



# LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GRADE 2 TEACHERS IN UTILIZING SCHOOLYARD PEDAGOGY TO ENHANCE READING SKILLS DURING THE IN-PERSON CLASSES: AN INQUIRY

Cathlyn Ann L. Diaz<sup>1</sup>

Master of Arts in Elementary Education, St. Mary's College of Tagum, Inc.  
Graduate School Department, Tagum City, Philippines

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this qualitative-phenomenological study was to divulge the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of Grade 2 teachers in the implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy during in-person classes. It comprised of fourteen (14) participants selected using a purposive sample technique, with seven (7) parents in a virtual in-depth interview and seven (7) public elementary teachers in a focus group discussion. The data analysis employed was thematic analysis. For the Grade 2 teachers, there were issues emerged from the problem namely: increase of student engagement in reading; improvement of students' reading skills; emphasis on socialization and collaboration increase of reading retention; emphasis on multisensory; awareness and appreciation for the environment; erratic weather conditions; limited reading resources and concerns on student safety. To address the issues, teachers mentioned ways: alternative solutions to barriers; guidance and assistance from colleagues; feedback and responses from students and parents; time management and flexible scheduling; emphasis on self-learning, emphasis on self-motivation; emphasis on self-care; utilization of differentiated activities; and utilization of additional resources. They also cited insights they could share to others, namely: provide reading resources and materials; conduct training; evaluate and improve one's self; integrate optimism, incorporate passion; and encourage the use of schoolyard pedagogy. The results are deemed significant to Grade 2 teachers, parents, learners, DepEd officials, administrators, and future researchers to give awareness and to develop best practices in utilizing schoolyard pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes to attain high quality education.*

**KEYWORDS:** education, in-person classes, schoolyard pedagogy, qualitative-phenomenological approach

## INTRODUCTION

After a protracted period of learning at home during school closures, learners returned to the physical classroom and adjust to the new routine. The prolonged school closures have caused unprecedented difficulties, notably in terms of their reading skills. Furthermore, reading is a skill that most people in the modern world take for granted, yet it is one of the most crucial areas that learners master in school since it forms the basis for all subsequent learning. In addition, reading is a must for all of our everyday responsibilities, thus being able to read fluently can help individuals perform their tasks more efficiently. However, many of life's seemingly ordinary and everyday tasks, which many literate people take for granted, can be felt like insurmountable difficulties to someone who is illiterate. Teachers should therefore take the necessary action to aid in the improvement of learners' reading skills.

In India, a study conducted among learners in Maharashtra revealed that 12,300 or 37% of learners from 32,888 who participated in the survey had failed to attain the minimum skills in reading (Gaikwad, 2022). Consequently, Gaikwad (2022) stated that this was the highest percentage of learners failing to attain the minimum skills in the state of Maharashtra. In Thailand, a study by World Bank (2020) revealed that nearly 40% of Thai learners were functionally illiterate. Further, teachers have observed that learners were not interested in reading and are very unmotivated which makes it difficult for

them to understand the lessons. Additionally, it was shown that Malaysian students have the same learning impairments because their performance, particularly in reading, has drastically declined (Selan, 2021).

In the Philippines, according to a United Nations Children's Fund research from 2022, the Philippines has a literacy rate of fewer than 15% or around three out of every twenty learners can read simple texts in large as a result of more than 70 weeks of school closure since the middle of February owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Mendoza (2021) highlighted that the Department of Education admitted that the nation had been experiencing learning poverty after a World Bank report revealed that 90% of learners under the age of 10 were illiterate. It argued that learners should be able to read at this age since reading is a doorway for learning other areas such as math, science, and the humanities as they advance through school and conversely, an inability to read closes that door.

In a school in Tagum City Division, particularly in the school I am assigned, many teachers shared their views and concerns regarding the deteriorating reading skills among learners. Teachers have discovered that more than half of the population struggles with reading and comprehension since the beginning of the school year. Specifically, in a classroom of 50 pupils, the majority of the pupils lack phonemic awareness and cannot read. Further, after the pandemic, the I have observed that

learners who have disengaged from school altogether had regressed and appeared to have lost the knowledge or skills they once had. The majority merely learned less than they would have in a usual year, but this is nonetheless significant. In general, learners advance to the next grade level unprepared, lacking the fundamental building blocks of knowledge needed to succeed.

After reading numerous kinds of literature and studies, the gist reveals that similar research was undertaken about the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy. Anent to this, Sahrakhiz et al., (2018) conducted a study in Germany that demonstrated that schoolyards promote meaningful context for early education by providing children with multiple possibilities for both formal and informal learning experiences. Consequently, Largo-Wight et al. (2018), stressed that learning outside stimulates interest, vitality, and motivation to learn. It can help learners improve their behavioral and concentration issues, especially those learners who are hard to deal with and lacks motivation in a traditional classroom. However, the researcher has not encountered any qualitative studies that discuss the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes, especially in national and local settings. The entire extent of learning loss during the pandemic will not be known for months and even years. If the learners are unable to regain their footing, they may experience delays in the acquisition of other reading-related skills, making it harder to master future academic content. For these reasons, the researcher was urged to do such a study.

This study is beneficial in assessing the lived experiences of Grade 2 teachers in the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy during in-person classes. Through the results and findings of the study, programs and interventions could be created to respond to different and specific needs in particular in terms of their reading skills through the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy. Furthermore, the results of this study would be endorsed to the research committee in the division and disseminated through school-based activities such as Learning Action Cells to uncover trends and to address the future recommendations of this research endeavor relative to alleviating the learners' reading skills.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This phenomenological study aimed to discover and understand the lived experiences of Grade 2 teachers in the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy during in-person classes in the South District of Tagum City Division.

