



HINTS AND HINDERS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON CATCH-UP FRIDAY THROUGH THE LENS OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative multiple-case study examined how six public secondary teachers in rural District 10 implemented the Department of Education's Catch-Up Friday program, a nationwide post-pandemic learning recovery initiative. Findings reveal systemic unpreparedness, including lack of training, insufficient materials, unclear guidelines, and resource constraints, which hindered effective delivery. Teachers also struggled with a significant mismatch between learners' actual reading levels and program expectations. Despite these challenges, teachers employed adaptive strategies such as differentiated grouping, use of leveled reading materials, flexible improvisation, and reliance on structured lesson scripts. Through the lens of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, teachers acted as scaffolds, bridging learners' Zones of Proximal Development by adjusting instruction, providing guided support, and enhancing learner confidence. The study highlights the program's potential but underscores the need for stronger systemic support, training, assessment, and contextualized implementation for rural Philippine schools.

Keywords: *Catch-Up Friday, learning recovery, teacher strategies, reading intervention, qualitative case study, Philippine education*

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic produced unprecedented disruptions in education, widening existing learning gaps and amplifying long-standing inequities in resource-constrained areas worldwide. In the Philippines, these disruptions heightened concerns about literacy, with the World Bank (2021) reporting that over 80% of Filipino learners aged 10 could not read or understand simple texts. To mitigate these gaps, the Department of Education launched the Catch-Up Friday program, a nationwide initiative intended to strengthen foundational skills in reading, numeracy, and values formation.

Understanding the implementation of such interventions requires attention to teacher experiences, especially in rural contexts where challenges are magnified by resource limitations. This study investigates how teachers navigate the Catch-Up Friday program, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ. By exploring teacher perspectives, this research contributes to the growing literature on post-pandemic learning recovery and provides grounded insights into improving remedial initiatives in Philippine public schools.

Research Questions

The study aimed to investigate the experiences of teachers in Carrying Out DepEd Catch-Up Friday program in the Rural High Schools of District 10, Baybay City Division, Leyte. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What specific challenges do the teachers encounter in Carrying Out the Catch-Up Friday Program, and how do they address these challenges?
2. What strategies and practices have teachers identified as practical or impractical in improving learner outcomes across different areas of the Catch-Up Friday program?
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of Catch-Up Fridays on their professional development and on learner's academic and socio-emotional progress?
4. How does teacher's specialization influence their approach to Carrying Out the Catch-Up Fridays?

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative multiple-case study design (*Yin, 2018*) was used, involving six teachers selected through criterion sampling. Criteria included: (a) minimum two years teaching experience, (b) direct involvement in Catch-Up Friday implementation, (c) handling Grades 7–10, and (d) experience teaching during the pandemic.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The researcher acknowledges positionality as a DepEd teacher, requiring reflexivity to minimize bias.

Data analysis followed *Braun and Clarke's (2006)* thematic approach: transcription, coding, theme generation, within-case analysis, and cross-case synthesis.

Table 1
Obstacles to Practical Catch-Up Friday Delivery

Theme	Description	Illustrative Teacher Quote
Mismatch of Reading Levels	Learners' reading skills far below grade expectations	<i>"My Grade 7 students read like Grade 2 pupils."</i>
Lack of Training & Materials	Teachers received no formal orientation or ready-made materials	<i>"We started without scripts, no guidance at all."</i>
Resource Constraints	Insufficient ICT tools, printing capability, and unsuitable classrooms	<i>"We wrote everything on the board because we had no projector."</i>
Low Learner Motivation	Learners disengaged, often anxious in reading activities	<i>"Some avoid reading aloud because they feel ashamed."</i>

Table 2
Adaptive Strategies Employed by Teachers

Strategy	Description	Example Quote
Differentiated Grouping	Learners grouped based on actual reading ability	<i>"I separated the non-readers so I could guide them step-by-step."</i>
Use of Leveled Materials	Elementary-level texts used for non-readers to build confidence	<i>"I used Grade 2 worksheets for my struggling Grade 7s."</i>
Structured Lesson Scripts	Guided scripts ensured consistent implementation	<i>"The script helped me know what to emphasize."</i>
Motivation Techniques	Point system, participation scores, and incentives	<i>"Extra points made them more willing to attend."</i>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Four major themes emerged across cases: (1) systemic obstacles to program implementation, (2) adaptive strategies for reading intervention, (3) teacher awareness of pandemic-driven learning gaps, and (4) alignment of lessons with teacher expertise.

