



TEACHING LITERATURE: THE CASE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN A NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This multiple case study explored the struggles and challenges encountered by the Junior High School teachers who are teaching literature in a national high school. I conducted this study with the use of multiple case study research design with in-depth interviews as the main method of collecting data. Four teachers served as the participants of this study. The common struggles and challenges encountered by my participants were lack of available reference materials, learners' attitude toward the subject, and learners' diverse cognitive capacity. Their coping mechanisms included the provision of learning materials, reliance on internet sources, conduct of reading remediation, use of differentiated instruction, integration of cooperative learning, and undergoing training and seminars. It is recommended to properly allocate a budget to send teachers to training and seminars and to provide them with technical assistance. Teachers also have to exert effort to address the needs of the students to attain the mission and vision of the Department of Education.

Keywords: *Struggles, Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, Literature, Teaching Literature, Tacurong City, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Being an English teacher for thirteen years now, I have been experiencing many struggles and challenges in teaching literature. Learners passively participate in class

discussions. Some learners are experiencing difficulty in reading the text. Most of the time, learners are not motivated to listen to class discussions because there are no available learning materials. I have also observed that some learners do not like the teachers' strategies, or they get bored with the teachers' tone of voice. These made me realize that learners must be given guidance for them to understand the lessons because every learner is vulnerable and precious, and their mind is primed for learning.

Learners differ in their level of understanding. As such, I have a great task to ensure the learning of my learners throughout the entire teaching and learning process. My learners should have the ability to cope with the teachers' strategies towards teaching most especially in literature subjects as this could probably solve the problem as to why many learners are passive. Looking into the situation, there is a gap that needs to be bridged with regards to teaching literature in Tacurong City because there are limited studies that venture into the challenges and struggles encountered by teachers in teaching literature.

Bloom (2019) emphasized that due to the challenges with text selection, length, cultural difficulty, and cultural appropriateness, teachers find it challenging to inspire their students to embrace reading. Thus, learners develop negative assumptions that are inculcated in their minds. These assumptions limit learners' abilities to learn. This results in negative responses on the part of the learners and hinders the development of their capabilities and abilities.

Damrosch (2019) articulated that in teaching literature, there is no perfect method because it depends on the capability of the learners to understand the subject. He found that the commonly used strategy in teaching literature is reporting while lecturing as a strategy was found to be effective in their learning process. Strategies in teaching literature have become an avenue for the teachers to be effective in motivating learners to learn and participate. A traditional lecture strategy used by the teacher may challenge some but may be ineffective for others. A tasked-based strategy motivates and is effective to some but may confuse and discourage slow learners.

As observed in Tacurong National High School, learners are passive in their literature subject; they go out and escape during class period. Teachers are also not prepared in handling the subject; hence, learners do not experience quality teaching because some teachers are obliged to teach literature even if it is not their specialization because of the lack of teachers in the school.

Research Questions

This study was conceptualized to determine the struggles and challenges as well as the coping mechanisms that they employed that teachers encounter in teaching literature to Junior High School students in Tacurong National High School in the school year 2023-24.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the struggles and challenges encountered by the Junior High School teachers in teaching literature at Tacurong National High School?

2. How do these teachers cope with the challenges and struggles encountered in teaching literature?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the qualitative multiple case study to understand the teachers' struggles and challenges in teaching Literature at Tacurong National High School. In order to provide an authentic illustration, I gathered data from four Junior High School English teachers. Specifically, one Junior High School English teacher teaching Grade 7 Philippine Literature, one Junior High School English teacher teaching Grade 8 Afro-Asian Literature, one Junior High School English teacher teaching Grade 9 Anglo-American Literature, and one Junior High School English teacher teaching Grade 10 World Literature.

. During the gathering of data, the researcher used an in-depth interview method or the key informant interview. Key informant interview is one of the most common techniques that are applied to research studies that have a social impact or effect on the community, for feedback and information to be collected before the application of a policy planning or a decision, and to explore and uncover different patterns that drive to the formulation of a certain behavior (Constantine, 2018). The researcher recorded all the interviews. The researcher transcribed the interview and examined and analyzed the verbal interactions which are recorded during the in-depth interview.

Thematic analysis was utilized to identify, analyze, and interpret recurring themes. It described and analyzed commonalities, differences, and relationships with the gathered data. In addition, thematic analysis was described as a tool for finding, analyzing, and reporting data trends.

RESULTS

Teaching literature in the junior high school level is a rewarding yet demanding endeavor that teachers undertake. Junior high school teachers face a variety of obstacles when navigating the world of literature subjects, which is entangled with both concrete and abstract complexity.

The struggles and challenges encountered by the junior high school teachers in teaching literature. Based on the thematic analysis there are three (3) major themes emerged namely (1) lack of reference materials, (2) learners' attitude toward the subject, and (3) learners' diverse cognitive capacity.

