

## ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNERS ALPHABETIC KNOWLEDGE STRATEGIES OF GRADE 1 TEACHERS

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored the views of teachers on their experiences and strategic ways on enhancing their learner's alphabetic knowledge. These data are the experiences, strategies or approach used, and insights of teachers in improving alphabet knowledge. In exploring the experiences of the eight (8) participants from Suawan Elementary School, Brgy Suawan, Marilog District, Davao City, I employed the qualitative phenomenological study of which primary instrument of data gathered utilizing in-depth interview method. On the participants' experiences in teaching their students alphabet knowledge, the following were the emergent themes namely: students learning behavior, learning level enthusiasm and lack of materials for learning. Further, teachers coped the experiences by their strategic approach in order to develop their students alphabet knowledge. Likewise, based on the analysis, there were three themes that emerged on their strategic way which are: implementation of correction, language training using mother tongue, and use of motivational strategies. These following strategies help the students in enhancing of their alphabetic knowledge. Upon the application of the following strategies, teachers shared their insights about these. We come up with two themes implies namely: parental support and use of differentiated instruction. And with this, strategies on alphabet knowledge that are used is to assist struggling pupils in developing their alphabetic knowledge. The results of the study may be used for publication in a reputable journal.

**Keywords:** Alphabetic knowledge, strategies, improvement, differentiated instruction, phenomenological

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of alphabetic knowledge is a fundamental aspect of early literacy, serving as the foundation for reading and writing. For Grade 1 learners, mastering the alphabet is crucial for their academic success. Teachers play a vital role in facilitating this learning process through various instructional strategies. This study aims to explore the strategies employed by Grade 1 teachers to enhance learners' alphabetic knowledge, examining their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.

#### Rationale

Alphabetic knowledge forms the basis for decoding words and understanding written language. Early literacy skills, including letter recognition and phonemic awareness, are essential for academic achievement (Adams, 1990). Grade 1 teachers are at the forefront of this instructional challenge, employing a range of strategies to support their students. Understanding these strategies, their implementation, and their impact on learners is critical for enhancing early literacy education.

#### Global, National, and Local Issues

##### Global Issues

Globally, the challenge of improving early literacy is significant. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2017), approximately 617 million children and adolescents worldwide are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. Early literacy is crucial for lifelong learning and global competitiveness. Many countries face challenges such as inadequate teacher training, lack of resources, and socio-economic disparities that affect literacy outcomes (OECD, 2016). For instance, in developing countries, large class sizes and limited access to quality educational materials hinder effective literacy instruction (UNESCO, 2017).

##### National Issues

In the Philippines, national assessments such as the Early Grades Reading Assessment (EGRA) have highlighted low levels of reading proficiency among young learners (DepEd, 2018). The Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented various programs to address these issues, such as the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, which emphasizes early literacy. However, challenges persist, including insufficient teacher training, inadequate instructional materials, and large class sizes (Pascua, 2020). Additionally, the diverse linguistic landscape of the Philippines presents challenges in implementing a standardized approach to teaching alphabetic knowledge (Navarro, 2021).

#### Local Issues

Locally, in many regions of the Philippines, schools face specific challenges that impact the teaching of alphabetic knowledge. Rural schools often struggle with limited access to resources and professional development opportunities for teachers (Delos Santos, 2022). In urban areas, overcrowded classrooms can impede effective teaching. Furthermore, socio-economic disparities mean that some children enter school with varying levels of pre-literacy skills, making it difficult for teachers to meet all learners' needs effectively (Martinez, 2023).

#### Synthesis

Synthesizing these perspectives, it is evident that the enhancement of alphabetic knowledge among Grade 1 learners is a multifaceted issue influenced by global, national, and local factors. Globally, there is a pressing need to improve early literacy to ensure future academic success and global competitiveness. Nationally, while the Philippines has made strides in addressing literacy through various programs, significant challenges remain in terms of resource allocation and teacher training. Locally, the unique challenges faced by schools in different regions highlight the need for context-specific strategies to improve early literacy. This study aims to contribute to this discourse by exploring effective strategies employed by Grade 1 teachers and identifying areas for improvement to enhance learners' alphabetic knowledge.

## 2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the strategies used by Grade 1 teachers to enhance learners' alphabetic knowledge. The study seeks to identify the instructional strategies employed by teachers, evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies, understand the challenges faced by teachers in teaching alphabetic knowledge, and provide recommendations for improving instructional practices and professional development.

