

Improving Literacy: Teacher's Strategy, and Reading-Deficient Students

Aren Pesino^{1*}, Ivy A. Lantaka²

^{1,2}Department of Education, Schools Division of Zamboanga City, Philippines

Abstract—This study explored how teachers from Grades 1 to 6 at Labuan Central School help students who struggle with reading. It focused on four key teaching strategies: differentiated instruction, clear and consistent routines, positive reinforcement, and hands-on, interactive learning. Using a descriptive-correlational approach, the study gathered data through teacher questionnaires and analyzed it using statistical methods, including Pearson's correlation. Findings revealed that teachers strongly implement these strategies, especially differentiated instruction, which allows them to adjust lessons based on individual student needs. Consistent classroom routines and positive reinforcement were also widely practiced, helping to create a structured and supportive learning environment. Interactive activities, such as using real-life materials and creative reading tasks, were commonly employed to keep students engaged. However, many teachers still reported that a significant number of students (about 26% to 50%) continue to fall behind in reading. The results showed a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between teaching strategies and students' reading performance. This suggests that while effective teaching methods do contribute to improved literacy outcomes, other factors such as the home environment, student motivation, and access to resources also influence a child's ability to read. The study highlights the importance of instructional strategies while emphasizing the need for broader support, including professional development, adequate school resources, and active community involvement, to fully address the needs of reading-deficient learners.

Index Terms—Reading Deficiency, Literacy Development, Teaching Strategies, Differentiated Instruction, Positive Reinforcement, Classroom Routines, Hands-on Learning, Elementary Education, Teacher Interventions, Student Reading Performance.

1. Introduction

In primary education, teachers play a crucial role in influencing how well their students acquire literacy. According to Pinnell and Fountas (2011), the teacher is the single most important factor in a child's reading development, especially during the foundational years. To improve reading skills, teachers use a range of teaching techniques such as phonics instruction, guided reading sessions, and the use of technology-assisted learning resources. These approaches are developed to accommodate different learning preferences and to consider students' differing skill levels. As Gunning (2016) emphasized, effective literacy instruction must be differentiated and responsive to the needs of each learner to achieve meaningful

progress. The professional development of teachers, their access to resources, and the assistance offered by educational institutions all impact how effective these tactics are.

Research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) shows that when teachers receive sustained and targeted professional development, their instructional quality improves significantly, which in turn boosts student literacy outcomes. Thus, it is essential to comprehend and maximize these teaching strategies in order to create an atmosphere that supports the development of literacy.

Students with reading deficiencies—who struggle with decoding, comprehension, and fluency—encounter several obstacles in their academic careers. According to Lyon et al. (2001), reading disabilities, if not addressed early, can lead to long-term academic difficulties and emotional distress. Numerous factors contribute to these struggles, including limited access to reading materials, cognitive learning problems, and socioeconomic constraints. These barriers not only hinder academic achievement but also negatively affect students' motivation, self-esteem, and classroom participation. As Allington (2011) pointed out, students who fail to read well by third grade are more likely to fall behind in all subject areas. Therefore, targeted interventions, early identification, and continuous support are critical to closing the literacy gap and ensuring equitable learning opportunities.

One of the most important areas of concentration in educational research is the interaction between teachers' instructional practices and the development of pupils who struggle with reading. As Pressley (2002) noted, effective instructional strategies can significantly enhance the reading abilities of students, particularly those at risk of falling behind. Students who struggle with literacy might have their reading progress greatly impacted by teacher-led customized strategies that focus on individual needs. These include scaffolding, the gradual release of responsibility model, and formative assessments. Conversely, inadequate teaching strategies or a lack of teacher preparedness can worsen existing reading challenges. Thus, exploring the connection between instructional approaches and student literacy development is essential to inform best practices and improve educational outcomes.

Labuan Central School (LCS) is a prominent educational establishment in the area. Located in Barangay Labuan,

*Corresponding author: arenpesino24@gmail.com

Zamboanga City, and founded in 1945, the school has a student population of 3,727 for the 2024–2025 school year, with 1,920 males and 1,807 females. With 93 classrooms, the school is served by 101 teaching staff members and 4 non-teaching staff members. Despite the presence of interventions such as remedial reading, school-based reading camps, and National Learning Camp (NLC), a large number of Grade I to VI students are still performing below reading expectations. According to preliminary data from internal school reports, a significant portion of Grade I to VI students continue to perform below the expected reading level. This situation underscores the urgent need to examine current teaching strategies and evaluate their effectiveness within this specific educational context.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the teaching methods used by Labuan Central School instructors to help reading-deficient students improve their literacy skills. Specifically, the research seeks to identify effective strategies, assess how institutional support affects literacy outcomes. It is expected that the findings will offer valuable insights to guide future literacy interventions by highlighting best practices and areas needing improvement. Moreover, the study aims to support the design of targeted professional development programs, inform the allocation of resources, and shape school-level policies that respond to the distinct needs of reading-deficient learners. Ultimately, the study seeks to enhance literacy outcomes and promote equitable educational opportunities for all students at Labuan Central School.

