Best Practices of Teachers in Enhancing the Reading Level of Grade 4 Learners

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Abstract — This study is concerned with the level of effectiveness of the best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of Grade 4 learners in Urdaneta City Division for SY 2022 – 2023. Specifically, this study determined the level of effectiveness of the best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of Grade 4 learners in Urdaneta City Division. The research questions was (1) the profile of the participants, (2) the best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of the learners.

The term "best practice" is generally used to describe those instructional approaches and techniques that improve learners reading development. In short, these practices have acquired evidence over time that if used with fidelity, learners are likely to become proficient in reading. There are several best practices that teachers can employ when teaching reading. These practices have been proven effective in promoting reading skills and fostering a love for reading among learners. Most of the teacher participants in this study used reading basic sight words, remedial reading, guided reading, vocabulary development and phonics instruction in enhancing the reading level of Grade 4 learners.

The teacher participants used these practices because they believe that this will help the learners enhance their reading level. The teachers also said that the greatest benefit of learning sight words is how much they help learners on their journey to becoming great readers. Knowing more sight words means they can be more fluent in reading because they don't have to stop and think about as many words. Learners can readily understand more sentences and concepts by being able to make connections between all the sight words at their disposal. They used also remedial reading because according to them it is highly effective short-term intervention of tutoring struggling readers in both an individualized and small group setting. They also believe that remedial classes improve the quality of learning of learners who are unable to learn, remember the concepts, and perform well in the exams. Remedial teaching is planned after the evaluation is done so that the problem or difficulty in learning is identified.

Keywords — Best Practices, Grade 4 Learners, Enhancing Learners Reading Level

I. Introduction

Reading is important for every learner. Reading is making meaning from print. It requires that we: Identify the words in print – a process called word recognition. Construct an understanding from them – a process called comprehension. Coordinate identifying words and making meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate– an achievement called fluency. Developing reading skills is incredibly important for early readers, starting as early as picture books. As school-aged children get older, it will help them understand textbooks, newspapers, and other more complex

texts. Comprehension is an active process that involves the reader understanding and interpreting what is read. It is heavily dependent on a learner's language comprehension skills and their ability to apply their background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, knowledge about texts, understanding of language structures and reasoning skills to a text. The ability to read from an early age is the platform that enables life-long education. People without this critical skill are often socially and economically handicapped. The global literacy rate of 86 percent means there are 774 million people in the world who cannot read or write. Illiteracy is one of the biggest social challenges of our time. Millions of children and young adults have low or no reading skills. UNESCO, in 2018, estimated that 258 million children are not literate. In developing nations, one in four children cannot read. South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have the lowest literacy rates for children and adults. Surprisingly, the reading problem even plagues a number of developed countries. In America, 65 percent of fourth-graders read below or at the basic level. As per The Department of Education, United Kingdom, England faces similar problems with 1 in 5 children not being able to read by the age of 11.

In summary, the world faces a reading crisis. Traditional brick and mortar methods, though effective, touch too few and may be too late for too many. Technology touches our lives in myriad ways. To solve the reading problem, we must leverage the opportunities of speed and scale that come with the innovation technology can provide. Wexler (2020) said that the American Schools usually focus on teaching comprehension skills instead of general knowledge—even though education researchers know better. Every two years, education-policy wonks gear up for what has become a time- honored ritual: the release of the Nation's Report Card. Officially known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, the data reflect the results of reading and math tests administered to a sample of leraners across the country. Experts generally consider the tests rigorous and highly reliable—and the scores basically stagnant.

Reading comprehension is one of the most complex cognitive activities in which humans engage, making it difficult to teach, measure, and research. Despite decades of research in reading comprehension, international and national reading scores indicate stagnant growth for USA students. (Elleman, 2019).

According to Terry (2022), Reading comprehension is the ability to understand, analyze, synthesize, and use what you have read. When you use best practices for improving reading comprehension, it is easier to understand what you have read. Research has shown that the simple act of reading aloud can improve your reading comprehension. Whenever you use more than one sense (hearing, seeing, or doing) when you are learning, you are more likely to remember what you have read and it's easier to get a more complete understanding of the topic.

