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## Challenges of Reading Coordinators in the Implementation of School-Based Reading Programs Among Rural and Urban Schools in Davao Del Sur

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### ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is one of the primary issues we have been dealing with recently, for which we have not discovered a solution but must. Reading comprehension issues are very prevalent in Davao del Sur. This qualitative study examines the challenges reading coordinators encounter in urban and rural areas while implementing reading programs at the primary education level in Davao del Sur, Philippines. Six participants were chosen through purposive sampling, with equal representation from urban and rural schools. In-depth, face-to-face interviews provided insights into their experiences. The findings reveal that despite having sufficient resources, urban coordinators need help motivating teachers and tailoring strategies to meet diverse student needs. Conversely, rural coordinators face more significant challenges, including limited resources, difficulties recruiting qualified teachers, and a need for more professional development opportunities. The study underscores the importance of improving resources, enhancing professional development, and fostering more vital collaboration between teachers and parents in urban and rural settings.

### INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is one of the primary issues we have been dealing with recently, for which we have not discovered a solution but must. Reading comprehension issues are very prevalent in Davao del Sur. The Mean Percentage Score (MPS) in English for public high school students in the region has been declining, ranging from 53% to 72% as of 2020 (Montillado & Lovitos, 2023). Tuban Elementary School has particularly faced challenges with students' reading performance at the primary level, requiring substantial effort from teachers to implement effective strategies (Hubag *et al.*, 2021; Romero & Lim, 2022). In Kapatagan, Digos City, teachers need more support, technology, and motivation, with ongoing training and better communication with parents recommended for improvement (Romero & Lim, 2022). Additionally, data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 shows that Filipino students aged 15 scored lower in reading, mathematics, and science compared to their peers in most other participating countries, with an average reading score of 340, on par with the Dominican Republic (PISA, 2018). The UNICEF (2022) states that at the end of fourth grade, one in every eight children in Bulgaria cannot read and understand simple text. Based on data from United Nations (2021), children with reading difficulties increased from 460 million to 584 million in 2020. The agency added that the more than 20% increase erased two decades of educational progress. Furthermore, many Indonesian secondary school students perceive reading comprehension as a challenging element of learning English, with three critical negative implications reported: decreased learning accomplishment impeded problem-solving skills, and hampered future studies and careers

(Nanda & Azmy, 2020)

The study presented by Acedillo (2023) stated that reading comprehension is one of the most complex cognitive processes that people engage in, making it challenging to teach and analyze. Students will have academic difficulties without reading comprehension because it is necessary for future learning and understanding. Reading comprehension issues critically impact context understanding (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). It is one of the issues that basic education students and teachers face the most frequently. The basis for future learning and apprehension in all subject areas was built by reading with understanding. Students will need this foundation to succeed academically, especially in reading and writing and in courses like English, math, science, and social studies (Jimenez & Ocampo, 2022).

The Philippines' poor performance in reading proficiency, which resulted in the country placing last in the world, only proves that schools hardly meet their goal of providing quality and well-informed individuals. Furthermore, the pandemic lockdown significantly impacted students in the country, as a recent UNICEF survey revealed that students in the Philippines had weak reading skills (Librea *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, Caraig and Quimbo (2022) state that reading education in the Philippines concentrates on primary word definition; while this is necessary, it is an issue in the context of reading comprehension. Filipino pupils should be surrounded by essays and strive to relate to and reflect on them to improve their comprehension. In contrast, students struggle with literal and reorganizational comprehension, whereas inferential and evaluative comprehension are difficult. This implies that students must be capable of comprehending both explicit and implicit information in

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a text (Cabural & Infantado, 2023). In the Philippines, reading comprehension is a significant consideration. Despite government initiatives to raise literacy rates in the Philippines, recent surveys reveal that many pupils need help with reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, and critical thinking skills (Idulog *et al.*, 2023).

Reading comprehension is vital for academic skills, assisting children in developing vocabulary, understanding complicated concepts, and improving job performance (Escar, 2022). Reading strategies teach students how to manage reading effectively, ultimately understanding the author’s message and leading to a more fulfilling life. Reading is at the heart of all academic learning. Children must be skilled in reading, writing, and math to flourish in school and achieve in life. Literacy enhancement is the Department of Education’s (DepEd) main objective. This was formed based on the Department’s flagship initiative, the “Every Child A Reader Program,” which aims to improve every Filipino child’s reading and writing ability at the grade level DepEd Order Number 14, 2018 (Ditona & Rico, 2021).

However, according to De Leon (2022), Filipino students still need help understanding what they read despite spending much time in class. This is according to the most current international report on Philippine education. Additionally, remote education has not helped the less fortunate. Online learning benefits kids from educated homes more, while students from less educated families are dropping out.

In order to address reading comprehension, it is crucial for teachers and students to feel motivated and empowered. The reader is inspired by empowered teachers, according to Oczkus (2018). Furthermore, according to Alghonaim (2020), the instructor’s use of effective reading comprehension techniques is critical to increasing the extent of comprehension in students; thus, language instructors must implement adequate reading strategies to improve comprehension and facilitate critical thinking in understanding complex texts. Reading motivation leads to reading engagement, which leads to achievement. When children set reading goals, value reading, and trust in themselves as readers, they engage in reading activities more voluntarily and fully (Barber & Klauda, 2020).

The primary goal of this research is to uncover the specific challenges encountered by reading coordinators responsible for implementing reading programs in urban and rural public schools in Davao del Sur. It addresses a notable gap in existing literature, as no prior studies have explicitly focused on recognizing challenges in reading programs. By identifying and understanding these challenges, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge and provides a foundation for future research to enhance reading comprehension programs among students.

**Research Objectives**

This study aims to determine the challenges of reading

coordinators in implementing school-based reading programs among rural and urban schools in Davao del Sur. Thus, addressed to this study are the following questions:

1. What are the specific challenges encountered by read coordinators in rural schools compared to those in urban schools when implementing reading programs in Davao del Sur?
2. What resources and support systems are available to reading coordinators in rural and urban schools to facilitate the implementation of school-based reading programs?
3. How do reading coordinators in both rural and urban schools In Davao del Sur navigate the identified challenges and employ strategies to ensure the effectiveness of reading programs?

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Participants**

This study was conducted in six (6) selected urban and rural Davao del Sur, Philippines schools. The urban schools are Urban School A, Urban School B, and Urban School C. Rural School A, Rural School B, and Rural School C are in the rural area. The researchers will identify challenges reading coordinators face in selected schools through interviews with reading program coordinators. The inclusion was (1) at least 3 years of being the reading coordinator and (2) willingness to participate. The exclusion of the study locale is the opposite of the said inclusion. Small sample size readily and purposefully sampled. It will depend on the research question and context. The following sample sizes have been suggested: 3–20 interview questions with 4-6 participants, which are appropriate for inexperienced researchers and can be used in mixed-methods studies (Ayton, 2023).

**Table 1:** List of Participants

Participant	Locale	Years as Reading Coordinator
1	Urban School A	14
2	Urban School B	3
3	Urban School C	15
4	Rural School A	16
5	Rural School B	16
6	Rural School C	9

**Instrument**

The research instrument used in this study was an audio recording, observation, and an interview guide to gather participants’ responses about the challenges of reading coordinators in implementing reading programs. The researchers asked for consent regarding anonymity and verified the interview guide’s validity and reliability through expert verification. Coordinators were involved in accessing data from those difficulties encountered in the programs.

