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Teaching Remedial Reading: Content Area Teachers' Difficulties and Needs

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Abstract. Teachers' capabilities inside the classroom are impacted by their teaching difficulties and needs. This participatory action research presents both the difficulties and the needs of junior high school content area teachers in teaching remedial reading, with the aim of providing recommendations for systemic changes. A total population of 31 teachers across various subject areas— particularly those teaching English, Filipino, Science, Mathematics, Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies), Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (Values Education), Technology and Livelihood Education as well as Music, Art, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH)—who teach remedial reading were purposively selected to participate in the study. Teaching experience among the content area teachers varied from one year to nine years. Data were collected through focus group discussions using a validated and pilot-tested researcher-made questionnaire that went through two cycles of thematic analysis. Findings revealed significant difficulties, such as challenges in engaging students with negative emotions towards reading, limited access to resources and unsupported home context, insufficient pedagogical knowledge of reading instruction, and difficulties in using reading assessments. Content area teachers expressed a strong need for professional development in reading instruction, including strategies for teaching reading components and utilizing assessment data. They also emphasized the need for management support, such as access to reading materials, reduced workloads, smaller class sizes, and the implementation of a comprehensive school-wide reading program. The study highlights the critical need for collaborative efforts between teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to effectively address the challenges of remedial reading instruction in the junior high school setting.

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1. Introduction

Not only is reading a crucial skill for literacy but it is also a foundational skill for all learning across the subject areas. Each student's ability to understand what they read, view, listen to, and write facilitates their understanding of the subject matter in the content areas. Students with good reading comprehension tend to perform better academically as they can effectively process information and analyze complex texts (Kucheria et al., 2019). Indeed, reading skills are an important ingredient in overall academic success and life endeavors (Loopoo & Balfour, 2021; Roe, 2016; Sashikala & Chye, 2023; Washington & Craig, 2014).

In the Philippines, the reading skills of students have been a significant concern. Igarashi and Suryardarma (2023) examined the foundational reading skills of Filipino students over 19 years of age and found that although schooling improves learning throughout basic education, a significant percentage of grade 10 students still do not have foundational reading skills, indicating that the learning attainment for each year of school attendance is lower than that expected in the curriculum. Abejuela et al. (2023) highlighted that most students in basic education are instructional readers rather than independent readers and that a number of students reach the secondary level as non-readers. Such findings align with the results of the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment, which showed that Filipino students obtained an average score that was significantly lower than that of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and that only one in five students achieved at least the minimum proficiency level in overall reading literacy (DepEd, 2019b). Consequently, the Department of Education (DepEd) has called on elementary and high school teachers to intensify remedial reading classes for struggling students (DepEd, 2019a).

Following the implementation of the Department of Education Memorandum 173 series of 2019, all teachers need to teach reading remediation, regardless of their specialization or training. In particular, this mandate posed a challenge to content area teachers (i.e. those teaching Mathematics; Science; Araling Panlipunan or Social Studies; Filipino; Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao [Values Education]; Music, Art, Physical Education, and Health [MAPEH]; and Technology and Livelihood Education) who do not specialize in reading.

Since teaching reading is a complex skill that requires specific knowledge and approaches, this study was conducted with the aim of addressing the gap in the literature on the teaching of remedial reading by content area teachers so that the findings can provide a reference to inform systemic changes to improve reading instruction. Hence, this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What difficulties do junior high school content area teachers face in teaching remedial reading? and (2) What are the needs of junior high school content area teachers in teaching remedial reading?

2. Literature review

Teaching Remedial Reading

Remedial reading describes a specialized class or program designed to help low ability readers to become independent readers. Remedial reading lessons are a significant tool in helping struggling learners to improve their reading competence, aiming to improve various aspects of reading, such as word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Tansley, 2022). However, teaching remedial reading requires extensive knowledge and skills in word recognition (e.g. phonemes, morphemes, graphemes, and word meanings), language comprehension (e.g. syntax and text structure of the language), and spelling and writing skills in order to enhance students' reading comprehension (Moats, 2020). Therefore, teachers who teach remedial reading must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach the components of reading effectively and efficiently.

