemented and well-regarded. This high rating indicates that teachers are committed to providing additional support to students who face challenges in decoding letters, thereby addressing learning gaps and ensuring that these pupils can catch up with their peers. The effectiveness of these remedial classes likely contributes positively to overall literacy development, helping students build essential decoding skills and progress in their reading abilities.

The pedagogical competence of teachers in reading, particularly in developing decoding skills, is crucial for fostering strong reading abilities in pupils. It addresses two key issues concerning early literacy development: 'what to teach when teaching reading', and 'how to teach reading'. The 'what to teach' thing deals with whole language approaches, various types of phonics, teaching letters names versus letter sounds, and oral language. The 'How to Teach Reading' deals with exploring different approaches to teaching reading such as small group interventions and peer-assisted strategies, as well as the non-cognitive or social-emotional factors that support learning to read.

For the Grade 2 teachers, the data reveal notable strengths and areas for improvement in their instructional strategies. The indicator with the highest weighted mean of 4.9, rated as excellent, is "I employ decoding techniques like understanding the sound each letter represents." This suggests that teachers are highly effective in teaching phonemic awareness, ensuring that pupils can associate letters with their corresponding sounds—a critical skill for developing proficient readers.

Conversely, the indicator with the lowest weighted mean of 4.20, rated as very satisfactory, is "I make decoding with my pupils' fun and enjoyable." While this rating still reflects a commendable level of effectiveness, it indicates that teachers are generally successful in creating a positive and engaging learning environment for decoding activities. Overall, the data highlight the excellent foundational instruction provided by Grade 2 teachers. This excellent foundational instruction likely includes well-structured lessons in basic literacy skills such as letter recognition, phonics, and early reading strategies. It reflects teachers' dedication to addressing students' individual needs and creating a supportive learning environment. The strong foundation being built at this stage is crucial for students' ongoing academic development and future success in reading and writing.

For the Grade 3 teachers, the data indicate that the instructional strategy with the highest effectiveness, reflected by a weighted mean of 4.91 rated as excellent, is "I give enough time for my pupils to recognize letters in the alphabet." The rating of excellent suggests that teachers are very successful in allocating sufficient time for students to thoroughly understand and recognize letters, which is crucial for solidifying their foundational literacy skills.

On the other hand, the indicator with the lowest weighted mean of 4.69, still rated as excellent, is "I employ decoding techniques like understanding the sound each letter represents." While this is the lowest among the indicators, it still demonstrates a high level of effectiveness in teaching phonemic awareness.

The findings for the level of teachers' pedagogical competence in decoding instruction suggest that the Grade 3 teachers excel in providing adequate time for letter recognition, which is a critical aspect of literacy development. It suggests that these educators are highly effective in a crucial component of literacy instruction. This focus on letter recognition is foundational to developing reading skills, as it supports students in understanding and identifying the basic building blocks of written language. By dedicating sufficient time to letter recognition, Grade 3 teachers are ensuring that students have a solid grasp of this fundamental skill, which is essential for progressing to more complex literacy tasks such as word formation and sentence reading. This approach demonstrates a commitment to addressing the needs of students at a critical stage in their reading development.

The emphasis on letter recognition also indicates that teachers are likely employing effective strategies and providing a supportive environment that facilitates learning. This attention to detail helps lay a strong foundation for students' future reading abilities and underscores the importance of continued focus on these core skills. Overall, this finding highlights the effectiveness of the Grade 3 teachers in fostering essential literacy skills and suggests that their pedagogical practices are well-aligned with the needs of their students. However, there is a small but notable opportunity to improve their methods for teaching letter-sound correspondence, which could further strengthen their students' reading abilities.

Table 3 in the next page, presents the level of teachers' pedagogical competence in terms of phonics instruction across Grades 1, 2, and 3. Notably, the level of pedagogical competence of teachers in teaching reading, particularly in phonics instruction garnered the average weighted mean ranging from 4.50-5.00 and was interpreted as excellent in all indicators. The excellent level of pedagogical competence demonstrated by teachers in phonics instruction across Grades 1, 2, and 3 reflects their dedication to fostering strong literacy skills among pupils. By continuing to prioritize professional development, resource allocation, and collaborative learning communities, educators can ensure that students receive high-quality phonics instruction that lays a solid foundation for their reading success.

Table 3. Level of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence Along Phonics Instruction.

Indicators	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3	
	Wtd Mean	Inter- pretation	Wtd Mean	Inter- pretation	Wtd Mean	Inter- pretation
1. I employ technique/s in letter-sound awareness and relationships.	4.88	Excellent	4.50	Excellent	4.80	Excellent
2. I employ technique/s in letter recognition and identification.	4.88	Excellent	4.50	Excellent	4.90	Excellent
3. I employ technique/s in teaching letter-sound correspondences in a specific sequence to decode word/s.	4.88	Excellent	4.60	Excellent	4.81	Excellent

4. I employ technique/s in teaching letter-sound correspondences in a specific word pattern like consonant-vowel-consonant.	4.62	Excellent	4.60	Excellent	4.50	Excellent
5. I employ technique/s in teaching systematic way for pupils to learn to categorize patterns	4.82	Excellent	4.40	Very Satisfactory	4.80	Excellent
6. I employ technique/s in teaching my students to look and pronounce beginning and ending sounds.	4.79	Excellent	4.60	Excellent	4.90	Excellent
7. I let my students practice reading by sounding.	4.88	Excellent	4.60	Excellent	4.90	Excellent
8. I use instructional materials that help my pupils easily associate letter sounds.	4.60	Excellent	4.40	Very Satisfactory	4.69	Excellent
9. I provide more examples of phonic patterns..	4.68	Excellent	4.40	Very Satisfactory	4.90	Excellent
10. I employ technique/s in letter-sound awareness and relationships.	4.69	Excellent	4.95	Excellent	4.71	Excellent
Overall Weighted Mean	4.77	Excellent	4.56	Excellent	4.79	Excellent

Legend: 1.00-1.49-Never/Very Poor; 1.50-2.49-Rarely/Poor; 2.50-3.49-Sometimes/Satisfactory; 3.50-4.49-Almost Always/Very Satisfactory; 4.50-5.00-Always/Excellent

For Grade 1, several indicators reflect high effectiveness in literacy instruction, with multiple aspects achieving a weighted mean of 4.88, rated as excellent. These indicators include “I let my students practice reading by sounding,” “I employ technique/s in teaching letter-sound correspondences in a specific sequence to decode word/s,” “I employ technique/s in letter recognition and identification,” and “I employ technique/s in letter-sound awareness and relationships.” These high ratings suggest that teachers are very successful in implementing fundamental literacy strategies, such as practicing phonemic awareness, sequential decoding, letter recognition, and understanding letter-sound relationships. These strategies are essential for developing strong early reading skills among Grade 1 pupils.