### Design and Procedure

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative approach to recognize program coordinators' challenges in implementing school-based reading programs. Qualitative research is a method to understand individuals' or groups' perceptions of social or human issues. It involves inductive analysis, data collection, interpretation, and a flexible written report structure. This approach emphasizes individual meaning and the complexity of situations (Creswell, 2014). It seeks to understand individuals' perceptions of the world, focusing on retaining rich meaning in data interpretation (Bhandari, 2020). Qualitative research aims to develop concepts that help us understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, emphasizing the participants' meanings, experiences, and views (Shomron, 2022). Additionally, descriptive qualitative research captures and conveys the essence of participants' experiences in their natural context, providing rich, detailed insights into specific phenomena (Longe, 2020).

Before starting our study, the researcher collaborated with the Research Publication Office of UM Digos College to validate the research questionnaire and interview guidelines. The researcher ensured that all required documents were completed, including letters that needed to be signed by the Dean of the College, the RPC, the Research Adviser, the Davao del Sur Division, and the school reading coordinators. A letter of authorization was obtained from the Davao del Sur Division before beginning interviews at selected schools.

Once permission was granted, the researchers informed the school principals and requested their availability for face-to-face interviews with the reading coordinators. The interviews were conducted using a guide and consent forms. After the interviews, the participants' responses were sent for data analysis, where thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and insights from the data. We accepted the methods recommended by our analyst, which included coding the responses for critical themes and comparing the results to highlight differences and similarities across urban and rural settings. The results were returned to us after one week, and the researchers ensured that all materials were kept safe and confidential.

### Ethical Considerations

In research, ethical consideration is an essential principle to which researchers must adhere to maintain scientific integrity, uphold research validity, and protect the rights of participants in the research study. The principle ensures that participants participate voluntarily and guarantees they are informed and safe for the research subject. According to Bhandari (2021), the following are the ethical considerations for evaluating reading programs:

**Informed Consent.** To perform research ethically, researchers must gain informed consent from the participants. Before getting consent, researchers must present potential participants with clear and understandable information about the study's objectives, procedures, risks, and benefits.

**Voluntary Participation.** Participants who participate in studies can decide whether to continue participating without obligation and are free to stop at any time. It is essential to clarify that declining to participate has no adverse effects because doing so helps in the study process.

**Professionalism.** Participants had to consider that the research would be managed professionally if they were to provide meaningful and sincere answers to surveys and interviews.

**Confidentiality.** Participants are more likely to voice their thoughts and opinions if their comments do not identify them. Participants must be assured that any information they disclose for the assessment or research project has been kept confidential.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Challenges of Reading Coordinator

Reading coordinators in both rural and urban areas face various challenges. In rural settings, issues related to resources and accessibility are particularly problematic. These coordinators urgently need support due to the scarcity of resources. A significant challenge is the need for essential devices and materials, such as books, reading supplies, computers, high-speed internet, and cellphones, which many students need access to. These limitations reduce the effectiveness of reading programs. Additionally, remote locations lead to fewer opportunities

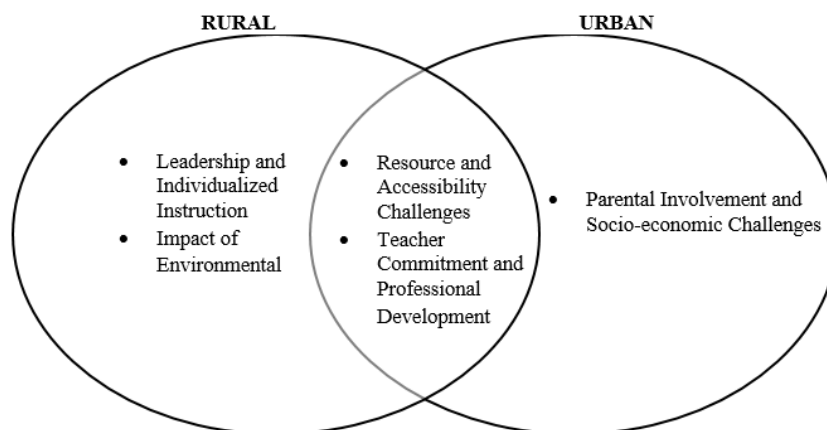


Figure 1: Venn Diagram on Challenges Encountered by Reading Coordinators in Rural and Urban Schools

for professional development, resulting in less exposure to new teaching methods. Another issue is the location and accessibility of reading centers; teachers and children in rural areas are often reluctant to visit these centers due to transportation costs and limited amenities.

One participant noted that limited resources in remote areas and fewer teacher professional development opportunities are significant issues.

“Limited access to resources significantly impacts children in schools in remote areas. First, a lack of books and other reading materials can severely limit children’s or students’ exposure to various reading materials. Second, the lack of multimedia materials can also hinder children’s ability to use online reading programs, thus restricting their learning due to insufficient resources. Third, teachers assigned to remote areas, especially in mountainous regions, have fewer chances or opportunities for professional development. With limited training, they also have fewer new teaching methodologies, which could greatly help enhance reading skills in schools and the school reading program”. [Line 1, Rural School B]

Another participant stated that,

“The lack of access to technology, such as updated computers and high-speed internet, has negatively impacted students’ academic performance, particularly young adults. Lack of access to technology is related to the lower socio-economic status, so they don’t have much, meaning they cannot afford their laptops, computers, desktops, or cellphones—some don’t even have these. This can hinder students’ academic performance.” [Line 1, Rural School A]

Another participant revealed,

“The biggest challenge I face is primarily the location. If the reading centers are far away, children are reluctant to go to the reading center due to the distance, primarily because of transportation costs and the lack of money. Secondly, these centers’ limited amenities and services make them less appealing. Although many teachers have great potential, they are also unwilling to go because of the distance. They would be more inclined to participate if the centers were nearby, but financial involvement tends to deter them.” [Line 2, Rural School B]

Reading coordinators in urban areas face unique resource challenges despite schools being generally well-equipped with laptops, bond paper, printers, and other educational supplies. Often, these coordinators need more support from schools and supervisors. To succeed, they need the right resources, ongoing professional development, and consistency of the implementation.

One participant noted.

“Because we are very much supported here. In terms of resources, we are fully supported when it comes to the production of materials. There’s no problem with that. There is so much training, especially when it comes to reading. There is so much training provided to the teachers.” [Line 3, Urban School A]

Another participant said,

Aside from the challenges, personally, for example, if you

don’t feel supported by your supervisors or principals, they don’t support your program. It’s likely part of your growth. If they don’t like you, you know you want to do something, and they don’t support it, that’s one challenge. Because we are just teachers, and our bosses are different. It will only happen if the higher-ups approve of what you want to happen. It’s useless. So that’s one issue aside from dedication. [Line 3, Urban School C]

Another participant said,

“I think in the implementation, even if how concrete the program is, if it is during the implementation, the consistency of the implementation then the continuity of the implementation, I think those are factors that would greatly affect and its balls down to the dedication of the teacher and the commitment. You have all the training and resources and are provided with everything, but when it goes back to the classroom, how does the teacher implement it?” [Line 2, Urban School A]

Maffea (2020) stated that the wicked problem is the lack of classroom resources. This problem affects students and teachers, which in turn can affect the parents of the children. The lack of classroom resources can cause extreme distress to the students and teachers. Not only are the students and teachers in distress, but they cannot learn to their fullest potential because they are not given the proper resources. The lack of resources affects the students in different ways. It means they need to get the most out of their education. They are learning parts of topics and lessons but must get the complete picture they deserve. Using various educational resources keeps students engaged and motivated by providing diverse learning materials, which helps prevent boredom and disinterest. This approach can increase participation, better attendance, and improved academic performance. In summary, employing multiple school resources creates a more dynamic and stimulating learning environment that promotes student growth and success (Asees, 2023). High-quality and sufficient educational resources are essential for delivering quality education and achieving the objectives of a school program. (Sharafa, 2018).