#### Review of Significant Literature

Research on early literacy highlights the importance of alphabetic knowledge as a predictor of reading success (Adams, 1990). Effective instructional strategies, such as explicit phonics instruction, multisensory approaches, and interactive read-alouds, have been shown to improve alphabetic knowledge (Ehri et al., 2001). Studies also emphasize the role of professional development in equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to implement these strategies effectively (Garet et al., 2001).

#### Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the theory of constructivism, which posits that learners construct knowledge through experiences and interactions with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the role of social interactions in learning, also informs this study. The conceptual framework illustrates how teachers' strategies, professional development, and instructional materials interact to enhance learners' alphabetic knowledge.

#### Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to answer the following questions: What instructional strategies do Grade 1 teachers use to enhance learners' alphabetic knowledge? How effective are these strategies in improving learners' alphabetic knowledge? What challenges do teachers face in teaching alphabetic knowledge? What recommendations can be made to improve instructional practices and professional development for teachers?

#### Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on Grade 1 teachers and their strategies for enhancing learners' alphabetic knowledge. The research is limited to a qualitative approach, including in-depth interviews, observations, and analysis of teaching materials. The findings may not be generalizable to other grade levels or educational contexts.

#### Definition of Terms

Alphabetic Knowledge refers to the understanding of letter names, sounds, and the ability to recognize and write letters (Ehri et al., 2001). Instructional Strategies are methods and techniques used by teachers to facilitate learning (Garet et al., 2001). Professional Development is the ongoing training and education that teachers receive to improve their teaching skills and professional knowledge (Garet et al., 2001). Constructivism is a learning theory that posits learners construct knowledge through experiences and interactions with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

#### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the strategies used by Grade 1 teachers to enhance learners' alphabetic knowledge. Qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of instructional materials, provide rich, detailed data on teachers' practices and experiences (Creswell, 2013).

#### Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study are Grade 1 teachers from various schools. A purposive sampling method was used to select teachers who have demonstrated effective practices in teaching alphabetic knowledge (Patton, 2002).

#### Research Instruments

The study utilized several research instruments, including an interview guide with semi-structured questions to explore teachers' strategies, challenges, and professional development experiences (Kvale, 2007); an observation checklist to systematically observe classroom practices and instructional strategies (Merriam, 2009); and a document analysis guide to analyze teaching materials, lesson plans, and other instructional resources (Bowen, 2009).

#### Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection involved several stages: initially contacting selected schools and obtaining permission to conduct the study, conducting in-depth interviews with teachers using the interview guide, observing classroom practices using the observation checklist, and analyzing teaching materials and lesson plans (Creswell, 2013).

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis involved coding and categorizing the data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Themes and patterns were identified to understand the strategies used by teachers and their effectiveness (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### Research Environment

The study was conducted in various primary schools, focusing on Grade 1 classrooms. The research environment included urban and rural schools to capture diverse teaching contexts (Patton, 2002).

#### Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting participants' privacy and rights (Creswell, 2013).

#### Mean Interval and Descriptive Interpretation

The study used the following intervals for interpreting data on job-embedded learning and teachers' professional development (Merriam, 2009):

For job-embedded learning: a mean interval of 4.20 – 5.00 corresponds to "Always" and indicates that job-embedded learning is always observed; 3.40 – 4.19 corresponds to "Oftentimes" and indicates that job-embedded learning processes are oftentimes observed; 2.60 – 3.39 corresponds to "Sometimes" and indicates that job-embedded learning is sometimes observed; 1.80 – 2.59 corresponds to "Seldom" and indicates that job-embedded learning is seldom observed; and 1.00 – 1.79 corresponds to "Never" and indicates that job-embedded learning is never observed.

For teachers' professional development: a mean interval of 4.20 – 5.00 corresponds to "Always" and indicates that teachers' professional development is always observed; 3.40 – 4.19 corresponds to "Oftentimes" and indicates that teachers' professional development is oftentimes observed; 2.60 – 3.39 corresponds to "Sometimes" and indicates that teachers' professional development is sometimes observed;

1.80 – 2.59 corresponds to "Seldom" and indicates that teachers' professional development is seldom observed; and

1.00 – 1.79 corresponds to "Never" and indicates that teachers' professional development is never observed.

### 3. RESULTS

The data revealed several key findings regarding the strategies used by Grade 1 teachers to enhance learners' alphabetic knowledge. Teachers often used multisensory approaches, incorporating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities to teach letters and sounds. This aligns with the literature that suggests multisensory instruction is effective for early literacy (Birsh, 2011). Explicit phonics instruction was a common strategy, helping students understand the relationship between letters and sounds. Research supports the use of phonics as a crucial component of early reading instruction (Ehri et al., 2001). Teachers used interactive read-alouds to engage students and reinforce alphabetic knowledge. This method is supported by studies that highlight its benefits in promoting literacy skills (Zucker et al., 2009). Incorporating games and activities was another effective strategy. Games make learning fun and interactive, which enhances student engagement and retention (Mraz et al., 2008). Teachers tailored their instruction to meet the diverse needs of students, recognizing that learners progress at different rates. Differentiated instruction is essential for addressing the individual needs of students (Tomlinson, 2001).