However, the indicator “I employ technique/s in teaching letter-sound correspondences in a specific word pattern like consonant-vowel-consonant” received a slightly lower weighted mean of 4.62, although it is still rated as excellent. This indicates that while the technique of teaching letter-sound correspondences within specific word patterns (such as consonant-vowel-consonant) is effective, it may not be as consistently or thoroughly applied as the other techniques. The data demonstrate that Grade 1 teachers are highly effective in most areas of early literacy instruction. There remains a slight opportunity for enhancement in teaching specific word patterns, which, if addressed, could further strengthen students’ decoding skills and overall reading proficiency.

For Grade 2, the indicator “I employ technique/s in letter-sound awareness and relationships” garnered a weighted mean of 4.95, rated as excellent. This high rating signifies that teachers are proficient in helping students understand and recognize the relationships between letters and their corresponding sounds. This foundational skill is critical for developing reading proficiency, suggesting that teachers are highly effective in this area of instruction. Conversely, the indicators “I use instructional materials that help my pupils easily associate letter sounds,” “I provide more examples of phonic patterns,”

and “I employ technique/s in teaching systematic ways for pupils to learn to categorize patterns” garnered a weighted mean of 4.40, rated as very satisfactory. This suggests that the instructional methods being used are highly effective in supporting students' phonics learning. These strategies are essential for developing foundational reading skills, as they help students make connections between sounds and letters, recognize patterns in words, and categorize these patterns for better recall and application. Although performing well, these areas might benefit from enhanced resources, more varied examples, and possibly more structured or innovative teaching methods to reach the excellent category.

The data reflect that Grade 2 teachers foster letter-sound awareness and relationships, which is crucial in literacy development. However, there is an opportunity to elevate their use of instructional materials, the examples of phonic patterns they provide, and their systematic teaching techniques to further enhance the literacy skills of their pupils. Addressing these areas could lead to more effective literacy instruction and improved student outcomes.

For Grade 3, the indicators “I provide more examples of phonic patterns,” “I let my students practice reading by sounding,” “I employ technique/s in teaching my students to look and pronounce beginning and ending sounds,” and “I employ technique/s in letter recognition and identification” have all achieved a weighted mean of 4.90, rated as excellent. This indicates that teachers are highly effective in these critical areas of literacy instruction. The ability to provide ample phonic pattern examples, encourage practice through sounding out words, and focus on both beginning and ending sounds, as well as letter recognition are crucial components of developing proficient readers. These excellent ratings suggest that teachers successfully employ strategies that support strong phonemic awareness and reading skills among their Grade 3 pupils.

Additionally, the indicator “I employ technique/s in teaching letter-sound correspondences in a specific word pattern like consonant-vowel-consonant” also received an excellent rating, with a weighted mean of 4.50. While slightly lower than the other indicators, this score still reflects a high level of effectiveness in teaching this specific and fundamental decoding skill. The consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) pattern is essential for helping students understand and decode simple words, laying the groundwork for more complex reading tasks.

The data reveal that Grade 3 teachers excel in multiple aspects of phonics instruction, particularly in providing varied examples, encouraging practice, and focusing on specific sound patterns. The consistently high ratings across these indicators demonstrate a solid commitment to effective literacy instruction, ensuring that students develop robust reading skills. The slight variance in the weighted mean for teaching specific word patterns suggests a minor area for potential enhancement, but overall, the instructional techniques employed are highly effective and contribute positively to student literacy outcomes.

The pedagogical competence of teachers in terms of phonics instruction implies having a deep understanding of how to effectively teach phonics to pupils. This includes knowledge of the relationship between sounds and written letters, the ability to teach sound-symbol correspondences systematically and explicitly, and the skill to help learners decode words accurately and rapidly. Pedagogical competence in phonics instruction involves knowing how to structure lessons, introduce letter-sound relationships in a specific sequence, and provide ample opportunities for learners to practice phonics sound-symbol correspondences systematically and explicitly and the skill to help learners decode words accurately and rapidly. Pedagogical competence in phonics and word study skills through reading and writing. Expert teachers in phonics possess extensive pedagogical content knowledge, better problem-solving strategies, and the ability to help students

develop strong phonics and word study skills for improved reading, spelling, and comprehension.

This pedagogical competence of teachers in teaching reading, especially in doing phonics instruction is observed to be the result of utilizing an approach or approaches that works for teaching reading, like the Marungko Approach and/or Fuller Method. Guevarra (2022) cited that the Marungko approach is one of the best methods in teaching beginning reading, and teachers are encouraged to use this approach not only for Grade 1 pupils but also for learners in different Grade levels who are having difficulties in reading. Similarly, Bañez and Urayan (2021) revealed in their study the effectiveness of the Marungko approach in reading remediation programs in increasing pupils' reading comprehension performance.

Similarly, Nielo (2019) described the Fuller Approach as a lesson on sounding out letters, words, phrases, and sentences, as well as story reading with picture-matching activities. The lessons in the fuller technique apply the spiral approach to teaching reading -sound, word, phrase, sentence, and story for each lesson. Other implications for excellent pedagogical competence of teachers in doing phonics instruction, as well as developing among the pupils the skills for the level of teachers' pedagogical competence in decoding instruction can be a mixed bag. On the positive side, many teachers have a solid understanding of the core reading skills and implement effective strategies.