### **Teacher Commitment and Professional Development**

In rural areas, some teachers must be more committed to program implementation and pay more attention to their responsibilities, which can affect students reading progress, especially if they overlook those who need help. Teacher training and skills are also the problem; some teachers struggle to perform and teach effectively due to inadequate training, leading to weak program implementation. Additionally, teachers need help with support and monitoring due to limited time tracking student progress. The lack of support from colleagues further hinders the implementation of the reading program and ensures efforts to provide quality education. One participant noted:

“Challenges affect program implementation. As I mentioned, some teachers are not very committed to their work; they are not devoted or dedicated to their jobs.

This affects the program because when some teachers exhibit this behavior, they just let things be, which means the students will not improve, especially if the teacher neglects a child who doesn't know how to read. So it is affected because the number keeps increasing, and it is just being neglected." [Line 3, Rural School C]

Another participant noted.

"They can't perform well because they're untrained and lack the necessary skills. Therefore, the implementation is weak because they lack the necessary skills. There is limited time to monitor because our pupils also get confused about where we will find the chance to monitor." [Line 3, Rural School A]

Another participant noted.

"There is a lack of support from fellow teachers. Some colleagues are not supportive of the reading coordinator, which significantly affects the implementation of the reading program." – [Line 2, Rural School B]

In urban areas, the success of programs relies heavily on teachers' dedication and commitment, no matter how well-designed the programs are. These qualities are necessary for the programs to work effectively. Teachers' dedication significantly impacts their teaching and the program's success. Even though urban teachers are generally well-qualified, the lack of parental support weakens the program's implementation. Policies and professional development issues require teachers to be intelligent and emotionally strong. Teacher dedication is critical as heavy workloads can lead to burnout.

One participant noted.

"I think in the implementation, even if how concrete the program is, if it is during the implementation the consistency of the implementation then the continuity of the implementation, I think those are factors that would greatly affect and its balls down to the dedication of the teacher and the commitment. You have all the training and resources and are provided with everything, but when it goes back to the classroom, how does the teacher implement it?" [Line 2, Urban School A]

Another participant noted.

"It will affect you because if you don't have dedication, particularly in bringing a report, it will just be done carelessly, like "magic magic," as in my previous reply. The program will only work with dedication, no matter how good it is, if dedication does not cooperate. For instance, a reading program requires one-on-one interaction with the students, and without dedication, it won't work." [Line 3, Urban School C]

Another participant said.

"We say we're all qualified; all my colleagues are qualified. That's the only challenge we face. Regarding support from our principal, she always provides us with the resources we need. However, it's just the parents. If you ask the child why it's like this, it's not something we can control because it's really about the children. The support from parents is less now because of budget constraints as well." [Line 2, Urban School B]

Another participant said.

"Personally, I think it's the DEPED, the policy right now; it's the high demand for quality teachers; when we say quality, I will say that it would not only mean intellectually capable but also emotionally kasi we need teachers who are not only aptitude but attitude wise right now because teaching is not purely teaching perse, it means dedication and commitment. Not only that, maybe when they are already in two (2) services on, the challenge is the unmanageable workloads, when it comes 5 years in the services may be burned out." [Line 1, Urban School A]

It can be concluded that commitment is required for educators to get engaged in some tasks and to have a potent teacher professional identity; it is expected that educators keep their commitment to their profession because the level of commitment plays a role in whether or not an educator needs to maintain his education career with pleasure or quit the task with exhaustion and burnout, Ma (2022). Effective professional development allows teachers to expand their knowledge and refine their skills, which can lead to better student outcomes. It also fosters collaboration among teachers and allows administrators to offer support. (Schwartz, 2023). Typically, teachers' professional development goal is to improve their teaching effectiveness. Educators can enhance their instructional techniques by keeping up with the latest research, methods, and technologies to provide more engaging and effective student learning experiences (Schweikhardt, 2024). Parental involvement in a child's education enhances their academic success from an early age, helps them remain in school longer, and promotes positive development (Azubuike & Aina, 2020).

### **Leadership and Individualized Instruction**

In rural areas, the role of the school principal in teacher selection is emphasized, particularly in ensuring that the needs of diverse learners are met through individualized approaches. The school principal is responsible for selecting newly hired teachers, assessing their qualifications, and determining whether they suit the school's unique challenges. Given the diversity of students, teachers must address all needs, especially the difficulties some students face.

One participant revealed that.

"In selecting newly hired teachers, the school principal plays a crucial role in determining the qualifications of the teachers. As a teacher yourself, you might also envision becoming a school principal in the future. It's important to expect that we will encounter diverse learners along the way. Indeed, we encounter a variety of learners with different abilities and needs. There are fast learners, those who struggle, and those with cognitive challenges. We as teachers need to provide interventions and support for those who may face frustration or difficulty understanding." [Line 2, Rural School C]

In Nwaham's (2023) study, educational resources refer to human and material assets administrators use to reach academic goals. These resources encompass administrative staff, teachers, facilities, libraries, laboratories, books,

computers, and time. Managing school resources in the Philippine Basic Education system is a challenging task that deeply affects students' learning experiences. Schools strive to provide quality education, but more funding is needed to access updated learning materials, modern technology, and proper infrastructure. As a result, many students—especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds—struggle with unequal access to these essential resources, making it harder for them to reach their full potential (Ondong, 2024).

### Parental Involvement and Socio-economic Challenges

In urban areas, the lack of parental support and student reading challenges are significant problems. Parents' lack of support for teachers is one of the hurdles that educators face. Additionally, the impact of socio-economic status is another issue, as many families are less fortunate, leading to no income and, consequently, high absenteeism among students.

One participant revealed that.

“As teachers, we strive because there's less support from the parents, so we must compensate. Sometimes, we even stay as late as 12:30 in the afternoon. We have peer reading sessions and sometimes use audiovisual aids, depending on the teacher. Besides that, as teachers, we each have our own time. For example, I am a grade 1 teacher and a reading coordinator, so I follow up daily with slow learners. I keep records of how many pages they can read each day, and if they can read a page, they move on to another. We record their daily reading progress, and you can see the improvement in the child. It's challenging because of the lack of support from families, especially those we consider less fortunate, who may have no income. They often have high absenteeism. What we do for those who are frequently absent is send reading materials home; you can't force them otherwise.” [Line 3, Urban School B]

Socio-economic status influences academic performance, with students from higher socio-economic backgrounds generally performing better academically (Munir *et al.*, 2023). Socio-economic factors contributing to school absenteeism have a detrimental effect on academic performance, with students who are frequently absent tending to underperform academically and face a higher risk of dropping out (Lematango & Kathuri, 2021).

