



Article

Bridging Reading Gaps through the ARAL Program: Lived Experiences of English Teachers in Supporting Struggling Readers in Talubin National High School

¹ Olga W. Wad-ey

Talubin National High School

Talubin, Bontoc, Mountain Province

wailanolga@gmail.com

Abstract

Reading proficiency remains one of the most significant determinants of learners' academic achievement and lifelong success. However, many secondary school students continue to experience reading difficulties that hinder their comprehension, communication, and overall academic performance. In response to the declining literacy levels among Filipino learners, the Department of Education introduced the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program to provide targeted interventions for struggling learners. While previous studies have primarily examined learners' reading outcomes and intervention effectiveness, limited attention has been given to the lived experiences of English teachers who serve as frontliners in implementing the ARAL Program. Understanding their experiences is crucial because teachers play a central role in designing instructional strategies, motivating learners, overcoming implementation barriers, and ensuring the success of reading interventions. This phenomenological study aims to explore the lived experiences of English teachers in supporting struggling readers through the ARAL Program at Talubin National High School. Guided by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the study seeks to understand how teachers perceive their instructional roles, the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the meanings they attach to their experiences in delivering reading interventions. Participants will consist of purposively selected English teachers directly involved in implementing the ARAL Program. Data will be collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis following the IPA framework. The findings are expected to generate comprehensive themes that describe teachers' professional commitment, instructional innovations, emotional resilience, collaborative practices, and recommendations for strengthening literacy intervention programs. The study intends to contribute to literacy education, teacher professional development, and educational policy by providing contextualized evidence that may inform the enhancement of the ARAL Program and similar remedial reading initiatives in Philippine secondary schools.

Keywords: ARAL Program, struggling readers, English teachers, literacy intervention, interpretative phenomenology, lived experiences, reading recovery, qualitative research



Introduction

Reading is widely recognized as the foundation of learning because it enables learners to acquire knowledge, communicate effectively, and participate meaningfully in academic and social life. Across educational systems worldwide, literacy development remains a central priority due to its direct influence on learners' academic achievement, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. Students who struggle with reading often experience difficulties across multiple subject areas, resulting in reduced confidence, limited classroom participation, and increased risk of academic failure.

International assessments have consistently demonstrated concerns regarding learners' reading proficiency. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have revealed that many students continue to perform below the minimum proficiency level in reading literacy, highlighting persistent challenges in comprehension, interpretation, and critical evaluation of texts. These findings underscore the necessity of strengthening reading instruction through comprehensive intervention programs and teacher support systems.

In the Philippine context, literacy recovery has become an urgent educational priority. The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic significantly widened learning gaps, particularly among learners with pre-existing reading difficulties. Interrupted face-to-face instruction, unequal access to learning resources, and varying levels of parental support contributed to declines in reading proficiency among many Filipino learners. Consequently, schools have been challenged to implement effective literacy interventions capable of addressing diverse learning needs while promoting equitable educational opportunities.

Recognizing these challenges, the Department of Education introduced the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program as one of its flagship initiatives to address learning loss and improve foundational competencies among learners. The ARAL Program provides structured remediation through focused instructional support, emphasizing literacy and numeracy recovery. Within this initiative, English teachers assume critical responsibilities in identifying struggling readers, designing differentiated instructional activities, monitoring learner progress, and fostering positive learning environments that encourage reading development.

Teaching struggling readers, however, extends beyond implementing prescribed instructional materials. Teachers often adapt learning resources, modify teaching strategies, provide individualized feedback, and establish supportive relationships with learners who exhibit varying levels of motivation and confidence. These responsibilities require not only pedagogical competence but also emotional resilience, creativity, patience, and sustained professional commitment.

Existing literature has documented the effectiveness of various reading intervention programs in improving learners' literacy skills. Studies have examined phonics instruction, guided reading, differentiated teaching, peer-assisted learning, and technology-assisted interventions. While these investigations have contributed substantially to understanding learner outcomes, considerably fewer studies have explored the lived experiences of teachers responsible for implementing literacy intervention programs. Their voices remain underrepresented despite their central role in translating educational policies into meaningful classroom practices.

