EXPLORING THE TEACHER EXPERIENCE:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO DEPED'S
DROP-EVERYTHING-AND-READ
(DEAR) PROGRAM

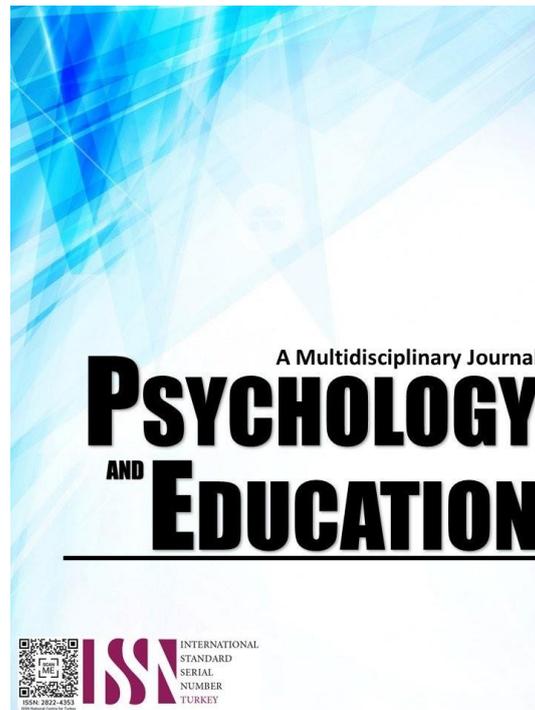# Exploring the Teacher Experience: A Phenomenological Inquiry Into DepEd's Drop- Everything-And-Read (DEAR) Program

Felinita III R. Doronio*, Henry E. Lemana II, Gretchen Mhee P. Llaneta
Jimmar J. Amarado, Ana Lou O. Bucag, Mherriel Joy A. Comeros
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

Reading intervention programs pose intricate challenges for school implementers, particularly the educators leading them. Employing phenomenology as a qualitative research methodology, this study charts a compelling investigative path. It aims to plumb the depths of lived experiences, convictions, and perspectives of educators who occupy pivotal roles in executing the DEAR program. Drawing from a purposively selected group of six participants in the Davao region, Philippines, this research employs semi-structured interviews subjected to meticulous thematic analysis. The study has illuminated themes that intricately capture participants' interactions with the program, vividly portraying educators' roles in program implementation: "Igniting Passion" probes the motivations that propel teachers, "Facing the Storm" delves into the encountered challenges, "Navigating the Tides" spotlights coping strategies, while "Learning and Transformation Through the Program" focuses on insights garnered from participation. The ultimate theme, "Guiding the Path Forward: Strengthening the Program," encapsulates participants' suggestions for enhancing and perpetuating program efficacy. These findings enrich discussions on reading interventions, underscore the indispensable roles of educators in nurturing reading skills, cultivating a love for literature, and nurturing lifelong learners. Implications drawn from these themes underscore the pivotal importance of support, collaboration, unwavering dedication, and proactive adaptations in effectually implementing reading programs.

Keywords: *drop-everything-and-read (DEAR) intervention, teacher experience, phenomenology*

Introduction

A reading intervention constitutes a pivotal component of systematic education, catering to students facing reading challenges by providing them with supplementary assistance in honing their comprehension skills and advancing toward grade-level reading proficiency (Boulay et al., 2015; Suggate, 2016). These structured instructional frameworks expedite the progress of individuals encountering reading difficulties, thus enabling them to bridge the gap and reach the expected reading standards for their grades (Ritchey et al., 2017). However, although these intervention programs have yielded fruitful outcomes across various global educational contexts, the preparation, execution, and long-term maintenance of such initiatives have proven intricate and laborious, particularly for school implementers, notably the educators involved.

An in-depth study conducted in the Southwestern United States by Velten and Mokhtari (2015) unveiled intricate challenges within the after-class intervention program. These encompass the intricate facets of program implementation and evaluation, spanning the identification of underperforming students suitable for program enrollment, the training and selection of adept instructional staff, the quest for suitable spatial provisions within the school premises, the encouragement of reticent students to partake, and the orchestration of comprehensive pre and post assessments to gauge program efficacy. This exhaustive examination highlighted three pivotal challenges and offered potential remedies to enhance instructional quality, optimize instruction dosage, and bolster program fidelity (Velten & Mokhtari, 2015).

Parallel challenges have likewise surfaced in the Philippines, as observed in Acita et al.'s (2022) research. This investigation illuminated difficulties plaguing the reading program, including scarcity of resources, struggles in defining the purpose of reading, unfamiliarity with letters, sounds, words, and accurate pronunciation, and hurdles in implementing analytical strategies. The intervention's execution faced obstacles, predominantly rooted in students' comprehension difficulties and teachers' struggles in dissecting vocabulary due to students' limited word knowledge (Acita et al., 2022).

Numerous research endeavors (Caga, 2019; Cruz et al., 2022; Susena et al., 2022; Weikert, 2018) collectively emphasize the intricate landscape associated with implementing reading interventions. These studies consistently shed light on the formidable challenges accompanying enhancing reading skills. This phenomenon holds across a wide array of contexts, as

scholars and practitioners alike have meticulously chronicled the substantial obstacles that emerge when attempting to pinpoint struggling students, deliver customized instruction, allocate the necessary resources, and assess the tangible impact of these interventions. The amalgamation of these research findings underscores an undeniable reality: executing a reading intervention is intricate and exacting. It calls for comprehensive forethought and meticulous planning, recognizing the multifaceted nature of the challenges that may arise. Moreover, the evidence from these studies unequivocally highlights the need for continuous and unwavering support throughout the intervention's implementation. Only through a steadfast commitment to thorough planning and sustained assistance can the complexities inherent in executing effective reading interventions be effectively navigated.