#### Sample IDI Interview Excerpts

1. Improved Engagement Through Multisensory Approaches: "Using multisensory activities really helps the children stay engaged. When they can see, touch, and hear the letters, it makes learning more interactive and memorable" (Birsh, 2011).
2. **\*\*Effectiveness of Phonics Instruction\*\***: "Explicit phonics instruction has been incredibly effective. Teaching the children the sounds that each letter makes and how to blend these sounds together has greatly improved their reading skills" (Ehri et al., 2001).
3. **\*\*Challenges with Resource Availability\*\***: "One of the biggest challenges is the lack of resources. We often have to get creative with the materials we have, but it would be beneficial to have more books and manipulatives specifically designed for phonics instruction" (DepEd, 2018).
4. **\*\*Interactive Read-Alouds\*\***: "Interactive read-alouds are a great way to engage the students. They love listening to stories and participating in discussions about the characters and plot, which also helps them recognize letters and words" (Zucker et al., 2009).
5. **\*\*Games and Activities\*\***: "Incorporating games into our lessons makes learning fun and interactive. The students enjoy playing games that involve letter recognition and phonemic awareness, and it helps reinforce what they've learned in a playful setting" (Mraz et al., 2008).
6. **\*\*Differentiated Instruction\*\***: "Differentiating instruction is crucial because not all students learn at the same pace. I tailor my lessons to meet the needs of each student, whether they need more advanced challenges or additional support" (Tomlinson, 2001).
7. **\*\*Professional Development Needs\*\***: "There is a need for more professional development opportunities focused on early literacy. Training on the latest strategies and resources would be very helpful in enhancing our teaching practices" (Garet et al., 2001).
8. **\*\*Parental Involvement\*\***: "Getting parents involved in their child's literacy development is very important. We encourage parents to read with their children at home and provide them with resources and tips on how to support their learning" (Darling-Hammond, 2013).
9. **\*\*Impact of Socio-Economic Factors\*\***: "Socio-economic factors play a big role in students' literacy development. Some children come to school with very little exposure to books and letters, which makes it challenging to get them up to speed with their peers" (Pascua, 2020).
10. **\*\*Classroom Environment\*\***: "Creating a positive and supportive classroom environment is essential. When students feel safe and encouraged, they are more willing to take risks and engage in learning activities" (Vygotsky, 1978).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that effective strategies for enhancing learners' alphabetic knowledge involve engaging and varied instructional methods. Multisensory approaches, explicit phonics instruction, interactive read-alouds, and incorporating games and activities are particularly effective in enhancing alphabetic knowledge. Teachers' ability to tailor instruction to meet diverse student needs through differentiated instruction is also crucial. However, the study also highlights significant challenges such as limited resources, inadequate professional development, and varying levels of student readiness, which can impede the effectiveness of these strategies. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive support and professional development for teachers.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve instructional practices and support Grade 1 teachers in enhancing learners' alphabetic knowledge:

1. **\*\*Professional Development\*\***: Provide ongoing training for teachers on effective literacy instruction strategies. Professional development programs should focus on equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to implement multisensory approaches, phonics instruction, and differentiated instruction effectively (Garet et al., 2001).
2. **\*\*Resource Allocation\*\***: Ensure that schools have the necessary resources to support diverse instructional methods. This includes providing adequate teaching materials, access to technology, and classroom supplies that facilitate interactive and engaging learning experiences (DepEd, 2018).
3. **\*\*Collaborative Learning\*\***: Encourage teachers to share best practices and collaborate on developing innovative teaching strategies. Creating professional learning communities can help teachers exchange ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and support each other in implementing effective instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

4. **Parental Involvement**: Engage parents in supporting their children's literacy development at home. Schools should provide resources and guidance to parents on how to reinforce alphabetic knowledge through activities such as reading aloud, playing literacy games, and practicing letter recognition (Pascua, 2020).

5. **Addressing Socio-Economic Disparities**: Implement targeted interventions to support students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools should identify and provide additional support to students who may lack pre-literacy skills due to socio-economic factors, ensuring that all learners have an equal opportunity to develop alphabetic knowledge (DepEd, 2018).

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