

## Exploring the Lived Experiences of Teachers in the ‘Drop Everything and Read’ Implementation

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the experiences of teachers involved in the Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R.) program in the Educational landscape of Cantahay and Campoyong Elementary Schools situated in Guiuan, Eastern Samar. Using narrative inquiry and semi-structured interviews with five (5) purposively selected reading teachers, the research generated primary themes related to innovative strategies, implementation challenges, and coping mechanisms. Findings reveal a spectrum of experiences, highlighting the need for differentiated instruction and alternative resources to engage reluctant readers. Challenges such as insufficient reading materials and student motivation are evident, prompting teachers to employ collaborative and encouraging strategies. The study advocates for increased support and resource provision within the educational system to enhance the effectiveness of the D.E.A.R. initiative.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In an ever-changing world, it is more important that our nation's youth are prepared to have enough knowledge and skills to solve problems, think critically, and make quick responsible decisions (Vithanage, 2020).

Education is a way of serving knowledge and preparing others intellectually to mature in life. It is one way to gain information, skill, and ethics (Dictionary.com, 2023). Education seeks to address ignorance while promoting moral values in society. This is the basis of lifelong learning, and because of education, people grow more independent as they mature and become aware of the opportunities in society. Education is crucial for combating poverty as it makes people live better lives and be more productive. This is the key to opening to the different job opportunities and succeeding in life (Target Study, 2024).

In addition, the global literacy is 86% which means that 774 million people lack the ability to read or write. Illiteracy is one of the largest social changes facing society, with millions of children and young adults struggling to read. Moreover, 258 million children are not literate as of 2018 (Global Reading Challenge, 2022). Tiffany P. Hogan the director of the speech and language literacy lab at the MGH Institute of Health Professions in Boston, reports that twice as many students as before the pandemic have been identified as being at high risk for reading difficulties in some high poverty schools. Students from low-income families, those with disabilities, and those who do not speak English fluently have fallen behind the most. The results of national and international exams in 2019 revealed a decline in reading in America as well as growing differences between high and low achievers (Goldstein, 2022).

India tops the list with an average weekly reading time of 10 hours and 42 minutes. Thailand is the second highest reading Nation with an average of nine hours and twenty-four minutes per week spent reading. China comes in third place with eight hours per person per week, while the Philippines comes in fourth place with an average reading time of seven hours and thirty-six minutes per week (Teotia, 2023).

There are many questions arise when it comes to education, such as where the funding for the program will come from, what curriculum should be followed, and even issues with which books should and should not allowed. People are interested in education, and they are interested in it in different ways. They are also interested in the various facets of education. Some of the prevalent problems in education are inequity in the educational system, issues with adaptive learning, and standardized testing exist as does this their appearance (Albritton et al., 2023).

It is important to note that, one of the problems in the school system is students struggling with reading. You may experience difficulties with writing, spelling, fluency, and understanding if you struggle with reading (Oxford, 2019). Furthermore, one factor that leads to reading incompetence is education. Sense to reading is crucial to learning, there has been a lot of effort put out to help kids become better readers. However, there are still issues with reading, and one of the teacher's responsibilities is to help children acquire the language (Gedik, 2022).

Reading is a way to make sense of a recent text by using words and symbols to describe and grasp it. Reading is essential to human life. For example, reading informational texts broadens our minds since it introduces us to new ideas, concepts, and vocabulary. Students should learn how to read fluently because it makes understanding concepts in all subject areas easier. Reading involves using our vision to interpret written symbols – letters, punctuation, and spaces – and transforming them into meaningful words, sentences, and paragraphs. We also use our brain to read, which can be silent or aloud (Definition of Reading According to Experts, 2017). According to Panjaitan et al., (2022) implied by using trainings, authors can leverage their readers to convey their message through words. In addition, Cline et al., (2006) suggested that “reading is decoding and understanding written text.”

The purpose of this study was to delve into the real-world experiences of teachers who have been participating in the initiative of the Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) program. This study aimed to obtain insights on the effectiveness, challenges, and possible enhancements of Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) implementation by examining their lived experiences. In order to improve student literacy development, educational policies and practices can be informed by an understanding of how teachers include Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) into their teaching practice. In order to maximize the implementation of Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R), this research were gathered participants' perspectives, strategies, and recommendations using qualitative method such as interview specifically an in-depth interview. The ultimate goal of this research was to improve Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) programs and encourage reading engagement and literacy development in learning environments.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### ***Related Literature***

The “Drop Everything And Read” program, which highlights they joy and enthusiasm of reading, originated with Beverly Cleary, who is well-known for her bestselling books about Ramona Quimby’s adventure. The “Drop Everything And Read” program can be used anywhere, at any time, for any purpose, including reading aloud to friends in a circle or as a class. You must put down your current task in order to “read” (Reading Rockets, 2024). Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) time is a scheduled period in the school calendar where students and teachers’ drop everything and read. D.E.A.R. stands “Drop Everything And Read”, an across the country reading campaign that encourages families to make reading a priority in their lives.