DISCUSSION

On the struggles and challenges encountered by the Junior High School teachers in teaching literature at Tacurong National High School.

Inside the classroom there are tasks or circumstances that demand teacher's skill or effort but might not necessarily evoke hardship are referred to as **Challenges**. Teachers are encountering these challenges on how to engage learners in different types of literary texts and others.

Table 1. struggles and challenges encountered by the Junior High School teachers in teaching literature at Tacurong National High School

Major Themes	Core Ideas	Frequency of Responses
Lack of Reference Materials	Unavailability of Reference Materials	General
	Limit Academic Knowledge	General
Learners' Attitude Toward the Subject	Learners' Disinterest	Typical
	Learners' Dislike	Variant
Learners' Diverse Cognitive Capacity	Varying Stages of Cognitive Abilities	Typical
	Poor Reading Ability	General

During the in-depth interview, the following themes were emphasized by the participants: lack of available reference materials, learning dislike and interest, and learners' diverse cognitive capacity. They expressed these different struggles and challenges upon hearing the questions and answered what they actually experienced and encountered in their teaching process. They answered the questions without any hesitation in mind drawing from their observations and experiences and showing their depth of understanding and engagement with the subject matter.

With confidence, the participants shared the real scenario and dynamics within their classroom. The participants explained their insights according based on what they observed and experienced in the classroom.

On the teachers cope with the challenges and struggles encountered in teaching literature

Teaching literature is a rewarding yet demanding endeavor, often accompanied by various struggles and challenges for educators. Navigating the complexities of imparting

literary knowledge and fostering critical thinking skills in her students, she encountered obstacles that could impact her well-being and effectiveness in the classroom.

Table 2. Teachers cope with the challenges and struggles encountered in teaching literature

Major Themes	Core Ideas	Frequency Responses
Provision of Learning Materials	Reproduction of Learning Materials	General
	Making of Powerpoint Presentation	General
Reliance to Internet Sources	Surfing the Internet	Variant
	Adopting the 21st Century Learning Process	General
Conduct of Reading Remediation	Participating in the Catch-Up Fridays	Typical
	Use of Dictionary	General
Use of Differentiated Instructions	Applying New Approaches	Variant
	Catering to Diverse Learning Needs	Variant
Integration of Cooperative Learning Strategy	Promoting Positive Interdependence	Variant
	Fostering Individual Accountability	Variant
Undergo Trainings and Seminars	Professional Development	Variant
	Continuous Growth and Skill Enhancement	Variant

Provision of Learning Materials

Learning materials such as journals, magazines, books, and modules are very essential in learning. They are important because independent learning is needed. Hence, teachers provide learning materials because of the lack of available reference materials. They help learners to learn by giving them assistance providing them with individual copies of the literary piece. All teacher-informants initiated to distribute copies of the literary piece for their learners (Ravitch, 2018).

Reproduction of Learning Materials. As the participants explained during the interview, the top struggle and challenge in teaching literature is the provision of learning materials in the field. They further stated that how can a teacher provide quality and productive learners in the future if this basic need in learning is not the priority by the Department of Education. Teachers in the government schools encounter the lack of reference materials as far as education is concerned. To provide quality education,

reference materials should be provided and be given priority for better education for the learners (Rodney, 2018).

According to the participants, they have to photocopy the lessons just to cope with the absence of reference materials in the class to ensure learning for the day. They invested their own money on reproducing copies of the literary pieces for the students to have their own copies of the topics. Copies of the literary piece will serve as students' learning material as mentioned by the participants. With the advancement of technology, the majority of participants now utilize Power Point presentations for learners. This is a big help for the teachers to have an easy preparation of topics to be discussed more efficiently, ultimately benefiting both educators and students alike. With the increasing prevalence of visual presentations, learners are now encouraged to pay attention if there are visual presentations prepared.

Making of PowerPoint Presentation. Making PowerPoint presentations in teaching literature enables teachers to enhance their lessons through visual aids, organization, multimedia integration, and differentiation (Alley, 2018). It promotes active learning, facilitates resource sharing, and contributes to teachers' professional growth and effectiveness in the classroom. Participants used this to motivate students to listen and participate in the class discussion. By diversifying instructional strategies, teachers create a more engaging and inclusive, dynamic and inclusive learning environment, encouraging students to learning journey. This helps ensure that all students have access to the material in a format that suits their learning preferences. It shows the exemplifying a more enriching and effective learning experience for everyone.

Reliance to Internet Sources In teaching literature, using internet sources is now crucial for helping students understand and connect with literary texts better. Using multimedia like audio, visuals, and interactive discussions helps teachers create an engaging learning space that caters to various students' preferences and styles. Carr (2018) emphasized that education in today's generation is challenging to the teachers. Most of the teachers are not so expert in the so-called 21st century learning process. Learners are active in using gadgets and other sources. This pushes teachers to use computers so that learners will be encouraged to attend class. Teachers use the internet to have an advanced learning of the topic to discuss. They also use the internet to get important details and information needed for the discussion. Thus, the reliance on internet sources in teaching literature offers opportunities to enrich students' learning experiences and foster critical thinking skills in the digital age.