Impact of Environmental. However, these issues are faced in rural areas; the impact on academics involves more access to technology, which hinders students' academic performance by limiting the opportunities technology can provide to enhance reading comprehension. Additionally, performance and challenges for reading coordinators have a considerable impact, and this hindrance dramatically affects the process.

One participant said.

“The lack of access to technology, such as updated computers and high-speed internet, has negatively impacted students' academic performance, particularly young adults. Lack of access to technology is related

to the lower socio-economic status, so they don't have much, meaning they cannot afford laptops, computers, desktops, or cellphones—some don't even have these. This can hinder students' academic performance. As we all know, technology can improve reading comprehension skills through digital scaffolding interventions such as contextual conversation. Technology also impacts reading comprehension by giving learners control over the learning process and facilitating collaborative learning. So, that's it.” [Line 1, Rural School A]

Another participant revealed,

“The challenges have a huge impact, especially for the reading coordinator. Naturally, the coordinator has goals to achieve, but these challenges hinder their ability to reach them. Therefore, as a coordinator, you must find ways to overcome these obstacles, striving to achieve success for the benefit of the school. These hindrances significantly affect the process.” [Line 3, Rural School B]

As noted by Haleem *et al.* (2022), digital technologies are valuable tools for enhancing education by streamlining the creation of instructional materials and providing new learning and collaboration opportunities. Integrating technology into the curriculum allows teachers to improve student engagement and academic success significantly. It facilitates peer collaboration through digital platforms, encourages creativity with technological tools, promotes higher-order thinking, supports inquiry-based learning, helps synthesize information from diverse sources, and fosters an online social presence (D'Angelo, 2018).

### Resources and Support Systems

Both rural and urban reading coordinators face numerous challenges related to resources and support systems. In rural areas, resource management and allocation are crucial, and having readily available resources provided by the school principal significantly enhances the effectiveness and ease of implementing reading programs. However, financial challenges arise as budgets are often limited, with a focus on providing resources but not adequately supporting teachers. Recognizing the importance of resources for effective implementation, coordinators frequently seek donations and contributions from both government and private sectors to fund and purchase necessary books. Additionally, the acquisition and distribution of technological resources, including using varied materials from the internet, remain beneficial for interventions and enhancing the learning process.

One participant said,

“Each teacher is provided with printers, bond papers, laminating film, and other resources by the school principal. This allows easy access to creating unified reading materials within the Project RAMOS reading program. These readily available resources make implementing the program smoother and more effective.” [Line 4, Rural School C]

Another participant revealed,

“Here in our municipality, the municipal government provides financial allocations for reading programs, but

unfortunately, the budget is sometimes limited. They focus more on resources, leaving little for teachers. As the school reading coordinator, we seek donations, financial assistance, and support from external stakeholders. Additionally, we have a budget from the MOOE (Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses).” [Line 4, Rural School A]

Another participant revealed that, “My goal is to have zero non-readers in the school. I require various resources and support to achieve this, which are crucial for effectively implementing the reading program. Securing funding and financial resources is essential, so I often seek donations and contributions of materials from both government and private sectors to purchase books.” [Line 4, Rural School B]

Another participant revealed that, “We became recipients of gadgets like tablets, especially for non-readers. These were awarded to us. The tablets were intended for non-readers, and we selected recipients by grade level. Last year, Grade 3 received them. We also selected five (5) recipients from each classroom, each section of Grade 3, as recipients of the tablets. So, DepEd, under the Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum, has reading resources and materials for children, including visual materials. They also support Barangay Education Workers beyond just the school setting. I requested our barangay to provide printers and bond papers for printing reading materials, which was very helpful. Especially with the support of our school principal, it’s significant for supporting reading assessments and printing these materials.” [Line 5, Rural School C]

In urban resource management and development, effective resource development and sharing involve designing and crafting localized reading materials tailored to specific needs. Resource management includes managing financial resources to support school events and effectively utilizing received materials for production, ensuring they are used appropriately and efficiently. The role of financial support in facilitating educational activities includes the principal providing resources and support from the MOOE for printing materials; however,

additional resources are only available for needs within the school’s budget.

One participant said that:

“As a reading coordinator, how do I support? In terms of resources, I usually design the materials. I initiate the crafting and designing of localized materials and then share them. These materials are ready to use; they don’t need to look for other sources because the reading materials are already provided. They only need to print them, as the mechanics are already there. So everything is ready; they must study the material, use it, and teach it during implementation.” [Line 4, Urban School A]

Another participant said that:

“Earlier, I mentioned financial matters. As a coordinator, there are indeed events happening in the school, so that’s where we use our resources financially. This is how we use the materials we received for production, and this is how we use them.” [Line 5, Urban School C]

Another participant said that:

“The resources and support as a reading coordinator from our principal come from the MOOE (Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses). For example, if we need to print materials, we ask for materials to print, but when it comes to other resources outside the school, there are none.” [Line 5, Urban School B]

In the 21st century, many educational resources are available to enhance student learning. Teachers must explore these materials and be resourceful to improve students’ learning experiences. Recruiting resourceful teachers is highly beneficial for any educational institution. Today’s educators must be resourceful in various ways, such as working constructively and collaboratively with others and effectively using appropriate technology, including the latest free and open-source Internet resources. A teacher’s resourcefulness influences students’ academic performance, retention, motivation, and other aspects. Teachers can significantly improve their effectiveness as educators by utilizing the diverse materials available. Resourceful teachers demonstrate their ability to maximize the benefits of all available resources to enhance student learning (Aina, 2023).

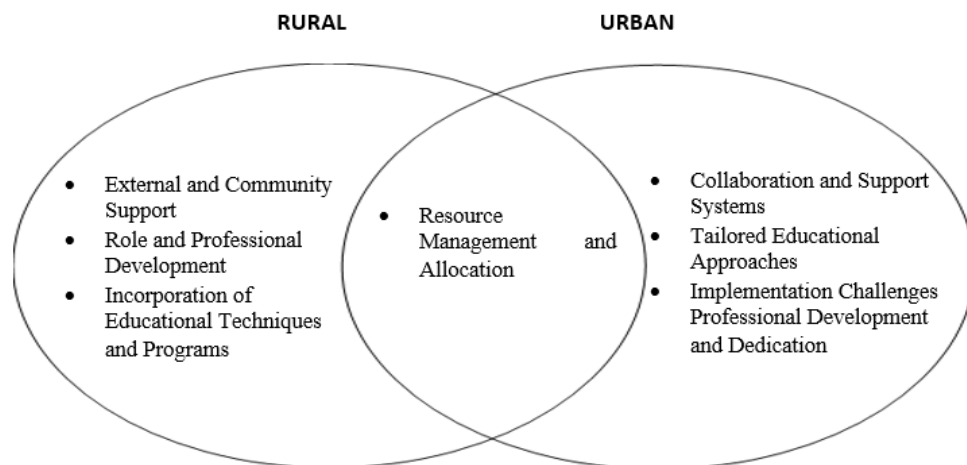


Figure 2: Venn Diagram on Resources and Support Systems in Rural and Urban Schools

### External and Community Support

In rural areas, external and community support is essential but needs to be improved. External Support and Fundraising: The local government allocates funds for reading programs. However, the budget often prioritizes resources over teacher support, prompting the school reading coordinator to seek additional donations and financial aid from external stakeholders. Community and External Support: Tablets for non-readers were received and distributed by grade level, with additional support from DepEd and the barangay, enhancing the school's ability to provide reading resources and conduct assessments effectively, with crucial backing from the school principal. Private Sector and Philanthropic Support: Generous donations of books and instructional materials from private institutions, along with contributions from the Department of Education, provide valuable support, though more is needed to meet the needs of all students fully.