At this stage in research, the lived experiences of elementary teachers in the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy during the in-person classes have been generally defined as teachers' challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights in the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy during the in-person classes which aimed to alleviate the learners' reading skills caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of Grade 2 teachers in utilizing Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes?
2. How did Grade 2 teachers cope with the challenges encountered in utilizing Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes?
3. What are the insights drawn from the experiences of Grade 2 teachers in utilizing Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes that can be shared to others?

### **METHODS**

This research study utilized qualitative research design following a phenomenological approach. According to Creswell (2013) qualitative research is an inquiry which focuses on the similarities among the lived experiences which participants in a particular group share. Phenomenological study was used to investigate the lived experiences of the Grade 2 teachers in the implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes. This type of research design enabled participants to communicate their thoughts, past experiences, coping techniques, and insights regarding the phenomena. Furthermore, phenomenological study is a flexible research approach which permitted interviewees to share experiences during interviews. Hence, a phenomenological research design was employed to obtain data and address the study's research questions.

This phenomenological inquiry involved 14 Grade 2 teachers, seven (7) for in-depth interviews (IDI) and seven (7) for focused group discussion (FGD) from the South District of Tagum City Division. To conform with the number of participants, this study abided by Creswell's (2013) principle which states that phenomenological research requires three to fifteen participants who have all encountered similar occurrences in order for phenomenology to have uniformity in the life experiences of research participants of a particular phenomenon. The interview was done virtually through an online platform such as Google Meet or Zoom. The participants of this study was chosen through a purposive sampling technique. The following criteria was used in selecting the participants: (a) must be a public elementary teacher from the South District of Tagum City Division; (b) must be a Grade 2 adviser with at least 5 years of teaching experience; and (c) must be using schoolyard pedagogy for at least five years. Moreover, the teachers may either be male or female, and may also come from small, medium, large, or mega-category schools.

Furthermore, thematic analysis is a flexible technique for discovering themes that are crucial in addressing the research problem (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, it strives to completely comprehend and analyze the data. Furthermore, the six-phase approach was outlined by Braun and Clarke (2014) as follows: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, looking for themes, analyzing potential themes, defining and labeling themes, and producing the report.



## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Schoolyard Pedagogy

Schoolyard pedagogy exemplifies teaching theories, approaches, and techniques that go beyond the confines of the traditional classroom and make use of the resources offered by the nearby schoolyard. Learning settings ranged across outdoor adventure education, school gardens, field trips, and traditional school subjects taught in natural environments (Mann et al., 2022). In a study conducted by Frielle (2021), the finding revealed that outdoor learning provides learners with enriching experiences outside of the classroom, which has the potential to improve educational practices in primary schools both directly and indirectly. As a matter of fact, core academic material is taught outside the classroom in schoolyard education. It actively involves students in engaging learning activities by utilizing the surrounding natural environment. By bringing core curricula outside, teachers can dramatically improve their learners' knowledge of both process skills and subject-specific concepts (Van Dijk-Wesselius et al., 2018).

Even though these extracurricular outdoor learning activities have a lot of promise, teachers frequently feel limited in their abilities in facilitating and improving learners' exposure to these kinds of outdoor activities because of issues with transportation, instructional demands, and a lack of time and scarcity of resources (Edward Jones et al., 2018).

### Trends in Reading

Phonics system and the whole language method are the two main approaches that educators have traditionally used to teach reading (Reyhner, 2020). Reyhner (2020) highlighted that the phonic method encourages beginner readers to mix the "sound spelling patterns" and sound out new words. The entire language approach is intended to assist children in learning words and their context-based meanings. Practically speaking, both approaches are frequently utilized to instruct beginner readers.

One important aspect of the research is figuring out how each person learns. Reading literacy instruction should take a very dynamic approach and be tailored to the needs of each type of learner because different methods are effective for various students. It is believed that approaches that dramatically alter what teachers and learners do every day in order to prioritize the teaching of reading from kindergarten through Grade 12 are thought to be connected with learners' achievement (The University of Kansas, 2019).

As a matter of fact, teachers at all levels are starting to see that the old strategy of making children sit quietly while they learned is no longer successful. No longer are students who learn via movement classified as having behavioral issues. They are now seen as students who learn in unique ways. To ensure that all kids learn effectively, teachers are now including movement in the lessons. Given that integrating physical exercises and literacy lessons enhances memory and helps kids retain new information, this is highly useful. New methods are increasingly being used, such as encouraging pupils to imitate spelling words in clay, drawing letters in dirt or sand, reading

with flashcards, and re-enacting a story that involves repeating words (Barry University, 2020).

### Roles of Teacher in Schoolyard Pedagogy

In adopting or implementing outdoor learning opportunities, teachers are expected to have extensive pedagogical content knowledge, which may be defined as the integration of pedagogical and subject matter knowledge (Dyment et al., 2018). On the other hand, teachers' comprehensive understanding of the surrounding environment exemplifies the overlay of the teacher and the environment. Therefore, teachers should exhibit an awareness of the concept of "place" and place-based pedagogy and realize the importance of environment/place as both a co-educator and a curricular source is essential for optimizing learning. It is apparent that teachers who are familiar with the environment and context of outdoor learning are in a better position to identify and capitalize on educational opportunities when they arise (Blenkinsop et al., 2016).

In addition, preparing for teaching in an outdoor setting differs significantly in a more conventional setting. A crucial skill for maximizing learning is the ability to pursue and embrace learning opportunities that present themselves in unpredictable but fertile outside environments (Blenkinsop et al., 2016). To maximize spontaneous learning opportunities, outdoor teachers should make the most of the affordances of the location they are teaching in by being emergent, spontaneous, progressive, and attentive to both their learners and the environment (Blenkinsop et al., 2016).