2. Literature Review

A. Teachers Strategies Used in Educating Reading-Deficient Students

Improving literacy among students who struggle with reading continues to be a global educational priority, as reading proficiency significantly impacts both academic achievement and lifelong social engagement. Despite the evolution of instructional strategies, many learners still face persistent difficulties in acquiring reading skills, prompting educators, researchers, and policymakers worldwide to explore practical interventions. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) emphasized that teachers play a central role in shaping literacy outcomes by adapting instruction to student needs and fostering supportive classroom environments. This is supported by Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis, which shows a strong correlation between instructional quality and student reading performance. Across countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, research confirms the value of structured reading programs, phonics-based instruction, comprehension-building techniques, and differentiated learning (Slavin et al., 2011; Pressley, 2002). Differentiated instruction allows teachers to tailor content, pacing, and delivery to individual learning profiles, helping struggling readers build confidence and comprehension (Allington, 2011; Tomlinson, 2014). Predictable routines, such as structured literacy blocks and consistent transitions, have been found to reduce anxiety and improve reading fluency (Pressley et al., 2001; Connor et al., 2014). Positive reinforcement, including praise, recognition,

and small rewards, fosters motivation and resilience among readers who have experienced repeated failure (Skinner, 1953; Gambrell, 2011). Similarly, hands-on and interactive learning approaches such as story mapping, read-alouds, and dramatizations enhance comprehension and engagement by making reading concepts more tangible and accessible (Vygotsky, 1978; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). These global studies also highlight the importance of ongoing professional development and collaborative practices among teachers, which enhance their ability to respond to diverse student needs (Timperley et al., 2007). The urgency of addressing reading gaps is reflected in data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), which reported that 34 percent of U.S. fourth-grade students read below the basic level, and by UNESCO (2021), which found that 53 percent of children in low- and middle-income countries cannot read a simple sentence by age ten. In the Philippines, these challenges are further compounded by economic disparities and learning disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies by Ramos (2019) and Valerio (2020) found that Filipino teachers implementing leveled texts, tiered activities, and peer-assisted reading observed significant gains in fluency and comprehension. Bautista and Garcia (2020) and Reyes (2019) noted that structured daily reading routines helped students manage transitions and improved their focus during literacy tasks. Meanwhile, Mendoza (2018) and Navarro (2018) highlighted how positive reinforcement strategies such as public acknowledgment, classroom applause, and verbal affirmations encouraged struggling readers to participate actively in reading tasks and build confidence. Interactive approaches, including role-playing, dramatization, puppetry, and reading games, have been effectively used in Northern Mindanao and Davao classrooms, as reported by De Leon (2021) and Capistrano (2021), to reinforce vocabulary, comprehension, and sequencing skills. These techniques engage learners with limited vocabulary by linking text to context through physical activity and storytelling. Collectively, these local and international studies reinforce that literacy improvement among reading-deficient students requires more than curriculum reform. It demands adaptive instruction, positive behavioral support, active learning experiences, and strong institutional backing, guided by reflective and well-trained educators who understand how to meet the diverse needs of their students.

B. Reading-Deficiency Rate

Reading difficulties continue to be one of the most pressing issues in classrooms around the world, especially for young learners in the early years of schooling. In the United States, the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reported that about 34 percent of fourth graders read below the basic level, meaning that nearly one in every three students struggles to understand age-appropriate texts. This reveals a serious gap in foundational literacy skills that, if left unaddressed, can grow wider over time. The situation is even more concerning in many developing countries. According to UNESCO (2021), over half, or 53 percent, of children in low- and middle-income nations cannot read and comprehend a simple passage by age ten. This

reality, often referred to as “learning poverty,” has pushed educators and policymakers to rethink how early literacy is taught, urging schools to adopt more personalized and student-centered reading strategies. Studies like that of Snow and Matthews (2016) show that reading challenges, when not caught early, often continue into later grades and negatively affect overall academic performance. These issues are often hidden until students fall too far behind, making early intervention essential. Teachers are in a unique position to identify these struggles early on through reading assessments, tailored instruction, and individualized learning plans. In the Philippines, the challenge is just as real. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI, 2019) found that about 27 percent of Grade 3 to Grade 6 students are at the “frustration level” in reading, unable to read and understand grade-level texts. According to Bernardo (2020), this problem is worsened by large class sizes, a lack of reading materials, and limited training opportunities for teachers. Many educators share that at least one in every five students in their classrooms finds reading difficult. In rural schools, this number can be even higher. Lontoc and Salandanan (2018) reported that only 58 percent of Grade 6 learners in these areas read independently, with the rest needing constant support. From a teacher’s perspective, these numbers are more than just statistics; they reflect the daily struggles of real students who need consistent, well-designed support. Addressing this gap takes more than just changing the curriculum. It calls for strong, classroom-based reading programs, adequate resources, and a deep commitment from schools and teachers to ensure that no learner is left behind in the journey toward literacy.

C. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to explore the instructional strategies utilized by Grade 1 to 6 teachers at Labuan Central School (LCS) during the 2024–2025 academic year to enhance literacy of reading-deficient students. It seeks to identify the challenges educators encounter in implementing literacy practices and to understand the factors affecting the success of literacy education.

Specifically, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the teaching strategies used by teachers in educating reading-deficient students in terms of:
 1. Differentiated Instruction
 2. Clear and Consistent Routines
 3. Positive Reinforcement
 4. Hands-On and Interactive Learning
2. What is the reading-deficiency rate of the students?
3. Is there a significant relationship between teacher strategies and reading-deficiency rate of students?

3. Scope and Delimitation

This study aims to investigate the teaching methods used by Labuan Central School (LCS) teachers of Grades 1 to 6 to improve literacy among students who struggle with reading in the 2024–2025 school year. It specifically looks into the teaching methods associated with differentiated instruction, clear and consistent routines, positive reinforcement and hands-

on and interactive learning. The study also aims to assess the reading-deficiency rate among students and explore the challenges teachers face in implementing effective literacy instruction. The study is limited to the teacher-reported data from a single school, which may not be representative of all teachers or schools. Furthermore, the study focuses solely on the relationship between specific teaching strategies and student reading outcomes, excluding other potential variables such as parental involvement, socioeconomic background, or access to learning resources outside the classroom. Since the study employs a quantitative approach, it will rely on measurable data from surveys, which may not fully capture the depth of teacher experiences or the nuanced challenges they face. Additionally, the results may not be generalized beyond the sample of teachers at Labuan Central School.

4. Methodology

A. Design

This study employs a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to examine the literacy strategies implemented by Grades 1 to 6 teachers at Labuan Central School (LCS) and their impact on students experiencing reading difficulties. The descriptive component aims to systematically identify and document the teaching strategies, challenges, and assessment methods currently utilized in the classroom. Data will be gathered through a structured survey questionnaire, designed to collect quantifiable information for statistical analysis. The correlational aspect seeks to explore potential relationships between teacher preparedness and student literacy progress, as well as between educational factors and student success.

B. Respondents of the Study

1) Sampling

This study employs a Purposive sampling, a non-probability sample approach, is used in this study to choose respondents from among Labuan Central School (LCS) teachers of Grades 1 to 6 for the 2024–2025 school year. Only teachers who currently teach language or reading courses and have prior experience dealing with students who have been recognized as reading-deficient were included in the sample, as the research focused on literacy techniques for these children. About 70 to 80 teachers who fit these requirements were chosen from among Labuan Central School 101 teaching staff members and invited to take part in the study. This sampling technique guarantees that information is collected from people who have firsthand knowledge of the variables under investigation.

2) Research Instrument

To collect relevant data for the study, a structured survey questionnaire was developed and served as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire was designed to align with the specific variables of the study. It is divided into four main sections that reflect the core areas of investigation: (1) Differentiated Instruction, (2) Clear and Consistent Routines, (3) Positive Reinforcement, (4) Hands-On and Interactive Learning. The instrument utilized a four-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, and (4) Strongly Agree. This format enabled the collection of quantifiable data,

allowing for statistical analysis to determine reading-deficiency rate of the students and the challenges encountered by the teacher's in teaching pupils with reading-deficiency.

3) Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher initiated the data collection process by formally requesting permission from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent of Zamboanga City to conduct the study at Labuan Central School (LCS). After permission, efforts were made to coordinate with the principal of the school in order to make it easier for the intended respondents to receive the survey instruments. All participating teachers gave their informed consent prior to data collection. The consent form promised participants anonymity and confidentiality of their answers and described the study's goals, methods, possible dangers, and advantages. The study only included people who willingly consented to take part. A structured questionnaire that was distributed electronically using Google Forms served as the data gathering tool that will last about 10 to 15 minutes. It was an online checklist type questionnaire. The researcher respected ethical norms by protecting each participant's privacy and confidentiality during the data collection process. Only the researcher had secure access to the data. Following data collection, suitable statistical techniques were used to gather, examine, and evaluate the responses. The researcher shared the analyzed data with the relevant participants for validation and confirmation in order to guarantee the accuracy of the findings.

4) Results and Discussion

This chapter presents and interprets the data gathered from the respondents through the checklist. The data collected was based on the objectives of the study, tallied, analyzed, and interpreted using descriptive statistics.

C. Problem 1. What are the Teaching Strategies Used by Teachers in Educating Reading-Deficient Students in Terms of: Differentiated Instruction, Clear and Consistent Routines, Positive Reinforcement, Hands-On and Interactive Learning?

Table 1 presents the teaching strategies under Differentiated Instruction that teachers use to support reading-deficient students. The highest-rated statement, "I adjust my teaching methods based on students' reading levels," received a mean score of 3.62, followed closely by "I plan reading interventions

based on student performance data," which had a mean of 3.56. Both items fall under the "Strongly Agree" category, showing that these practices are not only widely implemented but also valued by teachers as essential tools in addressing diverse literacy needs.