One participant said that:

“Here in our municipality, the municipal government provides financial allocations for reading programs, but unfortunately, the budget is sometimes limited. They focus more on resources, leaving little for teachers.

As the school reading coordinator, we seek donations, financial assistance, and support from external stakeholders. Additionally, we have a budget from the MOOE (Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses).” [Line 4, Rural School A]

Another participant revealed that:

“We became recipients of gadgets like tablets, especially for non-readers. These were awarded to us. The tablets were intended for non-readers, and we selected recipients by grade level. Last year, Grade 3 received them. We also selected five (5) recipients from each classroom, each section of Grade 3, as recipients of the tablets. So, DepEd, under the Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum, has reading resources and materials for children, including visual materials. They also support Barangay Education Workers beyond just the school setting. I requested our barangay to provide printers and bond papers for printing reading materials, which was very helpful. Especially with the support of our school principal, it's significant for supporting reading assessments and printing these materials.” [Line 4, Urban School C]

Another participant revealed that:

“I can receive books and other instructional materials by approaching private institutions. I am very grateful for this support, as many kind-hearted individuals are willing to help. The Department of Education (DepEd) also provided some support by giving out a few cell phones, but it was only around 10. This was insufficient, as not all my 44 or 45 students received one. Only three students were given cellphones in my classroom, which is still insufficient.” [Line 5, Rural School B]

### Collaboration and Support System

Urban areas benefit from a robust collaboration and

support system. Collaboration with the community and local government involves coordinating with the principal to identify priority resource needs, working with LGUs for financial assistance, engaging the barangay, and seeking parental support for additional resources. Strong administrative support helps reading programs thrive, as unwavering backing from school leadership, active parent and community involvement, and a clear understanding of goals ensure smooth implementation. Additionally, collaboration and support regular communication among colleagues and the principal allows for monitoring slow learners' progress and providing targeted one-on-one support during vacant periods through specific initiatives. As one participant said,

“Ah, one of the things I do is collaborate. Aside from asking the principal about the priority resource needs, I also coordinate with the LGUs. I invited them to participate in activities here, and they also provided financial assistance last year. So, that's a collaboration with the LGUs or the community. I also go to the barangay for local support and to the parents. They also help provide resources.” [Line 4, Urban School C]

Another participant revealed that,

“Regarding resources, as I mentioned again, there's no problem with that because our school principal backs us up. No matter who the principal or the district supervisor is, they are very supportive when implementing the reading program. Now, when it comes to support, we also have the support of our parents and the community. As long as they know the objective and the expected outcome, there's no problem with that.” [Line 4, Urban School A]

Another participant revealed that,

“I always keep in touch with my colleagues and principal, so we constantly ask each other how our slow learners are doing. After that, we discuss what we should do next, especially when there's a class where they say there hasn't been any improvement, like this or that. So what we do is we have our PSB, and they hold onto them when they have a vacant time, and we also ask them to help out our children one-on-one.” [Line 6, Urban School B]

Across various regions globally, school districts face challenges in securing adequate funding for educational resources, particularly in areas with high poverty rates. Schools in these impoverished areas often struggle the most because residents contribute less to school taxes, resulting in a scramble for resources (Maffea, 2020). The study found a significant positive correlation between support from the Local Government Unit (LGU) and progress in teaching and learning. The average scores across various factors indicated that LGU support is moderate to enormously influential. The results underscored the importance of collaboration among parents, children, teachers, school administrators, and government agencies in creating a supportive learning environment and enhancing student outcomes (Adao & Ching, 2024).

### Role and Professional Development

In rural settings, Role and Professional Development addresses students' and teachers' needs to enhance literacy outcomes. The role and responsibilities of the Reading Coordinator include facilitating the reading program by conducting thorough assessments of both students' and teachers' needs. The coordinator then sets goals to enhance students' reading proficiency and foster a love for reading. The Reading Coordinator is committed to professional development, continuously enhancing effectiveness by participating in workshops, conferences, and online seminars. This ensures they stay updated on the latest research and best practices to improve the reading program. Additionally, the coordinator applies experience and techniques, finding that strategies learned from previous experience have been precious in effectively teaching non-readers.

As one participant said:

"As the reading coordinator at our school, here's how I facilitated the program:

First, I thoroughly assessed the students to identify their specific needs and those of the teachers. Based on this assessment, I set goals for our reading program to improve students' reading proficiency and increase their love for reading." [Line 4, Rural School B]

Another participant said that:

"As a reading coordinator, continuously improving my knowledge and effectiveness is essential to the success of the reading program. To achieve this, I actively engage in professional development. First, I participate in workshops and conferences to improve my skills. Through seminars, I gain valuable insights and stay updated on the latest research, trends, and best practices in reading. I also attend online reading instruction, assessment, and literacy coaching seminars. I strive to update my practices and incorporate innovative approaches to enhance the reading program" [Line 6, Rural School B]

Another participant said that:

"Based on my experience, my past work as a teacher at Montessori for 6 years has been particularly valuable. I applied techniques learned there, especially in teaching non-readers effectively. We start by mastering letter identification, then move on to mastering letter sounds once the child can write the sound they hear. When teaching a child who is just beginning to read, don't introduce words directly that they haven't mastered the sounds of yet. Once they have mastered the sounds, you can start blending two-letter sounds, then move on to CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words. After mastering CVC words, introduce short phrases. To develop comprehension skills, always show pictures. When introducing new words, make sure to use pictures." [Line 6, Rural School C]

### Tailored Educational Approaches and Implementation Challenges

The reading coordinator faced Tailored Educational Approaches and Implementation Challenges in an

urban setting. Tailored Educational Approaches involve collaborating with colleagues and the principal to design customized reading instruction strategies that cater to different grade levels and diverse student needs. However, challenges in program implementation have arisen since the principal changed to a new one. Additionally, implementing Effective Strategies involves continuously researching and adapting proven, research-based methods to fit the specific local context of current reading intervention programs.