Traditionally, reading programs have been implemented and facilitated by reading/literacy specialists. According to the International Literacy Association (2015), a reading or literacy specialist is someone who plans, teaches, and evaluates instruction for students struggling with reading and writing. These are the same roles that remedial reading teachers perform in the Philippines (Rio, 2007, cited in Gatcho & Bautista, 2019). In their study, Gatcho and Bautista found that there are no distinct policies on the identities and roles of remedial reading teachers in the country, but in order to achieve the shared goal of improving the reading performance of students, reading instruction must be embraced by all teachers, including those teaching the content areas.

Content Area Teachers as Remedial Reading Teachers

Currently, the pressing need to remediate increasing numbers of non-readers requires content-area teachers to teach reading. Content area teachers teach specific subjects—such as Science, Mathematics, History, etc.—but have not received formal training in teaching remedial reading. Pocaan et al. (2022) reported that student learning is negatively impacted by content area teachers' lack of knowledge of the components of reading and effective strategies for teaching reading.

Ancheta (2022) investigated teachers' knowledge levels in terms of reading and content area reading instruction. The results revealed that the teachers were moderately knowledgeable about reading and content area instruction, specifically with regard to word recognition and comprehension. Additionally, they were also moderately knowledgeable in terms of background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text, and other strategies used in comprehending written text. However, their responses in the unstructured interviews indicated that they failed to implement reading strategies in the delivery of their lessons because they had not been provided with formal knowledge related to the teaching of reading. Furthermore, they were unable to integrate reading strategies into their lessons due to their own lack of knowledge and skills. Similarly, Tomas et al. (2021) confirmed that content area teachers need support as they lack the necessary training to teach reading, as well as the commitment and confidence needed to teach reading, resulting in the improper

implementation of reading programs. Therefore, content area teachers must embrace their role of providing students with content area reading instruction and integrate reading strategies without losing the content focus (Benjamin, 2013).

Factors that Affect the Teaching of Remedial Reading

The delivery of remedial reading classes or programs poses certain challenges to the implementers. Content area teachers have noted that various external factors affect the teaching of reading. Acita et al. (2022) and Sancada (2022) reported that teachers are hindered by a lack of classroom resources and instructional materials developed explicitly for remedial reading programs. This makes it difficult for them to teach and guide the students, as these resources could improve their motivation as well as their ability to teach.

Another major factor that affects the implementation of remedial reading programs is the school, including the headteacher, the teachers, the parents, and other stakeholders (Acita et al., 2022). Sancada (2022) and Tomas et al. (2021) emphasize that there should be collaboration among schools, parents, learners, program specialists, and stakeholders to provide support for remedial reading programs. Parents, Parent-Teacher Association officials, and school leaders may support the implementation of remedial reading programs by providing funds. Acita et al. (2022) support this, adding that it is particularly challenging for those schools that are located in communities where poverty rates are high to raise funds.

Moreover, the attitude and performance of the students themselves affect the success of remedial reading programs. Acita et al. (2022) discovered that students may not appreciate the purpose and importance of reading. Many are also hesitant to read because they are unable to pronounce words correctly, and in teaching remedial reading, they have to start from the basics of letters and sounds. Hence, they suggest that various reading-related activities should be used to convey to students the value and benefits of being able to comprehend a string of words and phrases.

Finally, Sancada (2022) identified additional areas of challenge for teachers in teaching remedial reading. These areas include poor classroom facilities that are not conducive to students' learning to read; difficulty in scheduling remedial reading classes that are conducted outside of the regular class timetables; and lack of financial support.

3. Research Methods

This in-depth qualitative research employing participatory action research was conducted in a junior high school in the central part of the Philippines. The school is located in the center of the city and is identified as one of the low-performing schools in the division, based on the National Achievement Test. The school teaches children from grades seven to ten.

The participants were purposively selected as they comprised the total population of the junior high school content area teachers who had taught reading to their students, either through after-class remediation sessions or by integrating reading into their content area lessons. All of the participants taught specialized subjects

to junior high school students in grades seven to ten. In total, 31 content area teachers (seven males and 24 females) participated in the study, with eight of them teaching English and Filipino, five teaching Science, five teaching Mathematics, four teaching Araling Panlipunan (AP) or Social Studies and Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (EsP) or Values Education, four teaching Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE), and five teaching Music, Art, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH). Teaching experience varied among the content area teachers, ranging from one to nine years.