However, teachers are faced with uncertainties in the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy. Much of this tension stems from the conflicting goals of outdoor experiences: the release of excess energy and the development of gross motor skills, or emphasis on mental and emotional growth, including the instillation of environmental values.

### Experiences of Teachers in Utilizing Schoolyard Pedagogy

Teachers who have implemented schoolyard pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes have reported positive experiences and observed significant benefits for their learners. In fact, researchers from a study conducted by Kuo et al., (2017) found that "the number of redirects after a lesson in nature was roughly half (54%) that of redirects after a classroom lesson."

Moreover, the literature supports the notion that outdoor activities can have a positive impact on language skills and literacy development, as emphasized by the Nature Explore Program (2022). Likewise, incorporating outdoor activities in teaching reading makes the learning process more interesting and fun, enhancing students' interest in learning. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2020) highlights that when learners are exposed to a wider range of materials and activities, they gain flexibility and often express heightened engagement, enjoyment, and motivation in their learning.



Similarly, in a study conducted by Yildirim and Akamca (2017), teachers have noticed a significant improvement in reading retention when implementing schoolyard pedagogy. Such meaningful experiences are more likely to be stored in their long-term memory, contributing to their social and emotional development in the long run.

Furthermore, the incorporation of schoolyard pedagogy in in-person classes not only yields positive effects on students' reading skills but also proves beneficial in nurturing their socialization and collaboration abilities. When students collaborate in reading, they not only acquire knowledge from each other but also become aware of their peers' attitudes towards reading, which can either bolster or hinder their reading motivation (Barber & Klaudia, 2020).

**Strategies of Teachers in Utilizing Schoolyard Pedagogy**

The implementation of schoolyard pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes has been proven beneficial for teachers. However, teachers have faced significant challenges in this process, which must be addressed for successful outdoor learning experiences.

Adverse weather, like extreme temperatures and rain, can disrupt or limit outdoor activities, which can have a negative impact on student engagement and the overall effectiveness of this approach. Therefore, it's crucial to be prepared for extreme weather emergencies. While outdoor learning can happen in most weather conditions, it shouldn't be pursued at the expense of the children's comfort or safety. To address this, a weather response plan must be in place for extreme cold, rain, or heat (Gwen, 2022).

Also, it is important to consider concerns related to limited resources. Since teacher buy-in is crucial for the effective use of these learning environments, it's essential to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence teachers' adoption and continued use of this approach (Dring et al., 2020).

**Insights of Teachers in Utilizing Schoolyard Pedagogy**

Teachers have shared valuable insights on how to enhance reading skills through the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy during in-person classes. One of the key points highlighted by teachers is the importance of differentiated instruction. According to Tomlinson and Moon (2013), differentiated instruction involves adapting the content, process, and products of learning to cater to individual students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Another aspect that teachers underscore in schoolyard pedagogy is the importance of having well-structured lesson plans. An effective lesson plan exhibits characteristics such as attractiveness, dynamism, satisfaction, increased engagement, and students' interaction and participation in the classroom (Iqbal et al., 2021). With a well-prepared lesson plan, a teacher can utilize time, resources, materials, and techniques efficiently, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience.

Moreover, when choosing activities, it is essential for teachers to consider students' reading levels and individual characteristics. This practice is in line with formative assessment principles, where ongoing assessments help teachers understand students' strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to tailor instruction accordingly (Black & Wiliam, 2018). When empowered to make decisions about topics, communication forms, and materials, students take on greater ownership and responsibility for their learning engagement (Adlit, 2018).

Furthermore, collaboration and partnership with stakeholders also play a significant role in providing additional resources. Distributed leadership, which entails shared leadership or management, emphasizes collective and extended leadership rather than specific roles and responsibilities (Academy, 2022). Through such collaborative efforts, teachers gain access to a broader range of resources, further enhancing the effectiveness of schoolyard pedagogy.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Table 1**

**Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of Grade 2 Teachers in the Implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy to Enhance Reading Skills during In-Person Classes**

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Increase of Student Engagement in Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● observed an increase of students' reading interest and enthusiasm through outdoor reading activities</li> <li>● noticed the increase in students' engagement in the reading activities</li> <li>● sparked students' curiosity and enthusiasm through outdoor reading activities</li> <li>● noticed the increase in students' attentiveness in class</li> <li>● perceived an increase in students' learning autonomy in reading</li> <li>● noticed an increase in student motivation in reading</li> </ul>





Improvement of Students' Reading Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>observed that the students improve their reading ability by using words with pictures</li> <li>observed a positive impact on student reading experience</li> <li>enhanced the students' reading comprehension</li> <li>encountered the students' improved skills in vocabulary and reading comprehension</li> <li>encountered a rapid development of the student's reading skills</li> <li>noticed the students' retention in remembering the phonetic sounds of the word</li> <li>perceived a higher level of reading retention due to personalized learning experiences</li> <li>observed the students' capability to easily retrieve information from memory due to the authentic activities experienced</li> </ul>
Enhancement of Learning through Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enabled the students to experience collaborative learning through peer correction.</li> <li>noticed the improvement of the non-reader's skills through peer teaching</li> <li>noticed the improvement of the student's social skills through schoolyard pedagogy</li> </ul>
Emphasis on Multisensory Learning Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>let the students encounter learning through experiences that appeal to their tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory senses</li> <li>enhanced the reading instruction by providing the students with a rich sensory experience</li> <li>perceived schoolyard pedagogy as an effective approach to reading that utilizes the students' multiple senses</li> <li>let the students become more aware of their surroundings through a multisensory learning experience</li> <li>developed the students' sense of greater appreciation for the environment</li> <li>let the students be more connected to the real world through their reading environment</li> </ul>
Lack of Reading Resources and Bad Weather Conditions as Barriers to Schoolyard Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>experienced erratic weather conditions</li> <li>encountered rain as a barrier to conducting outdoor activities</li> <li>experienced scarcity of reading materials in school due to financial constraints</li> <li>encountered limited access to resources and materials that spark readers' interest</li> <li>experienced limited availability of resources when conducting outdoor reading activities</li> </ul>
Concerns on Student Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>experienced classroom disruptions due to the congested space</li> <li>perceived class size as factor to consider in terms of the security and safety of learners</li> <li>understood that student safety is a primary concern for the teachers</li> </ul>