Adapting instruction based on individual reading levels is a central tenet of differentiated instruction. As emphasized by Tomlinson (2014), such strategies allow educators to meet learners where they are, creating an inclusive environment that supports varied learning styles and paces. This is especially important for struggling readers, who benefit from instruction tailored to their specific needs, ultimately helping to build both skill and confidence. Similarly, using student performance data to plan reading interventions reflects a data-driven and student-centered approach. Allington (2011) advocated for the consistent use of formative assessments in guiding instruction, noting that timely and targeted support is crucial for improving fluency and comprehension. The strong ratings of these strategies in Table 1 confirm that teachers are integrating such research-based practices into their classrooms.

On the other hand, the strategies with the lowest mean scores— "I design reading tasks with varying levels of difficulty" (M = 3.46) and "I group students strategically based on reading abilities" (M = 3.47)—though still rated as "Strongly Agree," indicate slightly less frequent use. These practices, while effective, can be more demanding to execute consistently due to time constraints, diverse student needs, and classroom management challenges. As Tomlinson (2014) pointed out, flexible grouping encourages collaboration and peer learning, but it requires thoughtful organization and planning. Likewise, Allington (2011) acknowledged the challenge of designing differentiated tasks, which demand additional preparation and resources.

With an overall mean of 3.52, the data clearly shows that teachers are committed to implementing differentiated instruction to support reading-deficient students. Their strong use of adaptive teaching and performance-based planning demonstrates a deep awareness of their students' needs. However, the slightly lower ratings in areas like task variation and student grouping suggest that additional professional

Table 1

| Teaching strategies used by teachers in educating reading-deficient students in terms of differentiated instruction | | |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| Statement: Differentiated Instruction As a teacher, I.... | Mean | Verbal Description |
| plan reading interventions based on student performance data. | 3.56 | Strongly Agree |
| provide different types of learning materials (visuals, audio, texts) to suit students' needs. | 3.52 | Strongly Agree |
| adjust my teaching methods based on students' reading levels. | 3.62 | Strongly Agree |
| create reading tasks with different difficulty levels to match each student's learning needs. | 3.46 | Strongly Agree |
| group students strategically during reading activities to support peer learning and targeted instruction. | 3.47 | Strongly Agree |
| Over-all mean | 3.52 | Strongly Agree |

Legend: 4.00 – 3.26 Strongly Agree, 3.25 – 2.51 Agree, 2.50 – 1.76 Disagree, 1.75 – 1.00 Strongly Disagree

Table 2

| Teaching strategies used by teachers in educating reading-deficient students in terms of clear and consistent routines | | |
|--|------------|-----------------------|
| Statement: Clear and Consistent Routines As a teacher, I.... | Mean | Description |
| I begin each reading lesson with a familiar warm-up activity or routine. | 3.41 | Strongly Agree |
| I use structured routines to promote reading independence among students. | 3.43 | Strongly Agree |
| I use visual aids or reminders to support reading activities. | 3.51 | Strongly Agree |
| I set clear rules and steps for reading activities to avoid confusion and keep students focused. | 3.47 | Strongly Agree |
| I incorporate review and reflection time as part of our daily reading routine to reinforce learning. | 3.36 | Strongly Agree |
| Over-all mean | 3.4 | Strongly Agree |

Legend: 4.00 – 3.26 Strongly Agree, 3.25 – 2.51 Agree, 2.50 – 1.76 Disagree, 1.75 – 1.00 Strongly Disagree

development and support could further enhance the effectiveness of these strategies. Strengthening these areas would not only improve instructional delivery but also foster better literacy outcomes among struggling readers.

Table 2 presents the teaching strategies focused on Clear and Consistent Routines that teachers employ to support reading-deficient students. The highest-rated strategy, “I use visual aids or reminders to support reading activities,” received a mean score of 3.51, followed by “I set clear rules and steps for reading activities to avoid confusion and keep students focused,” with a mean of 3.47. Both strategies were rated as “Strongly Agree,” indicating that teachers value the importance of structured routines in creating a calm and supportive environment for struggling readers. These findings align with Pressley et al. (2001), who stated that predictable routines help reduce cognitive overload, allowing students to focus more effectively on reading tasks. Similarly, Connor et al. (2014) emphasized that routines improve student engagement and fluency, particularly for those who face reading challenges. Through visual cues and clearly defined steps, teachers help students stay on task and gradually build reading independence and confidence.

The two lowest-rated strategies, though still rated positively, were “I incorporate review and reflection time in daily reading routines” ($M = 3.36$) and “I begin each reading lesson with a familiar warm-up activity” ($M = 3.41$). These slightly lower scores may reflect the time constraints many teachers face in managing daily instruction. However, both strategies remain essential components of effective reading instruction. As noted by Pressley et al. (2001), familiar routines like warm-ups and reflection periods help ease students into learning and reinforce comprehension. Connor et al. (2014) also highlighted that consistency in these activities can strengthen student engagement and overall reading fluency. Although they may be used less frequently, teachers still recognize their impact and value in supporting literacy development.