Glaser (2022) said that best practices in reading should always emphasize fluency. One of the most important research findings is that fluency is the key to meaningful reading and motivation. Even slightly labored reading can limit comprehension. Researchers have found that most "lazy" readers actually have reading fluency difficulties. The Sound Reading Small Steps

Readers develop fluency on with simple and complex words, as well as with sentences and stories. To help learners build both reading fluency and comprehension skills, various strategies should be used. Research shows that using a combination of techniques to improve reading comprehension is ideal. Glaser (2022) also give six main types of comprehension strategies available for use in the classroom, and each provides its own unique set of benefits for various types of learners.

However, the right strategies and support give children the best opportunity for becoming proficient readers. The good news is that there are numerous ways teachers and parents can support literacy and reading comprehension. The Victorian Government's Department of Education and Training note that the main strategies viewed as supporting comprehension are, activating and using prior knowledge to make connections – by tapping into their personal and cultural experiences and what they already know, readers can make connections with new material. For example, they might consider what they have previously learned about the topic or type of text. After reading, they might think about how the text added to their knowledge or influenced their thinking.

In the Philippines, in order to enhance the reading level of learners, teachers utilize their best practices in enhancing the reading level of learners. Best practices of teachers are " high level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of uncertainty. In the sense of the "art of the general", which included several subsets of skills including "tactics", siege craft, logistics etc. (Freedman 2013). Mintzberg 2006) defined best practices as "a pattern in a stream of decisions" This definition can be contrasted with McKenon's (2011), who argues that "best practices is about shaping the future" and is the human attempt to get to "desirable ends with available means". Best practices can also be perceived as a type of problem solving (Rumelt, 2011. In general, best practices involve various actions, objectives and the concept of optimality. In other words, a best practices is the most relevant way which leads to achieving an aim. A best practices is often described as a cognitive representation of the same actions undertaken to understand something or reach a certain goal. It pertains to complex action sequences, which means that it is related to the notion of a plan.

Baier (2015) said that learners who use reading comprehension strategies while reading retain more information and comprehend the text better. It was also hypothesized that learners who have good reading comprehension skills perform better on reading comprehension tests. It was concluded that the sixth grade literature learners performed better on the posttests where they used the Self-Questioning Reading Strategy.

Aside from the test results submitted by the public school teachers, the published report of CNN Philippines, (2019) that the Philippines is ranked the lowest in reading comprehension and second lowest in science and mathematics among 79 countries, a global survey showed, the researcher prompted to study the level of effectiveness of the best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of learners in Urdaneta 1 Central School, in Urdaneta City Division

for SY 2022 – 2023. The result of this study might help to improve the reading level of learners in Urdaneta City Schools Division.

II. Methodology

Research Design and Strategy

The researcher used the Mixed method research approach whereby researchers collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data within the same study. Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e. g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

Qualitative research questions seek to explore or describe phenomena, not provide a neat nomothetic explanation, so they are often more general and vaguely worded. They may include only one concept, though many include more than one. Instead of asking how one variable causes changes in another, we are instead trying to understand the experiences, understandings, and meanings that people have about the concepts in our research question. The survey instrument validation rating scale of Ryan Michael F. Oducado from West Visayas State University was used to validate the questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by the District Supervisor, School Principal and a Master Teacher.

This study determined the level of effectiveness of best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of Grade 4 learners in Urdaneta 1 Central School, Urdaneta City Division for SY 2022 – 2023. The researcher employed this research method to gain more realistic and valid information regarding the level of effectiveness of best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of Grade 4 learners in Urdaneta 1 Central School, Urdaneta City Division.

The subjects of this study were the Grade 4 public elementary school teachers in Urdaneta 1 Central School, Urdaneta City Division for SY 2022 – 2023. All Grade 4 public elementary school teachers in Urdaneta 1 Central School, Urdaneta City Division are respondents to this study.