Describing DEAR: The Drop-Everything-And-Read Program

The Department of Education's proactive approach becomes unmistakably apparent in operationalizing the Drop-Everything-And-Read (DEAR) program, which was introduced in response to the guidelines outlined in DepEd Memorandum No. 22, s. 2011, as discussed by Acita et al. (2022). Originating as a noteworthy practice observed in educational systems abroad, the DEAR initiative stands as a meticulously fashioned strategy aimed at deeply embedding the act of reading into the very fabric of the educational experience (Caga, 2019). This strategic undertaking is purposefully designed to enhance reading's status as a habitual and integral pursuit within the academic realm (Sanden, 2014).

With meticulous planning, the DEAR program is structured to cultivate a sustained and immersive engagement with various forms of written content. The initiative strives to create an environment where students consume text and actively engage, question, and explore diverse discourses by immersing students in this multifaceted interaction with reading materials. This calculated approach instills a genuine passion for reading and encourages a deeper understanding of the ideas and perspectives conveyed through written expression (Acita et al., 2022; Caga, 2019).

At the heart of the DEAR program lies the fundamental aim of nurturing a heightened connection to textual content and developing robust comprehension skills. Students are empowered to exercise agency at the designated DEAR intervals by selecting and perusing textual materials, dedicating

approximately 15 to 20 minutes to this immersive activity before commencing regular class sessions (Tado, 2020). A critical juncture in the DEAR process involves the students' succinct retelling of the chosen narrative, an exercise meticulously designed to gauge their comprehension mastery. This facet of comprehension is intricately woven with the students' ability to draw insightful inferences that bridge the textual content with their pre-existing cognitive frameworks, bridging the gap between localized understanding and broader conceptual contexts (Delamente, 2019.)

Central to this process is the assertion put forth by Sparks (2019), wherein the synergy between comprehension and inference is underscored as pivotal to effectively interlinking new information with the students' existing knowledge reservoir. This harmonious interaction forms the bedrock of the DEAR program's success, encapsulating the twin accomplishments of adeptly relaying the narrative's essence while simultaneously intertwining it with the students' contextual insights. Sparks (2019) implies that this symbiotic fusion serves as a significant milestone, propelling students toward enriched reading engagement and heightened proficiency in comprehension—an essential stride in their educational journey.

Within the Philippines context, quantitative research endeavors have concentrated on understanding the DEAR program's effectiveness in enhancing learners' reading capabilities. For example, Delamente's (2019) study aimed to enhance the reading capabilities of Grade 5 students grappling with reading comprehension difficulties, as evidenced by the high prevalence of students categorized as Frustration level during the Phil IRI Pretest conducted in July 2016. Among the 31 pupils assessed, 100% fell into the Frustration level in Overall Reading, with 39% at the Independent Level, 19% at the Instructional Level, and 42% at the Frustration Level in Word Recognition. The study introduced the DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) intervention to address this issue. This initiative involved dedicating a daily time slot of around 15-20 minutes for students to engage in reading activities, accompanied by an additional 15 minutes for reflection and listing five words with meanings for later spelling activities. The goal was to bolster reading competence and cultivate improved study habits. Subsequent results from the Phil-IRI Post-Test revealed a noteworthy enhancement in reading comprehension among Grade 5 students exposed to the DEAR technique, with a significant improvement (t= -7.133, p= .000) and a confidence interval of 34.256 to

61.744 for the score difference. The study emphasized the positive impact of sustained silent reading, akin to the DEAR approach, on students' reading profiles. It enabled designated periods for reading within the remedial schedule, fostering engagement with reading materials and books within the classroom and school premises. This approach not only positively influenced reading skills but also facilitated the cultivation of effective study habits. Overall, Delamente's study underscored the effectiveness of the DEAR intervention in bolstering Grade 5 students' reading comprehension, evidenced by their marked progress from their initial pretest performance.

In another study focusing on addressing reading comprehension challenges among Grade three pupils at a frustration level, Sangria and Reduca (2019) introduced Project DEAR and 12:30 Reading Habit as an intervention program at Bendita Elementary School. This initiative aimed to provide enhanced exposure, comprehension strategy understanding, and skill development through guided practice, fostering greater reading independence. Employing a pre-experimental design, the study assessed pupils' reading abilities using pre- and post-tests, analyzing data through behavior rating scales, percentages, means, standard deviations, and T-Tests. Results from a selected group of 44 Grade 3 pupils revealed a significant improvement from frustration to instructional reading levels after implementing the intervention. This study underscored the program's effectiveness in enhancing reading proficiency and comprehension among Grade 3 students, showcasing its valuable role in addressing reading difficulties and promoting improved reading skills.

Tado's (2020) study focused on evaluating the effectiveness and challenges of the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Program in relation to Teacher Education Students' (TES) reading preferences, vocabulary skills, and comprehension abilities. The study aimed to assess the extent of DEAR Program implementation, determine students' reading preferences, measure their vocabulary and comprehension skills, explore potential relationships among variables, and gather insights from TES regarding their perceptions of the program. The research employed various methods, including analyzing DEAR logs for implementation details, administering a validated test for vocabulary and comprehension skills, conducting a survey for reading preferences, and using group interviews to gather TES viewpoints on the program. The findings indicated that the DEAR Program had limited impact on enhancing TES vocabulary and comprehension skills, with

proficiency levels ranging from low to moderate. While reading preferences showed no significant correlation with skills, a significant relationship was observed between students' vocabulary and comprehension abilities.