With an overall mean of 3.40, the results in Table 2 confirm that teachers strongly agree with the use of clear and consistent routines in their reading instruction. These structured strategies

are essential in guiding reading-deficient students through daily lessons, minimizing confusion, and promoting confidence.

While certain practices like warm-ups and reflection might require more time to implement consistently, the findings suggest that even simple, repeated routines—when done intentionally—can make a lasting and meaningful impact on a child's literacy journey.

Table 3 presents the teaching strategies used by teachers in educating reading-deficient students through Positive Reinforcement. The highest-rated strategies were “I acknowledge small achievements to boost students' confidence” and “I create a supportive environment where students feel safe to take reading risks and make mistakes,” both with a mean of 3.58. These results show how teachers value encouragement as a key tool for motivating struggling readers. As Skinner (1953) emphasized, reinforcing positive behavior increases the likelihood of its repetition. Similarly, Gambrell (2011) noted that when students feel their efforts are recognized, they're more willing to engage in literacy tasks. By celebrating small successes and creating a safe, judgment-free space, teachers help build confidence, resilience, and a growth mindset—crucial for learners who have faced repeated challenges with reading.

The two lowest-rated strategies in Table 3 were “I regularly reflect on and adjust my reinforcement strategies” ($M = 3.43$) and “I use reward systems or motivational tools to encourage reading” ($M = 3.48$). Although still strongly agreed upon, these slightly lower scores suggest that some teachers may find it challenging to consistently update or manage reward systems while balancing daily classroom demands. As Skinner (1953) pointed out, reinforcement works best when it's meaningful and consistent. Gambrell (2011) also noted that recognizing effort helps students stay engaged, especially in reading. In practice, teachers might find it easier to offer simple praise or encouragement in the moment than to maintain structured systems. These results show that while the value of positive reinforcement is clear, teachers may need extra time, support, or flexibility to make these strategies even more effective for students who need ongoing motivation and encouragement in

Table 3
Teaching strategies used by teachers in educating reading-deficient students in terms of positive reinforcement

| Statement: Positive Reinforcement As a teacher, I.... | Mean | Description |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| use reward systems or motivational tools to encourage reading. | 3.48 | Strongly Agree |
| acknowledge small achievements to boost students' confidence. | 3.58 | Strongly Agree |
| regularly reflect on and adjust my reinforcement strategies to ensure they remain effective and aligned with my students' evolving needs. | 3.43 | Strongly Agree |
| create a supportive environment where students feel safe to take reading risks and make mistakes. | 3.58 | Strongly Agree |
| use certificates, stickers, or points systems to acknowledge consistent reading improvement. | 3.48 | Strongly Agree |
| Over-all mean | 3.51 | Strongly Agree |

Legend: 4.00 – 3.26 Strongly Agree, 3.25 – 2.51 Agree, 2.50 – 1.76 Disagree, 1.75 – 1.00 Strongly Disagree

Table 4
Teaching strategies used by teachers in educating reading-deficient students in terms of hands-on and interactive learning

| Statement: Hands-On and Interactive Learning As a teacher, I.... | Mean | Description |
|---|---------------|-----------------------|
| I involve students in interactive reading activities (e.g., reading aloud, paired reading). | 3.50 | Strongly Agree |
| I use manipulatives or real-life objects when teaching new words or concepts. | 3.55 | Strongly Agree |
| I allow students to create or illustrate their own stories as part of reading practice. | 3.51 | Strongly Agree |
| I use storytelling and role-play activities to build comprehension and vocabulary. | 3.46 | Strongly Agree |
| I use manipulative reading applications (such as interactive phonics games, drag-and-drop word builders, word hunts). | 3.46 | Strongly Agree |
| Over-all mean | 3.4975 | Strongly Agree |

Legend: 4.00 – 3.26 Strongly Agree, 3.25 – 2.51 Agree, 2.50 – 1.76 Disagree, 1.75 – 1.00 Strongly Disagree

their reading journey.

With an overall mean of 3.51, Table 3 shows that teachers truly see the value of using positive reinforcement to support students who struggle with reading. They place the highest importance on recognizing small wins and creating a classroom where students feel safe to take risks—because those little moments of encouragement can go a long way. While tools like reward systems and adjusting strategies take more time and effort, teachers still see their worth. These insights show that when reinforcement is done with care and consistency, it can help students not only stay motivated but also believe in their ability to grow as readers.

Table 4 shows that teachers strongly support hands-on and interactive learning when helping students with reading difficulties. The highest-rated strategies where “I use manipulatives or real-life objects when teaching new words or concepts”. ($M = 3.55$) and “I allow students to create or illustrate their own stories as part of reading practice” ($M = 3.51$). These approaches reflect how teachers bring reading to life in ways that are easier for struggling readers to grasp. Many find that when students can touch, see, and create something connected to a lesson, it sticks with them longer.