Table I Distribution of Respondents

School	Number of Teachers
Urdaneta 1 Central School	14
Total	14

Data Gathering Tool

The researcher used questionnaire checklist for the respondents profile and structured interview questions for the teachers respondents. Part 1 of the questionnaire-checklist is the profile of the teacher respondents. The researcher also schedule interview to the teacher respondents for gathering their best practices in enhancing the reading level of their learners.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before administering the research instrument, permission secured from Schools Division Superintendent of Urdaneta City. The researcher personally distributed and administered the questionnaires and conducted interview regarding the best practices the respondent teachers use in enhancing the reading level to all Grade 4 public elementary school teachers in Urdaneta 1 Central School, Division of Urdaneta City.

Likewise, the researcher personally retrieved the same questionnaires. The teacher respondents in the interview part of this research study was recorded or written in the researcher notebook for analyzing and interpreting their answers, The responses and data obtained kept confidential by the researcher to ensure the highest degree of objectivity of responses. The respective respondent of the institutions was informed and oriented by the researchers regarding the purpose of the study.

Treatment of Data

The following statistical tools used to answer the specific problems of the study. To answer specific problem number 1, determining the profile of the public elementary school teachers namely, age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, position, number of years teaching, and number of relevant trainings, the frequency counts and percentages will be use.

To answer specific problem number 2, determining the best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of Grade 4 learners, the researcher conducted an interview to the Grade 4 teacher respondents from Urdaneta 1 Central School, Urdaneta City Schools Division. After the collection of all data from the participants, the researcher transcribed the sound recordings to a written document containing the verbatim responses of the participants. Transcribed data are consolidated into a coherent report through listing or ranking, coding of key ideas and themes or content analysis, discourse, and conversational examination.

As suggested by Morgan (1988, as cited by O. Nyumba et. al, 2018), analysis of interview and focus group discussion require three-element coding framework which will allow the researcher to generate a mixed content analysis composed of two-step content analysis that produces numerical data which can be in form of tabular presentation of responses from listings or ranking and one-step ethnographic analysis that provides the qualitative results. To generate the key ideas and themes of the responses, coding of data was generated through comprehensive

generation of various category codes or also known as the initial coding stage. Then, focused coding was done by the researcher to consolidate and eliminate coding categories from the initial coding.

According to Charmaz (2006, as cited by O. Nyumba et. al., 2018), attention is crucial on recurring ideas and broader themes connecting the codes. Through such process, the qualitative results were generated across focus groups, and participants' responses. Thematic analysis enables the researcher to distinguish from the responses important codes, that was generated into themes which will yield the qualitative results.

III. Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of public elementary school teachers to learn about their best practices in enhancing the reading skills to address reading skill deficits of their learners and investigate why the public elementary school teachers choose these practices in teaching reading. The analysis presented in this chapter was based on a generic qualitative research approach using a constant comparison thematic analysis of data from fourteen participant interviews. The participants of this research study was the fourteen Grade 4 teachers in Urdaneta I Central School teaching Reading. Participant profile variables are, age, sex, civil status, highest educational qualification, number of years of teaching, position, and number of relevant trainings varied among participants.

The research study analysis and resulting findings are included in this chapter and preceded by an overview of the research study participants, participant background, sequential analysis steps for each interview. The research design was qualitative, and the semi-structured in-person interviews provided opportunities for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon. Fourteen interviews were conducted in person in Urdaneta I Central School following approved procedures. Data were collected using open ended interview questions in a semi-structured format which addressed the following categories regarding the participant's experiences: ((a) the best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of their learners. The interview protocol was developed and aligned with the research question, What are the best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of Grade 4 learners?