The Drop Everything And Read program, which is component of the MATATAG curriculum, was put into place to enhance the quality education. Furthermore, on January 12, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced “Catch up Fridays”, which will emphasize Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R). Catch up Fridays will take place every Friday; the National Reading Program (NRP) will focus up the first half of the day's schedule, with the second half dedicated to values, health, and peace education along with the “Homeroom

Guidance Program.” Schools can use a variety of strategies to implement National Reading Month, like “Drop Everything And Read,” which allows students to read any book they choose (Bautista, 2023).

In relation to this, Manila Bulletin (2024) stated that Drop Everything And Read is the emphasis of the entire month of January. This is also a component of the National Reading Month activities, which aims to improve reading abilities and foster a love of reading.

The increasing number of the students who are not able to read or having a difficult time in reading, the Department of Education launched various programs such as “Drop Everything And Read” to help students learn how to read and comprehend what they are reading.

### ***Related Studies***

Teachers should supervise students’ actions and facilitate the act of modelling reading in the classroom during the Drop Everything And Read exercise (Rambe et al., 2023)

McDowall (2022), implied that teachers are essential in helping students reading abilities to grow. Teachers who enjoy reading themselves can help their pupils develop as readers by modeling the skills, values and knowledge that come with reading. Teachers teaching how to read and teacher also teach them how to be readers.

According to Syafira and Dafit’s (2022), they stated that, elementary schools’ students’ engagement is greatly influenced by their teachers’ roles as creators, facilitators, motivators, and assessor. Teacher should not only be a facilitator but also a motivator. As Syamsi et al., (2022) stated, the instructor serves as a friend by providing information to the students regarding the books they have read. The students should not have their reading interrupted during Drop Everything And Read activity. Teachers assists students in the reading process by providing motivation. When a student is talking and disrupting another during Drop Everything And Read activity, the teacher can take notes and discuss the problem when the activity is finished.

Moreover, Cox (2014), as cited in Starke (2020) provided advice on how to inspired students to love reading. To motivate students, teachers could begin by reading aloud to them, modelling reading for them, emphasizing the value of reading, and letting them select the books they want read. Added to that, teachers must demonstrate to their students that reading is fun if they want their students to desire to read as well.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This qualitative inquiry is underpinned by relevant theories to establish the research methodology and objectives clearly.

#### ***Self-determination theory***

To help define connections of how teachers motivate their students during the Drop Everything And Read activity, this research anchored on the theory of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 1985). In order for students to be motivated to read, intrinsic motivation can be facilitated through feelings of

competence and the sense of autonomy, as well as choice and the opportunity for self-direction. This seeks to explain how being self-determined impact motivation. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation, behaviors are performed to obtain an externally imposed reward. This theory is relevant to this study, it will help the teachers on how they motivate their students intrinsically and extrinsically during the implementation of the Drop Everything And Read activity. Reading motivation in students can be fostered through intrinsic motivation, which is enhanced by choice, autonomy, competence, and the sensation of self-direction. This aims to clarify how motivation is affected by self-determination. However, extrinsic motivation refers to actions take in order to receive a reward that is imposed from the outside.

This idea is pertinent to the research because it will assist educators in providing both internal and external motivation for their students when implementing the Drop Everything And Read activity.

### *Self - Efficacy Theory*

According to Bandura (1977) a Canadian-American psychologist and Stanford University professor, originally used the term "self-efficacy". Self-efficacy theory describes a person's confidence in their ability to carry out the actions required to achieve particular performance outcomes. It is a belief that one can shape circumstances and exert control over one's surroundings. Furthermore, it focuses on a person's belief in their capabilities to achieve specific goals or perform certain tasks. In the context of learning, it refers to a student's (or teacher's) confidence in their ability to succeed in reading tasks. Students who believe they can read well are more likely to be driven to read, to continue with it when things go tough, and set high standards for themselves. They have faith in their capacity to overcome challenges and advance their reading abilities (Garido, 2023).