Table 4 on the other page reveals the level of teachers' pedagogical competence in terms of contextual understanding. 8 out of 10 statement indicators are rated within the ranges of 3.50-4.49, interpreted as very satisfactory. Only 2 statement indicators are rated within the range of 4.50-5.00, interpreted as excellent. The overall weighted mean is 4.36, interpreted as very satisfactory. Be that as it may, despite the generally positive ratings indicating a very satisfactory level of pedagogical competence in terms of contextual understanding among teachers, it is evident that achieving excellence in this aspect remains a challenging task. The fact that only 2 out of 10 statement indicators were rated within the highest range of excellence (4.50-5.00). This indicates that while there are specific areas where teaching practices are exemplary, a majority of the instructional strategies may not be reaching their full potential. The fact that only a small fraction of the indicators received top ratings suggests that there may be inconsistencies in the application of effective teaching methods or areas that are not as well-developed as others.

Table 4. Level of the Teachers' Pedagogical Competence Along Contextual Understanding Instruction

Indicators	Grade 1		Grade2		Grade3	
	Wtd Mean	Inter- pretation	Wtd Mean	Inter- pretation	Wtd Mean	Inter- pretation
1. I employ technique/s in letter-sound awareness and relationships.	4.62	Excellent	4.10	Very Satisfac- tory	4.10	Very Satisfac- tory
2. I employ technique/s in letter recognition and identification.	4.65	Excellent	4.30	Very Satisfac- tory	4.30	Very Satisfac- tory
3. I employ technique/s in teaching letter-sound correspondences in a specific sequence to decode word/s.	4.86	Excellent	4.40	Very Satisfac- tory	4.40	Very Satisfac- tory

4. I employ technique/s in teaching letter-sound correspondences in a specific word pattern like consonant-vowel-consonant.	4.75	Excellent	4.40	Very Satisfactory	4.40	Very Satisfactory
5. I employ technique/s in teaching systematic way for pupils to learn to categorize patterns	4.66	Excellent	4.00	Very Satisfactory	4.00	Very Satisfactory
6. I employ technique/s in teaching my students to look and pronounce beginning and ending sounds.	4.65	Excellent	4.50	Excellent	4.50	Excellent
7. I let my students practice reading by sounding.	4.47	Very Satisfactory	4.40	Very Satisfactory	4.40	Very Satisfactory
8. I use instructional materials that help my pupils easily associate letter sounds.	4.73	Excellent	4.10	Very Satisfactory	4.10	Very Satisfactory
9. I provide more examples of phonic patterns..	4.88	Excellent	4.60	Very Satisfactory	4.60	Excellent
10. I employ technique/s in letter-sound awareness and relationships.	4.71	Excellent	4.80	Excellent	4.80	Excellent
Overall Weighted Mean	4.70	Excellent	4.36	Excellent	4.36	Excellent

Legend: 1.00-1.49-Never/Very Poor; 1.50-2.49-Rarely/Poor; 2.50-3.49-Sometimes/Satisfactory; 3.50-4.49-Almost Always/Very Satisfactory; 4.50-5.00-Always/Excellent

Most of the indicators are rated within the range of 3.50-4.49, indicating that teachers exhibit a strong understanding of contextual factors related to reading instruction. This suggests that teachers are generally effective in integrating contextual elements, such as cultural relevance, prior knowledge, and real-world connections, into their teaching practices. Achieving excellence in contextual understanding may be challenging due to the multifaceted nature of this aspect of teaching. It requires teachers to effectively navigate diverse student backgrounds, learning styles, and instructional contexts. Some areas of contextual understanding may also require ongoing professional development and support to deepen teachers' knowledge and skills.

Teachers who are aware of students' cultural backgrounds, prior knowledge, and learning styles can tailor their teaching. Imagine using local folktales to illustrate a point instead of generic fables. The physical layout, available resources, and school policies influence teaching strategies. A creative teacher might leverage technology or adapt activities based on classroom size.

This contextual understanding unlocks several benefits: increased student engagement, effective differentiation (providing the right level of challenge), and culturally responsive teaching. Ultimately, by understanding the context of learning, teachers build a classroom that caters to individual needs and ignites a passion for knowledge in all students. The data reveal that in Grade 1, the indicator, "I provide more examples of phonic patterns" received a weighted mean of 4.88, the highest among the indicators assessed so far was rated as excellent. This high score indicates that teachers are exceptionally proficient in providing diverse and abundant examples of phonic patterns to their students. By offering a wide range of examples, teachers are effectively reinforcing students' understanding of letter-sound relationships and phonemic awareness, which are fundamental skills for early literacy development.

Conversely, the indicator “I let my students practice reading by sounding” received a slightly lower weighted mean of 4.47, rated as very satisfactory. The practice of having students read by sounding out words is a fundamental component of phonics instruction, crucial for developing phonemic awareness and decoding skills. This rating, while still commendable, is slightly lower compared to other highly rated instructional strategies. This suggests that while the practice is highly effective, it may not be perceived as quite as impactful as other instructional methods. Encouraging students to practice reading by sounding out words is an essential technique for developing phonemic awareness and decoding skills. However, the slightly lower rating indicates that there may be opportunities to enhance the effectiveness or frequency of this practice within the classroom.

The data indicate that Grade 1 teachers excel in providing diverse examples of phonic patterns, which is crucial for building strong foundational literacy skills. While the practice of reading by sounding received a very satisfactory rating, there is potential for further refinement to ensure optimal development of students’ reading abilities.