**Increase of Student Engagement in Reading**

*My students are excited because they have a chance to go out in our classroom at the same time they learn while they are enjoying. IDI-02*

*I noticed that the children were more engaged in their learning how to read – thus, having their reading skills significantly improved. IDI-04*

*Taking reading activities outdoor can spark student curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. When students are actively engaged in their reading experiences, they are more likely to develop a love for reading and improve their skills. IDI-05*

The participants emphasized that learners became more engaged and interested in reading when exposed to outdoor reading activities through schoolyard pedagogy. This aligns with the contemporary research on experiential learning, which suggests that students are more likely to be engaged in their learning when they can connect it to real-world experiences

(Kuo et al., 2017). Schoolyard pedagogy provides a unique environment that captivates students' curiosity by linking the learning process to the outdoors, making reading a more enjoyable and meaningful experience.

Highlighted as well are the improvement in students' reading skills as a direct result of implementing schoolyard pedagogy. Such outcomes can be attributed to the enriched learning opportunities provided by the schoolyard environment, which fosters active participation and hands-on experiences. This was supported by the idea of Nature Explore Program (2022) that outdoor activities can contribute to improved language skills and literacy development.

**Improvement of Students' Reading Skills**

*If they see the picture, they can read, so their reading ability will really improve. IDI-01*

*Then, I can see is that there is indeed a positive impact on the child's reading journey. IDI-03*



*Using schoolyard pedagogy is very helpful for children because it enhances their reading comprehension even more. IDI-05*

The accounts of teachers highlight the significant improvement in students' reading skills due to the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy. Visual aids, such as pictures and real-life objects in the outdoor setting, offer contextual cues that facilitate reading comprehension. This aligns with research on the effectiveness of multisensory learning, showing that incorporating visual elements in reading instruction enhances students' decoding and word recognition skills (Agtarap, 2021). Schoolyard pedagogy taps into students' natural inclination towards visual learning, leading to a more effective and rapid development of reading skills.

The experiences shared by participants underscore the positive influence of schoolyard pedagogy on students' vocabulary and reading comprehension. The outdoor environment provides diverse and authentic learning opportunities that expose students to new words and contexts, enriching their vocabulary (Usman, 2019). Additionally, engaging in reading activities outdoors sparks students' curiosity and fosters deeper comprehension through real-world connections (Bradberry and De Maio, 2019). By linking reading to the environment and experiences around them, students are better able to grasp and retain information, leading to improved reading comprehension.

#### **Enhancement of Learning through Collaboration**

*When a child makes a mistake in reading, their classmates can also correct them, as they learn from one another. IDI-06*

*My learner's reading skills is letting the kids learn together through peer teaching where the readers taught the non-readers, and pair and share where they share their learnings with each other or vice versa. IDI-07*

*Their ability to socialize with other learners has also improved. FGD-05*

The participants highlighted the value of peer teaching and collaborative learning in schoolyard pedagogy. Allowing students to work together and help each other, regardless of their reading abilities, creates a sense of community and mutual support in the classroom. Research on cooperative learning supports these findings, showing that collaborative activities enhance students' social skills, communication, and empathy towards their peers (Kuo et al., 2019). Through this approach, students become active participants in their own learning process, fostering a positive and inclusive classroom culture.

Moreover, the observations made by the participants underscore the positive impact of schoolyard pedagogy on students' socialization skills. The outdoor setting and group activities create an environment conducive to communication and interaction. As students engage in discussions, provide feedback, and learn from their classmates, they develop stronger socialization skills, including active listening and effective communication (Howard as cited by Columbia University, 2021). Moreover, the freedom and encouragement to express themselves in the schoolyard contribute to increased

confidence and sociability among learners, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning community.

#### **Emphasis on Multisensory Learning Experience**

*The learning experiences provide them with opportunities to engage in physical movement, active listening, and tactile exploration of the materials we use. IDI-04*

*The outdoor environment provides a rich sensory experience that can enhance reading instruction. IDI-05*

*It is a very effective approach and rewarding as well because we allow them to use their senses for their learning experience. IDI-07*

The experiences shared emphasized the importance of engaging students' senses during the learning process. Schoolyard pedagogy allows students to physically interact with the environment, actively listen to sounds, and tactilely explore materials related to their reading. Research on multisensory learning supports these findings, suggesting that incorporating multiple senses during instruction facilitates deeper understanding and memory retention (Morin, 2022). By immersing students in rich sensory experiences, schoolyard pedagogy provides a more holistic and meaningful learning experience that complements reading instruction.

#### **Lack of Reading Resources and Bad Weather Conditions as Barriers to Schoolyard Pedagogy**

*Sometimes it's nice in the morning, the weather is very pleasant. But by midday, it suddenly rains or in the morning, it's a bit chilly, but by noon, it becomes very hot. IDI-01*

*Then limited resources and materials, since you are outside, it's important that the materials you acquire are ready to use and can engage the children in utilizing them, especially reading materials. IDI-04*

*In schoolyard activities, your preparations become more extensive. FGD-01*

Without adequate reading materials, teachers may find it challenging to engage students effectively in reading activities, limiting the breadth of the educational experience. Research on outdoor education emphasizes the importance of having relevant and engaging materials to facilitate meaningful learning in nature (MacDonald & Breunig, 2018). Insufficient resources may hinder the full potential of schoolyard pedagogy in fostering students' reading skills and overall learning outcomes.