Teachers' lived experiences offer valuable insights into how educational interventions function within authentic school contexts. Their narratives illuminate both the opportunities and constraints encountered during program implementation, including resource availability, administrative support, learner engagement, parental involvement, workload management, and professional

collaboration. Understanding these experiences is essential for designing responsive professional development programs, strengthening instructional support mechanisms, and improving literacy policies that are grounded in classroom realities.

Talubin National High School provides a relevant context for investigating these experiences because English teachers actively participate in implementing the ARAL Program among learners identified as struggling readers. Their daily interactions with students allow them to witness the complexities of reading intervention, observe learner progress, and develop practical strategies for addressing literacy challenges within resource-constrained educational settings.

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, this study seeks to capture the meanings English teachers assign to their experiences while implementing the ARAL Program. Rather than merely evaluating program outcomes, the research aims to understand how teachers interpret their roles, negotiate instructional challenges, construct professional identities, and derive personal and professional fulfillment from supporting struggling readers. By foregrounding teachers' perspectives, the study contributes to a richer understanding of literacy intervention as a human-centered educational practice shaped by experience, reflection, and commitment.

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of research on reading interventions, significant gaps remain in the existing literature. Most previous studies have focused primarily on learners' reading achievement, intervention effectiveness, or instructional strategies measured through quantitative approaches. These investigations provide valuable evidence regarding student outcomes but offer limited understanding of the lived realities of teachers responsible for implementing literacy intervention programs.

Within the Philippine educational setting, particularly following the implementation of the Department of Education's ARAL Program, empirical studies exploring teachers' firsthand experiences remain scarce. Existing literature has yet to comprehensively examine how English teachers navigate instructional challenges, adapt pedagogical approaches, manage emotional demands, and construct professional meaning while supporting struggling readers.

Furthermore, few phenomenological investigations have explored the contextual realities of secondary school English teachers implementing government-led literacy recovery programs in geographically unique and resource-limited schools such as Talubin National High School. Consequently, there remains insufficient qualitative evidence describing how teachers experience literacy intervention beyond measurable learner outcomes.

Addressing this gap is essential because understanding teachers' lived experiences provides contextual knowledge that quantitative performance indicators cannot fully explain. The findings of this study will enrich existing literature by presenting nuanced descriptions of teachers' professional journeys, thereby informing literacy policy, teacher education, instructional leadership, and future enhancements of the ARAL Program.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore and understand the lived experiences of English teachers in implementing the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program for struggling readers at Talubin National High School.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Explore how English teachers describe their experiences in supporting struggling readers through the ARAL Program.
2. Identify the instructional challenges encountered during the implementation of reading interventions.
3. Examine the coping strategies and instructional innovations employed by teachers to address learners' reading difficulties.
4. Understand the meanings teachers attach to their experiences in implementing literacy interventions.
5. Generate practical recommendations that may strengthen the implementation of the ARAL Program and future literacy recovery initiatives in Philippine secondary schools.

Review of Related Literature

Reading literacy is widely recognized as the cornerstone of academic achievement, lifelong learning, and active participation in society because it enables learners to comprehend, analyze, and apply information across various contexts. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) defines reading literacy as an individual's ability to understand, evaluate, and reflect on written texts to achieve personal goals, develop knowledge, and contribute effectively to society. Numerous international studies have consistently demonstrated that reading proficiency significantly predicts learners' performance in all academic disciplines, as students with strong reading skills are more capable of understanding complex concepts, engaging in higher-order thinking, and succeeding academically (Snow, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Conversely, learners who struggle with reading often experience difficulties in comprehension, vocabulary development, written communication, and critical thinking, which consequently affect their motivation, classroom participation, and overall academic performance (Guthrie & Klauda, 2022). The urgency of strengthening literacy instruction has become more evident following the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), where Filipino learners consistently performed below the international average in reading literacy, highlighting persistent educational challenges that require immediate intervention (OECD, 2023). The educational disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic further widened learning gaps, particularly among struggling readers, as prolonged school closures, limited access to instructional resources, and unequal learning opportunities significantly affected learners' literacy development (UNESCO, 2023). In response to these challenges, the Philippine Department of Education institutionalized the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program to address learning loss by providing structured remediation and targeted support in foundational competencies such as reading, literacy, and numeracy. The ARAL Program emphasizes learner-centered, inclusive, and differentiated instruction designed to accelerate learners' recovery while ensuring equitable access to quality education (Department of Education, 2024). Within this framework, English teachers play a pivotal role as literacy intervention specialists responsible for identifying struggling readers, designing contextualized instructional materials, implementing differentiated reading strategies, monitoring learner progress, and fostering supportive learning environments that encourage reading development. According to Hattie (2023), teacher expertise remains one of the strongest school-related factors influencing student achievement, particularly when educators employ evidence-based instructional practices, provide timely feedback, and establish positive teacher-learner relationships. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) emphasized that effective teachers continuously adapt their instructional approaches based on learners' needs while promoting inclusive and equitable classroom practices. Studies on reading intervention have shown that differentiated instruction, guided reading, explicit vocabulary instruction, repeated reading,