For Grade 2, the indicator “I employ technique/s in letter-sound awareness and relationships” achieved an excellent rating with a weighted mean of 4.80, the highest among the indicators assessed thus far. This high score suggests that Grade 2 teachers are particularly effective in implementing strategies that help students understand the relationships between letters and their corresponding sounds. By focusing on letter-sound awareness and relationships, teachers are laying a strong foundation for phonemic awareness, which is essential for developing proficient readers. Conversely, the indicator “I employ technique/s in letter recognition and identification” received a slightly lower weighted mean of 4.30. While still rated as excellent, this score indicates that there may be some opportunities for improvement in this area of instruction. Letter recognition and identification are fundamental skills that form the basis of early literacy development. The data suggest that Grade 2 teachers foster letter-sound awareness and relationships, which is crucial for developing strong early reading skills. While the indicator related to letter recognition and identification received a slightly lower rating, it still reflects effective instruction in this area.

Table 5. The Level of FLAT Performance of Grades 1, 2 and 3 Pupils in the 2nd Quarter of SY 2023-2024

Performance Level	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Below Letter	0	0	0	0	0	0
Letter	37	14.8	6	6.0	4	4.0
Word	82	32.8	19	19.0	22	22.0
Paragraph	89	35.6	24	24.0	22	22.0
Story	34	13.6	21	21.0	20	20.0
Story+ comprehension	8	3.2	30	30.0	32	32.0
Total	250	100.0	100	100.0	100	100.0

Furthermore, contextual understanding in pedagogical competence involves not only grasping the theoretical aspects of teaching but also effectively adapting teaching methods and strategies to diverse classroom environments and student needs. This adaptability can present significant challenges, as it requires teachers to navigate varying contexts, such as differences in student backgrounds, learning styles, and classroom dynamics. Therefore, achieving excellence in contextual understanding of pedagogical competence demands

continuous professional development, reflection, and refinement of teaching practices to meet the evolving needs of students and educational contexts.

Among Grade 1 pupils, 14.8%, or 37 out of 250 are within the letter level, 32.8%, or 82 out of 250 within the word level, 35.6%, or 89 out of 250, within the paragraph level, which is the highest number so far among other levels, and 34 out of 250 pupils are within the story level, and eight (8) pupils are within the story plus comprehension level. These 8 pupils out of 250 are the least number among the distribution on this result, yet they were the ones who made it to the highest level in FLAT performance. It is remarkable though, that none of the pupils is below letter level.

Generally, most Grade 1 pupils have progressed to the next reading level from the 1st quarter to the 2nd quarter. From 1 out of 250 pupils under story+ comprehension to 8 pupils comprised a 2.8% increase. From 5 pupils out of 250 who belong to story level to 34 pupils constitute an 11.6% increase and from 31 pupils who belong to paragraph level to 89 pupils comprise an increase of 23.2%. The reduced number of pupils who belong to the letter and below letter level contributes to the increased number of pupils who can advance to the next reading level. It implies that there is an improvement in the FLAT performance of the Grade 1 pupils from the 1st quarter to the 2nd quarter.

The data show a notable progression in reading levels from the 1st to the 2nd quarter. This improvement is reflected in the increased number of pupils at higher proficiency levels and the reduced number at the lower levels. This positive trend suggests that the instructional strategies and interventions employed have been effective. Continuing these practices while addressing any remaining challenges will further enhance pupils' reading skills. Although only 3.2% (8 out of 250) of pupils have reached the story plus comprehension level, this represents a significant increase from the 1st quarter, where only 1 pupil was at this level. The increase from one pupil to eight pupils reaching this advanced level indicates that the instructional methods and interventions implemented are yielding positive results. This growth highlights the effectiveness of targeted strategies designed to enhance comprehension skills, suggesting that the approaches being used are successful in fostering deeper reading understanding among students.

The number of pupils at the paragraph level has increased from 31 to 89, indicating a 23.2% rise. This suggests that many pupils successfully transition from basic to more advanced reading skills. The number of pupils at the story level has also increased significantly from 5 to 34, an 11.6% rise. These pupils are starting to understand and interpret longer texts and narratives. Continued emphasis on reading comprehension strategies, vocabulary development, and fluency practice can help these pupils move to the story-plus comprehension level. The number of pupils at the letter level has decreased, indicating fewer pupils are struggling with basic letter recognition and phonics. No pupils are below the letter level, which is a positive indicator of early literacy success. With 32.8% of pupils at the word level, ongoing support is necessary to help these pupils progress to more advanced reading stages. Instructional strategies should include phonics reinforcement, simple sentence reading, and vocabulary building.

Among Grade 2 pupils, about 100 of them, six (6) pupils are within the letter level, 19 pupils are within the word level, 24 pupils are within the paragraph level, 21 pupils are within the story level, 30 pupils are within the story plus comprehension level, and advantageously, no pupil is assessed within the below letter level of FLAT performance. The highest number in the distribution is 30 pupils who have reached the story plus comprehension, the highest level so far. That thirty (30) pupils have achieved the story plus comprehension level is a strong indicator of effective literacy instruction. These pupils can not only read and understand individual words and sentences but also comprehend and

interpret entire stories. This high level of proficiency suggests that teaching methods are effectively fostering deep reading comprehension skills. Continued emphasis on strategies that build on this foundation, such as critical thinking exercises and discussion-based learning, can further enhance these pupils' abilities. With 24 pupils at the paragraph level and 21 at the story level, a significant portion of the cohort demonstrates substantial reading skills. These pupils can understand and interpret longer texts and narratives, which is crucial for their academic progression. The presence of 6 pupils at the letter level indicates a need for foundational reading support. These pupils are still mastering basic letter recognition and phonics skills. With 19 pupils at the word level, there is a clear need to strengthen their ability to decode and understand individual words. Instructional strategies should focus on phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and simple sentence reading. The fact that no pupils are assessed below the letter level is encouraging. It suggests that all pupils have at least a basic understanding of letter recognition, which is a critical first step in reading development. This outcome may reflect successful early intervention efforts, which have ensured that all pupils have achieved a minimum level of literacy proficiency.