#### **Concerns on Student Safety**

*Sometimes a child would cry because they got hurt, or there are instances when we are in the gym and other grade levels are using their play areas, so they complain to us. IDI-01*

*One of my concerns is the safety of the learners, specially if you have many learners you have to be extra careful. FGD-02*

*We should also prioritize the safety of the learners because it is indeed our responsibility as teachers. FGD-03*

The participants' responses highlight that student safety should be a primary concern for teachers during the implementation of

schoolyard pedagogy. As teachers strive to provide engaging and enriching outdoor experiences, they must remain vigilant about potential safety risks and take proactive measures to

protect students from harm (Yussif, 2023). A safe and conducive environment enables students to fully engage in their experiences, promoting positive learning outcomes

**Table 2**

**Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanism of Grade 2 Teachers in the Implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy to Enhance Reading Skills during In-Person Classes**

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Providing Alternative Solutions to Barriers to Implementing Schoolyard Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● innovating learning materials as an alternative solution to limited reading resources</li> <li>● having backup plans as an alternative to erratic weather conditions</li> <li>● looking for solutions when encountering difficulties in implementing schoolyard pedagogy</li> <li>● looking for substitute activities via the internet as an alternative solution to limited resources</li> <li>● being resourceful and flexible when problems in implementation arise</li> </ul>
Seeking Guidance and Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● seeking help from colleagues and administrators in the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy</li> <li>● asking support from colleagues and professional communities in implementing schoolyard pedagogy</li> <li>● asking reading strategies from seasoned colleagues regarding strategies in implementing schoolyard pedagogy</li> <li>● engaging collaboration with colleagues in preparation for schoolyard activities</li> <li>● having weekly feedbacking sessions with colleagues to help mitigate implementation issues</li> </ul>
Receiving Constructive Feedback and Responses from Students and Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● receiving positive feedback from parents</li> <li>● listening to students' feedback for better implementation</li> <li>● seeking the feedback of the students to improve the implementation of schoolyard activities</li> <li>● feeling inspired by the positive responses of the students, parents, and colleagues</li> <li>● receiving heart-warming messages from the parents</li> </ul>
Managing Time Wisely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● accommodating outdoor reading activities through flexible scheduling</li> <li>● managing the timeframe of the tasks in other subjects to allow more time for outdoor reading activities</li> <li>● being conscious of the time when implementing outdoor reading activities</li> </ul>
Emphasizing on Self-Motivation as a Coping Mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● reminding oneself of schoolyard pedagogy advantages as a form of self-motivation</li> <li>● banking on the students' heightened interest in reading as a form of self-motivation</li> <li>● having the higher purpose of teaching the students to read as a form of self-motivation</li> <li>● engaging in positive self-talk as a form of motivation</li> </ul>
Emphasizing on Self-Care as a Coping Mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● engaging in self-care activities for one's wellness and health</li> <li>● celebrating one's achievements as a form of self-care</li> <li>● allocating time to recuperate as a form of self-care</li> <li>● enjoying the teaching process and going with the flow as means for self-care</li> </ul>
Utilizing Differentiated Activities in the Implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● accommodating the diverse learning styles of the students in implementing schoolyard activities</li> <li>● providing differentiated activities to address the individual needs of the students</li> <li>● accounting for the students' level of reading skills in choosing schoolyard activities</li> <li>● understanding that the schoolyard activities should be suited according to the student's strengths, weaknesses, and level of skill</li> </ul>



### **Providing Alternative Solutions to Barriers to Implementing Schoolyard Pedagogy**

*We will just innovate in our own way to find ways for children to learn how to read. We will create our own reading materials. IDI-01*

*I have a desired activity but the materials are not available, so I would look for alternatives on the internet. FGD-02*

*So, look for alternatives, be resourceful, that's probably it. Being flexible. FGD-04*

According to Schleicher (2018), resilience in education involves problem-solving, creativity, and adaptability in response to challenges. The Grade 2 teachers' approach of innovating and creating their own reading materials demonstrates their resourcefulness and adaptability. By finding alternative ways for learners to learn how to read, they show a commitment to the students' education despite limited resources.

Additionally, the importance of being flexible and adaptive, as stressed by the participants resonates with the notion of teacher resilience discussed by Blenkinsop et al., (2016). Resilient teachers possess a positive attitude and are open to change, enabling them to navigate challenges and find solutions effectively.

### **Seeking Guidance and Assistance**

*Seeking help from my colleagues, my master teachers and school principal in preparation and implementation of the schoolyard pedagogy. IDI-03*

*Connecting with other teachers who have implemented this schoolyard pedagogy or joined professional communities where I can share challenges and success stories. IDI-05*

*I seek the guidance of More Knowledgeable Others who can influence me, teach me strategies, and give me advice on enhancing the learners' reading skills. IDI-07*

The act of connecting with other teachers who have already implemented Schoolyard Pedagogy or joining professional communities, as mentioned by the participants fosters a sense of support and camaraderie. Such interactions provide opportunities for feedback and support, enabling teachers to learn from one another's experiences and overcome implementation issues effectively (Frielle, 2021).

Furthermore, it also highlighted the importance of seeking guidance from More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs) and underscores the importance of learning from experienced colleagues. As per Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, interactions with MKOs facilitate cognitive development and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills (Abatahi, 2017). By seeking advice and strategies from seasoned teachers, teachers enhance their instructional approaches and contribute to the improvement of students' reading skills.