These investigations (Delamente, 2019; Sangria & Reduca, 2019; Tado, 2020) have predominantly utilized quantitative research methods, relying on descriptive and correlational statistical analyses to gather insights into this aspect. These studies have aimed to quantitatively measure students' viewpoints and gauge their responses to the program's impact. However, a notable gap persists in the research landscape. While much attention has been directed toward students' perspectives, there needs to be more exploration from the vantage point of educators. Specifically, the involvement of teachers' insights and experiences concerning the DEAR program in the Philippines has yet to be explored. Adopting a different methodological approach that delves into the qualitative aspects of teachers' perceptions becomes imperative to address this void.

The present study uses phenomenology as a qualitative research methodology to present a compelling pathway for this inquiry. This research endeavors to delve into the lived experiences, convictions, and viewpoints of educators who occupy a pivotal role in the execution of the DEAR program to explore the intricacies and subtleties that underlie teachers' engagements with the program, thereby illuminating the multifaceted landscape of challenges, achievements, and potential avenues for enhancement. This all-encompassing perspective engenders a holistic comprehension of the program's dynamics and reverberations—encompassing its impact on students and the educators who shepherd its implementation.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers as implementers of the DEAR program?
2. How do these experiences shape their insights and suggestions to other teachers and the wider academic community?

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, explicitly employing the phenomenological design. Creswell et al. (2007) explain that phenomenology

underscores the need to understand human experiences deeply. Given the study's focus on participants intimately familiar with implementing the DEAR program, this approach facilitates a nuanced synthesis of their perspectives, contributing to an in-depth interpretation of their collective encounters (Creswell in Webb & Welsh, 2019).

Research Participants

The study's participants comprised six teachers acting as school reading coordinators who implemented the DEAR reading program as a reading intervention across Davao Region schools. These participants were selected using a combined approach of convenient and purposive sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). The choice of Davao Region (Region XI) was purposeful and aligned with the researchers' backgrounds spanning various regional provinces. Stringent criteria guided participant selection. Eligible participants were public school teachers designated as school reading coordinators in Region XI, possessing a service history of at least three years. An age range of 30 to 40 years was specified to ensure diverse perspectives. This deliberate selection encompassed both genders and aimed to include individuals genuinely immersed in and experiencing the focal phenomenon—the implementation of the DEAR program.

Data Sources and Instrument

Data for this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews, employing a meticulously crafted interview guide. This guide featured open-ended questions strategically designed to comprehensively explore participants' experiences within the Drop-Everything-And-Read (DEAR) program. These inquiries spanned various dimensions, encompassing challenges encountered during program implementation, strategies employed to address these challenges, and reflections on the program's outcomes and effectiveness. To ensure the robustness and reliability of the interview guide, it underwent a rigorous validation process involving three external experts specialized in education and qualitative research. Their invaluable feedback and insights were thoughtfully incorporated to refine the guide, enhancing its clarity, relevance, and capacity to elicit meaningful and insightful responses from participants.

Data Collection Procedure

The study's initiation involved the main author, who obtained approval from her institution's research committee after sending the proposal for review and a formal letter seeking permission to conduct the research. Upon receiving approval from the institution, copies were shared with the principals or school heads of the identified participants. Subsequently, the researchers communicated with the participants through Facebook Messenger, distributing informed consent forms to each. These forms clarified the study's purpose and participants' roles, and participants were asked to review and sign them, confirming their voluntary involvement. A comprehensive online orientation followed, outlining the study's objectives and the significance of participants' contributions. They were then encouraged to participate in individual interviews, forming the primary data collection avenue. Lastly, the researchers stressed the importance of recording interviews, highlighting the essential role of personal perspectives and experiences in these discussions. This approach underscored the absence of right or wrong answers, fostering a non-judgmental environment throughout the data collection process.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed as the analytical framework in this study (Sundler et al., 2019). The data obtained from individual interviews underwent transcription, with relevant statements sorted into core ideas. Through careful thematic analysis, data were categorized, leading to the identification of significant themes that encompassed various facets of the phenomenon. To enhance the rigor of the findings, the data was reviewed and endorsed by three external data analysts, bolstering the credibility of the analysis. Additionally, member checking was applied, allowing participants to validate the identified themes, further ensuring the accuracy and validity of the study's outcomes.

Ethical Consideration

To ensure participants' voluntary involvement, researchers provided a comprehensive explanation of the informed consent form, followed by a request for their signature to affirm their willingness to participate and ensure their safety throughout the study. This process not only established transparent expectations but also encouraged openness. After signing, participants received an orientation regarding the interview procedures. To safeguard their rights and privacy, participants were informed about the study's

details and ethical principles, such as anonymity and confidentiality (each participant was assigned a pseudonym, i.e., ReadAd1…ReadAd6), with aliases assigned for further confidentiality. The study adhered to ethical standards by employing measures to minimize risks through open communication, feedback, and vigilant concerns monitoring. Legal requirements and confidentiality were maintained, protecting participants' dignity, rights, safety, and privacy. The study also considered individual differences, accommodating participants' preferences during data collection.

Results

Themes have been generated that encapsulate the participants' lived experiences, providing a comprehensive insight into their journey as implementers of the DEAR program. These themes illuminate the intricate interplay of motivations, challenges, coping strategies, insights, and suggestions that shape their engagement with the program. Each theme forms a vivid narrative thread, weaving together the diverse and meaningful facets of their experiences, ultimately painting a rich and multifaceted portrait of their roles as educators and advocates of reading.