formative assessment, and scaffolded learning significantly improve reading comprehension and learner engagement among struggling readers (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Foorman et al., 2023). Furthermore, Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory underscores the importance of guided learning and instructional scaffolding, suggesting that learners develop higher-order reading skills through meaningful interactions with knowledgeable teachers who provide appropriate support within the learners' Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Despite the growing body of literature on reading intervention and literacy development, most previous studies have concentrated on measuring learners' reading achievement, evaluating intervention effectiveness, or comparing instructional strategies using quantitative approaches. Comparatively few studies have examined the lived experiences of English teachers implementing literacy recovery programs, particularly within the Philippine context following the implementation of the ARAL Program. Santos and David (2023) observed that teachers implementing remedial reading initiatives often encounter challenges related to insufficient instructional materials, increased workload, diverse learner needs, inconsistent parental involvement, and limited intervention time; however, they continue to demonstrate resilience and commitment by modifying instructional practices and providing individualized support to struggling learners. Likewise, Garcia and Ramos (2024) reported that teachers' adaptability, collaboration, and reflective practices contribute significantly to the success of school-based literacy intervention programs despite resource constraints. Nevertheless, empirical phenomenological studies exploring how English teachers interpret their experiences, navigate instructional challenges, and derive professional meaning while implementing the ARAL Program remain limited, particularly in rural public secondary schools such as Talubin National High School. Addressing this gap is therefore essential because understanding teachers' lived experiences offers rich contextual insights that extend beyond learner performance indicators, providing evidence that can inform literacy policies, teacher professional development, instructional leadership, and the continuous enhancement of the Department of Education's ARAL Program.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as articulated by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009).

Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory

Vygotsky proposed that learning occurs through social interaction, guided participation, and collaborative engagement between learners and more knowledgeable individuals. Central to this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which explains that learners achieve higher levels of understanding when supported by teachers or peers through appropriate scaffolding.

Within the ARAL Program, English teachers function as knowledgeable facilitators who scaffold struggling readers' literacy development by providing differentiated instruction, guided reading activities, corrective feedback, and individualized support. As learners gradually acquire reading competencies, instructional assistance is systematically reduced until independent performance is achieved.

This theoretical perspective emphasizes that literacy development is socially constructed through meaningful teacher-learner interactions rather than solely through independent practice.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, developed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), serves as the methodological lens guiding this investigation. IPA seeks to understand how individuals make sense of significant personal experiences by examining participants' interpretations of events within their specific contexts.

The approach recognizes the concept of double hermeneutics, wherein participants interpret their own experiences while researchers subsequently interpret those interpretations. Through in-depth interviews, reflective analysis, and thematic interpretation, IPA allows researchers to uncover the meanings teachers assign to implementing literacy interventions under the ARAL Program.