### **Feedback and Responses from Students and Parents**

*I also seek feedback to my students regarding their experiences to gain a deeper understanding on how to the*

*challenges that may be faced and adapt the approach accordingly. IDI-03*

*Receiving a positive impact from students, parents and colleagues reinforce the impact of this schoolyard pedagogy. IDI-04*

*Listen to your students because they are the ones who know if they enjoyed the activities or encountered any difficulties. FGD-06*

The acknowledgment of receiving positive feedback and impact from students and parents serves as a motivating factor for teachers to continue using Schoolyard Pedagogy. Positive reinforcement from stakeholders reinforces the significance and relevance of the chosen approach, providing a sense of validation and encouragement for teachers (Deci & Ryan as cited by Pelletier et al., 2016). This aligns with the concept of self-determination theory, where the fulfillment of psychological needs, such as competence and relatedness, drives intrinsic motivation and commitment (Cherry, 2022).

Furthermore, listening to students and encouraging them to share their ideas and preferences, promotes a sense of agency and ownership over their learning experiences. This participatory approach aligns with the principles of student voice and agency, where learners are actively involved in shaping their educational journey (Katopodis, 2020).

### **Managing Time Wisely**

*Flexible scheduling to accommodate outdoor learning component, schedule have been adjust to allow dedicated time of the schoolyard. IDI-01*

*I try to simplify the activities for other subjects to allow more time for our outdoor activities on that day. FGD-02*

*We need to be conscious of time to ensure that it doesn't interfere with other subjects. FGD-05*

As highlighted by the participants responses, teachers recognize the need for effective time management to strike a balance between outdoor and experiential learning activities and core academic subjects. This aligns with research on the importance of time allocation and organization in maximizing learning opportunities (Meador, 2019).

Moreover, the emphasis on simplifying activities for other subjects during expanded face-to-face classes allows more time for outdoor activities, showcasing the adaptability and resourcefulness of teachers in ensuring sufficient opportunities for outdoor learning. Such flexible scheduling enables teachers to capitalize on the benefits of Schoolyard Pedagogy while maintaining a well-rounded curriculum (Daniel, 2021).

### **Emphasizing on Self-Motivation as a Coping Mechanism**

*When I see them improving, actively participating, it motivates me even more to continue implementing the program because many children are learning from it. IDI-03*





*I motivate myself by recognizing that the children or learners should have something to learn every day they are in school. IDI-04*

*When my learners are happy at the same time they are learning, especially when I hear them express their eagerness to play or learn outside the classroom, it motivates me. FGD-05*

Intrinsic motivation serves as a driving force that fuels teachers' commitment and dedication to making outdoor and experiential learning effective for their students (Neuhaus, 2022). The participants' reflection on the visible benefits and improvements in their learners' participation and learning progress reinforces the importance of personal conviction in sustaining the use of schoolyard pedagogy.

Similarly, focusing on the happiness and enthusiasm of their students during outdoor activities demonstrates the emotional connection teachers have with their students' engagement and joy in learning. This connection, in turn, motivates them to continue utilizing schoolyard pedagogy as a means to foster a positive learning environment (Keller et al., as cited in Dewaele et al., 2021).

#### **Emphasizing on Self-Care as a Coping Mechanism**

*We should also participate in activities that contribute to our physical well-being, such as exercise, zumba, engaging in our hobbies, and sports. IDI-02*

*I celebrate my achievements in simple ways, like eating out or getting a massage, to stay motivated for the following week. FGD-02*

*I also allocate time for myself. Although I work hard most of the time, there are moments when I set aside tasks to recharge and avoid burnout. FGD-04*

The participants recognize the demanding nature of incorporating outdoor and experiential learning activities into their curriculum and the potential impact it can have on their physical and emotional well-being. The participants' suggestion to engage in self-care activities, such as exercise, hobbies, and outdoor adventures, aligns with research on the positive effects of physical activity and leisure on reducing stress and improving overall well-being (Parkhurst, 2021). By prioritizing self-care, teachers can recharge themselves and maintain their energy and enthusiasm in the classroom.

#### **Utilizing Differentiated Activities in the Implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy**

*I consider diverse needs and abilities of my students when selecting schoolyard activities. IDI-01*

*I try to provide differentiated activities to meet their individual needs. FGD-01*

*Before choosing activities, I assess their reading level so that I know what type of activities I need to provide. FGD-02*

Research supports the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in meeting students' diverse learning needs. According to Tomlinson and Moon (2013), differentiated instruction involves modifying the content, process, and products of learning to address individual students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. By providing differentiated activities, teachers can cater to various learning styles, learning speeds, and levels of comprehension, thus promoting active engagement and optimal learning outcomes.

The responses of the participants highlight the teachers' commitment to selecting schoolyard activities that can be differentiated. This approach aligns with the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which emphasizes providing multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement to accommodate learners' variability (Meyer et al., 2014). By implementing UDL principles in schoolyard pedagogy, teachers ensure that all students can access and participate in the learning activities effectively.

#### **Utilizing Additional Resources**

*I search for additional resources that can support implementation of schoolyard pedagogy. IDI-01*

*I would ask for assistance from others, such as the administration, because they also understand that the school cannot shoulder everything. IDI-06*

*The teacher should know how to find ways to ask other teachers, seek support from parents, or look for alternative materials. FGD-02*

The responses of the participants exemplify the proactive approach of Grade 2 teachers in seeking support when resources are lacking. This aligns with the concept of teacher agency, which emphasizes teachers' ability to take initiative, make decisions, and seek resources to support their instructional practices (Arnsten, 2021). By exercising agency and resourcefulness, teachers can effectively adapt to challenging situations and ensure that schoolyard pedagogy remains a viable and enriching approach for enhancing reading skills.