Igniting Passion: The Heartbeat Behind the Pursuits. This theme delves into the profound motivation driving teachers who ardently embrace their roles as implementers of the DEAR program. This theme illuminates the inner flames that fuel their dedication, shedding light on the personal narratives, aspirations, and fervent commitments that inspire educators to embark on this transformative journey. In that regard, the data speaks that the underlying reason that breathes life into teachers' pursuit of the DEAR program is deeply rooted in the sense of reward and fulfillment derived from their role as advocates for student learning. A sincere dedication to the program drives the school reading coordinators. They view it as a rewarding career that allows them to fulfill their responsibilities and address students' reading needs. Their genuine advocacy and passion for the program serve as a driving force that propels them to invest significant time and effort into its implementation.

My unyielding dedication to the DEAR program's advocacy is a wellspring of profound fulfillment. This fulfillment resonates deeply, especially when I witness my students fearlessly conquering intricate English words. Their newfound happiness emanates from the learning nurtured by our reading intervention.

(ReadAd2)ReadAd1 reflected on her journey, noting that sacrifices are intrinsic to a sense of fulfillment. She acknowledged the investment of time and effort, even during breaks, as an integral part of their path. Despite the challenges, the path remains inherently gratifying. The transformation of struggling readers into instructional readers serves as a reaffirmation of the profound worth of her sacrifices.

The data convey that while the participants acknowledge that their journey may have its ups and downs, they find fulfillment in the progress and achievements of their students. Their dedication is driven by witnessing the transformative impact of the DEAR program on their students' abilities and happiness, especially when observing students mastering complex words and becoming enthusiastic readers. Despite the challenges and sacrifices of the role, the teachers' sense of fulfillment stems from the tangible outcomes they witness as struggling readers transform into proficient learners. This intrinsic motivation, tied to the joy of witnessing student growth and success, underscores the teachers' commitment to the DEAR program implementation.

Facing the Storm: Challenges in the Journey. This theme encapsulates the various difficulties and obstacles encountered by participants during their engagement with the DEAR program. This theme provides a comprehensive portrayal of the challenges that educators grapple with while implementing the program, providing a focused lens through which these hurdles are explored and understood. For the participants, implementing the DEAR program has its share of challenges. One significant issue is feeling alone as they struggle to get enough support from school staff and parents. This can make their days feel less fulfilling at times.

ReadAd3 shared, "My experiences are like a roller coaster. Some days, I'm content with what I've accomplished, but sometimes my day doesn't feel fulfilling." In agreement, ReadAd1 pointed out, "For me, it's tough because of the lack of support from our school principal and teachers." ReadAd2 also highlighted, "The parents of struggling readers aren't able to support their children's reading at home due to their busy schedules of finding food for the table."

Resource shortages are another hurdle these educators face. They often lack necessary materials like reading resources, printers, paper, and ink, making it hard to do their job well. ReadAd6 and ReadAd4 both point out this lack of resources, which can hinder their effectiveness.

Doronio et al.

Engaging unmotivated readers presents another challenge. According to the participants, many students show little interest in reading and often miss sessions. This makes it tough to assess and stay in touch with their progress. ReadAd1 mentions the difficulty of dealing with unmotivated readers as she explains:

Some students lose interest in reading and choose to play instead. Some even want to delay reading because they don't feel ready or have yet to practice at home. Teachers have faced these challenges in keeping students engaged and motivated in the DEAR program. (ReadAd1)

In the DEAR program journey, these challenges are like hurdles that educators strive to overcome. From managing without enough support to facing resource shortages and working with unmotivated readers, each challenge tests their dedication and determination.

Navigating the Tides: Coping Strategies in the Journey. The participants in the study have not only identified the challenges they encounter in the DEAR program implementation but have also been forthcoming about the strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles. By sharing their experiences, they have provided insights into their resourceful and adaptable methods for effectively navigating the intricate landscape of the DEAR program. This theme underscores the diverse and creative ways participants take the initiative to address and overcome the hurdles they encounter.

A prominent strategy employed by the teachers in the DEAR program implementation involves the unwavering commitment and dedication they invest in their roles. The participants underscored that a successful and sustainable program hinges on the solid commitment and dedication of educators and stakeholders.

Committing myself to overcoming difficulties has ignited a sense of resourcefulness and creativity within me. This has been particularly evident in generating reading materials, where I've been able to address the challenge of material scarcity effectively. Through dedication, I've found innovative ways to provide our students with the necessary resources, ensuring that their learning experience remains enriching and fulfilling despite the constraints. (ReadAd1)

ReadAd2 and ReadAd3 echoed ReadAd1's sentiment, highlighting that dedicated teachers foster encouragement and enable learners to grasp the significance of reading. This commitment, as ReadAd3 emphasized, aims to instill awareness of how reading profoundly influences prospects. ReadAd4 and ReadAd1 reinforced this notion, emphasizing that teachers' substantial commitment is pivotal in making the program effective and beneficial for learners.

Collaborating with stakeholders emerged as another crucial coping strategy embraced by the participants to surmount challenges in the DEAR journey. The teachers recognized the value of collaborating with community partners, local government units (LGUs), and private institutions to address resource limitations. ReadAd3 emphasized seeking support from community partners and the LGU to tackle material scarcity, while ReadAd2 emphasized the significance of collaboration between parents and teachers to ensure the program's sustainability and efficacy. This collaborative spirit extended to the home environment, as ReadAd1 acknowledged the support of family and co-workers in preparing reading materials. The involvement of parents in extending reading activities at home was also highlighted as a critical element in sustaining learning.

Participants also revealed their strategic approach to fostering learner engagement and motivation within the DEAR program. Employing diverse reading strategies emerged as a critical aspect of their coping mechanism. ReadAd2 highlighted the significance of offering a variety of reading materials to captivate learners' interest, while ReadAd3 stressed the importance of tailoring strategies to students' preferences and learning styles. Furthermore, the implementation of a reward system, as mentioned by ReadAd2, emerged as a successful technique for boosting learners' motivation by recognizing their accomplishments. These strategies collectively underline the teachers' adaptive methods for nurturing enthusiasm and active participation among learners, ultimately contributing to the program's effectiveness.