Moreover, Bandura (1977) cited in Garido (2023) proposed main sources that influence self-efficacy beliefs. The first one is the Mastery of Experiences, students who successfully completing reading tasks, even small wins, and builds confidence. The second, is the vicarious Experiences this means that observing others succeed in reading (e.g., seeing peers read fluently) can boost a student's belief in their own abilities. Furthermore, Bandura (1997) also includes Social Persuasion as a main source that influence self-efficacy, it pertains to positive encouragement, praise for effort, and teachers expressing confidence in a student's abilities can significantly impact self-efficacy. Lastly, Physiological and Affective States it defines as feeling calm, focused, and prepared for reading tasks can contribute to a higher sense of self-efficacy. Dinther et al., (2011), conducted a study between the relationship of education and self-efficacy and they found out that self-efficacy is related to things like the techniques students use, the objective they set for themselves, and for academic success. They also found out that students who have higher level of self-efficacy may also be more organized and better academically.

By understanding self-efficacy theory, teachers can create a more supportive and motivating learning environment in the implementation of the

Drop Everything And Read program that empowers students to love reading and develop their reading.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

In this study, the researchers utilized a qualitative research design. According to Yilmaz (2013), qualitative research design is an approach that is emergent, inductive, interpretive, and naturalistic. It aims to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world by studying people, cases, phenomena, social situations, and processes in their natural settings. Specifically, the researchers used the narrative inquiry research design. Narrative inquiry research design is used to examine teachers' perspectives and personal narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Through this research design, researchers delved into their life experiences through thick rich stories and gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse narratives and experiences recounted by teachers as they navigate the implementation of the Drop Everything And Read initiative. By delving into these stories, researchers can identify patterns, challenges, and effective strategies, thereby offering valuable insights to inform future educational practices and improve the implementation of similar initiatives.

### ***Research Locale***

This study conducted at Cantahay Elementary School, headed by school principal and Campoyong Elementary School headed by a school head. There are ten (10) total number of teachers in Cantahay Elementary School and twelve (12) total number of teachers in Campoyong Elementary School. The choice of the research setting is due to researchers' deep concern on the lived experiences of teachers on the implementation of Drop Everything And Read; on what approaches and strategies they employ, the challenges they faced during D.E.A.R, and their coping mechanisms.

### ***Participants of the Study***

The participants selected for this study consisted of reading teachers who have been purposively chosen based on a set of criteria. To ensure a thorough exploration of meaning and a rich source of experiences in this study, the researchers selected 5 participants who are participating in the Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) initiative. Teachers who did not meet the predefined standards or criteria set by the researchers were excluded from participation in the study. This rigorous selection process ensures that the participants possess the necessary qualifications and expertise to provide valuable insights into the research topic. The participants answered the interview questions that the researchers gave them, which provided the information that the researchers needed.

### ***Sampling Technique***

In this study, the researchers employed purposive sampling, a deliberate technique utilized to select a specific group of individuals or units for examination. Unlike random sampling, which selects participants by chance,

purposive sampling involves intentionally selecting participants based on predefined criteria or characteristics. This method allows researchers to target individuals who possess particular characteristics or experiences that are important for what the research is trying to find out (Coyne, 1997). As highlighted by Team (2023), purposive sampling offers several advantages, including the ability to carefully select participants who meet the established standards or criteria set by the researchers. By utilizing this sampling method, the researchers can ensure that the selected participants are most suited to provide valuable insights and data pertinent to the study's objectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Theme 1: Crafting Reading Routine: Innovative Strategies in D.E.A.R Initiative*

In an ever-changing pace of educational practices, the Drop Everything And Read initiative stands out as a transformative way to foster the love of reading and develop the reading proficiency skills of the learners. Providing time for students to select their own books to read, and bring books they want.

The Department of Education implemented a memorandum 0051 S.2024, it is the implementation of Catch-up Fridays focused on Drop Everything And Read. Drop Everything And Read program is a new intervention to address the poor reading competence level of the students. Moreover, through the 2011 memorandum No. 244 S.2011, November was proclaimed National Reading Month each year, and November 25, 2011, was set as the Nationwide Araw ng Pagbasa, and one of the activities during this month is the Drop Everything And Read program. Additionally, Gatchalian suggested that November should be designated as National Reading Month in accordance with senate bill, 475, which would be observed with nationwide reading initiatives and activities aimed at fostering a passion for reading among students enrolled in basic education programs and their communities. Moreover, teacher plays a significant role in guiding students reading development by employing effective strategies and approaches which can foster a love of reading, and enhancing of reading comprehension.