Profile of the Respondents

Some variables related to the profile of the public elementary school teachers in Urdaneta City Division are herein considered. Such variables included was age, sex, civil status, highest educational qualification, number of years teaching, position, and number of relevant trainings. In this study, the public elementary school teachers of Urdaneta City Division were taken as respondents. They were categorized according to certain variables. Age. In terms of age, majority of the respondent public elementary school teachers belong to age bracket 41-50 that is 6 or 43

percent, while the rest belong to age bracket 21- 30, 2 or 14 percent, 31 - 40, 1 or 7 percent, 51 – 60 is 5 or 36 percent a. This could mean that the public elementary school teachers are just in their prime age of maturity suited for active and effective delivery of instruction in reading thru practicing the different approaches in enhancing the reading skill of learners. Sex. The same table shows that the public school teachers are dominated by females that is 10 or 71 percent while 4 or 29 percent were males. This means that the male group of respondents is outnumbered by the female group considering that teaching is a female dominated profession as observed in the different public schools in the country as well as in other countries. According to Wong (2019). teachers suffer low pay, little respect, and more and more pressure from all sides. And for many, the reason is a consequence of the teaching profession being largely populated by women. Today, 3 out of 4 public school teachers in the United States are women, and 97% of early childhood educators are women.

Table 2
Profile of the Respondents N =14

Profile Variables	Variable Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21 - 30	2	14%
	31 – 40	1	7%
	41 – 50	6	43%
	51 – 60	5	36%
	61 years and above	0	0%
Sex	Male	4	29%
	Female	10	71%
Civil Status	Single	2	14%
	Married	11	79%
	Widow/Widower	1	7%
Highest Educational Qualification	Bachelor Degree Holder	5	36%
	With M. A. Units	6	43%
	M.A. Degree Holder	2	14%
	With PhD/EdD Units	0	0%
	PhD / EdD Degree Holder	1	7%
Number of Years Teaching	1 year and below	1	7%
	2 – 7 years	1	7%
	8 – 13 years	7	50%
	14 – 19 years	2	14%
	20 years and above	3	22%
Position	Teacher I	1	7%
	Teacher II	2	14%
	Teacher III	10	72%
	Master Teacher I	1	7%
	Master Teacher II	0	0%
Number of Trainings/Seminars International	3 and below	0	0%
	4 – 6	0	0%
	7 and above	0	0%

National	3 and below	6	43%
	4 – 6	5	36%
	7 and above	3	21%
Regional	3 and below	2	14%
	4 – 6	7	50%
	7 and above	5	36%
Division	3 and below	1	7%
	4 – 6	4	29%
	7 and above	9	64%

Civil Status. It can be seen in the table that 11 or 79 percent are married, 2 or 14 percent are single while 1 or 7 percent are widow/widower. This means that majority of public elementary school teachers are married.

Highest Educational Attainment. As reflected in the table, 6 or 43 percent earned their M.A. Units, 2 or 14 percent are M.A, Holder, 1 or 7 percent have earned their PhD/EdD units , 5 or 36 percent of the respondents have their Bachelor Degree. This could mean that the public elementary school teacher respondents are very conscientious in pursuing their professional development. They also regard education as a continuous process of learning where they can acquire knowledge and skills and competencies which are essential for their professional growth.

Number of Years Teaching. It can be gleaned in the table that the greatest is in the group classification of 8-13 years with a frequency of 7 or 50 percent already in the teaching profession, while 3 or 22 percent have 20 years and above teaching experience, 2 or 14 percent have 14 – 19 number of years teaching. It could be said that there are more new breed of teachers in Urdaneta I Central School. This finding shows that public elementary school teachers are enjoying their functions / job as elementary school teacher with the old ones in the service, thus acquiring some skills. Based on the general knowledge that experience is the best teacher and there are many more things to learn, young elementary school teachers in the service are trying their best in order to attain the goal of having the best elementary school teacher in their generation.