Most of the Grade 2 pupils have progressed to the next reading level from the 1st quarter to the 2nd quarter. The number of pupils belonging to the letter level was reduced from 20 pupils to 6 pupils. The word level was reduced from 25 pupils to 19 pupils and advantageously, from 4 pupils belong to below letter level to nothing. This decreased number of pupils contributes to the increased number of pupils who can advance to the next higher reading level such as paragraph, story, and story + comprehension level. There is an increase of 14% from 16% or 16 pupils out of 100 to 30% or 30 pupils out of 100 moves to story + comprehension level. 7% or 7 out of 100 pupils were able to advance to the story level from 14 pupils to 21 pupils. This means that there is a development in the reading performance of the Grade 2 pupils from the 1st quarter to the 2nd quarter.

Among Grade 3 pupils, about 100 of them, four (4) pupils are within the letter level, twenty-two (22) each for the word and paragraph levels, twenty (20) within the story level, thirty-two (32) within the story plus comprehension level, and advantageously, no pupil was assessed within the below letter level of FLAT performance. Grade 3 also showed notable improvement in reading performance as the number of pupils under story+ comprehension level increased from 16 pupils out of 100 in the 1st quarter to 32 pupils in the 2nd quarter comprising the 16% increase. There is a decrease in the number of pupils who belong to the letter level in the 1st quarter from 19 pupils to only 4 in the 2nd quarter constituting a 15% decrease. The doubling of pupils at the story plus comprehension level (from 16 to 32) is a significant achievement, reflecting enhanced reading comprehension skills. Pupils at this level are capable of understanding and interpreting entire stories, which is crucial for academic success. This improvement suggests that instructional strategies and interventions implemented between the first and second quarters have been effective. Continued focus on higher-order comprehension skills, such as inferencing and critical thinking, can further enhance these pupils' abilities. The decrease in pupils at the letter level (from 19 to 4) indicates successful early intervention and foundational literacy instruction. This reduction is crucial as it shows that fewer pupils are struggling with basic letter recognition and phonics. With 22 pupils still at the word level, ongoing support is necessary to help these pupils' transition to higher proficiency levels.

The challenges encountered by the teachers in developing reading skills in terms of decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding instruction

The following themes are drawn based on the challenges encountered by the teachers in Grades 1, 2, and 3 in developing reading skills in the area of decoding:

Grade 1:

Lack of Mastery in Letter Names and Sounds: Pupils who have not mastered letter names and sounds often struggle with reading words and phrases accurately, hindering their decoding abilities.

Diverse Learning Needs: There is a wide range of learning needs among pupils. While some pupils can decode quickly, others face challenges due to a weak foundation in letter sounds and names. However, providing individualized attention is difficult for teachers due to large class sizes and the need to cover multiple subjects throughout the day.

Grade 2:

Influence of Teaching Approaches: Pupils trained in the Marungko approach may rely on syllables rather than individual sounds when reading and spelling words. While this approach offers convenience, the Fuller Method, particularly in teaching word clusters, is recognized for its effectiveness.

Varied Learning Styles: Pupils exhibit different learning styles, which can lead to challenges in blending sounds. Some may struggle with this aspect for an extended period, requiring ongoing support and intervention.

Grade 3:

Accommodating Diverse Learning Styles and Abilities: Teachers must address the diverse learning styles and abilities of pupils in decoding instruction. While some pupils may quickly grasp decoding skills, others may struggle, necessitating differentiated instruction and additional support.

Utilizing Varied Instructional Strategies: To keep pupils engaged and motivated, teachers need to employ a variety of instructional strategies. This ensures that all pupils receive the necessary support to develop their decoding skills effectively.

The challenges in developing decoding skills across Grades 1, 2, and 3 revolve around addressing individual pupils' needs, adapting teaching approaches, and maintaining pupils' engagement. Teachers play a crucial role in overcoming these challenges by providing targeted instruction and employing diverse instructional strategies to support all learners in their decoding skill development.

In the area of phonics instruction, the following are the themes drawn on the challenges encountered by the teachers in Grades 1,2, and 3:

Grade 1:

Confusion with Letter Pairs: Some Grade 1 pupils struggle with confusion between letter pairs such as (b,d), (p,q), and (g,q), indicating difficulty in distinguishing between similar letter formations. This confusion hampers their phonics development and ability to differentiate between sounds.

Diverse Learners: Grade 1 teachers face the challenge of catering to diverse pupils with varying learning needs. These pupils may come from different linguistic backgrounds,

leading to confusion between sounds in their Mother Tongue (L1) and English (L3). Teachers must identify and implement developmentally appropriate practices in phonics instruction to address these diverse needs effectively.

Grade 2:

Struggling Readers: Grade 2 teachers encounter difficulties in supporting struggling readers who lack strong phonemic awareness skills. These pupils may struggle to grasp fundamental phonics concepts, hindering their ability to decode words and comprehend text proficiently.

Grade 3:

Systematic and Explicit Instruction: Grade 3 teachers emphasize the importance of delivering systematic and explicit phonics instruction to support pupils in understanding the relationship between sounds and letters. This structured approach ensures that pupils receive consistent guidance in phonics principles, facilitating their reading development.

Phonological Awareness Needs: Teachers in Grade 3 must address the needs of pupils who struggle with phonological awareness, as well as the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in language. These pupils may require targeted interventions and differentiated instruction to strengthen their phonemic awareness skills and enhance their phonics understanding. The thematic analysis highlights the distinct challenges faced by teachers in each grade level regarding phonics instruction. These challenges include confusion with letter pairs, catering to diverse learners, supporting struggling readers, delivering systematic instruction, and addressing phonological awareness deficits. Overcoming these challenges requires tailored instructional approaches, ongoing professional development, and a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of students in phonics instruction.

In the area of contextualizing understanding, the following are the themes drawn on the challenges encountered by the teachers in Grades 1, 2, and 3:

Grade 1:

Language Proficiency: Grade 1 learners

exhibit a stronger ability to visualize and understand English words compared to Filipino and Mother Tongue. The transition from L1 (Mother Tongue) to L3 (English) poses challenges, particularly for students with limited English vocabulary.

Reliance on Prior Knowledge: Some Grade 1 pupils demonstrate comprehension when they possess prior knowledge of the text, emphasizing the importance of connecting content to students' experiences.