Data were collected through focus group discussions using a validated and pilot-tested researcher-made questionnaire (see Appendix 1), which focused on identifying the difficulties and the needs of content area teachers in teaching reading. The instrument underwent content validation by three experts, before being pilot-tested to content area teachers from another low-performing public high school in the same division. The participants of the pilot test were five content area teachers who had experience in teaching remedial reading. The gathered data were transcribed and sent back to the participants for member-checking purposes, after which two cycles of thematic analysis were performed. The first cycle consisted of data familiarity, identification of common codes, creating code descriptions, and cross-checking. The second cycle included categorizing the common codes, formulating themes, and supporting them with assertions.

4. Results and Discussion

This study investigated the difficulties and needs of content area teachers in teaching remedial reading. Content area teachers specializing in English, Mathematics, Science, Araling Panlipunan, Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao, Technology and Livelihood Education, Filipino, and Music, Art, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) were interviewed to share their experiences.

Theme 1: Difficulties Encountered by Content Area Teachers in Teaching Remedial Reading

The difficulties encountered by content area teachers revealed four major themes, ranked by the frequency with which they were reported. Findings revealed that the primary difficulty was engaging students who had developed negative emotions associated with reading. Next, the content area teachers struggled with the lack of school resources and a lack of support from the students' home context. The third difficulty was the teachers' insufficient pedagogical knowledge of reading. Finally, the teachers found it difficult to use reading assessments to inform instruction.

Subtheme 1.1: Difficulty in engaging students who have negative emotions associated with reading

Content area teachers face significant challenges in motivating struggling readers due to various emotional barriers. They reported that students exhibit shyness, fear, and hesitation when reading, making it challenging for them to create an engaging learning environment. One teacher shared that students' shyness and lack of participation were one of the primary obstacles. A Science teacher described his students as follows: "They are in silent mode, and reluctant to

engage in reading activities. They will not read aloud and will wait for me to sound out the words before they follow.” (P4 male, Science teacher)

Often, the teachers have to scaffold the students by sounding out the words, indicating students’ hesitancy and lack of confidence. Participants also highlighted that the inability of struggling readers to read in junior high school added to their embarrassment and self-doubt. In turn, this lack of confidence further hindered their willingness to speak up and actively participate in reading exercises. Teachers observed that this may be attributed to previous incidents in which their classmates had laughed at them for their pronunciation errors. Despite consistent encouragement and support, these students now refused to participate.

Teachers reported that students felt humiliated when they focused on teaching them how to read, exacerbating students’ negative emotions. Furthermore, teachers revealed that some struggling readers resorted to absenteeism as a coping mechanism. The anxiety associated with being asked to read in front of others became overwhelming for these students, leading them to prefer staying away from school. As the Science teacher (P2 female) said, “When they are asked to read, they do not go to school. They intentionally do it. Also, they do not attend the remedial reading classes. Once they have a scheduled remedial class, you cannot see them in school.”

Students avoid their remedial reading sessions and leave the school premises immediately when reading sessions are scheduled.

These results mirror the findings of McArthur et al. (2020), who found that low ability readers who have short attention spans and poor spoken language also have low academic self-concept. Reading self-concept is a significant predictor of both reading comprehension and overall reading performance (Henschel et al., 2013; McArthur et al., 2020; Locher et al., 2021). Therefore, teachers are encouraged to apply the principles of motivation and to create a safe environment at the beginning of the school year to ensure a psychologically healthy atmosphere in which to encourage struggling readers to take risks in reading.

Subtheme 1.2: Lack of school resources and unsupportive home context

Contextual factors such as lack of school resources and lack of parental support at home were also reported by content area teachers to hamper learners’ performance in learning to read. The participants expressed having difficulty in facilitating effective reading instruction when they lacked the necessary resources, such as instructional materials and classrooms.

Indeed, the scarcity of instructional materials made the teachers feel challenged in delivering the classes. As the Social Studies teacher (P4, female) expressed, “It’s difficult to teach without materials. We are still the ones to provide them. It is an additional preparation on top of my regular classes.”

This was confirmed by the Math and English teachers (P5 male; P2 male), who stated that they found it challenging to prepare instructional materials, especially those that were appropriate for the students’ reading levels.