Position. It can be also seen in the table that most of the respondents are occupying Teacher III position, there are 10 or 72 percent are Teacher III, 2 or 14 percent are Teacher II, 1 or 7 percent is Teacher I and 1 or 7 percent is Master teacher I. **Number Trainings and Seminars**. It can be seen in the table that most of the public elementary school teachers respondents have attended 7 and above relevant trainings in the Division Level, that is 9 or 64 percent, 5 or 36 percent of the respondents have also 7 and above regional trainings, 3 or 21 percent attended 7 and above relevant trainings in the national level, and 0 or 0 percent had attended international trainings and seminars. This would mean that the public elementary school teachers were given enough opportunities to attend in-service trainings in the different levels except the international trainings and seminars wherein nobody from the teacher respondents attended. As a matter of fact, seminars, trainings and workshops provides excellent avenues for continuing professional education.

Common Best Practices of Teacher Respondents in Enhancing the Reading Level of Grade 4 Learners

This part presents the common best practices of Grade 4 teachers in enhancing the reading level of their learners such as reading everyday the basic sight words, remedial reading, guided reading, peer reading and utilizing phonics instruction.

Reading Basic Sight Words Everyday

One of the best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of their learners was reading the basic sight words everyday. According to them, reading basic sight words everyday enhance the reading level of their learners. Majority of the teacher participants in this study used the basic sight words to their learners to enhance the reading level of their learners, they said that when learners can recognize the words, they can read faster. With the right support, learners can become so familiar with these words that they no longer need to pause and try to decode them. Learners can read with better fluency when they recognize these words right away. The teachers also said that the greatest benefit of learning sight words is how much they help learners on their journey to becoming great readers. Knowing more sight words means they can be more fluent in reading because they don't have to stop and think about as many words. Learners can readily understand more sentences and concepts by being able to make connections between all the sight words at their disposal. This also frees up their mental energy to focus more on new and unfamiliar words in the text. In addition, it builds up their confidence when they see a lot of words they immediately understand and can easily string together sentences.

The teachers also said that using basic sight words in teaching reading is an excellent supplement to phonics instruction. Phonics is a method for learning to read in general, while basic sight words instruction increases a learners' familiarity with the high frequency words he will encounter most often. They said also that this is the best way to learn basic sight words is through lots and lots of repetition, in the form of flashcard exercises and word-focused games. Sight words are words that should be memorized to help learners learn to read and write. Learning basic sight words allows a learner to recognize these words at a glance —on sight without needing to break the words down into their individual letters and is the way strong readers recognize most words. Knowing common, or high frequency, words by sight makes reading easier and faster, because the reader does not need to stop to try and sound out each individual word, letter by letter.

Remedial Reading

Another best practices of the teacher participants in this study was the remedial reading, the teacher participants used this in enhancing the reading level of their learners. According to teacher participants, each pupil is different in terms of learning ability, academic standards, classroom learning and academic performance, and each has his own in learning. The goal of the teachers in using remedial reading was to provide learning support to pupils who lag far behind their counterparts in school performance. By adapting school curricula and teaching strategies,

teachers can provide learning activities and practical experiences to learners according to their abilities and needs. They can also design individualized educational programs with intensive remedial support to help learners consolidate their basic knowledge in different subjects, master the learning methods, strengthen their confidence and enhance the effectiveness of learning.

The teachers also said that they utilized this practice to reduce the number of learners who have extreme difficulty learning to read and write. Remedial Reading is a highly effective short-term intervention of tutoring struggling readers in both an individualized and small group setting. They mentioned also that most of the Remedial Reading teachers are highly trained professionals who work closely with learners and design prescriptive and strategic instruction to address individual learners needs. Once learners can meet grade-level expectations and demonstrate that they can continue to work independently in the classroom, they are released from Remedial Reading but are still monitored closely to ensure academic success. The teachers also said that remedial reading is needed for slow and non reading learners, because reading opens the door to a number of opportunities for growth and development. An effective remedial teacher should always be sensitive to the needs of every learner in their class, and must be concerned with the outcome of their teaching. The teachers should also plan ahead their lessons so that slow learners can keep up with the level of other learners in the class. It is also important to provide a specific time slot for remedial teaching, as teachers should maximize the use of this opportunity to make pupils master lessons taught and attain quality reading. They believe also that improving the reading ability of learners needs a lot of time, effort and cooperation on the part of the teacher and the learners. Remedial reading can unlock reading difficulty of learners, who find it hard to read, pronounce words, and don't even comprehend what they have read. They mentioned also the various factors that can affect the ability and the willingness of the learners to read. Through this practice, they will be given the opportunity to love reading again, increase phonemic awareness, develop skills or effective oral and written communications, organize and express ideas and develop skillful study habits, develop correct speech habits which guarantee automatic response in normal speech situations and helps the learners listen and read with comprehension.