Learning and Transformation Through the Program. This theme encapsulates the valuable insights participants have garnered from their hands-on involvement in the DEAR program. Through their direct experiences, the participants have come to recognize the profound importance of reading as a foundational skill that enhances communication and nurtures creativity and imagination. This theme underscores the consensus among participants that fostering a love for reading is essential for students' growth and competency, contributing to their independence as learners.

Amid exploring the DEAR program's intricacies, participants like ReadAd1, ReadAd4, ReadAd6, ReadAd5, ReadAd3, and ReadAd2 uncovered profound insights that underscored the paramount significance of reading. Their collective experiences formed a realization that reading is a vital skill beyond mere communication. The DEAR program serves as a conduit for enhancing students' communication abilities, propelling them toward a transformative personal and academic growth journey.

Central to this theme is the participants' conviction that nurturing a love for reading is essential to this transformation. ReadAd1, ReadAd4, and ReadAd6 echoed that this love catalyzes building students' independent reading competence. The participants acknowledged that reading is the cornerstone upon which a spectrum of other skills - speaking, writing, and listening - find their foundation. Moreover, as one participant explained:

The dimensions of creativity and imagination that reading unlocks are genuinely significant. Reading can foster holistic growth in students, enabling them to explore their creative potential and expand their imaginative horizons. It's more than just acquiring knowledge; it's a gateway to holistic development that shapes their perspectives, enhances their communication skills, and encourages them to think beyond boundaries. (ReadAd5)

As the participants delved into their insights, they also recognized the pivotal role of educators in the program's transformative journey. ReadAd2 and ReadAd4 acknowledged that teachers are not merely educators but architects of students' thinking, comprehension, reactions, and decisions. Their role in fostering students' reading skills, as witnessed in DEAR sessions, emerges as a cornerstone of this theme. The transformative influence of educators goes beyond the classroom, shaping students' perspectives and abilities.

The participants' revelations also extended to the concept of program adaptation. ReadAd6, ReadAd2, and ReadAd3 attested to the importance of strategic planning and replanning for the program's success. Their shared understanding was that the program's design must align with students' needs, incorporating flexible approaches to ensure effectiveness. The need for strategic adjustments, exemplified by ReadAd3's emphasis on financial considerations, further highlights the participants' insights into the program's transformative nature.

Guiding the Path Forward: Strengthening the Program. This theme signifies the participants' role in the program's evolution. It underscores their valuable perspectives on sustaining and intensifying the program's impact, highlighting their commitment to its success. In this regard, sustaining and enhancing the program's effectiveness is a primary focus of participants' suggestions. ReadAd2 underscores the need for continuity, emphasizing that the program must be sustained to bolster students' literacy abilities, encompassing vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. ReadAd1 echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the crucial role of sustainability in the program's success.

Furthermore, participants advocate for the vigilant monitoring of the program's progress. In the words of ReadAd 6, "We need to intensify our efforts and ensure sustainability. Our aim is to cultivate a genuine love for reading that becomes a habit among our students." Moreover, according to ReadAd3, "Regular assessments are key. We must constantly gauge our progress, adjusting our instruction as needed. This proactive approach ensures that our efforts align with the students' evolving needs."

A crucial element highlighted by participants is allocating funds for program support. ReadAd4 asserts the significance of stakeholder involvement in funding allocation, while ReadAd5 and ReadAd6 stress the necessity of financial support for both teachers and materials. This financial backing is deemed essential for maintaining program integrity.The active involvement of all stakeholders emerges as a pivotal suggestion. ReadAd6 advocates for a holistic approach, urging schools to engage stakeholders firsthand to ensure a deeper understanding of the DEAR program's objectives. The role of parents and local officials in program involvement is emphasized, emphasizing unity in achieving common goals.

Another recommendation centers on diversifying reading materials to encourage repeated engagement.

It's crucial for stakeholders to join forces and offer a wide array of reading materials that address different aspects of learning. By collaborating, we can establish a rich reading environment that fosters comprehensive student growth and learning. (ReadAd4)

ReadAd6 echoes this sentiment, recognizing the importance of resource provision in sustaining the program's effectiveness. Moreover, the participants also stress the significance of making reading enjoyable and exciting. ReadAd1 suggests

incorporating engaging activities like games to boost student engagement, an idea reaffirmed by ReadAd6. The need for consistent dedication to the program is also emphasized, with ReadAd6 highlighting the importance of earnest implementation beyond mere reporting.

Discussion

The results of this study have illuminated the complex and enriching journey undertaken by public school reading advocates in implementing the DEAR program. The emerging themes provide a comprehensive insight into their experiences, encompassing motivations, challenges, coping strategies, insights, and suggestions. These themes collectively paint a vivid portrait of the educators' roles as facilitators and champions of reading.

Igniting Passion: The Heartbeat Behind the Pursuits. The data underscores that teachers' commitment to the program is grounded in the intrinsic satisfaction of being advocates for student learning. Despite challenges, teachers find fulfillment in witnessing struggling readers evolve into proficient learners. This intrinsic motivation prevails over program-related difficulties. This suggests that educators' dedication thrives when their efforts yield positive student outcomes, underscoring the value of emotional rewards tied to impactful teaching. This interpretation aligns with established psychological theories, such as Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (as cited in Adams et al., 2017; Deci et al.,2017; Ng et al., 2012), which stress that autonomy and competence enhance intrinsic motivation. This holds true in education, where teachers connecting their work to student progress experience heightened intrinsic motivation (Ng, 2018). Furthermore, teacher satisfaction and retention research corroborate this, showing that teachers linked to student growth report higher job satisfaction and longer tenures (Banerjee et al., 2017; Lavy & Bocker, 2018). Yang et al. (2022) then accentuate the pivotal role of emotional gratification in sustaining a teacher's commitment.