The two strategies with the lowest—but still high—ratings were using storytelling and role-play activities and manipulative reading applications like phonics games or word builders, both scoring 3.46. While teachers see the value in these methods, they may not always be easy to use regularly—some may need more time, materials, or confidence to manage them in the classroom. Still, as Vygotsky (1978) pointed out, students learn best when they’re actively involved. Guthrie and Humenick (2004) also highlighted that hands-on experiences help students understand and remember more. Even if these particular strategies are used a bit less, when teachers do find ways to include them, they give students a chance to connect with reading in a more playful and meaningful way—something especially helpful for kids who find reading tough.

With an overall mean of 3.50, the data in Table 4 clearly shows that teachers value hands-on and interactive learning as a powerful approach for helping students who struggle with reading. These strategies allow learners to actively engage with

reading tasks in ways that feel more concrete and less intimidating. When students are given opportunities to touch, create, or act out parts of a lesson, reading becomes more meaningful and memorable. Although some techniques—like storytelling, role-play, or using interactive apps—may be used less frequently due to time or resource limitations, their potential impact is still recognized.

D. Problem 2: What is the Reading-Deficiency Rate of the Students?

Table 5 shows that reading deficiency is not only a classroom concern but also a systemic educational challenge. Based on the responses of participating teachers, an estimated 26–50% of their students are currently struggling with reading, as shown by a mean score of 2.3750. This corresponds to about 4 to 6 students per class who are reading below their expected grade level.

This isn’t just a local issue. In the United States, a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) found that 34% of fourth-grade students were reading below the basic level. Across the globe, UNESCO (2021) shared that 53% of children in low- and middle-income countries can’t read or understand a simple story by age 10. This challenge, known as learning poverty, shows how widespread the problem truly is.

Here in the Philippines, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI, 2019) reported that 27% of students from Grades 3 to 6 are at the “frustration level” in reading, meaning they struggle to make sense of grade-level texts. This closely matches what teachers shared in Table 5, proving that many students need stronger reading support, both at home and in school.

The results of Table 5, when interpreted alongside both international and local literature, paint a clear picture of the urgency and complexity of the reading deficiency issue. Addressing reading deficiency will require not just curriculum reforms, but a whole-school approach involving administrators, policymakers, families, and communities. With proper support and sustained efforts, every child—regardless of their background or reading level—can be given the opportunity to grow into a confident, competent reader.

Table 6 presents how teachers perceive and respond to the

Table 5
Rate of the students in reading-deficiency

| Statement: Reading-deficiency Rate As a teacher, I... | Mean | Description |
|---|--------|--------------|
| estimate that the percentage of reading-deficient students in my class is | 2.3750 | 26–50% |
| currently have the following number of students who are reading below grade level | 2.3750 | 4–6 students |

Rate: A. 1–25% (1–3 students), B. 26–50% (4–6 students), C. 51–75% (7–10 students), D. 76–100% (More than 10 students)

Table 6
Reading-deficiency rate of the students

| Statement: Reading-deficiency Rate As a teacher, I... | Mean | Description |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| assess and keep track of how many of my students are reading below grade level. | 3.51 | Strongly Agree |
| have noticed an increase in the number of reading-deficient students compared to previous school years. | 3.36 | Strongly Agree |
| consider a student reading-deficient if they are at least one grade level behind in reading. | 3.36 | Strongly Agree |
| conduct regular informal or formal assessments to identify the percentage of students with reading deficiencies. | 3.40 | Strongly Agree |
| know the specific reading levels of each of my students based on regular assessments. | 3.48 | Strongly Agree |
| use assessment tools (such as running records, reading inventories, or oral reading tests) to determine the number of students with reading deficiencies. | 3.43 | Strongly Agree |
| know the specific reading levels of each of my students based on regular assessments. | 3.43 | Strongly Agree |
| regularly identify students who struggle with decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills. | 3.55 | Strongly Agree |
| Over-all mean | 3.44 | Strongly Agree |

Legend: 4.00 – 3.26 Strongly Agree, 3.25 – 2.51 Agree, 2.50 – 1.76 Disagree, 1.75 – 1.00 Strongly Disagree

reading-deficiency rate among their students, based on various assessment-related practices. The highest mean score, 3.55, came from the statement, “I regularly identify students who struggle with decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills.” This indicates that teachers are actively observing their students' reading abilities and are especially focused on the core areas essential to literacy. Their efforts reflect the insights of Snow and Matthews (2016), who emphasized the need for early identification of reading difficulties so that timely interventions—like diagnostic assessments and individualized reading plans—can be implemented. Recognizing where students are struggling enables teachers to adjust their instructional strategies to better support each learner's progress.

The second highest score, 3.51, was recorded under the statement, “I assess and keep track of how many of my students are reading below grade level.” This demonstrates teachers' strong commitment to monitoring student performance through continuous assessment. This practice aligns with the goals of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI, 2019), which encourages frequent reading evaluations to quickly identify students at the “frustration level.” It also supports UNESCO's (2021) call for student-centered, contextualized teaching strategies in areas facing widespread reading challenges. In the same vein, Bernardo (2020) emphasized the importance of teacher-led tracking in classrooms that may not have access to dedicated reading specialists or extensive resources.

On the other hand, the two lowest mean scores, both at 3.36, came from the statements: “I have noticed an increase in the number of reading-deficient students compared to previous school years” and “I consider a student reading-deficient if they are at least one grade level behind in reading.”