***Systemic obstacles.** * Teachers consistently described the program as launched with "no training, no materials, no clear direction," leading to confusion and inconsistent implementation. One teacher noted, *"We were asked to start immediately, but we didn't even have the scripts yet."* Resource shortages, such as lack of ICT tools and crowded classrooms, further hindered the program.

***Adaptive strategies.** * Despite challenges, teachers displayed resilience by differentiating instruction, grouping learners by reading level, using elementary texts for non-readers, and following lesson scripts to maintain structure. As one stated, *"I used Grade 2 materials for my Grade 7 non-readers just to build their confidence."*

***Teacher awareness.** * Teachers became acutely aware of pandemic-driven learning losses. Emotional and psychological needs also surfaced, with one teacher noting, *"Some learners are anxious they avoid reading aloud."*

***Teacher expertise.** * non-language teachers struggled with reading-focused lessons. *“I teach Math, I’m not trained for phonics,”* one shared, highlighting the misalignment between teacher specialization and program expectations.

Integrated with Vygotsky’s framework, these findings demonstrate how teachers attempted to scaffold learning despite systemic constraints.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

The study provides a detailed analysis of how the Catch-Up Friday program was implemented across different educational contexts, drawing from individual teacher experiences and cross-case comparisons. The study focused on identifying common challenges, strategies used, and teacher perceptions regarding the program’s effectiveness in addressing learning gaps caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the results, the Catch-Up Friday program has potential but is restricted by gaps in training, resources, and learner readiness. Teachers showed resilience by adjusting their strategies, but systemic improvements are needed to sustain the program. The analysis supports Vygotsky’s theory, emphasizing the need for scaffolding, emotional support, and instruction aligned with each learner’s developmental level.

Conclusion

This study revealed that while Catch-Up Friday holds promise as a learning recovery initiative, its effectiveness is limited by systemic gaps, including insufficient training, inadequate resources, and lack of clear guidelines. Rural teachers navigated these challenges through adaptive and creative strategies that aligned with Vygotskian principles of scaffolding. The study contributes to understanding how large-scale programs function in resource-limited contexts and underscores the need for contextualized, teacher-informed implementation.

Recommendations

Table 3 presents recommendations mapped directly to major findings.

Key Findings	Corresponding Recommendations
Mismatch of Reading Levels	Provide leveled materials and diagnostic assessments.
Lack of Teacher Training	Conduct regular professional development.
Resource Limitations	Equip classrooms with ICT and functional materials.
Specialization Misalignment	Assign reading tasks primarily to language teachers.

From the conclusion, the following recommendations are:

1. Provide leveled reading materials aligned with learners’ actual reading levels (addresses

‘mismatch’ theme).

2. Conduct regular teacher training on differentiated instruction and reading intervention.
3. Improve program clarity by issuing unified guidelines and assessment tools.
4. Strengthen monitoring and support systems for implementation consistency.
5. Align reading tasks with teacher specialization where possible.
6. Integrate psychosocial support and confidence-building activities for learners.
7. Improve learning environments by supplying functional ICT tools and quiet reading spaces.
8. Develop a clear table linking program objectives, learner needs, and recommended strategies.

By addressing these recommendations, the Catch-Up Friday initiative can evolve into a more practical and sustainable model for post-pandemic learning recovery, one that empowers teachers and meets learners where they are.



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