Facing the Storm: Challenges in the Journey. The study delves into the challenges educators face in the program, highlighting three main issues: inadequate support from schools and parents, resource scarcity, and engaging disinterested readers. These findings illuminate the potential impact on both educator well-being and program effectiveness. The lack of support and resources can demotivate educators, hindering engaging learning experiences. Additionally, the

struggle with unmotivated readers suggests program design flaws. Scholarly research (see Sato et al., 2022; Yaghoubinejad et al., 2017) aligns with these challenges, emphasizing shared hurdles among educators. Supporting studies (e.g., Arifin, 2015; Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015; Kareem & Hussein, 2019) indicate that institutional support and resources positively influence educator effectiveness in advocacy. Moreover, other studies (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015; Kennedy, 2014; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015) underscore the significance of offering professional development and resources to enhance teacher engagement, aligning with addressing support and resource gaps.

Navigating the Tides: Coping Strategies in the Journey. Participants identify their obstacles and share their resourceful methods for navigating these challenges. The strategies include a solid commitment to their roles, collaboration with stakeholders, and employing diverse reading strategies to engage and motivate learners. The result suggests that educators involved in the DEAR program employ various coping strategies to overcome challenges, ensuring the program's effectiveness and sustainability. The interpretation here is that educators in the DEAR program exhibit adaptability and resourcefulness in the face of challenges. Their commitment, collaboration, and strategic approaches underscore their determination to provide students with meaningful learning experiences despite obstacles. Research (e.g., Dixon et al., 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2019; Von der Embseet et al., 2016) on teacher efficacy and coping strategies aligns with the findings. These studies imply that teachers who are committed and dedicated to their roles are more likely to find innovative ways to address challenges; their dedication then contributes to higher job satisfaction and better student outcomes (Banerjee et al., 2017). Collaboration with stakeholders has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of educational programs. Research emphasizes the importance of involving parents, community partners, and local authorities in creating a supportive and conducive learning environment (Blank et al., 2015; Gross et al., 2015). Collaborative efforts contribute to better resource access and a more comprehensive educational experience (Wheeler et al., 2018). Furthermore, using diverse teaching strategies and fostering learner engagement are central to effective pedagogy. Research (e.g., Coubergs et al., 2017; Heilporn et al., 2021; Suwastini et al., 2021) on differentiated instruction and student motivation supports the idea that tailoring strategies to students' individual needs and interests can enhance their engagement and overall

learning.

Learning and Transformation Through the Program. The findings show that the participants recognize reading as a foundational skill beyond communication, nurturing creativity, imagination, and holistic growth. They emphasize that fostering a love for reading is crucial for students' development, contributing to their independence as learners. Participants also highlight the pivotal role of educators in this transformative journey and emphasize the importance of program adaptation to meet students' needs. The result suggests that participants in the DEAR program have gained profound insights into the transformative power of reading and the program itself. These findings discussed align with established educational research. Studies on the importance of reading highlight its multifaceted benefits, including cognitive development (Zauche et al., 2016), vocabulary expansion (Gonzales et al., 2014), and enhanced creativity (Wang, 2012). Research on teacher influence emphasizes that educators play a central role in shaping students' attitudes, skills, and values (Blazar & Craft, 2017; Keiler, 2018). Additionally, literature on program adaptation and responsive teaching underscores the significance of tailoring educational approaches to suit learners' needs (Gay, 2018; Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019; Warren, 2018). Hence, as the participants' narratives imply, educational programs should be flexible, considerate of learners' contexts, and adaptable to changing circumstances.

Guiding the Path Forward: Strengthening the Program. The findings also provide valuable suggestions to sustain and enhance the DEAR reading program's impact. Participants emphasized the importance of continuity, monitoring progress, allocating funds, involving stakeholders, diversifying reading materials, and making reading enjoyable to ensure the program's success. The result suggests that participants in the program are deeply committed to its evolution and effectiveness. The theme discussed aligns with established educational strategies and research findings. Research on program sustainability emphasizes the importance of ongoing efforts and monitoring to ensure long-term success (e.g., Lindenmayer & Likens, 2009; Logachev et al., 2021). Banerjee et at. (2017) also emphasize that collaborative efforts and support from various stakeholders contribute to program effectiveness. Additionally, literature on engaging and enjoyable learning experiences supports the idea that incorporating interactive and enjoyable activities can enhance student engagement and motivation (Carroll

et al., 2021l; Erbaggio et al., 2012; Rojabi et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant in programs like DEAR, which generally aim to promote a love for reading.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has identified several themes that capture the participants' experiences with the DEAR program. Each theme provides a comprehensive perspective, vividly depicting their roles as educators implementing the program. The themes include "Igniting Passion," which explores the motivation driving teachers, "Facing the Storm," which discusses the challenges they encounter, "Navigating the Tides," which highlights their coping strategies, and "Learning and Transformation Through the Program," which focuses on the insights they gained from the program. Lastly, the theme "Guiding the Path Forward: Strengthening the Program" encapsulates their suggestions for improving and sustaining the program's effectiveness. These findings contribute to the discourse surrounding reading interventions, underscoring educators' pivotal role in nurturing students' reading skills, cultivating a love for reading, and, ultimately, fostering lifelong learners. The implications drawn from these themes emphasize the significance of support, collaboration, dedication, and proactive adaptations in effectively implementing reading programs. Thus, this research's contribution lies in its holistic portrayal of educators as reading advocates, emphasizing their multifaceted experiences and significance in enhancing students' literacy skills, fostering a love for reading, and driving program sustainability. By unveiling these nuanced dimensions, the research enriches the global knowledge landscape of education, offering insights that can inform educational policies, pedagogical practices, and program implementation strategies worldwide.