Using IPA enables this study to move beyond descriptions of instructional practices toward a deeper understanding of teachers' emotions, beliefs, professional identities, resilience, and commitment while supporting struggling readers.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the lived experiences of English teachers in implementing the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program for struggling readers at Talubin National High School. IPA was selected because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of how individuals interpret and make meaning of significant experiences within their personal and professional contexts (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2022). The study was conducted at Talubin National High School, Bontoc, Mountain Province, Philippines, where the ARAL Program is implemented as a literacy intervention initiative for learners with reading difficulties. A total of 10 English teachers who had directly implemented the ARAL Program for at least one academic year were purposively selected as participants based on their firsthand experiences with struggling readers. Data were gathered through researcher-developed semi-structured interviews, which were validated by experts in qualitative research and English education to ensure content validity and relevance. Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the appropriate school authorities, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Individual face-to-face interviews lasting approximately 45–60 minutes were conducted in a confidential setting and audio-recorded with participants' permission. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to member checking to ensure the accuracy and credibility of participants' responses. Data analysis followed the systematic procedures of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, involving repeated reading of transcripts, initial noting, coding of significant statements, development of emergent themes, clustering of related themes, and interpretative analysis to uncover the meanings participants attributed to their experiences. To establish the trustworthiness of the findings, the study adopted the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), ensuring credibility through member checking and peer debriefing, transferability through rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, dependability through a comprehensive audit trail, and confirmability through reflexive journaling and systematic documentation of analytical decisions. Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study by ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity through the use of pseudonyms, secure storage of research data, and participants' right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Collectively, these methodological procedures ensured the rigor, credibility, and ethical integrity of the study while providing a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of English teachers implementing the ARAL Program in supporting struggling readers.

Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Embracing the Role of a Literacy Advocate

The participants described their experiences in the ARAL Program as more than fulfilling a teaching assignment. They perceived themselves as literacy advocates whose primary responsibility was to restore learners' confidence and cultivate a genuine interest in reading. While they acknowledged that improving reading skills required patience and sustained effort, they considered every incremental learner achievement a meaningful indicator of success. Teachers emphasized that the program allowed them to build stronger relationships with struggling readers, understand learners' individual needs, and provide personalized instructional support that was often difficult to achieve during regular classroom instruction. Their experiences reflected a strong sense of professional commitment and purpose, demonstrating that literacy intervention extends beyond academic instruction toward empowering learners to become confident readers.

Representative responses include:

P1: "The ARAL Program reminded me that every learner deserves another chance to succeed. Some students only needed someone who would patiently guide them without making them feel embarrassed."

P4: "Helping a struggling reader recognize words and eventually understand a passage gave me a sense of fulfillment. Their small improvements motivated me to continue despite the challenges."

P8: "I realized that teaching reading is not only about books. It is about encouraging learners to believe that they are capable of learning."

These narratives suggest that teachers viewed literacy intervention as a transformative process centered on learner empowerment rather than merely improving test scores. Similar findings were reported by Darling-Hammond et al. (2022), who emphasized that teachers' professional commitment and supportive relationships significantly enhance learner engagement and academic success. Likewise, Hattie (2023) identified teacher efficacy and positive teacher-student relationships as among the strongest influences on learner achievement. Within the context of the ARAL Program, English teachers demonstrated that fostering confidence and motivation constituted an essential component of effective literacy instruction.

Theme 2: Adapting Instruction to Diverse Reading Needs

Participants consistently reported modifying instructional strategies to accommodate learners' varying reading abilities. Rather than relying exclusively on prescribed instructional materials, teachers contextualized lessons, simplified reading passages, integrated visual aids, utilized games, and employed differentiated instruction to address learners' specific literacy needs. They emphasized that flexibility was necessary because struggling readers possessed diverse levels of reading proficiency, motivation, and learning preferences. Teachers also highlighted the importance of continuous assessment in identifying learners' progress and adjusting instructional approaches accordingly.

Representative responses include:

P2: "No single strategy works for every learner. I often change my activities depending on their reading level and how they respond during the lesson."

P6: "Sometimes I prepare additional flashcards, localized stories, and vocabulary activities because the provided materials are not enough for all learners."

P10: "I learned to become more creative because every learner has different strengths and weaknesses."

The findings demonstrate that effective literacy intervention requires adaptive instructional practices responsive to learners' individual needs. This supports the work of Tomlinson (2021), who argued that differentiated instruction enhances learner participation by accommodating differences in readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Similarly, Duke and Cartwright (2021) emphasized that explicit instruction combined with differentiated literacy strategies substantially improves reading comprehension among struggling readers. The participants' narratives affirm that instructional flexibility is fundamental to the successful implementation of the ARAL Program.