Teachers demonstrated the teaching strategies/approaches during Drop Everything And Read initiative and how important the initiative to the learning process and may have an impact to the reading skills of the learners.

An information from the Participants claimed the various approaches or strategies during D.E.A.R activity saying:

*"Since the pupils have different reading proficiency levels, I have employed varied strategies depending on the group of learners. For example, with the advanced and fast readers, I have allowed them to have an independent reading choice, wherein they get to choose their own reading materials based on their interests and reading level. Whereas with the struggling and beginning readers, I employed the Modelling and Read Aloud strategies where I get to pick the reading material and read it in front of these learners. Since the primary goal of Drop Everything And Read is to promote independent silent reading and encourage learners to develop love for reading, these strategies were, I guess, the best in our level". (P1)*

*"In my class, since I am a grade 5 teacher, and at the same time an adviser, the first thing that I have done, to implement this DEAR is first the "Diagnostic Test". In reading, we have to diagnose which level they belong. The first thing we do, when the class starts, we have this tool the PHIL-IRI. The PHIL-IRI method or strategy there is a called a GST (Group Screening Test). In this GST, all pupils are tested to measure and identify which level the pupil he or she belongs. So, when the reading level of the student are already identified, that's the time that we use the different approaches just like groupings. For example, if the students are in the frustration level, we focus on them. If it is instructional or independent reader, I utilize them as their peer-teachers. So that they can help my frustration reader pupils." (P4)*

By using these techniques and strategies, teachers can give their students an enjoyable and enriching reading experience. The Drop Everything And Read activity can be a effective way to encourage a love of reading, enhance literacy skills, and build a feeling of unity and connection among students. To support this claims, Cox (2014), as cited in Starke (2020) provided advice on how to inspired students to love reading. To motivate students, teachers could begin by reading aloud to them, modelling reading for them, emphasizing the value of reading, and letting them select the books they want read. Added to that, teachers must demonstrate to their students that reading is fun if they want their students to desire to read as well.

During reading session, students can decide what books they read and the books they are most comfortable with. And the environment inside of the classroom during reading is conducive for the students to possess reading skills, its one method of getting them interested in the text.

As the Participant 2 claimed:

*"Setting a routine during Fridays we give different kinds of activities to pupils that will help them creating a sense of structured and consistency to make them easier. Providing a choice giving the pupils the opportunity to choose the reading materials. Creating a comfortable environment – to make sure that the classroom is conducive to learners that will help them enhancing the reading abilities of pupils and make them comfortable. Encouraging reflection this may encourage to reflect the reading experiences by writing their journal, sentences or paragraph. Celebrating reading achievement – this will help pupils motivate and inspire them to continue engaging reading" (P2)*

### ***Theme 2: Challenges in implementing Drop Everything And Read***

Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) implementation can be difficult, particularly in terms of making sure that students are motivated and assisted in their reading. Giving struggling readers just the proper amount of support while letting more proficient readers take charge of their reading is one of the biggest problems. Some students might not have the motivation to read, particularly if they don't think like the reading materials.

Implementing Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) can be challenging especially when it comes to ensuring that children are inspired to read and receiving support. One of the main issues is enabling more adept readers take control of their reading while providing struggling readers with just the right amount of assistance. Some students may lack the drive to read, especially if they don't think reading is vital or don't find the subject matter to be engaging.

*"First, catering to a variety of reading levels and interests within the classroom is difficult. Some students finish their books quickly while others struggle. Second, providing a quiet environment for reading is challenging, especially with these younger pupils. Lastly, there are some unmotivated readers who do not enjoy reading or maybe they find it difficult and engaging these pupils in reading is a challenging."* (P1)

One of the Challenges of teachers in implementing Drop Everything And Read activity is the struggle to find the suited Reading activities of the students in line with the curriculum and standardized testing.

*"One of the main challenges faced during the implementation of Drop Everything And Read is finding the time in an already packed schedule to dedicate to independent reading. With mandates for standardized testing and curriculum requirements, teachers often struggle to find time for activities that are not directly linked to this assessment. However, it is important for educators to recognize the value of independent reading and find ways to incorporate it into their daily schedule."* (P2)

In relation to the challenges, the Lack and Insufficient of reading materials is one of the challenges faced by the teachers during D.E.A.R session.