References

Acita, D., Egtob, M., Cabus, S., Luceñara, C., Luceñara, D., & Saro, J. (2022). Challenges, difficulties, and effective enactment of remedial reading programs: A qualitative-phenomenological approach. Psychology and Education, 5(1), 553-564.

Adams, N., Little, T. D., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-determination theory. In M. L. Wehmeyer, K. A. Shogren, T. D. Little, & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), Development of self-determination through the life-course (pp. 47–54). Springer Science + Business Media. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1042-6_4

Arifin, H. M. (2015). The influence of competence, motivation, and organisational culture to high school teacher job satisfaction and performance. International Education Studies, 8(1), 38-45.

Banerjee, N., Stearns, E., Moller, S., & Mickelson, R. A. (2017). Teacher job satisfaction and student achievement: The roles of teacher professional community and teacher collaboration in schools. American Journal of Education, 123(2), 000-000.

Blank, M. J. (2015). Building sustainable health and education partnerships: Stories from local communities. Journal of School Health, 85(11), 810-816.

Blazar, D., & Kraft, M. A. (2017). Teacher and teaching effects on students' attitudes and behaviors. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 39(1), 146-170.

Boulay, B., Goodson, B., Frye, M., Blocklin, M., & Price, C. (2015). Summary of research generated by striving readers on the effectiveness of interventions for struggling adolescent readers. (NCEE 2016-4001). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

Caga, S. (2019). Effectiveness of project DEAR (Develop and Enhance Ability in Reading) to reading skills of grade II pupils of Isidro Cuadra Elementary School. Ascendens Asia Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Abstracts, 3(2B). https://ojs.aaresearchindex.com/index.php/AAJMRA/article/view/79 53

Carroll, M., Lindsey, S., Chaparro, M., & Winslow, B. (2021). An applied model of learner engagement and strategies for increasing learner engagement in the modern educational environment. Interactive Learning Environments, 29(5), 757-771.

Chalmers, D., & Gardiner, D. (2015). An evaluation framework for identifying the effectiveness and impact of academic teacher development programmes. Studies in Educational Evaluation, 46(1), 81-91.

Coleman-Void, D. A. (2022). Teacher perceptions of the impact of the iReady reading software: A phenomenological study [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University].

Coubergs, C., Struyven, K., Vanthournout, G., & Engels, N. (2017). Measuring teachers' perceptions about differentiated instruction: The DI-Quest instrument and model. Studies in Educational Evaluation, 53(1), 41-54.

Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. The Counseling Psychologist, 35(2), 236-264.

Cruz, J., Mendes, S. A., Marques, S., Alves, D., & Cadime, I. (2022). Face-to-face versus remote: Effects of an intervention in reading fluency during COVID-19 pandemic. Frontiers in Education, 6:817711. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.817711

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1980). Self-determination theory: When mind mediates behavior. The Journal of Mind and Behavior, 1(1), 33-43.

Deci, E. L., Olafsen, A. H., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-determination theory in work organizations: The state of a science. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 4(1), 19-43.

Delamente, L. (2019). The effectiveness of drop everything and read as an intervention to enhance the reading level of the grade five pupils of Dughan Elementary School. Ascendens Asia Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Abstracts, 3(2I). https://ojs.aaresearchindex.com/index.php/AAJMRA/article/view/75 44

Dixon, F. A., Yssel, N., McConnell, J. M., & Hardin, T. (2014). Differentiated instruction, professional development, and teacher efficacy. Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 37(2), 111-127.

Erbaggio, P., Gopalakrishnan, S., Hobbs, S., & Liu, H. (2012). Enhancing student engagement through online authentic materials. IALLT Journal of Language Learning Technologies, 42(2), 27-51.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5(1), 1-4.

Gay, G. (2018). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice. Teachers College Press.

Gonzalez, J. E., Pollard-Durodola, S., Simmons, D. C., Taylor, A. B., Davis, M. J., Fogarty, M., & Simmons, L. (2014). Enhancing preschool children's vocabulary: Effects of teacher talk before, during and after shared reading. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29(2), 214-226.

Gross, J., Haines, S. J., Hill, C., Francis, G. L., Blue-Banning, M., & Turnbull, A. P. (2015). Strong school-community partnerships in inclusive schools are "part of the fabric of the school... we count on them". The School Community Journal, 25(2), 9-34.

Heilporn, G., Lakhal, S., & Bélisle, M. (2021). An examination of teachers' strategies to foster student engagement in blended learning in higher education. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 18(1), 1-25.

Kareem, M. A., & Hussein, I. J. (2019). The impact of human resource development on employee performance and organizational effectiveness. Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy, 7(3/25), 307-322.

Keiler, L. S. (2018). Teachers' roles and identities in student-centered classrooms. International Journal of STEMeducation, 5(1), 1-20.

Kennedy, A. (2014). Understanding continuing professional development: The need for theory to impact on policy and practice. Professional Development in Education, 40(5), 688-697.

Lavy, S., & Bocker, S. (2018). A path to teacher happiness? A sense of meaning affects teacher–student relationships, which affect job satisfaction. Journal of Happiness Studies, 19(5), 1485-1503. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-017-9883-9

Lindenmayer, D. B., & Likens, G. E. (2009). Adaptive monitoring: a new paradigm for long-term research and monitoring. Trends in ecology & evolution, 24(9), 482-486.