Guided Reading

Another best practices of teacher participants in this study is the guided reading. Guided reading is a popular intervention strategy for learners who are struggling with reading. In this approach, the teacher works with a small group of learners to help them improve their reading skills. The teacher provides support and instruction as the learners read texts that are at their level of difficulty. This approach can be very effective in helping learners improve their reading skills.

According to the teacher participants in this study they used guided reading in enhancing the reading level of their learners because this is powerful and efficient way to differentiate and meet the specific needs of learners. Their purpose of using guided reading is to help learners become independent, and strategic readers. When they understand and notice children's reading behaviors, they can support them and give them exactly what they need to move forward. In guided

reading, the teachers asks learners to read the text on their own with some teacher support. The teacher notes the areas where they need assistance and provides strategies to scaffold them toward independence. Providing learners with the necessary tools for success fosters confidence, motivation, and a sense of responsibility. When learners understand their individual strengths and weaknesses, they can create action plans for improvement.

But according to the teacher participants, guided reading is a small-group instructional context in which a teacher supports each reader's development of systems of strategic actions for processing new texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty. During guided reading, learners in a small-group setting individually read a text that the teacher selected at their instructional reading level. The teachers provide teaching across the lesson to support learners in building the in-the-head networks of strategic actions for processing increasingly challenging texts. Through guided reading, learners learn how to engage in every facet of the reading process and apply that literacy power to all instructional contexts. The teachers also use this guided reading to allow learners to engage with a rich variety of texts, help learners learn to think like proficient readers, and enable learners to read more challenging texts with support. The teachers also use this guided reading in enhancing the reading level of their learners because they believe that has significant beneficial effects on helping learner's develop reading skills. It is one of the most effective tools not only to improve a learner's fundamental reading skills but also to help the learner develop higher level comprehension skills. With guided reading they can directly help the learners in establishing fundamental skills necessary for proficient reading, identifying weaknesses and strengthen specific skills, improving attention to detail, building fluency, expanding vocabulary knowledge and developing reading comprehension skills.

Peer Reading

The next best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of Grade 4 learners is peer reading. The teachers said that they trained pupils who perform better in a certain subject to become 'little teachers' and who will be responsible for helping schoolmates with learning difficulties in group teaching and self-study sessions as well as outside class. Peer support program helps pupils reinforce their knowledge, and develop their communication and cooperation skills as well as good interpersonal relationship. To enhance the reading skill of their classmates, remedial teachers must provide training to the pupils concerned beforehand and make regular reviews on its effectiveness. Generally speaking, this program is more suitable for pupils of higher grades. They also use remedial reading to dramatically reduce the number of learners who have extreme difficulty learning to read and write. They believe that remedial reading is a highly effective short-termintervention of tutoring struggling readers in both an individualized and small group setting. They also believe that remedial classes improve the quality of learning of learners who are unable to learn, remember the concepts, and perform well in the exams. Remedial teaching is planned after the evaluation is done so that the problem or difficulty in learning is identified.

Peer teaching is also one of the best practices of teachers in teaching reading because they believed that this is a wonderful reading technique which helps children master the skill of reading. It's not only for children who are struggling, but also helps any child improve their fluency skills. Paired reading can be used at home with you and your child, or in a classroom, pairing two readers, one more skilled than the other.