Resource Limitations: Grade 1 teachers face challenges due to limited resources, primarily relying on downloadable reading materials. This constraint affects the variety and quality of materials available for teaching, impacting students' access to diverse learning resources.

Grade 2:

Reading vs. Comprehension: While most Grade 2 pupils can read, only a few understand the context due to difficulties maintaining focus while reading. This highlights the need for strategies to enhance students' concentration and engagement with text to improve comprehension.

Grade 3:

Deeper Understanding of Texts: Grade 3 teachers face the challenge of ensuring students grasp the deeper meaning of texts beyond surface-level comprehension. This involves guiding students to analyze the context in which the text was written, fostering critical thinking skills and deeper understanding.

Making Personal Connections: Another challenge in Grade 3 is assisting students in making connections between the text and their own lives, experiences, and prior knowledge. This involves creating a supportive learning environment that encourages students to share insights and facilitates opportunities for discussion to foster meaningful connections.

This result highlights specific challenges teachers encounter in contextualizing understanding across Grades 1, 2, and 3. These challenges include disparities in language proficiency, reliance on prior knowledge, resource limitations, and difficulties in maintaining focus and fostering deeper comprehension and personal connections with the text. Overcoming these challenges requires employing tailored instructional strategies and creating supportive learning environments that address the unique needs of students in each grade level.

Transcription of the Teachers' Responses on Developing Reading Skills

The Transcription of the Teachers' Responses on Developing Reading Skills presents the qualitative data gathered from selected teacher participants in a structured and meaningful way. This section aims to document and analyze the insights shared by teachers regarding the strategies they use, the challenges they face, and the support they need in developing pupils' reading skills. To ensure clarity and depth of analysis, the transcription includes the interview questions, participant responses, significant statements, formulated meanings, and the themes.

Table 6. Transcription of the Teachers' Responses on Developing Reading Skills

Questions	Partici pants	Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	Themes
1. What are the challenges encountered by the teacher in developing reading skills in terms of Decoding Instruction	1	Learners who haven't mastered letter names and sounds often read words and phrases incorrectly.	Mastering letter names and sounds is a critical step in learning to read.	Lack of mastery of letter names and sound
	2	Pupils have different learning needs. There are pupils who can decode quickly but others are struggling because they don't have a strong foundation on the letter sounds and names. The teacher finds it difficult to provide individualized attention since the class is large and there are some subject areas to be taught the whole day.	The challenges teachers face in meeting the diverse learning needs of their pupils, especially in large classes.	Diverse learning needs among pupils in Grade 1

	3	Learners who are trained to read through Marungko approach often spell and read words through syllables and not individual sounds. While the approach is convenient, Fuller Method is still a great approach especially in teaching word clusters.	The differences between the Marungko approach and the Fuller Method in teaching reading. While the Marungko approach focuses on syllables and is noted for its convenience, the Fuller Method is praised for its effectiveness in teaching word clusters.	The influence of teaching approaches
	4	Teachers need to employ varied instructional strategies to maintain pupil's interest.	Pupils who have difficulty blending sounds may experience frustration and a lack of confidence, potentially impacting their overall motivation and engagement in reading activities	Varied Learning Styles
	5	Some pupils can quickly understand and apply decoding techniques, others may find it challenging and need more time and specialized instruction to master the skills.	The diverse learning needs of students when it comes to decoding techniques in reading.	Accommodating diverse learning styles and abilities
	6	Some pupils have problem in maintaining focus and attention, their attention span is very short.	The challenge some pupils face in maintaining focus and attention due to their short attention spans.	Utilizing varied instructional strategies
2. What are the challenges encountered by the teachers in developing reading skills in terms of Phonics Instruction	1	Some learners are confused by seemingly the following pair of letters. (b,d), (p,q) (g, q).	Confusing these letter pairs can lead to misreading words, which affects reading accuracy and comprehension.	Confusion with letter pairs such as (b,d), (p,q), (g,q)
	2	The teacher has diverse learners. They have different learning needs and the teacher needs to find developmentally appropriate practices in teaching phonics since they are confused with the sounds of letters in Mother Tongue (L1) and in English (L3).	The challenges and needs of teaching phonics in a diverse, multilingual classroom.	Diversity of learners
	3	Dealing with struggling readers who have not developed strong phonemic	The challenge of teaching phonics to struggling readers who	Presence of struggling

		awareness skills. They may find it difficult to grasp phonics concepts.	have not developed strong phonemic awareness skills.	learners
	4	Teachers need to tailor phonics instruction to meet the diverse needs, which can be time-consuming and demanding	Ensuring that phonics instruction is systematic and explicit enough to effectively support pupils in understanding the relationship between sounds and letters.	Systematic and explicit instruction
	5	Addressing needs of pupils who may struggle with phonological awareness, which is the ability to hear and manipulate sounds of language.	The importance of addressing the needs of pupils who struggle with phonological awareness.	Phonological awareness needs
3. What are the challenges encountered by the teachers in developing reading skills in terms of Contextual Understanding Instruction	1	Learners can visualize and understand English words more than Filipino and Mother tongue.	Learners' stronger ability to visualize and understand English words compared to Filipino and their mother tongue reflects differences in exposure, instructional emphasis, and societal influences.	Language proficiency
	2	L1 becomes English, L2 Sinugbuanong binisaya and L3 is Filipino.	Students' ability to comprehend text is greatly enhanced when they have prior knowledge about the subject matter or can relate to the content.	Pupil's Prior Knowledge affects his/her understanding
	3	Some of the pupils have limited vocabulary in English. Bridging from L1 (Mother Tongue) to L3 (English) is hard.	Inadequate reading instructional materials can really hinder the development of contextual understanding	Limited Vocabulary
	4	Some of the pupils can comprehend the text if they have prior knowledge on it. They can easily understand the story if they can relate to the text.	It emphasizes the importance of guiding students to analyze the contextual factors that shape a text's meaning, thereby fostering critical thinking and deeper engagement with the material	Reliance on Prior Knowledge
	5	Limited resources also are a challenge since the teacher	It requires teachers to create a supportive	Resource limitations

	rely heavily on the downloadable reading materials.	learning environment where pupils feel comfortable sharing their insights while providing opportunities for discussion	among Grade 1
6	Most of the pupils can read but only few can understand the context because some of them have difficulty maintaining focus while reading leading to comprehension difficulties.	This involves guiding pupils to analyze the context in which the text was written that may influence its meaning.	Reading vs. comprehension
7	Helping pupils make connections between the text and their own lives, experiences and prior knowledge.	encouraging students to relate what they read to their personal experiences, memories, and the knowledge they already possess. This approach enhances comprehension, engagement, and retention by making learning more relevant & meaningful to their	Making Personal Connections