In addition, a shortage of classrooms resulted in the reduction of classes to half-day sessions, creating shorter class hours and sometimes sacrificing the time allocated for remedial sessions.

Moreover, a lack of parental support exacerbated by poor economic conditions negatively influenced the implementation of reading classes. As mentioned by the Social Studies/ESP teacher:

Some students do not attend the reading sessions because, after class, they have to work at the fishing port, serve as a porter in the nearby market, do a part-time job as a house helper, or are depended upon to do the chores in their homes. (P3 female, Social Studies/ESP teacher)

Teachers reported that, in some cases, parents condone their children's absences so they can work to augment the income of the family. Furthermore, some parents are unable to provide academic guidance at home as they may also be non-readers or may not have time to engage in reading activities at home.

The findings suggest that environmental factors – such as the resources provided by the school as well as the home support provided by parents – affect learners' ability to read. These findings are similar to those of Sancada (2022), who found that there is a lack of support from parents and the Parent-Teachers Association, and also a lack of funding for remedial reading programs. Similarly, Merga's (2020) findings indicate that policymakers, researchers, school administrators, and teachers need to work closely with students and communities to develop and support innovative solutions for literacy. In the same vein, Acita et al. (2022) confirmed that the school as a whole is a significant factor in the execution of the remedial reading program, consisting not only of the teachers but also of the headteacher, the parents, and other stakeholders and donors, who must cooperate strongly. This indicates the necessity of reviewing the school's priorities in terms of resources for budget allocation and policies on the scheduling of classes, including the participation of parents in school activities.

Subtheme 1.3: Insufficient pedagogical knowledge of reading

Content area teachers acknowledged that in teaching reading remediation, their knowledge is limited to word pronunciation and comprehension. They understand reading skills as the ability to recognize words and understand what has been read. None of them mentioned phonemic awareness, fluency, or higher-order comprehension skills. Furthermore, the participants conceded that they lack instructional strategies for effectively teaching sounds, such as blending, long vowel sounds, and silent letters. Moreover, they reported that they did not know how to approach the teaching of sounds since they believed that these skills should have been mastered in elementary education. They noted that these students were resistant to traditional phonemic instruction methods, particularly in terms of the explicit articulation of each letter sound. According to the participants, students with low reading ability tend only to look at the mouth and lips of the teacher, while remaining reluctant to engage in sound reproduction activities. In addition, a Social Studies teacher (P1, female) stated that she has no other strategies, so she teaches blending merely by letting students watch videos, which she keeps repeating for one week until the students have learned it.

Content area teachers admitted that they are not specialized in reading; hence, they find teaching reading comprehension challenging. They present the vocabulary first, but they reported that they used direct translation to teach the difficult words so that students can understand the text they are reading. Additionally, the teachers reported that they struggle with using comprehension strategies, which limits their ability to help students understand texts beyond the literal level. Struggles in teaching reading comprehension emerged as their common challenge. As the MAPEH teacher (P3, male) quoted, “No, [we have] no technique. So, sometimes when the text is in English, we translate it ... so they can understand... We lack strategies and techniques on how to teach in a manner that is easiest for them to understand.”

Most of the participants emphasized that they lack strategies and techniques for their students to easily understand long texts. Thus, they look forward to varied and straightforward strategies for students to learn as quickly as students in the junior high school.

The findings of this study indicate that content area teachers find it hard to teach reading because they do not possess the necessary skills to teach the components of reading. This reaffirms the findings of Ancheta (2022), who found that content area teachers had inadequate knowledge of the nature of reading and content area reading instruction. Similarly, Moreau (2014) noted that many content area teachers feel unprepared for teaching reading skills due to a lack of knowledge and time in integrating literacy into their subject areas. Moats (2020) suggested that reading teachers should possess extensive knowledge and skills in word recognition and language comprehension, while Clark (2018) found that personalized professional development was effective for teachers who have a limited understanding of reading comprehension instruction. The findings indicate the need for support and professional development opportunities to equip content area teachers with effective strategies for teaching these aspects of reading.