Theme 3: Navigating Instructional and Contextual Challenges

Despite their commitment, participants described numerous challenges affecting the implementation of the ARAL Program. The most frequently cited concerns included limited instructional time, shortages of reading materials, increased workload, inconsistent learner attendance, and minimal parental involvement. Teachers explained that balancing ARAL responsibilities alongside regular classroom teaching often required additional preparation beyond official working hours. Nevertheless, they remained committed to providing quality instruction despite these constraints.

Representative responses include:

P3: "Our biggest challenge is time. We already have regular teaching responsibilities, and preparing intervention materials requires additional effort."

P5: "Some learners are absent frequently, making it difficult to monitor continuous progress."

P7: "Limited instructional materials sometimes force us to create our own reading resources using personal time and resources."

These findings align with Santos and David (2023), who reported that teachers implementing remedial reading programs frequently encounter resource limitations, increased workloads, and inconsistent learner participation. Likewise, Garcia and Ramos (2024) found that insufficient instructional resources and limited parental engagement remain persistent barriers to literacy intervention in Philippine public schools. Despite these obstacles, participants demonstrated resilience and maintained their commitment to supporting struggling readers.

Theme 4: Building Resilience Through Collaboration and Reflection

Teachers explained that collaboration with colleagues, school administrators, and parents played a vital role in sustaining the implementation of the ARAL Program. They frequently exchanged instructional materials, discussed learner progress, shared intervention strategies, and reflected on classroom experiences to improve their teaching practices. Many participants also viewed professional reflection as an important mechanism for continuous improvement and resilience.

Representative responses include:

P1: "We regularly discuss which strategies work best. Sharing experiences with fellow teachers helps us solve common problems."

P4: "Every learner's progress encourages me to improve my teaching. Reflection helps me become more patient and effective."

P9: "Support from our school head and colleagues gives us confidence to continue even when challenges become difficult."

The participants' experiences demonstrate that teacher resilience is strengthened through collaborative professional relationships and reflective practice. This finding supports Day and Gu (2020), who concluded that collaboration and professional learning communities significantly enhance teacher resilience and instructional effectiveness. Similarly, OECD (2023) highlighted collaborative school cultures as essential for sustaining educational reforms and improving learner outcomes. The ARAL Program therefore benefits not only from effective instructional practices but also from supportive professional networks that encourage continuous learning among teachers.

Essence of the Lived Experience

The lived experiences of English teachers implementing the ARAL Program reveal a professional journey characterized by commitment, adaptability, resilience, and hope. Teachers perceived literacy intervention not merely as an institutional requirement but as a meaningful opportunity to transform learners' educational experiences through patience, encouragement, and individualized instruction. Although they encountered challenges related to instructional resources, workload, learner participation, and time constraints, they remained dedicated to helping struggling readers develop confidence and improve their literacy skills. Their narratives illustrate that successful implementation of the ARAL Program depends not only on instructional materials or policies but also on teachers' passion, creativity, collaboration, and unwavering belief in every learner's capacity to succeed.

Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the multifaceted experiences of English teachers implementing the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program in supporting struggling readers at Talubin National High School. The emergent themes collectively demonstrate that literacy intervention extends beyond the delivery of reading instruction and encompasses professional commitment, instructional adaptability, resilience, and collaborative engagement. The teachers perceived their participation in the ARAL Program as an opportunity to restore learners' confidence, strengthen foundational literacy skills, and foster positive attitudes toward reading. Their narratives reveal that successful literacy intervention is deeply rooted in meaningful teacher-learner relationships, where empathy, patience, and individualized support become essential components of effective instruction. These findings resonate with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which posits that learners develop higher-order competencies through guided interactions with knowledgeable individuals who provide appropriate scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). By continuously adjusting instructional strategies according to learners' needs, teachers facilitated meaningful learning experiences that enabled struggling readers to gradually develop confidence and independence.