The Test of the Significant Relationship of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence Level and The FLAT Performance of Grades 1, 2, and 3 Pupils

Table 7 on the next page reflects the correlation analysis between teachers' pedagogical competence level and the FLAT Performance of Grades 1, 2, and 3 pupils for the 1st and 2nd Quarters of SY 2023-2024.

Table 7. Correlation Analysis Between the Level of Pedagogical Competence of the Teachers and The FLAT Performance of the Grades 1, 2, and 3 Pupils

		Decoding Instruction	Phonics Instruction	Contextual Understanding	
		Mean	Mean	Mean	
Spearman's rho	Grade 1	Correlation Coefficient	.238**	.209**	.235**
		p-value	.000	.001	.000
		Decision on H ₀ Interpretation	Reject H ₀ Significant	Reject H ₀ Significant	Reject H ₀ Significant
	Grade 2	Correlation Coefficient	.238**	.209**	.235**
		p-value	.000	.001	.000
		Decision on H ₀ Interpretation	Reject H ₀ Significant	Reject H ₀ Significant	Reject H ₀ Significant
	Grade 3	Correlation Coefficient	.077	.032	.085
		p-value	.447	.753	.399
		Decision on H ₀ Interpretation	Do not reject H ₀ Not significant	Do not reject H ₀ Not significant	Do not reject H ₀ Not significant

**significant @ p<.01

It can be gleaned from the Table that there is a very significant relationship between the FLAT performance of the Grade 1 pupils and the pedagogical competence in terms of decoding ($\rho=.238$; $p=.000$); phonics instruction ($\rho=.209$; $p=.001$); and contextual understanding ($\rho=.235$; $p=.000$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that if the level of pedagogical competence of the teachers is raised to a higher level, the Grade 1 pupils will tend to improve their FLAT performance. If teachers improve their teaching methods and approaches to reading, Grade 1 pupils will likely become more proficient in reading. If teachers do remedial reading or do differentiated instruction for reading based on the level and nature of difficulty the pupils have, they tend to improve their FLAT performance. Decoding is a foundational skill for reading. The significant correlation ($\rho=.238$) indicates that pupils are better equipped to decode words independently when teachers excel in teaching letter-sound relationships and decoding strategies. It underscores the importance of effective phonics instruction in early literacy development. Tools such as phonics games, multisensory activities, and explicit phonics instruction can be beneficial. The positive correlation ($\rho=.209$) highlights the importance of systematic and explicit phonics instruction. This approach helps pupils understand the relationship between letters and sounds essential for reading fluency and accuracy. Implementing differentiated instruction based on the specific needs of pupils can address individual difficulties in phonics. For example, grouping students by their phonics knowledge level and tailoring activities to their needs can improve outcomes. The correlation ($\rho=.235$) underscores the importance of contextual understanding for reading comprehension. Pupils need to connect new information to their prior knowledge and understand the meaning of text within a larger context.

Abanador and Pagsibigan (2019) posited that there is a positive significant relationship between the level of teachers' pedagogical competence and pupils' academic achievement in English, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Further, he said that as the teachers strived to enhance their competencies in English, as outlined by the Department of Education through the Philippine Elementary Learning Competencies (PELC), and as they actively participated in conferences and training sessions mandated by their school principals to stay updated with their skills, thereby enabling them to be more effective in the classroom. In instances where they may not have access to these opportunities, the Division conducts Re-Echo Seminars, ensuring that all teachers stay updated on their teaching competencies, thereby empowering them to successfully achieve classroom instructional objectives.

From among the Grade 2, pupils, the data also reveal that their FLAT performance has a significant relationship with the pedagogical competence of the teachers in terms of decoding ($\rho=.238$; $p=.000$); phonics instruction ($\rho=.209$; $p=.001$); and contextual understanding ($\rho=.235$; $p=.000$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that the FLAT performance will tend to improve if the teachers will raise their level of pedagogical competence. Decoding is fundamental for reading proficiency. The significant correlation ($\rho=.238$) underscores how crucial it is for teachers to be adept at teaching letter-sound relationships and helping pupils decode words effectively. Providing teachers with specialized training in phonemic awareness and decoding strategies can directly enhance pupils' reading abilities.

Along with Phonics Instruction, the positive correlation ($\rho=.209$) indicates that systematic and explicit phonics instruction is vital for reading success. Phonics skills help pupils understand the relationship between letters and sounds, which is essential for both reading and spelling. It highlights the critical role of effective phonics teaching in developing reading and spelling abilities. contextual understanding ($\rho=.235$) is critical for

reading comprehension. It involves the ability to relate new information to existing knowledge and understand the meaning of text within a larger context. Enhancing teachers' skills in teaching context-based reading strategies, such as making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections, can improve pupils' comprehension abilities.

Further analysis indicated that the level of pedagogical competence of teachers did not significantly correlate with the FLAT performance of Grade 3 pupils. This is evidenced in the p-values exceeding the .05 significance level, leading to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis. So, this means that other factors might influence the FLAT performance of Grade 3 pupils. These could include individual pupils' characteristics, home environment, peer interactions, or other school curriculum and environment aspects. While teachers need to improve their pedagogical skills continuously, this analysis implies that simply enhancing teaching competencies may not directly translate into improved FLAT performance for Grade 3 pupils in this context. Therefore, further investigation into other potential factors affecting student performance may be necessary to develop more effective strategies for enhancing learning outcomes.