Furthermore, collaboration and partnership with stakeholders play a significant role in providing additional resources. Seeking assistance from fellow teachers, parents, and school administration fosters a sense of collective responsibility and support for the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy. This collaborative effort is aligned with the concept of distributed leadership, where various stakeholders contribute to decision-making and resource allocation to achieve common goals (Academy, 2022). Through such collaborative efforts, teachers can access a broader range of resources, further enhancing the effectiveness of schoolyard pedagogy.

**Table 3**  
**Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of Grade 2 Teachers in the Implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy to Enhance Reading Skills during In-Person Classes**

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Provide Reading Resources and Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● recommend the need to have ready-to-use reading materials</li> <li>● utilize ready-to-use materials as a great help in the teacher’s preparation for schoolyard activities</li> <li>● provide materials as a means to expedite the smooth implementation of activities</li> <li>● provide lesson plans as a resource for implementation of schoolyard pedagogy</li> <li>● Sustain the schoolyard pedagogy implementation</li> <li>● provide additional reading materials especially for the learners under Kindergarten to Grade 3</li> <li>● integrate technology in the implementation of schoolyard activities</li> </ul>
Conduct Training on the Implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● provide of workshops and seminars on schoolyard pedagogy</li> <li>● conduct training on the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy for teachers who are not familiar with the approach as a means with the necessary knowledge and competencies</li> <li>● suggest to DepEd the conduct specific training on various strategies in implementing schoolyard pedagogy</li> </ul>
Evaluate and Improve One’s Teaching Prowess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● take the time to evaluate oneself to improve one's prowess in teaching strategies</li> <li>● be flexible to further improve schoolyard pedagogy implementation</li> <li>● engage in new activities to stay relevant</li> <li>● find ways to improve ones’ teaching approach</li> <li>● seek new knowledge to stay relevant</li> <li>● embrace the need to learn new things without fear</li> </ul>
Integrate Optimism in Facilitating Schoolyard Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● approach teaching challenges with a growth mindset</li> <li>● consider difficulties as an avenue to improve one’s teaching</li> <li>● strive to remain optimistic despite having problems</li> <li>● be optimistic and realistic in managing one’s expectations</li> <li>● keep on utilizing schoolyard pedagogy until one can get it right</li> <li>● identify solutions to problems</li> </ul>
Incorporate Passion in Facilitating Schoolyard Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● maintain passion and dedication in one's teaching profession</li> <li>● harness the power of schoolyard pedagogy through maintaining one's passion for teaching</li> <li>● be passionate in all aspects of teaching</li> <li>● keep the passion alive despite burnouts and exhaustion</li> </ul>
Encourage the Use of Schoolyard Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● share the positive effect of schoolyard pedagogy with the students.</li> <li>● testify the effectiveness of schoolyard pedagogy as an approach to teaching reading</li> <li>● promote the benefits of schoolyard pedagogy as an approach to teaching reading</li> </ul>

**Provide Reading Resources and Materials**

*It would be great if they could support teachers by providing ready-to-use materials that can be easily utilized. IDI-04*  
*DepEd should consider the long term and sustainability and maintenance of the outdoor learning class. IDI-03*  
*DepEd should provide additional ready-to-use materials so that teachers can just use them without having to prepare. IDI-06*

Supporting the call for essential resources, the participants emphasize the importance of providing reading materials to teachers, especially for reading-based activities, to facilitate the smooth implementation of schoolyard pedagogy. Adlit (2018) underline the value of providing diverse and engaging reading materials to enhance students' motivation and comprehension skills. By ensuring teachers have access to a range of appropriate reading resources, the potential for creating dynamic and enriching reading experiences during schoolyard pedagogy sessions can be maximized.



### **Conduct Training on the Implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy**

*Workshops, seminars, and ongoing support should be provided to ensure that teachers feel confident and competent in implementing Schoolyard Pedagogy. IDI-01*

*Training should be conducted for teachers because not all teachers are knowledgeable or aware of the significance or importance of schoolyard pedagogy. IDI-02*

*DepEd should provide trainings and workshops and seminars to ensure that teachers are equipped with knowledge and competent in implementing the schoolyard pedagogy. IDI-03*

Research conducted by Hattie, Fisher, and Frey (2017) highlights the influence of effective professional development on teacher confidence and competence. Teachers who receive specialized training and support are more likely to implement innovative instructional methods, such as schoolyard pedagogy, with greater effectiveness. In the context of reading instruction, studies by Deci and Ryan (2017) have demonstrated that experiential learning in outdoor settings can significantly enhance students' vocabulary acquisition and comprehension skills.

Furthermore, the importance of providing ongoing support and upskilling opportunities for teachers is reinforced by the work of Waheed (2022). In her research, she emphasizes that one-off workshops may not lead to sustained changes in teaching practices, but rather continuous professional development is essential to ensure lasting impact. By offering seminars and workshops focused on the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy, teachers can continually refine their skills and adapt instructional approaches to meet the evolving needs of their students.

### **Evaluate and Improve One's Self**

*Then take time to evaluate what worked well and what's need and use this to improve your teaching strategies. IDI-03*

*For me, my advice is that as teachers, we should always find ways to better our teaching. FGD-03*

*Do not be afraid to learn new things especially if it greatly affects the learners just like the implementation of schoolyard pedagogy. FGD-05*

The suggestion to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches aligns with research by Coghlan & Brannick, as cited by Farell (2022) on the significance of teacher self-assessment in professional growth. By critically examining their teaching strategies, teachers can identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to optimize student learning outcomes in the context of schoolyard pedagogy.

The need for flexibility in schoolyard pedagogy implementation is supported by the work of Moore (2022). She outlined the adaptable teaching approaches which are essential to meet the diverse needs and challenges of students effectively. Embracing flexibility allows teachers to respond to unexpected

situations and optimize learning opportunities in outdoor settings.