One participant said,

"First, I met with my colleagues to discuss how we should approach teaching the children. Each grade level requires a different approach. For example, kindergarten requires a different approach than grade 1, and grade 3 is different again. It's challenging in grade 3 because if you approach it the same way as grade 1, their reading abilities vary widely by stage and grade level. So, I prioritize discussing this with my fellow teachers and our principal because we plan this. Afterward, they care for their students, and I request the records. We conduct the Phil-IRI, a program to identify their needs, for grades 3 to 6, but the approach is different for younger grades." [Line 4, Urban School B]

Another participant pointed out that:

"First, I met with my colleagues to discuss how we should approach teaching the children. Each grade level requires a different approach. For example, kindergarten requires a different approach than grade 1, and grade 3 is different again. It's challenging in grade 3 because if you approach it the same way as grade 1, their reading abilities vary widely by stage and grade level. So, I prioritize discussing this with my fellow teachers and our principal because we plan this. Afterward, they care for their students, and I request the records. We conduct the Phil-IRI, a program to identify their needs, for grades 3 to 6, but the approach is different for younger grades. We also have our program, Project Charlie, but we haven't implemented it since our principal changed." [Line 4, Urban School B]

Another participant pointed out that:

"Most of the time, especially as a reading coordinator, I usually surf the internet for research-based and proven effective strategies and localize them. We are using NANAY ACADEMY in our program, which we are using now as a reading intervention. The strategy is based on the background of our learners. That's why we have our initial implementation." [Line 6, Urban School A]

In collaborative leadership, principals engage with teachers, staff, and other stakeholders in making decisions and planning strategies to enhance learning quality. By adopting this approach, principals can increase teachers' involvement in decision-making and planning, motivating them to improve their performance and contribute to better learning outcomes in schools (Aryani & Haryadi, 2023).

### Incorporation of Educational Techniques and Programs

Reading coordinators in rural areas incorporated educational techniques and programs. Issues related to

incorporating various reading programs and techniques can significantly enhance reading skills in slow readers, as these methods have been proven effective through extensive training sessions.

One participant said,

“I will incorporate the Marungko Approach reading program, ESC technique, Follar technique, multi-sensory approach, and picture ladder. These methods help improve the reading level of slow readers, so these techniques are beneficial. We must choose because they are all effective, and the students will level up, especially with the teacher. Reading with phonics also. We had many training sessions in the reading recovery program course where we learned these techniques, including the Follar technique and ESC, from the Division.” [Line 6, Rural School A]

Teaching methods have an essential role in the growth of the students. They are those who manage how each student acquires the information presented during the classes and can even contribute to the gain in expertise and creativity of each individual. Teaching methods help students learn more effectively by making the instruction easier, more exciting, and more intended for the student’s needs. The purpose of teaching methods is to promote learning processes, make students more independent, and develop their problem-solving skills. The teaching methods are skills and methodologies to help students cover the topics and understand their learning (Brodowicz, 2024).

### Professional Development and Dedication

In urban areas, the role of a Reading Coordinator involves a strong focus on both professional development and dedication. Issues related to Professional development in education involve continuous learning through workshops and programs, such as write shops and the Reading Recovery Program, which enhance teaching strategies and materials. Dedication to educational tasks is crucial, encompassing using resources like printing materials and equipment and overcoming challenges with a positive attitude and commitment. Successful implementation of these tools and techniques relies on the teacher’s willingness to go beyond classroom hours and fully engage with the tasks.

One participant said that:

“There have been many workshops, like writing shops. I’ve been attending these writing shops in preparation for those lap books that should contain one-liners so children can read them easily. I was also part of the Reading Recovery Program, which we did for 6 months at the region. We would visit regularly; it was a good program style because it was done one-on-one. We were taught, and I’m tired of speaking in English now, so I’ll switch to Bisaya. They would teach us during the week, and then we would implement it.” [Line 6, Urban School C]

Another participant said that:

“The printing materials, the publication, when we say printing materials, includes the book paper, printer, and

ink. We have the laminator, the laminating film, the binding machine—all those things. There’s no problem. I haven’t seen any problem. There would be a problem if you make an excuse like, ‘I don’t have time to do that because it’s beyond classroom hours.’ That’s when the problem arises. Again, it goes back to the teacher’s attitude, commitment, and dedication.” [Line 5, Urban School A]

Ma, D. (2022) highlights that commitment is a crucial aspect of teacher professional identity, as educators need to sustain their intrinsic motivation to meet academic standards, address learner needs, and fulfill personal goals. Commitment is essential for teachers to engage effectively in their roles and develop a strong professional identity. The level of commitment influences whether educators continue their careers with enthusiasm or face burnout and exhaustion. Thus, teachers’ professional identity and their degree of commitment are closely linked and interdependent. Committed teachers are concerned with the development of their students, and they profoundly struggle with how to keep students learning (Mart, 2018).

### Strategic Assessment and Feedback

Reading coordinators in urban and rural areas faced various challenges, with rural coordinators experiencing unique difficulties. They struggled with assessment and continuous improvement, employing different methods to measure student progress. Although diagnostic assessments were vital, coordinators found assigning teachers exclusively to reading challenging, which hindered their ability to identify struggling students effectively. Evaluating assessment results was another obstacle, as coordinators needed to gather input through interviews and feedback from parents, students, and co-teachers to assess the effectiveness of materials and interventions, particularly for those with limited vocabulary. Additionally, they had to adjust educational strategies by ensuring students mastered each phase before advancing, often requiring a methodical approach with regular repetition.

One participant said:

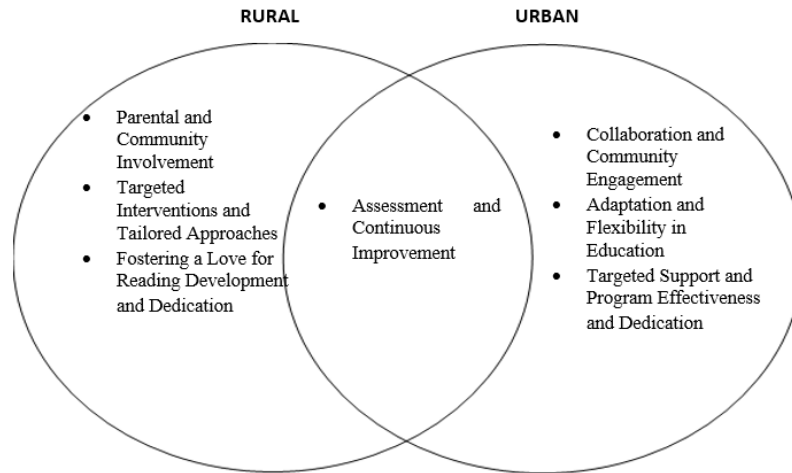
“We used the CARLA assessment and EGRA. What is CARLA? The Comprehensive Reading Learners Assessment Test for our kindergarten to grade 3 students. CARLA stands for Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment. We conducted pre-tests, mid-assessments, and post-assessments to determine whether the children improved after each test”. [Line 8, Rural School A]

Another participant said:

“Diagnostic assessment is also essential. I schedule these assessments by classroom, coordinating with volunteer teachers. I assign specific teachers to focus solely on reading. I work with the principal to pull out struggling students and give them additional help during lunch or free periods. I also engage proficient readers to help teach their peers”. [Line 8, Rural School B]

Another participant said:

“As the reading coordinator, I analyze the evaluation



**Figure 3:** Venn Diagram on Strategic Assessment and Feedback in Rural and Urban Schools

results and conduct interview sessions. I also organize regular sessions to review the assessments of the students, gathering feedback from co-teachers, parents, and the students themselves. We evaluate whether the materials and interventions are significantly helping the students, whether they can comprehend better, and if their vocabulary has improved. Often, students struggle with reading mainly due to their limited vocabulary”. [Line 9, Rural School B]

Another participant:

“Evaluation results, I need to adjust how I’ll adjust, well, do I still have something I need to do? Of course, he will meet with the barangay education workers again because I just had a mid-assessment, and I still do not know how to read. We need to revisit that and not proceed to the next level or the next phase if he hasn’t mastered that phase yet. We need to go through it step by step, go back to what’s necessary, and constant repetition is needed if you want a child to learn how to read”. [Line 9, Rural School C]

Educators use reading assessments to evaluate students’ reading abilities and develop effective interventions. The Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) was created as a 5-minute tool to quickly assess the reading profiles of students in grades 1 through 3 and devise targeted instructional strategies, addressing gaps that arose from the extended summer break of 2020 due to the pandemic (Zapanta, 2023). Additionally, diagnostic assessments are employed to identify specific sources of reading difficulties, as weak readers may face various challenges in different reading components. These assessments help educators pinpoint precise areas that need intervention (Hu *et al.*, 2021).