This result further implies that other factors may be influencing the FLAT performance of Grade 3 pupils more significantly than the level of pedagogical competence of their teachers, like the need to explore teacher perspectives on formative assessment within a primary classroom. (Casicas and Quirap (2023) opined that while reading is very important to a pupil, the love of reading may only develop when the child has reading motivation and good reading habits. Family support and the home environment too are a great help in the child's reading development. Also, both the internal and external reading factors affect pupils' reading performance, reading must be further enhanced both at home and in school for mastery and familiarization with reading materials to help the child develop a love of reading in English and Filipino.

The Proposed Training Manual for the Brigada Pagbasa

The findings of the study revealed that teachers' pedagogical competence in terms of decoding instruction, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding significantly contribute to raising the FLAT performance of Grades 1 and 2 pupils. For Grade 3 pupils, however, their FLAT performance is not in any way related to teachers' pedagogical competence nor accounts for significantly contributing to the same. This is perhaps due to the observed scenario that Grade 3 pupils are becoming independent readers as compared to pupils in Grades 1 and 2. Based on the findings, the challenges encountered by the teachers in developing decoding skills across Grades 1, 2, and 3 revolve around addressing individual pupils' needs, adapting teaching approaches, and maintaining pupils' engagement. Teachers play a crucial role in overcoming these challenges by providing targeted instruction and employing diverse instructional strategies to support all learners' decoding skill development.

The thematic analysis highlights the distinct challenges teachers face in each grade level regarding phonics instruction. These challenges include confusion with letter pairs, catering to diverse learners, supporting struggling readers, delivering systematic instruction, and addressing phonological awareness deficits. Overcoming these challenges requires tailored instructional approaches, ongoing professional development, and a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of students in phonics instruction.

Furthermore, in contextualizing understanding, this result highlights specific challenges encountered by teachers across Grades 1, 2, and 3. These challenges include disparities in language proficiency, reliance on prior knowledge, resource limitations, and difficulties in maintaining focus and fostering deeper comprehension and personal connections with the

text. Overcoming these challenges requires employing tailored instructional strategies and creating supportive learning environments that address the unique needs of students in each grade level.

Hence, this training manual is designed to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to create engaging and effective reading lessons. By focusing on decoding, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding, the teachers empower themselves to cultivate a love for reading among learners while laying a solid foundation for literacy development. Emphasis should be placed on methods and strategies that have been shown to enhance these competencies effectively. Throughout this manual, the teachers will find practical guidance explicitly tailored for Grades 1 and 2 learners.

In the Philippines' Brigada Eskwela (Brigada Pagbasa), a training manual is a crucial roadmap for success. This program, focused on strengthening reading skills, relies heavily on teachers equipped with the knowledge and strategies to guide students effectively. A well-designed manual ensures consistency in delivering the Brigada Pagbasa program across different schools and regions. This is vital for maintaining program quality and measuring its effectiveness. The manual equips teachers with research-based methods and activities tailored to the Brigada Pagbasa's goals. This empowers them to deliver engaging and impactful reading instruction. A comprehensive manual serves as a valuable resource, saving teachers time and effort in lesson planning and materials creation. It ensures everyone is on the same page and reduces the risk of reinventing the wheel. An effective training manual can provide a framework while allowing for adaptation based on students' needs and local contexts. This balance is critical for successful implementation. Providing teachers with clear guidance and high-quality resources empowers them to deliver this vital program and cultivate a love of reading among students. The training manual, as proposed, is composed of discussions and/or demonstrations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The reading proficiency levels of Grades 1 to 3 pupils manifest significant variations, with most pupils still at the developing foundational literacy level. Some pupils demonstrate proficient reading abilities others continue to face challenges with basic reading competencies.
2. The teachers demonstrate excellent pedagogical competence in teaching decoding, phonics and contextual understanding instruction. They are highly capable of teaching Grades 1 to 3, as their strong pedagogical competence equips them to effectively develop early literacy skills.
3. A notable progress was demonstrated by the pupils in their FLAT performance from the first to the second quarter. The number of pupils at lower reading levels decreased, while more pupils advanced to higher reading proficiency, particularly in paragraph reading, story comprehension, and story-plus comprehension.
4. The teachers in Grades 1, 2, and 3 faced significant challenges in decoding, phonics, and contextual understanding instruction due to varying learning needs, language proficiency gaps, and instructional resource limitations.
5. The FLAT performance of Grades 1 and 2 pupils is significantly correlated with teachers' pedagogical competence. Enhancing teachers' pedagogical skills is likely to improve the FLAT performance of the pupils. However, this correlation does not apply to Grade 3 pupils; some factors beyond teacher's competence could exert greater influence on their FLAT performance.

6. The proposed training manual is designed to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to create engaging and effective reading lessons. By focusing on decoding, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding, the teachers empower themselves to cultivate a love for reading among learners while laying a solid foundation for literacy development.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are the recommendations:

1. For Teachers

Engaging in professional development programs can enhance instructional strategies, particularly in decoding, phonics instruction, and contextual understanding. Implementing differentiated instruction, small-group learning, and remedial reading interventions can support struggling learners and improve literacy outcomes.

2. For School Administrators

Providing continuous training opportunities, coaching, and mentoring programs can strengthen teachers' pedagogical competence in literacy instruction. Regular assessment and monitoring systems can help track pupils' reading progress and ensure data-driven instructional decisions.

3. For Parents

Active involvement in their children's literacy development by creating a supportive reading environment at home can reinforce learning. Attending school-initiated literacy workshops and encouraging daily reading habits can help strengthen pupils' foundational literacy skills.

4. For Stakeholders

Collaboration with schools in supporting literacy initiatives such as Brigada Pagbasa and community-based reading programs can contribute to improved reading proficiency. Providing instructional materials, sponsoring teacher training, and engaging in advocacy for literacy development can make a significant impact on pupils' learning experiences.

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