*"Insufficient supply of reading materials and pupils' lack of comprehension."* (P3)

*"Insufficient supply of reading materials."* (P5)

The Covid-19 Pandemic posed a significant challenge to teachers worldwide, especially when it came to preserving and enhancing pupils reading proficiency. The first impact was the closing of schools, which caused disruptions to the learning schedule and limited opportunities for students to interact with peers and teachers. This decrease motivation and engagement may negatively impact students' ability to love reading. It brought a challenge to the teachers on the reading proficiency levels of the learners. Students have lack of motivation in reading during online learning, which results in difficulties in understanding the text during reading.

As Participant 4 claimed the challenge of Covid 19 Pandemic to the teachers saying:

*"The first challenge, our level of reading of pupils have drop especially during the pandemic. Because in the midst of pandemic there was face-to-face classes, of course only the parents are attending to, guiding their children. And I think there were no reading sessions in their houses. That's why, if the pupils are frustrated the more the teacher are frustrated also especially during last year. We are expecting that grade 5 students read and understand and comprehend to specific lessons or passages intended to grade level. But we are frustrated because some of them, 50% are below their reading level. So, that is the most challenging."* (P4)

### ***Theme 3: Coping Mechanism of Teachers during Drop Everything And Read***

The teacher is passionate about reading and wants to instill that love in their students. To make reading more engaging, they used innovative strategies such as peer reading and peer tutoring. This helped students learn at their own pace and work together.

As the Participants stated:

*"In order to cope with the challenges and difficulties in implementing this reading activity, some of the strategies I also employed was peer reading, where I allowed pupils*

*to read silently or read aloud to a partner, preferably one step ahead to their level. Another strategy was peer tutoring where one pupil will serve as a teacher during the reading session" (P1)*

*"To cope with the challenges and difficulties in implementing D.E.A.R activity, I employ peer reading."(P2)*

*"I just cope up according to what should I do relevant to the problem I should resolve related to Drop Everything And Read." (P3)*

Even when faced with challenges, the teacher remained determined. They sought advice from experienced educators and kept improving their teaching methods. Ultimately, the teacher's satisfaction lies in witnessing their students' progress and growth, recognizing that every step, no matter how small, is a significant achievement.

As the Participants Claimed:

*"As a teacher, since our passion is teaching and knowing they are learning it is already our happiness and it is already our achievement. And for me, even if it is hard to teach children how to read, I'm still happy at the end of the day." (P4)*

*"Seek mentorship from an experienced teacher, and keep coping up with the challenges and difficulties." (P5)*

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study delved into the multifaceted lived experiences of teachers as they navigated the Initiation of the "Drop Everything And Read" (D.E.A.R) initiative within the educational landscape of Cantahay Elementary School and Campoyong Elementary School, situated in Guiuan, Eastern Samar. This study illuminated the nuanced dynamics shaping this educational practice within this specific regional context.

The data revealed by this study that teachers possess both similar and diverse experiences regarding the strategies and approaches employed, the challenges encountered, and the coping mechanisms utilized during the D.E.A.R. initiative. This study highlights the significance of differentiated instruction, peer support, and positive reinforcement in mitigating these challenges and fostering a positive and engaging reading environment. Teachers were able to overcome challenges such as limited resources, lack of student motivation, and interest. The use of audio-visual aids, peer support, and a student-centered approach fostered a more engaging and inclusive reading experience, ultimately contributing to a positive and rewarding learning environment for all students.

### ***Recommendations***

From the evidence of the results and discussion drawn in this study, recommendations were made for future research or for future researchers who desire to explore this more deeply.

1. There should have additional reading materials for students which include fiction, non-fiction or other genres.
2. The Department of Education should continue to support the D.E.A.R. program and provide sufficient reading materials for its effective implementation.

3. There should have additional allowances or reading learning resources such as televisions, printer, and band paper for printing for teachers.
4. Learners must be guided by the teacher during D.E.A.R. time to stay motivated and enhance their reading skills.
5. Additional research studies on the effectiveness of the D.E.A.R initiative should be conducted in other contexts.

### **FURTHER STUDY**

For future research, it is recommended to include a larger and more diverse group of participants, such as students, parents, and administrators, to gain a more holistic view of the D.E.A.R. implementation. Comparative studies across regions, longitudinal research, and student-centered approaches can further enrich the findings. Additionally, exploring the integration of technology, conducting intervention-based studies, and analyzing education policies may help enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the program.

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