### **Integrate Optimism in Facilitating Schoolyard Pedagogy**

*Approach the challenges with a growth mindset, recognizing that obstacles and setbacks are opportunities for learning and improve and improvement. IDI-01*

*Let's not think that it's difficult, we can do it as long as we want to and we can be even better at it. IDI-02*

*Then be positive, always strive to be optimistic in every situation because, like I said, problems will always be problems unless you take action. FGD-06*

Research by Lu (2021) supports the role of optimism in promoting teacher resilience. A growth-oriented mindset encourages teachers to view setbacks as opportunities for learning and improvement. This optimistic approach enables teachers to persist in the face of challenges and continuously strive to enhance their instructional practices in schoolyard pedagogy.

Moreover, the positive attitude advocated by the participants fosters an optimistic classroom environment that can have a significant impact on students' motivation and engagement. Studies revealed that teachers' optimism and positive reinforcement influence students' attitudes toward learning and academic self-efficacy (Lu, 2021). By modeling optimism and embracing challenges with a positive attitude, teachers can inspire students to approach reading activities with enthusiasm and confidence.

### **Incorporate Passion in Facilitating Schoolyard Pedagogy**

*Maintain your passion for teaching because your dedication and effort are making a difference in the lives of your students. IDI-03*

*Maintain your passion for teaching and the believe in the power of your schoolyard pedagogy to enhance the reading skills and then stay resilient in the face of challenges. IDI-05*

*Always remember to be passionate and keep in mind the reason why you became a teacher. FGD-05*

Research by Osika et al., (2022) supports the impact of positive emotions, such as passion, on learning and motivation. When teachers approach schoolyard pedagogy with enthusiasm and love for the subject, they foster a positive learning environment where learners feel encouraged and supported to explore reading activities with eagerness.

Moreover, the suggestions emphasizing the role of teachers' beliefs and attitudes in influencing learners' learning outcomes align with the research of OECD (2019). When teachers maintain a passion for teaching and believe in the power of schoolyard pedagogy, they instill confidence in their students, leading to increased engagement and improved reading skills.

### **Encourage the Use of Schoolyard Pedagogy**

*I want to share what schoolyard pedagogy is, how it works, what activities can be done, and what positive effects it can have on our learners. IDI-01*



*I will encourage other teachers to use schoolyard pedagogy in their schools. IDI-03*

*Teachers should promote the benefits and make sure that the necessary resources are available to further encourage teachers. FGD-06*

Research by Arkansas State University (2017) emphasizes the importance of teacher collaboration in creating positive and transformative learning experiences. When teachers share best practices, strategies, and successful experiences with one another, they create a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within the school community. This collaboration enhances teachers' professional development and effectiveness in implementing innovative pedagogical approaches like schoolyard pedagogy.

Furthermore, the recommendations align with the research of Bouchrika (2022) on promoting the benefits of educational practices. By actively promoting the positive outcomes of schoolyard pedagogy, teachers not only encourage their colleagues to adopt the approach but also foster a culture of support and openness to innovative teaching methods within the educational institution.

#### **IMPLICATION FOR TEACHING PRACTICE**

The utilization of Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes has both benefits and drawbacks for Grade 2 teachers. This study effectively uncovered the diverse perspectives Grade 2 teachers concerning the issues of utilization of Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes and the effects on learners' educational processes. Their overall perspectives were summarized by the continuum, which displayed the broad themes established from the diverse responses of the teachers. Furthermore, this research study provided an opportunity for all the parents, teachers, students, and education personnel to understand the different standpoints of Grade 2 teachers regarding the utilization of Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes.

In the light of conclusions of the study, teacher may provide alternative activities that can improve students' reading skills despite the limitations and challenges in its implementation. Moreover, they may seek professional relationship towards their peers, master teachers, and school principal to learn and share teaching materials, strategies, and best practices, enhancing the quality of reading activities in the schoolyard. Likewise, it is imperative for the teachers to seek feedback from students and parents into the effectiveness of the teaching strategies employed to tailor their approach to meet the unique needs and preferences of their learners. Most importantly, teachers should maintain genuine enthusiasm and dedication for outdoor and experiential learning to inspire students to actively engage in the learning process and develop a genuine interest in reading.

#### **CONCLUSION**

After a protracted period of learning at home during school closures learners are returning to the physical classroom and

adjusting to the new routine. Result from the prolonged school closures has caused unprecedented difficulties, notably in terms of their reading skills. Teachers' on the other hand went through a lot of adjustments to enhance learners' reading skills during in-person classes through the use of Schoolyard Pedagogy. The results of this study revealed the challenges and difficulties in the implementation of Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in in-person classes, as well as their coping mechanisms and insights into the phenomena.

I opted to investigate thoroughly the experiences of Grade 2 teachers' utilization of Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes because this phenomenon impacts everyone in the education field specially after long school closure due to the pandemic. Personally, as a teacher who utilize Schoolyard Pedagogy, I encountered several challenges regarding its implementation. This issue left me to reflect on other teachers' perspectives and experiences of other teachers in the utilization of Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes.

Throughout the conduct of this study, I became aware of the extent of the researcher's preparation and duty in carrying out the thesis while adhering to safety standards, appropriate precautions, and ethical concerns. This encounter needed patience and sacrifice in order to collect all of the important data that would support my research. With the assistance extended by my adviser, I was able to complete this research successfully. Furthermore, this endeavor enabled me to become aware of the experiences of the Grade 2 teachers in the utilization of Schoolyard Pedagogy to enhance reading skills during in-person classes.

As a teacher, I could say that there is really a need to exert much effort and willingness to implement various strategies including schoolyard pedagogy in helping alleviating the learners' reading skills as a result of the learning gap caused by the pandemic. Furthermore, it is very important for teachers to have genuine passion and enthusiasm for outdoor and experiential learning to inspire learners to actively participate, develop a love for reading and embrace learning with enthusiasm.

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