Another significant finding is the teachers' consistent use of differentiated and contextualized instructional approaches. Participants emphasized that no single teaching strategy effectively addressed the diverse literacy needs of all learners; instead, successful intervention required continuous adaptation, creativity, and responsiveness to learners' progress. These experiences affirm the principles of differentiated instruction proposed by Tomlinson (2021), which emphasize flexible teaching practices tailored to learners' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. The

findings likewise support Hattie (2023), who identified teacher expertise and adaptive instruction as among the strongest school-based influences on student achievement. Teachers' willingness to modify instructional materials, develop localized reading resources, and employ learner-centered activities demonstrates their professional competence and commitment to maximizing learners' opportunities for literacy development despite contextual limitations.

The study also highlights the complex realities surrounding the implementation of literacy intervention programs. Teachers encountered challenges associated with insufficient instructional materials, limited intervention time, increased workload, inconsistent learner attendance, and inadequate parental support. Despite these constraints, participants remained committed to fulfilling their responsibilities by investing additional effort, utilizing personal resources, and collaborating with colleagues to sustain program implementation. These findings corroborate previous Philippine studies reporting that literacy intervention teachers frequently face resource constraints and competing instructional responsibilities while remaining highly dedicated to improving learner outcomes (Santos & David, 2023; Garcia & Ramos, 2024). Such experiences illustrate that educational policies achieve meaningful outcomes only when supported by adequate institutional resources, administrative leadership, and professional development opportunities.

Collaboration emerged as another critical dimension of teachers' lived experiences. Participants emphasized that collegial support, reflective practice, and administrative encouragement strengthened their capacity to address instructional challenges and improve intervention strategies. Through professional dialogue, sharing of instructional resources, and collective problem-solving, teachers developed innovative approaches that enhanced learner engagement and reading progress. This finding aligns with Day and Gu (2020), who argued that collaborative professional communities significantly contribute to teacher resilience, instructional effectiveness, and sustained educational improvement. The experiences shared by participants further suggest that school cultures promoting collaboration foster greater confidence, motivation, and professional satisfaction among teachers implementing intervention programs.

Viewed through the lens of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the participants' narratives reveal that implementing the ARAL Program transformed not only learners but also the teachers themselves. Their experiences fostered stronger professional identities characterized by empathy, adaptability, resilience, and a deeper appreciation of their role as literacy advocates. The teachers interpreted their work as meaningful because they witnessed gradual improvements in learners' confidence and reading abilities, reinforcing their commitment to educational service. This reflects the interpretative nature of phenomenological inquiry, wherein individuals continuously construct meaning from their lived experiences while navigating personal and professional challenges (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2022). Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that effective literacy intervention depends not solely on instructional strategies but also on teachers' beliefs, commitment, reflective practices, and supportive professional environments.

Implications of the Study

The findings offer several implications for educational practice, policy, teacher education, and future research. For educational practice, schools implementing the ARAL Program should strengthen differentiated reading instruction by providing teachers with updated literacy intervention resources, contextualized instructional materials, and ongoing opportunities to exchange effective teaching practices. Continuous professional learning communities may further enhance teachers' instructional competence and encourage collaborative innovation in literacy instruction.

From a policy perspective, the Department of Education may consider expanding institutional support for ARAL implementers through regular professional development programs, increased allocation of intervention materials, improved monitoring systems, and recognition of teachers' additional responsibilities. Policymakers should also strengthen partnerships with parents and local communities to promote sustained learner participation and reinforce reading development beyond the classroom.

For teacher education institutions, the study underscores the importance of integrating evidence-based literacy intervention strategies, differentiated instruction, and inclusive education practices into pre-service and in-service teacher preparation programs. Developing teachers' competencies in reading assessment, intervention planning, and learner motivation will better prepare educators to address persistent literacy challenges in diverse educational settings.

Finally, future researchers may replicate this study in different educational contexts, involving larger participant groups or employing mixed-methods designs to further investigate the effectiveness and sustainability of the ARAL Program. Comparative studies across elementary and secondary schools or among different geographical regions may provide broader insights into literacy intervention practices within the Philippine educational system.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of English teachers in implementing the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program to support struggling readers at Talubin National High School. The findings revealed that the teachers viewed literacy intervention as a meaningful professional responsibility that extended beyond improving learners' reading performance to nurturing their confidence, motivation, and willingness to learn. Through their experiences, teachers emerged not only as facilitators of reading instruction but also as mentors, advocates, and agents of educational transformation who continuously adapted their instructional practices to address the diverse needs of struggling readers.