Although these statements still received a “Strongly Agree” rating, the slightly lower scores suggest that teachers may have varying perceptions about trends in reading performance and how they define reading deficiency. The first item may reflect differences in teachers' contexts—such as grade level taught or location—leading to mixed observations about whether reading problems are increasing. Meanwhile, the second item reveals that while most teachers agree on the general definition of reading deficiency, there may still be slight inconsistencies in how they interpret and apply it in their own classrooms. This variation points to the need for shared assessment criteria and continuous professional development, as emphasized by Snow and Matthews (2016).

With an overall mean of 3.44, all items in Table 6 fall under the “Strongly Agree” category, clearly showing that teachers are actively engaged in monitoring and assessing students' reading levels. These findings reinforce the idea that teachers play a crucial role in identifying reading deficiencies early and

consistently. To build on this foundation, schools must continue to provide structured support, assessment tools, and training to help teachers make data-informed decisions. Doing so will empower educators to respond more effectively to the diverse reading needs of their students and ultimately help close the literacy gap.

E. Problem 3: Is there a Significant Relationship Between Teacher Strategies and Reading-Deficiency rate of Students?

Table 7 presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship between the teaching strategies employed by Grades 1 to 6 teachers and the reading-deficiency rate of their students at Labuan Central School. The analysis yielded a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.250, with a significance level (p) of 0.025. As the p -value (0.025) is less than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, the relationship between teacher strategies and the reading-deficiency rate of students is statistically significant. This finding resonates with established literature, such as Pinnell and Fountas (2011), who underscore the teacher's pivotal role in a child's reading development, especially during foundational years, and Gunning (2016), who emphasized the necessity of differentiated and responsive instruction for meaningful progress in literacy.

The positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.250$) suggests that as teachers increase their implementation of the studied strategies (differentiated instruction, clear and consistent routines, positive reinforcement, and hands-on/interactive learning), there is a slight improvement in students' reading abilities or a tendency for the reading-deficiency rate among students to slightly decrease. This supports the notion put forth by research like Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), which indicates that improvements in instructional quality, often stemming from effective strategies, significantly boost student literacy outcomes.

While this connection is statistically significant, its strength is relatively weak, as indicated by the magnitude of the correlation coefficient. This implies that while teaching strategies do play a role, they account for a small proportion of the variance in student reading deficiency. This limitation in explanatory power is also recognized in broader research; factors outside the classroom—like the support students get at home, how often they are exposed to reading materials, and how motivated they are to read—can also have a significant impact on their literacy development. Indeed, these results echo what other studies have pointed out, with Snow and Matthews (2016) and UNESCO (2021) asserting that improving reading skills requires more than just effective teaching. Instead, it calls for a broader, more holistic approach that integrates efforts from the home, the school environment, and the wider community.

Table 7

| | | Teacher Strategies | Reading-Deficiency Rate | Interpretation |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Teacher Strategies | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .250* | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .025 | Significant |
| | N | 80 | 80 | |
| Reading-Deficiency Rate | Pearson Correlation | .250* | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .025 | | Significant |
| | N | 80 | 80 | |

Therefore, while teachers' efforts in implementing these specific strategies are vital and statistically linked to reduced reading deficiency, they need to be supported by other interventions to make a lasting and more substantial difference in children's literacy.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that:

1. Teachers at Labuan Central School show a high level of dedication in addressing the needs of reading-deficient students. They consistently apply a variety of instructional strategies—including differentiated instruction, clear and consistent routines, positive reinforcement, and hands-on and interactive learning—to support student learning. These strategies are not only widely implemented but are also highly valued by the teachers, reflecting their deep commitment to improving literacy outcomes. Among all strategies, differentiated instruction emerged as the most strongly applied, with teachers frequently adjusting their teaching approaches based on students' reading levels and assessment results. This demonstrates a data-informed, learner-centered approach to addressing individual reading needs. Similarly, the use of structured routines helps create an environment where struggling readers can stay focused, follow clearly defined steps, and build reading independence over time.
2. Teachers also recognize the importance of emotional support. Through positive reinforcement—such as celebrating small achievements and creating a safe, encouraging atmosphere—students are more motivated to engage in reading tasks. Hands-on and interactive strategies further enhance this support, making reading more enjoyable and meaningful through the use of real-life materials, student-created stories, and interactive activities.
3. Despite these strong instructional efforts, a significant number of students—estimated at 26% to 50% per class—continue to struggle with reading. This finding highlights that reading deficiency remains a persistent challenge in the classroom, even when teachers are using well-established strategies. It was also found out, through Pearson's *r* analysis, that there is a statistically significant, though relatively weak, positive relationship between the implementation of teaching strategies and the reading-deficiency rate among students ($r = 0.250$, $p = 0.025$). Given this statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that while these strategies are essential and contribute positively, their impact may not be singularly sufficient to produce substantial, rapid improvements in literacy within this specific context. In addition, external factors—such as the home environment, student motivation, access to learning materials, and family or community involvement—may have a stronger or complementary influence on literacy outcomes. This underlines the complexity of addressing reading difficulties and

emphasizes the need for a more holistic, collaborative approach. Teachers, families, school leaders, and communities must work hand in hand to provide struggling readers with the consistent support they need to grow into confident and capable readers.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

A. Teachers

Continue using teaching strategies that reach every learner, especially those who struggle. Prioritize hands-on activities, guided reading, and sincere encouragement. Stay open to trying new methods and trust that even small steps forward matter. Your commitment shapes not just better readers but more confident learners.