Logachev, M. S., Orekhovskaya, N. A., Seregina, T. N., Shishov, S., & Volvak, S. F. (2021). Information system for monitoring and managing the quality of educational programs. Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, 7(93), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7010093

Mokhtari, K., & Velten, J. (2015). Strengthening academic vocabulary with word generation helps sixth-grade students improve reading comprehension. Middle Grades Research Journal, 10(3), 23-42.

Ng, B. (2018). The neuroscience of growth mindset and intrinsic motivation. Brain Sciences, 8(2), 20. https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci8020020

Ng, J. Y., Ntoumanis, N., Thøgersen-Ntoumani, C., Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M., Duda, J. L., & Williams, G. C. (2012). Self-

determination theory applied to health contexts: A meta-analysis. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 7(4), 325-340.

Puspitarini, Y. D., & Hanif, M. (2019). Using learning media to increase learning motivation in elementary school. Anatolian Journal of Education, 4(2), 53-60.

Quinney, L., Dwyer, T., & Chapman, Y. (2016). Who, where, and how of interviewing peers: Implications for a phenomenological study. Sage Open, 6(3), 2158244016659688.

Ritchey, K. D., Palombo, K., Silverman, R. D., & Speece, D. L. (2017). Effects of an informational text reading comprehension intervention for fifth-grade students. Learning Disability Quarterly, 40(2), 68-80.

Rojabi, A. R., Setiawan, S., Munir, A., Purwati, O., Safriyani, R., Hayuningtyas, N., ... & Amumpuni, R. S. (2022). Kahoot, is it fun or unfun? Gamifying vocabulary learning to boost exam scores, engagement, and motivation. Frontiers in Education, 7, 939884. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.939884

Sanden, S. (2014). Out of the shadow of SSR: Real teachers' classroom independent reading practices. Language Arts, 91(3), 161-175.

Sato, M., Fernández Castillo, F., & Oyanedel, J. C. (2022). Teacher motivation and burnout of English-as-a-foreign-language teachers: Do demotivators really demotivate them? Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 891452.

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2019). Teacher self-efficacy and collective teacher efficacy: relations with perceived job resources and job demands, feeling of belonging, and teacher engagement. Creative Education, 10(7), 1400-1424.

Sparks, R. L. (2019). Why reading is a challenge for US L2 learners: The impact of cognitive, ecological, and psychological factors in L2 comprehension. Foreign Language Annals, 52(4), 727-743.

Sucena, A., Silva, A. F., & Marques, C. (2022). Reading skills intervention during the Covid-19 pandemic. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 9(1), 45-51. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01059-x

Suggate, S. P. (2016). A meta-analysis of the long-term effects of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension interventions. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 49(1), 77-96.

Sundler, A. J., Lindberg, E., Nilsson, C., & Palmér, L. (2019). Qualitative thematic analysis based on descriptive phenomenology. Nursing Open, 6(3), 733-739.

Suwastini, N. K. A., Rinawati, N. K. A., Jayantini, I. G. A. S. R., & Dantes, G. R. (2021). Differentiated instruction across EFL classrooms: A conceptual review. TELL-US Journal, 7(1), 14-41.

Tado, A. W. (2020). The drop everything and read (DEAR) program and the reading preferences, vocabulary and comprehension skills. Letran Research Center. https://research-manila.letran.edu.ph/article/159

Von der Embse, N. P., Sandilos, L. E., Pendergast, L., & Mankin, A. (2016). Teacher stress, teaching-efficacy, and job satisfaction in response to test-based educational accountability policies. Learning and Individual Differences, 50, 308-317. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.lindif.2016.08.001

Wang, A.Y. (2012). Exploring the relationship of creative thinking to reading and writing. Thinking Skills and Creativity, 7(1), 38-47. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2011.09.001

Warren, C. A. (2018). Empathy, teacher dispositions, and preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy. Journal of Teacher Education, 69(2), 169-183.

Webb, A. S., & Welsh, A. J. (2019). Phenomenology as a methodology for scholarship of teaching and learning research. Teaching and Learning Inquiry, 7(1), 168-181.

Weikert, D. E. (2018). Effectiveness of reading intervention program types in increasing comprehension for intermediate school students [Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University, St. Paul]. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/327228574.pdf

Wheeler, L., Guevara, J. R., & Smith, J. A. (2018). School–community learning partnerships for sustainability: Recommended best practice and reality. International Review of Education, 64, 313-337.

Whitworth, B. A., & Chiu, J. L. (2015). Professional development and teacher change: The missing leadership link. Journal of Science Teacher Education, 26, 121-137.

Yaghoubinejad, H., Zarrinabadi, N., & Nejadansari, D. (2017). Culture-specificity of teacher demotivation: Iranian junior high school teachers caught in the newly-introduced CLT trap! Teachers and Teaching, 23(2), 127-140.

Yang, S., Shu, D., & Yin, H. (2022). The bright side of dark emotions: Exploring EFL teachers' emotions, emotional capital, and engagement in curriculum implementation. Teaching and Teacher Education, 117, 103811.

Zauche, L. H., Thul, T. A., Mahoney, A. E. D., & Stapel-Wax, J. L. (2016). Influence of language nutrition on children's language and cognitive development: An integrated review. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 36, 318-333.

Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Felinita III R. Doronio
Assumption College of Nabunturan – Philippines

Henry E. Lemana II
Walailak University – Thailand

Gretchen Mhee P. Llaneta
Doña Carmen Soriano National High School
Department of Education – Philippines

Jimmar J. Amarado
Jose T. Quiboloy Sr. National High School
Department of Education – Philippines

Ana Lou O. Bucag
Buko-Buko Elementary School
Department of Education – Philippines

Mherriel Joy A. Comeros
Boringot Elementary School
Department of Education - Philippines