Some schools used standardized tests for student assessment in urban areas because they were convenient and had materials already provided. On the other hand, for continuous monitoring and mastery-based learning in reading, reading coordinators used games and conducted weekly assessments. These assessments targeted students who had not yet mastered letter sounds. If students had not mastered a particular letter, they did not move on to

the next one. Furthermore, reading coordinators in urban areas ensured that their methods were realistic and that program evaluations were conducted regularly. However, some schools in urban areas faced challenges with assessment because the reading coordinators were not the ones conducting the assessments; this responsibility fell on the teachers. When reading coordinators did assess, they often requested assessments from teachers, who then passed the results to the reading coordinators.

One participant said:

“In terms of assessment, first, we have a standardized assessment. At NANAY ACADEMY, we use Mary Clay’s Reading Recovery Assessment Tools, which are research-based and standardized. We find them convenient to use because the materials are already provided. For monitoring, we use games and conduct weekly assessments. Our target is students who do not know letter names and letter sounds. We assess three letters a week and do not move to the next letter if there is no mastery of the previous one. This approach follows a pyramid design in teaching and reading at NANAY ACADEMY. You can’t move to the next letter if the pyramid’s foundation isn’t built. It’s a building process where you introduce a letter, like the letter R. If the student hasn’t mastered the letter R, you reintroduce it. This is done weekly to ensure mastery”. [Line 8, Urban School A]

Another participant said:

“What we’re doing should be realistic; ideally, we should have an evaluation after the year-end. Where does the program evaluation take place? How do you track it?” [Line 9, Urban School C]

Another participant said:

“When it comes to assessment, I’m not the one who assesses; it’s the adviser who assesses their own. The adviser gives me their results. I don’t have direct assessment; it’s indirect for me. I request assessments from the teachers, and they pass them on to me”. [Line 8, Urban School B]

### Parental and Community Involvement

Reading coordinators in rural areas faced different

challenges regarding community engagement, as some parents volunteered and found enjoyment in what they did. However, there were students in rural areas who needed to be faster learners. To address this, the district supervisor initiated the organization of Barangay Education Workers, the parents who volunteer their time weekly to assist slow learners. Additionally, various assessments were conducted in rural areas, including pre-assessments to identify non-readers, with Barangay Education Workers helping them to learn to read. Lastly, reading coordinators in rural areas created a matrix to inform the principal about the need for meetings with parents, ensuring that parents were aware of their child's reading progress. This also emphasized the importance of reading materials at home and that more than relying solely on teachers might be needed.

One participant noted.

“At our school, as the coordinator, I actively engage the local communities and parents to ensure the success of our reading program. I invite parents and announce during assemblies, asking volunteers to partner with me in the reading program. Some parents do volunteer, finding it enjoyable as well”. [Line 7, Rural School B]

Another participant said.

“Here in our district, through the initiative of our district supervisor, we organize the Barangay Education Workers. Who are these Barangay Education Workers? They are our parents. They share their time weekly to assist our pupils, at least in reading, especially the slow learners”. [Line 7, Rural School A]

Another participant said.

“So, earlier, I mentioned that various assessments are being conducted. We did a pre-assessment where we identified the non-readers, who they are, and they are now considered recipients. Our barangay education workers are helping them to read. I will personally provide them with materials”. [Line 8, Rural School C]

Another participant said.

“So first, I'm creating a matrix to inform our school principal that we will meet with the parents of our non-readers and the barangay education workers. We are calling for a meeting with our non-readers so that the parents can also be aware of their child's reading profile, and collaboration is needed. Collaborative efforts between parents and teachers are needed in July, with the assistance of barangay education workers. After that, make them aware that sending reading materials is necessary for your child because relying solely on the teacher for reading problems may not suffice”. [Line 7, Rural School C]

Collaboration between teachers and parents significantly facilitates student assessment. This growing academic partnership aims to enhance students' educational experiences. Teachers are increasingly working with parents to improve educational outcomes, with this partnership playing a vital role in students' academic performance (Cruz *et al.*, 2023). Research indicates parental involvement can enhance school quality, boost

teacher morale, and improve community reputation. Engaged parents earn teachers' respect, leading to higher expectations for their children. Moreover, involved parents contribute to long-term benefits, including increased retention and a higher likelihood of continuing education after high school (Hasegawa, 2023).

### Collaboration and Community Engagement

Issues related to collaboration and community engagement were particularly the problem. Reading coordinators needed the community's support to address children's reading needs. A significant challenge was that reading coordinators had to seek community support by orienting them to the programs that helped improve students' reading skills. Collaboration and training were also challenging for reading coordinators, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when they had to conduct training sessions for parents, many of whom were not educated on practical approaches for their children. Another issue was communication with parents. Reading coordinators often could not attend meetings and did not have direct contact with parents; instead, advisers were responsible for communicating with parents, while reading coordinators only informed parents about their children's status and progress.

A participant noted that.

“Ah, also way back during COVID time, I also conducted training, strategies on how the pupils, like the parents you mentioned, should approach, should teach their children because they called me up by grade level; it happened during COVID because we didn't have face-to-face interactions so one of the strategies was for parents who weren't educated.” [Line 7, Urban School C]

Another participant said that.

“I don't have direct contact with the parents in that approach. When we have meetings, I'm not able to attend; it's usually through the advisers. Each adviser is responsible for communicating with the parents. We inform the parents about their children's status, their standing”. [Line 7, Urban School B]

Another participant said that.

“In the community, we engaged them, tapped them, and then asked for their commitment. We have what we call a “pledge of commitment.” We don't just orient them or tell them about the program; we ask for their support.” [Line 7, Urban School A]

Hasegawa (2023) notes that parental involvement can significantly contribute to creating a positive learning environment, improving communication between parents, teachers, and students, and keeping parents informed about their child's progress and any challenges they may encounter. Parents who actively participate in their child's school life can substantially impact their academic and personal development. Involvement from parents and the community is crucial for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering social improvement (Eden *et al.*, 2024).

### Targeted Interventions and Tailored Approaches

Reading coordinators in rural areas faced challenges in targeting interventions, as they needed to consider various assessments for students from kindergarten to grade 3 and different assessments for students in grades 3 to 6. Additionally, it was challenging for reading coordinators to determine if the strategies were genuinely effective, making it essential to identify and observe suitable strategies. Regarding addressing students' needs, reading coordinators had to tailor their approaches by gathering feedback from parents, co-teachers, and students to ensure that the strategies aligned with the student's specific needs. Finally, in rural areas, reading coordinators struggled because if students could still read, they had to revisit the material they could not comprehend and avoid moving on to the next level until the child had fully learned to read.