Surfing the Internet. Moreover, the participants responded that to cope with the struggles and challenges in teaching literature, they have to be equipped with the innovations like surfing the internet just to develop the skills and competencies to attain for that day, week, and quarter (Turkle, 2018). However, the informants explained that some learning materials are limited and not suited to the understanding of the learners. They just encourage students to surf the internet to get some significant details about the

subject to be discussed. Also, teachers have to surf the internet to provide their students with appropriate knowledge to be disseminated.

Adopting the 21st century Learning Process. The 21st-century learning process in teaching literature is crucial for making the subject more relevant, engaging, and impactful for learners in today's rapidly changing world. It fosters critical thinking, global awareness, personalized learning, and prepares learners with essential skills for their academic and professional futures. Teachers of this generation should adopt the 21st century teaching process especially in teaching literature. Teachers should explore new approaches, technologies, and teaching strategies that engage students and inspire a lifelong love of reading and learning (Prensky, 2018). Thus, my informants embrace this challenge as their coping mechanisms. They use ICT to make their teaching more interactive and effective such as using Powerpoint Presentations during their teaching process.

Conduct of Reading Remediation. Every school year, the teachers face problems from the non-readers. The conduct of reading remediation is the coping mechanism used by the teachers in facing the struggles and challenges. Although it is difficult to give extra time due to the overwhelming workloads, and assisting students who are slow readers and non-readers, teachers must still find time to help their students read during vacant periods. teachers remain steadfast in their commitment to supporting students' literacy skills, utilizing even the briefest of moments to provide guidance and encouragement during any available downtime (Yin, 2018).

Conclusions

In this age of information, teachers must become learners' guides to learning. The great teacher must have digital agility, and accept change with open arms. Technology does not make or break a great teacher; it is a tool that needs to be facilitated properly to prepare learners for what lies ahead in this great new world.

Education is a mutual process, in which everybody can learn from each other. With the different struggles and challenges of teachers being mentioned, Teachers in English are resourceful and diligent to deliver quality education despite the problems they encounter. Learning from others creates an atmosphere of fulfillment. Both the teachers and students are learning in school. Teaching is very essential. Teachers keep motivated to share knowledge for the learners. With literature teaching, many lessons indeed emerged, because it is a manifestation that teachers really do an effort to impart their knowledge to the students.

Literature is a broad subject to learn for students, but some teachers offer themselves to help students who need their guidance. Learning is a cycle; teachers also learn from their learners. Teachers as masters of skills naturally emerge because of the way they showcase their expertise as recognized not only by the learners but also by the

community. This professional attribute is recognized because it is founded in patience, hard work, and perseverance to acquire and master the skill in teaching literature.

This research is only limited to the struggles and challenges of Junior High School teachers of Tacurong National High School, there is so much more to be learned about the topic which hopefully, this study may enflame those in higher positions in the department to delve deeper into the broader issues affecting teachers across various institutions. In my point of view, learners should be given importance because they need teachers to guide, teach, and understand them by experiencing an environment where growth and enlightenment flourish harmoniously.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: the department heads and grade level head may know the dilemma experienced by the teachers inside the classroom through giving technical assistance. The school administrators as immediate supervisors may allocate enough budget to send teachers on trainings and seminars so that teachers may improve their teaching techniques and strategies. Education managers may be able to develop a systematic model for innovative methods in teaching literature. Students may be provided with relevant and age-appropriate reading materials which means reading materials vary depending on whether the learners are slow or struggling readers. Students may also be given reading activities in school to train them and to develop their interest in reading. Teachers may design reading activities where the inferential and critical comprehension of learners may be developed. Parents may know their moral vital role in influencing their children to develop their habit in reading.

The above recommendations are made having considered the practical implications of the results of this study. Teachers find difficult to manage and teach because of workloads and the large number of students in the classrooms. Nevertheless, these may be considered sooner than later for the betterment of the educational system in school. The additional training suggestions made, including those to be included in in-service days training, are unlikely to result in vast cost or impossible practical implications because it could not be argued that the struggles and challenges encountered by the teachers are authentic.

Therefore, investing in targeted training programs aimed at addressing these challenges would not only be justified but also essential for supporting educators in overcoming obstacles and fostering a more conducive learning environment for students.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This is a declaration by the author/s in his/their own words and in paragraph form which includes compliance with obtaining informed consent, the respondents' freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, the anonymity of the respondents was maintained,

the respondents' well-being was safeguarded, no conflict of interest exists in the conduct of the study, plagiarism was strictly avoided, there was no bias in the interpretation of the findings and that the results were used purely for research.

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