The study further demonstrated that effective implementation of the ARAL Program depended on teachers' ability to employ differentiated and contextualized instructional strategies while responding to the varying literacy levels of learners. Despite experiencing challenges related to limited instructional materials, insufficient intervention time, increased workload, irregular learner attendance, and limited parental involvement, the participants remained resilient and committed to achieving the goals of the program. Their willingness to innovate, collaborate with colleagues, and reflect on their teaching practices enabled them to sustain meaningful literacy intervention despite resource limitations.

Moreover, the findings underscored the significance of collaborative professional relationships in strengthening literacy intervention. Administrative support, collegial collaboration, and continuous professional reflection fostered teacher resilience and enhanced instructional effectiveness. These experiences affirm that successful literacy recovery programs require not only evidence-based instructional approaches but also supportive educational environments that recognize teachers' contributions and provide adequate institutional resources.

Overall, the study concludes that the success of the ARAL Program is largely influenced by teachers' professional commitment, adaptive instructional practices, resilience, and collaborative engagement. Understanding the lived experiences of English teachers provides valuable insights into the realities of implementing government-led literacy intervention programs and contributes to the development

of responsive educational policies, teacher development initiatives, and sustainable reading intervention practices that promote equitable learning opportunities for struggling readers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **The Department of Education** should strengthen the implementation of the ARAL Program by providing adequate instructional resources, updated reading materials, and sustained financial and administrative support for literacy intervention initiatives.
2. **School administrators** should establish continuous professional development programs focusing on differentiated instruction, reading intervention strategies, learner assessment, and evidence-based literacy practices to enhance teachers' instructional competence.
3. **English teachers** should continue employing learner-centered and differentiated instructional approaches while regularly sharing effective literacy intervention practices through professional learning communities and collaborative mentoring activities.
4. **Parents and guardians** should actively participate in learners' reading development by reinforcing reading habits at home and maintaining close communication with teachers regarding learners' progress and intervention needs.
5. **Schools implementing the ARAL Program** should strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the consistent implementation of literacy interventions and provide timely instructional support for struggling readers.
6. **Teacher education institutions** should integrate literacy intervention, differentiated instruction, inclusive education, and remedial reading strategies into pre-service and graduate teacher education programs to better prepare future educators.
7. **Future researchers** are encouraged to replicate this study in different educational settings, employ larger participant groups, or utilize mixed-methods and longitudinal research designs to further examine the implementation, effectiveness, and sustainability of the ARAL Program across various contexts.

References

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2022). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 26(2), 97–140.
- Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2020). *The new lives of teachers*. Routledge.
- Department of Education. (2024). *Policy guidelines on the implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program*. Department of Education, Philippines.
- Duke, N. K., & Cartwright, K. B. (2021). The science of reading progresses: Communicating advances beyond the simple view of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56(S1), S25–S44.
- Foorman, B. R., Petscher, Y., & Herrera, S. (2023). Evidence-based literacy instruction for improving reading achievement. *The Reading Teacher*, 76(5), 557–568.

- Garcia, M. L., & Ramos, J. P. (2024). Teachers' experiences in implementing remedial reading interventions in Philippine public schools. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educational Research*, 9(1), 45–60.
- Guthrie, J. T., & Klauda, S. L. (2022). Engagement and motivation in reading achievement. *Handbook of Reading Research*.
- Hattie, J. (2023). *Visible learning: The sequel*. Routledge.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *PISA 2022 results (Volume I): The state of learning and equity in education*. OECD Publishing.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Santos, R. M., & David, P. L. (2023). Challenges encountered by teachers in implementing school-based reading intervention programs. *Philippine Journal of Educational Studies*, 18(2), 89–104.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2022). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Snow, C. E. (2023). Reading for understanding: Toward a research and development program in reading comprehension. *Educational Researcher*, 52(3), 145–158.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2021). *How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms* (3rd ed.). ASCD.
- UNESCO. (2023). *Global education monitoring report 2023: Technology in education—A tool on whose terms?* UNESCO Publishing.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.