Subtheme 1.4: Difficulty in using reading assessment to inform instruction

Although they recognize that reading assessment tools are helpful in identifying the students' reading ability level, content area teachers face challenges when using reading assessment tools for instructional placement. In particular, the remediation assessment tool procedure is designed to accurately gauge the students' reading capabilities and effectively facilitate homogeneous groupings. Some of the teachers in this study had an awareness of how to conduct the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT), but not all. Even those who had received training in specific assessments, such as the Phil-IRI and SORT, reported that the training was insufficient to effectively use these tools as the primary focus was on the mechanics of administering the assessments rather than on how to interpret the results and apply them to instructional planning. As a result, they struggled to accurately identify the reading level of their students and to determine the appropriate instructional strategies. One Science teacher said:

We were trained in Phil-IRI. There was a resource speaker. But we were taught only how to administer the test. So after we conducted the test to

our students, we submitted the scores. That's all... Sometimes, we are in doubt [about] how to identify this child, what he really is. Or [as to] what [reading] level he is. (P1 female, Science teacher)

Additionally, a Social Studies teacher (P2, male) explained that after conducting the reading assessment, it was left to each teacher's discretion to determine the materials and methodology of remedial reading instruction among their advisory classes.

Savitz (2020) suggested that an assessment should be implemented to identify the student's reading abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, and teachers should learn how to assess and use specific and detailed information from the findings to decide on the best interventions to use. Similarly, Christy (2011) stated that teachers need to ascertain students' literacy levels using screening tools rather than simply drawing conclusions based on their perceptions or instinct. Thus, the above finding implies that content area teachers, even those who are not reading specialists, need to be trained in the administration and interpretation of reading assessment tools, which could be achieved during the Teacher Induction Program (TIP) or In-Service Training (INSET).

Theme 2: Needs of Content Area Teachers in Teaching Remedial Reading

The needs of content area teachers in teaching remedial reading include: the need for professional development to enhance their skills in reading assessment and in strategies and techniques for teaching the components of reading; and the need for management support for the provision of reading materials, additional classrooms and teachers, reduced workload, smaller class sizes with homogeneous grouping, and the provision of a reading program so they can effectively implement the remedial reading classes.

Subtheme 2.1: Need for professional development

Most of the content area teachers expressed a need to enhance their remediation skills through intensive training, workshops, and seminars; particularly, the need for a complete reading program with accompanying materials was highlighted. Notably, the participants reported having a strong desire to improve their content and pedagogical expertise in reading remediation. Specifically, they identified the need for training in literacy skills that include phonemic awareness (proper pronunciation of letter sounds), phonics (sound blending techniques), vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies. As one Mathematics teacher (P4, male) said, "If we Math teachers are trained, we can help the child, even with the basics, and eventually, the English teacher can follow up, at least the problem will be lessened."

Moreover, the teachers requested intensive workshops focused on implementing the structured reading intervention programs. They emphasized the need for hands-on training with appropriate remedial reading materials and explicit guidance on their effective implementation. A Filipino teacher explained:

We need to enhance our reading remediation instruction process. After we assess the student's reading level, we implemented the instruction independently without supervision; hence, we need a structured reading program that lays down the scope and sequence of the instruction, and we

need guidance and supervision on where to begin the instruction – from teaching the phonics or letter sounds or starting with the reading of the word? Thus, we need a systematic, step-by-step process on what to do from the assessment through the concrete instruction. (P6 female, Filipino teacher)

Thus, these findings reveal that content area teachers are eager to enhance their professional skills in teaching reading but, at the same time, need the provision of resources from the Department of Education. This confirms the finding by Tomas et al. (2021) that content area teachers require support for the teacher gap due to a lack of orientation and training to teach reading and the incorrect implementation of reading programs. This implies that teachers must continuously update and enhance their teaching approaches and strategies to directly impact the students' achievement by implementing research-based strategies for improving comprehension and retention, thereby creating more meaningful learning experiences. Moreover, training on assessment and differentiated instruction methods would help teachers to better understand and adjust to meeting the individual needs of their students.

Subtheme 2.2: Need for management support

Content area teachers expressed the need for management support of the DepEd in terms of the provision of reading materials and additional classrooms, reduced workload, reduced class size with the homogeneous grouping of learners, and the provision of a reading program that they can easily implement.

Almost all of the teachers mentioned the need for the provision of all of the necessary materials for different reading levels. In particular, they expressed a need for books and other printed materials that are readily available. They pointed out the comparatively greater convenience of implementing reading classes when a complete set of materials—including instructions—is readily available. Furthermore, additional classrooms are needed to prevent the shortening of classes into half-day sessions.