They also said that reading with someone encourages children to read in a safe and supported way. Any fears about not being able to read are quickly allayed by hearing your voice with theirs. They become more confident. If they stop on a word, you keep going and they learn from listening to you. Start with simple books at their level. They will be encouraged to try reading books above their usual reading level once they get comfortable with the method.

Utilizing Phonics Instruction

The number five best practices of teachers in enhancing the reading level of their learners in this study is phonics instruction. Phonics is a reading method that helps students understand the relationship between letters and the sounds they make. This is often used to help learners struggling with reading. The teacher participants in this study used phonics instruction in enhancing the reading level of their learners because it is essential to provide plenty of support to help the learner learn master the concepts. The teachers read stories to their learners and point out the letters and sounds that are being used in the story. They can also help their learner practice sounding out words and praise them and when they make mistakes continue trying to sound out the words. The teachers also used phonics lessons in their classroom to help learners learn the different sounds that letters make and provide practice exercises for learners to work on.The teachers also said that teaching phonics is necessary to support fluency of learners. This is because fluent readers will often rely on their understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds to decode words. Make sure learners understand phonics by teaching it alongside fluency. According to them also, phonics is the foundation of reading. Teachers should provide explicit instruction on letter- sound relationships, decoding skills, and phonemic awareness. This helps learners decode words and improve their reading fluency.

Teacher participants used phonics instruction in enhancing the reading level of their learners also because the primary focus of phonics instruction is to help beginning readers understand how letters are linked to sounds (phonemes) to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns and to help them learn how to apply this knowledge in their reading. They also said that phonics is at the heart of how learner learn to read. Once the learner know the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they stand for, they're ready to use those building blocks to read words and simple sentences. Building strong phonics skills in the early years of school is the key to learner becoming a strong, independent reader. According to them also phonemic awareness and phonological

awareness are essential for learning to read and spell. By teaching learners to break words down into their sounds, they can better understand how to read and spell them. They use phonics instruction to support learners in making connections between the sound patterns they hear in words and the way that these words are written, and phonics instruction improves the accuracy of the learner's reading but not necessarily their comprehension. It is important that learners are successful in making progress in all aspects of reading including comprehension, the development of vocabulary and spelling, which should also be taught explicitly.

Challenges Encountered by the Grade 4 Teachers in Enhancing the Reading Level of the Learners

The researcher ask the teacher respondents about the challenges they encountered in enhancing the reading level of their learners. Below are the challenges the teachers encountered in enhancing the reading level of the learners.

Limited Vocabulary. One of the biggest problems that elementary teachers face is the limited vocabulary of their learners. This makes it difficult for them to understand what they are reading and comprehend it well. Learners struggles with decoding due to limited vocabulary knowledge.

Reading Comprehension. Many learners in elementary school have difficulty with reading comprehension. This can be due to lack of understanding of the text, or simply because they are not interested in the topic.

Phonics. Phonics is the foundation of reading, and many learners struggle with it. Some learners have difficulty sounding out words, while others struggle with blending sounds together. Phonemic awareness is an essential skill for reading, and some learners may struggle with it. Teachers may find it challenging to teach phonemic awareness to learners who have difficulty hearing and distinguishing sounds.

Motivation. Lack of motivation is a problem that many teachers encounter when teaching reading to elementary learners. Learners may not see the importance of reading or may not be interested in the material. Lack of learners attraction toward the subject and their motivation in learning English in general.

Attention Span. Elementary school learners have a short attention span, which can make it difficult for teachers to keep them engaged in reading activities for extended periods of time.

Different learning styles. Learners have different learning styles and some may struggle with reading, making it difficult for teachers to provide effective instruction.

Limited time. Teachers may have limited time to provide individualized instruction to learners who need extra help with reading. Also teachers have limited time to teach reading due to

large number of subjects to be covered. It is challenging to cover all required reading skills in the time available.