One participant said:

"We conducted pre-tests, mid-assessments, and post-assessments using the prescribed assessment tools for kindergarten to grade 3. We used the CARLA assessment and EGRA. What is CARLA? The Comprehensive Reading Learners Assessment Test for our kindergarten to grade 3 students. CARLA stands for Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment, while EGRA stands for Early Grade Reading Assessment. We assessed the children's language of instruction, which includes MTB, Filipino, and English, using EGRA. For grades 3 to 6, we used Phil-IRI, assessing both English and Filipino. We conducted pre-tests, mid-assessments, and post-assessments to determine whether the children improved after each test". [Line 8, Rural School A]

Another participant said:

"Based on the assessment results, we will identify which other strategies are suitable, what went well, and what went wrong. Then, we'll find out and give another appropriate approach based on the child's needs". [Line 9, Rural School A]

Another participant said:

"As the reading coordinator, I analyze the evaluation results and conduct interview sessions. I also organize regular sessions to review the assessments of the students, gathering feedback from co-teachers, parents, and the students themselves. We evaluate whether the materials and interventions are significantly helping the students, whether they can comprehend better, and if their vocabulary has improved". [Line 9, Rural School B]

Another participant said:

"We need to revisit that, need to revisit it, and don't proceed to the next level or the next phase if he hasn't mastered that phase yet. We need to go through it step by step, go back to what's necessary, and constant repetition is needed if you want a child to learn how to read". [Line 9, Rural School C]

### Adaptation and Flexibility in Education

In urban areas, reading coordinators struggled with adapting and being flexible in education, especially during

the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, reading coordinators conducted training sessions for parents to ensure that children could continue reading at home despite the lack of face-to-face interactions. It became crucial for reading coordinators to adapt and be flexible in their teaching strategies. They regularly revisited and held meetings, followed by a Slack session where they determined the most effective strategies to help students at each grade level improve their reading skills.

In urban areas, reading coordinators needed a wide range of strategies. If a particular approach proved ineffective, they revised and reinvented their strategies. Even if the implementation was prolonged and students still struggled with reading, the reading coordinators took an individualized approach and extended the time until the student mastered the material.

One participant said:

"Ah, also way back during COVID time, I also conducted training, strategies on how the pupils, like the parents you mentioned, should approach, should teach their children because they called me up by grade level; it happened during COVID because we didn't have face-to-face interactions so one of the strategies was for parents who weren't educated, not like the same as you, so what I did was I called them up and trained them by grade level, and I just taught simple approaches how to teach parents, that's it." [Line 8, Urban School C]

Another participant said:

"So what I've been doing with the evaluation is revisiting it whenever I have time. We have meetings here, and after our Slack session, I do this. This is what we've been through in our mid-year, where we enhanced our reading program. We looked at the readings, that's it. I checked what, and we all evaluated whether its reading at that grade level was compelling. [Line 9, Urban School C]

Another participant said:

"Well, just like I mentioned, we don't proceed; we revise and reinvent our strategies if they are ineffective. Before proceeding to the next step, we reteach based on the learner's results in the assessment. In other words, it's student-centered. It's not teacher-centered; a strict timeline must be followed to determine whether the students have mastered the material. It's not like that. We go back and reteach. So, if the 10-week implementation isn't enough for the child, we don't force it. We extend the time as needed until the child masters the material. It's an individual approach, not a group approach". [Line 9, Urban School A]

Jamil and Qureshi (2023) noted that teachers who use innovative strategies such as problem-based, inquiry-based, and collaborative learning methods effectively enhance student participation and engagement, leading to improved learning outcomes. Additionally, flexibility is crucial for teachers in the classroom, as it allows them to embrace new ideas, adapt to changes, and address students' needs. A flexible teacher is more successful in managing student behavior and building positive relationships with students (Yussif, 2022).

### Fostering a Love for Reading

In rural areas, reading coordinators faced the challenge of fostering a love for reading, especially among students who struggled with it. On the other hand, reading coordinators in rural schools worked on the continuous improvement and love for reading among students, particularly those who struggled and needed to be uplifted.

One participant said:

“We have a project focused on continuous improvement, and our reading program applies this through enrichment and intervention to uplift students. The main goal is to instill a love for reading in the children”. [Line 8, Rural School B]

Children who enjoy reading tend to perform better academically. Essentially, when kids develop a love for reading, they read more frequently, which enhances their reading skills and overall school performance (Culbert, 2024).

### Targeted Support and Program Effectiveness

In urban areas, reading coordinators faced challenges in ensuring the effectiveness of their programs. Even though they offered various programs for students, they still needed to measure whether these programs were truly effective in improving reading skills. Another challenge for reading coordinators in urban areas was working with students who struggled with reading. Coordinators had to tailor their approach to each child’s needs, and if the assessments used were insufficient, they adjusted their methods accordingly.

One participant said:

“Actually, I just want to check the effectiveness of the reading program here at the school. I have already submitted an action research report to the division, but due to time constraints, I could not continue with it. The proposal was approved, but I haven’t pursued it yet. I want to check the effectiveness of the reading program we implemented here at the school”. [Line 8, Urban School C]

### CONCLUSION

This study explored the challenges faced by reading coordinators in rural and urban schools using qualitative methods and descriptive comparison. Results revealed that both settings face significant but distinct challenges.

In rural schools, coordinators struggle with limited resources, lack of professional development, and minimal parental involvement. These factors hinder the implementation and success of reading programs. Coordinators often rely on local government support and personal experience to manage literacy initiatives.

In urban schools, while resources are more available, coordinators face issues such as inadequate institutional support, teacher burnout, and frequent leadership changes, affecting program continuity. They must continuously adapt strategies, especially in response to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessment practices also vary rural coordinators face

difficulties in evaluating progress and fostering reading interest, while urban coordinators revise approaches to meet diverse student needs. Despite contextual differences, both emphasize the need for flexibility, targeted interventions, and strong commitment.

Overall, the findings highlight that resource availability, educator dedication, and adaptability are key to overcoming challenges and ensuring effective reading instruction in both rural and urban contexts.

### Implications

The study highlights the significant challenges that reading coordinators face in rural and urban schools, emphasizing the urgent need for meaningful improvements in reading programs. In rural areas, coordinators advocate for more resources, including access to books and technology, enhanced professional development, and community support to tackle literacy issues effectively. These calls for support underscore the unique obstacles faced by rural educators, where resources can be particularly scarce.

In contrast, urban schools are dealing with their challenges, particularly the need to establish robust support systems for reading coordinators and teachers. Burnout becomes a real risk without adequate support, hindering the successful implementation of reading programs. The study emphasizes that creating a collaborative environment is essential for sustaining the enthusiasm and effectiveness of educators in urban settings.

Moreover, flexibility in educational strategies is increasingly critical, especially given ongoing challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. By shedding light on these diverse issues, the study is a practical eye-opener that can lead to better student reading outcomes. It also provides a valuable guide for future research and policy efforts in literacy education, aiming to enhance the reading experience for all learners.

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