Teachers are also calling for a reduced workload, expressing that their paperwork demands too much of their time, preventing them from focusing on the delivery of their classes. Since the reading class is non-graded and an additional responsibility, this becomes the first task to be sacrificed when the workload overwhelms them. As a Filipino teacher (P8, female) expressed, "If our main concern is the student's success, we teachers should spend less time on paperwork and more time teaching."

Moreover, a reduced class size was also mentioned as being essential, as the one to 45 ratio was considered too great a challenge. Also, the regrouping of students from heterogeneous to homogeneous was suggested to facilitate more effective teaching. One MAPEH teacher commented:

Students must be grouped homogeneously so that we can teach them using one approach. A strategy will be used for a group of independent students, then another strategy will be given to struggling students; however, if in one group [they are] are on different reading levels, we cannot teach them effectively. (P1 female, MAPEH teacher)

This perception was also supported by a Social Studies/EsP teacher, who mentioned:

I think it is important to extend help to our learners through differentiating instruction. Having heterogeneous grouping presents challenges among students. Students who are already proficient readers may become bored, undermotivated, and disengaged because of the pace and the lesson, often accommodating the struggling readers. (P2 male, Social Studies/EsP teacher)

Finally, teachers mentioned the need for a reading program with a specific procedure. A Science teacher (P5, female) elaborated, “The whole school [has] to create a program that is correct [and] appropriate for reading remediation because what we are doing is just to plaster the problem.”

Teaching effective reading remediation requires essential support from management in various aspects. To ensure the success of the program, the management needs to determine the teachers’ effectiveness, the students’ outcomes, the infrastructure, and the sustainability of the reading program. The results of this study are comparable to those in Sancada’s (2022) study, indicating that the lack of resources—such as classrooms and appropriate instructional materials—affects the teachers’ delivery of remedial classes. This implies that effective reading classes require the support of DepEd officials, and the teachers’ difficulties in preparing for the reading classes may also be addressed by having a packaged reading program, complete with procedures and materials.

5. Conclusions

Content area teachers play a crucial role in addressing the pressing problem of low levels of reading proficiency among secondary students. By teaching remedial reading, these teachers can make valuable contributions to the skill development of the high number of struggling readers and non-readers, which cannot be addressed by the limited number of reading teachers.

In this study, content area teachers expressed having difficulty in delivering reading lessons due to students’ low self-concept and lack of motivation for reading. Since these students have not realized the value of reading, teachers have to provide activities that will keep them engaged, ensuring that lessons are within their level of ability and interest. Administrators and teachers must therefore create a positive and supportive environment as a key ingredient in making the students feel confident enough to take risks when reading.

In addition, the lack of school resources and lack of parental support pose additional challenges to the success of reading classes. Policymakers would be advised to examine the existing policies to address the pressing challenges regarding the grouping of learners, scheduling of classes, and prioritization of reading classes, in order to enhance learning. In addition, funding allocation from administrators is definitely needed to address the difficulties of insufficient learning materials and learning spaces to facilitate the effective delivery of classes. Parental support, such as by encouraging their children to attend the reading sessions instead of working and showing concern for their children’s learning if unable to provide follow-up lessons, would be valuable in motivating students to

be engaged and conscientious regarding their reading and academic performance. Collaboration, such as forming cross-functional teams or implementing regular parent-teacher conferences, has to be established between home and school in order to provide continuous support to learners.

Similarly, teachers face the difficulty of having insufficient pedagogical knowledge in reading instruction. Discussion of their specific difficulties in teaching the components of reading—such as phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary techniques—was limited due to the fact that they lacked in-depth knowledge about these aspects. In addition, they are facing feelings of inadequacy in administering and interpreting the reading assessment tools, making it difficult to effectively determine their students' instructional placement. To address both of these challenges, school administrators should take the initiative of providing teachers with mentorship programs, such as intensive training from reading specialists, including diagnostic assessment and the teaching of various reading skills.

The difficulties expressed by the content area teachers are accompanied by various needs. Participants expressed the need for intensive training, workshops, or seminars on how to teach reading. An intensive capability-building activity on the strategies for teaching phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary could increase their confidence in addressing the students' reading deficiencies. Policymakers may consider including reading remediation as an elective course in the teacher education curriculum of secondary preservice teachers.