B. School Administrators

Support your teachers by ensuring they have the time, training, and tools they need to help struggling readers succeed. Monitor student progress closely and lead efforts to create targeted reading interventions. In partnership with DepEd personnel, collaborate on programs that enhance teacher capacity, provide reading resources, and implement effective literacy initiatives. Strengthen school-community linkages and seek support from local stakeholders. With strong leadership and active collaboration, schools can create an environment where every child has the opportunity to become a confident reader.

C. Future Researchers

Explore the deeper layers influencing literacy beyond the classroom, such as home environments, student mindset, and community involvement. Use both data and lived experiences to capture the full picture. Understanding these unseen factors can lead to more meaningful, long-term solutions for struggling readers.

D. Students

Remember, every great reader was once a beginner. Struggling does not mean failing; it means growing. Keep practicing, ask for help, and celebrate your progress, no matter how small. Your voice, your effort, and your journey matter. Believe in yourself because you are capable of more than you think.

References

- [1] Allington, R. L. (2011). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs* (3rd ed.). Pearson.
- [2] Bautista, R., & Garcia, A. (2020). Structured reading routines and student focus in literacy tasks. *Philippine Journal of Literacy Education*, 12(2), 45–59.
- [3] Bernardo, A. (2020). Challenges in literacy instruction in Philippine classrooms. *Philippine Educational Research Journal*, 18(1), 66–80.
- [4] Capistrano, A. (2021). Interactive reading strategies in Davao classrooms. *Journal of Southeast Asian Literacy Studies*, 10(2), 89–102.
- [5] Connor, C. M., Morrison, F. J., Fishman, B. J., Schatschneider, C., & Underwood, P. S. (2014). The early years: Algorithm-guided individualized reading instruction. *Science*, 315(5811), 464–465.

- [6] Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- [7] De Leon, C. (2021). Puppetry and dramatization to enhance reading comprehension. *Mindanao Literacy Review*, 8(1), 22–35.
- [8] Gambrell, L. B. (2011). Motivation in reading: Engaging students through authentic reading experiences. *The Reading Teacher*, 65(3), 172–178.
- [9] Gunning, T. G. (2016). *Creating literacy instruction for all students* (9th ed.). Pearson.
- [10] Guthrie, J. T., & Humenick, N. M. (2004). Motivating students to read: Evidence for classroom practices that increase motivation and achievement. *The Voice of Evidence in Reading Research*, 329–354.
- [11] Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- [12] Lontoc, C. R., & Salandanan, G. G. (2018). Independent reading among Grade 6 learners in rural areas. *Philippine Journal of Educational Measurement*, 15(1), 33–47.
- [13] Lyon, G. R., Shaywitz, S. E., & Shaywitz, B. A. (2001). A definition of dyslexia. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 51(1), 1–14.
- [14] Mendoza, J. A. (2018). Motivational classroom practices for struggling readers. *Education Quarterly*, 56(4), 49–63.
- [15] National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *The nation's report card: Reading 2019*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/>
- [16] Navarro, K. M. (2018). Verbal affirmations and reading confidence in primary learners. *Journal of Elementary Education*, 20(2), 55–68.
- [17] Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). (2019). *Phil-IRI Manual 2018 edition*. Department of Education.
- [18] Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (2011). *The continuum of literacy learning: Grades PreK–8*. Heinemann.
- [19] Pressley, M. (2002). *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- [20] Pressley, M., Wharton-McDonald, R., Mistretta-Hampston, J., & Echevarria, M. (2001). The nature of effective first-grade literacy instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(4), 510–546.
- [21] Ramos, L. T. (2019). Peer-assisted reading strategies in Philippine public schools. *Journal of Literacy Studies*, 11(1), 18–29.
- [22] Reyes, M. A. (2019). Daily reading routines in Filipino classrooms. *Philippine Journal of Reading and Literacy*, 16(2), 40–52.
- [23] Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and human behavior*. Macmillan.
- [24] Slavin, R. E., Lake, C., Davis, S., & Madden, N. (2011). Effective programs for struggling readers: A best-evidence synthesis. *Educational Research Review*, 6(1), 1–26.
- [25] Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. National Academy Press.
- [26] Snow, C. E., & Matthews, T. J. (2016). Reading and language in the early grades. *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 57–74.
- [27] Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Ministry of Education, New Zealand.
- [28] Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners* (2nd ed.). ASCD.
- [29] UNESCO. (2021). *Global education monitoring report: Non-state actors in education*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/>
- [30] Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.