Other challenges encountered by the respondent teachers are, **Lack of Learners Interest.** Some learners may not be interested in reading or may not see the value in it. **Limited resources.** Teachers may have limited resources, such as books or technology, to support reading instruction. **Learning Disabilities**. Learners with learning disabilities may require specialized instruction to improve their reading skills. Lack of Parental Support. Some learners may not receive support from their parents or guardians to practice reading at home, which can hinder progress. Poor decoding and word recognition skills to understanding meaning the phrase, sentence, and paragraph level. Difficulties in recognizing and appropriately applying background knowledge. Learners encounters vocabulary they do not know or do not recognize due to inaccurate decoding. Most of the learners were incapable of understanding the meaning of the text they read and they did not familiar with the vocabulary in the text. Learners underdeveloped reading fluency, Inappropriate reading materials and de-contextualized reading text and Learners has no reading habit.

According to Logsdon (2019) a learner with poor reading level affects the learner's ability to understand the meaning of words and passages. Learners with this issue may also struggle with basic reading skills such as decoding words, but comprehension is the greater weakness. Some learners with poor reading comprehension can read aloud with little or no difficulty pronouncing words, but they do not understand or remember what they've read. When reading aloud, their words and phrases are often read with no feeling, no change in tone, no logical phrasing, and no rhythm or pace. Their reading abilities may seem fine, but they may understand very little of what they just read. A learner with poor reading level likely involves difficulty with the language processing and visual reasoning centers of the brain. This may be owed to an inherited condition or developmental differences. Difficulty with hearing, speech, or vision, or a lack of appropriate instruction may also be involved.

Naturally, reading problems affect many academic areas. Learners who struggle to understand what they are reading may experience deficits in a variety of academic areas beyond reading and writing. Any class that relies on reading, understanding, and explaining written material, including language arts, science, history, and related topics, can become a struggle for those with reading problems.

IV. Conclusion

The following conclusions are drawn based on the salient findings:

1. The respondents are typical public secondary school administrators who are mostly female, married, qualified, belongs to the lower-middle income families, relatively young in the

service, well-informed due to attendance of more than 21 relevant in-service training in all levels, serving in a medium category school. Hence, these young and ambitious school administrators need special incentives in the form of scholarship grants to pursue and finish their post-graduate degrees.

2. Since, the respondents' extent of management competence and performance is Competent (C), there is still room for improvement in order to upgrade them to become Very Competent, specifically, in the area of "Strategic Thinking and Innovation."

3. Civil status, number of relevant in-service trainings attended, and school-size category are sources of variation in the respondents' extents of management competence and performance, however, management competence and performance are correlated with school-size category in all areas of management, thus in-service trainings should be focused on skills and competencies in relation to school-size.

4. The respondents' extent of management competence and performance are not associated to the profile variables, except school-size category, favoring the small-size schools, thus SSAs of mega-schools and medium-schools should organize themselves into smaller sub-units under coordinators and department heads to maximize their effectiveness and performance.

5. The stakeholders' comments and reactions to SSAs' extents of management competence and performance are identified as positive, negative and nonchalant, hence the SSAs should exert extra effort on achieving the positive management activities and minimizing, if not totally eliminating the negative ones.

V. Recommendations

This study forwards following recommendations strongly:

1. t is strongly recommended that a scholarship grant and an incentive program be developed and implemented for the deserving SSAs to finish their post-graduate degree.

2. Additional trainings on management must be conducted for SSAs to upgrade themselves and become "very competent administrators," specifically, in the area of "Strategic Thinking and Innovation."

3. Furthermore, both SSAs and stakeholders should have joint-trainings in the school-based management so that they could collaborate in any program of the school more effectively.

4. A DepEd Strategic Enhancement Program should be developed to create and establish a school leadership-specialized organization to provide guidance to SSAs in managing

successfully, organizing activities and contests in their field, and creating effective learning in educational management.

5. Other studies on management competence of SSAs should be encouraged using more variable and conducted on a larger scale under the auspices of accredited graduate institutions.

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