Additionally, the teachers highlighted the need for management support due to their overwhelming workload, lack of resources such as classrooms, and large class sizes with heterogeneous grouping, as these factors have a strong impact on their efficiency and effectiveness in delivering reading lessons. Moreover, the provision of a reading program package with a procedure manual and learning materials was also highlighted as a necessity to ease their teaching burden, in view of the fact that their remedial reading class is an added responsibility on top of their regular workload.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore studies on the perspectives of struggling readers. Equally, an evaluation of the long-term impact of professional development programs provided by the school, or an investigation of the technological interventions in remedial reading instruction would offer useful insights. Such studies would provide an important contribution to enrich the body of knowledge on the teaching of remedial reading by content area teachers.

6. Limitations

Despite the insights it provides, this study contains several limitations. First, the teachers included in the focus group discussions were content area teachers with one to nine years of teaching experience, and their pedagogical skills are limited to their length of experience. Also, the learners in remedial classes were grouped heterogeneously, with different reading levels. Finally, the content area teachers' observations may be limited to the performance of learners with low reading

abilities.

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Appendix 1

Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire

Date: _____ Assessor: _____

School: _____

Number of Participants: _____ No. of Males: _____ No. of Females: _____

Introductions

1. Welcome! My name is _____, and I am a _____ at _____. My colleague is _____, and she is a _____ at _____. She will be taking notes/looking after the recording/just listening.
2. We are having this discussion today because we are interested to know more about your experiences in teaching remedial reading among junior high school students.
3. You have been invited to participate in this focus group because you are a specialist in your subject area, but you are teaching remedial reading.
4. We have recorders/note-takers because we want to make sure to capture your experiences and ideas. Everything that you say is **confidential**. Your thoughts and experiences will be reflected in the study findings **anonymously**. We will not use your name or identifying characteristics when you share the findings of this study with others. We ask that you do not share what others have discussed with people outside of this group.
5. We expect this discussion to take about 45 minutes to 1 hour. There will be no break, but you can take your snacks while answering the questions.

Ground Rules

6. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your experiences with teaching remedial reading.
7. You do not have to agree with everyone else in the room if that is not how you really feel. We expect people will have different experiences and views on these questions.
8. We want you to feel comfortable sharing your thoughts freely. We aren't looking for any particular answers. We just want to understand your viewpoints.
9. We ask that you talk one at a time, but there is no need to request permission to talk. Feel free to speak up if you have something to say and no one else is talking.
10. My role is to facilitate the discussion, but we hope you will talk to one another and not just to me.
11. Feel free NOT to answer some questions.
12. You may use any language in sharing your thoughts.
13. Please turn cell phones off/on silent to minimize distractions and disruptions.
14. We are going to use an audio recorder for your responses for future use. Do you agree with this? Do you agree to participate?
15. Let's start by learning more about each other. Please introduce yourself and tell us what subject you teach.

Topic	Question	Response
Warm Up	1. How long have you been teaching junior high school?	
Professional Preparation	2. Have you received professional development related to teaching struggling readers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the topic? • When was that? • How long did it last? 	
	Are you familiar with the DepEd Memo No 13, s. 2018 titled “Implementing Guidelines on the Conduct of Remedial and Advancement Classes During Summer For the K-12 Basic Education Program” (Amended in DepEd Order No. 25, s. 2022). Are you implementing it?	
Teaching Struggling Readers	3. How many struggling readers do you teach in the remedial reading program?	
	4. What has gone well as you have been teaching remedial reading?	
	5. What are the difficulties you encountered when trying to teach struggling readers in a reading remediation program?	
	6. What was difficult in teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonics? • vocabulary? • comprehension? and • writing? 	

	<p>7. What areas in teaching remedial reading would you like to learn more about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonics? • vocabulary? • comprehension? and • writing? 	
	<p>8. What support (e.g. training, materials) do you need to be able to help struggling readers?</p>	

What else would you like to tell us about your challenges in providing instruction and support to struggling readers?

Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge and experiences with us today. Do you have any questions for us?

After we analyze the data we'll share it with you through email and discuss the results to enhance the accuracy and validity of our findings, and if there are things you want to add, we would appreciate it.