

ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE OF KINDERGARTEN PUPILS THROUGH THE LENS OF TEACHERS

Marjorie C. Gabañete

marjorie.gabate@deped.gov.ph

Teacher III, Mabunao Elementary School, Panabo City 8105, Davao Del Norte, Philippines

Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of kindergarten teachers in teaching alphabet knowledge to the learners in District 1, Division of Panabo City. It further investigated their insights that were drawn from the findings of this study. I employed the qualitative – phenomenological study of which primary instrument of data gathering was through in- depth interview. Major findings revealed that when participants were asked about their experiences as kindergarten teachers in teaching the alphabet knowledge, and after a careful analysis of their responses, the following themes were noted: Development of Reading Skills, Promotion of Writing Skills, and Introduction to Letter Sounds. Furthermore, after a thorough analysis, when the participants were asked on their insights from the experiences that can be shared to others in terms of their experiences in teaching the alphabet knowledge, they mentioned various themes. After a thorough analysis of the transcription, the following themes emerged: Intensifying Literacy Skills Development, Selecting Appropriate Teaching Pedagogy, and Improving Learners' Academic Outcomes. The findings imply that accurate assessments of student progress are crucial because they enable teachers to detect particular gaps in students' reading knowledge and integrate this information into their lessons. To better understand how preschool teachers, make such judgements, it was necessary to evaluate what they knew about their children' unique literacy development and to identify the types of information they utilize to guide their thinking. Further, it is also implied that alphabetical awareness was demonstrated in the writing skills of children to have an observable increase.

Keywords: *alphabet knowledge, kindergarten pupils, phenomenology, Panabo City, Philippines*

The Problem and Its Setting

“Children who do not know the alphabet when they enter kindergarten are behind in reading by the end of kindergarten.”
– Child Up Early Learning Quotes

Children acquire the ability to identify and name both upper- and lowercase letters as their understanding of the alphabet develops. They also come to understand that each letter has a certain sound connected with it. Early writing for children often begins with scribbling and creating markings, then moves on to drawing, and finally, to the formation of letters. Reading issues are always caused by an inability to correlate letters and sounds, and children who have trouble learning to read may be easily identified.

According to Clark (2007) as cited by Ruiz-Esteban et al. (2020), a lifetime of challenges may lie ahead for young people all over the world if they do not master their gross motor development by the age of five. Therefore, the development of children's gross motor skills is very important; nonetheless, the majority of preschool instructors undervalue its significance in relation to their students' alphabet knowledge. Further, Steen (2011) mentioned that children who are about to start kindergarten take on new responsibilities. Children who are not mentally, socially, or physically prepared for kindergarten run the risk of not being able to achieve academic criteria, including the need that they know their alphabet.difficulties

In a similar vein, the majority of children entering kindergarten in the Philippines have difficulty learning their alphabet, as well as the sound associated with each letter, combining sounds, and ultimately reading words. In addition, the teachers are aware that these youngsters have difficulty recognizing individual letters, which has a direct influence on the children's capacities in the areas of reading and writing. Findings indicate that improvised instructional material is more effective than the traditional visual and auditory activities in teaching kindergarten students about alphabetic knowledge when a multisensory approach is used in conjunction with "powdered eggshells" as a versatile instructional aid in teaching

alphabetic knowledge. This approach is used in teaching kindergarten students about alphabetic knowledge (Olao, 2016).

In the public elementary schools in District 1, Division of Panabo City, Early Childhood Education teachers at the school have a hard challenge when tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that Kindergarten students participate in learning activities that are developmentally appropriate specifically the alphabet knowledge. This is partly due to the inadequacy of the in-service trainings that instill the prominence of multisensory experiences among the fundamental and meaningful educational strategy that facilitate cognitive development and the shortfall of the trainings provided by the Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) during the teacher preparatory years. This situation has arisen in part because of the shortfall of the trainings provided by the Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) during the teacher preparatory years.

Research on teaching alphabet knowledge has been conducted globally and locally. Molfese et al. (2011) found that children who are proficient in identifying letters (naming upper- and lower-case letters, recognizing beginning and ending word sounds) at the start of kindergarten demonstrate stronger skills at the end of kindergarten and in first grade on measures of phonological processing and word reading than children who are not proficient in identifying letters. This is in contrast to children who are not proficient in identifying letters. However, I have not come across a study that dealt on exploring the experiences of kindergarten teachers in teaching alphabet knowledge in the local setting.

The researcher felt it necessary to analyze kindergarten teachers' experiences teaching alphabet knowledge. Along with contributing to the literature, this study may provide critical information to local practitioners. This information may influence how Kindergarten classrooms develop and implement their curriculum, routines, and activities, with a particular emphasis on improving kindergarteners' alphabet knowledge.

In addition, the outcomes of this research will be utilized to adopt ways and/or techniques that promote the alphabetic knowledge development of kindergarten pupils. Early childhood educators may improve their classroom surroundings and, therefore, the learning experiences of young children by selecting classroom spaces where multimodal experiences can be explored in addition to normal sensory activities.

Method

In this chapter, some important sections are presented. These are research design, research participants, ethical considerations, role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis and trustworthiness of the study.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of kindergarten teachers in teaching alphabet knowledge to the learners in District 1, Division of Panabo City. It further investigated their insights that were drawn from the findings of this study. At this stage of research, the experiences of kindergarten teachers were generally defined as their learning and challenging experiences in teaching kindergartners' alphabet knowledge.

Methods common to phenomenological research aided data collection and analysis. Outcomes are a culmination of the teachers' views as newly hired teachers in teaching the TLE subject.

Experiences of Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching the Alphabet Knowledge

When participants were asked about their experiences as kindergarten teachers in teaching the alphabet knowledge, and after a careful analysis of their responses, the following themes were noted: Development of Reading Skills, Promotion of Writing Skills, and Introduction to Letter Sounds.

Development of Reading Skills. Reading is necessary and acts as a fundamental building block for learning, regardless of the school topic, whether it language arts or even mathematics. The necessity to read items such as traffic signs and medications demonstrates that reading is also an essential life skill. Regular reading helps youngsters develop the capacity to sit still and silently for longer and longer amounts of time since it is a task that takes concentration. Effective teachers are the single most critical element in drastically enhancing kids' reading skills. Teachers have a comprehensive comprehension of the curriculum requirements. Teachers regularly teach certain reading methods before, during, and after reading.

IDI-01 thought and responded in the interview that:

"Learning the alphabet knowledge can help the kindergarten learners develop their reading skills. As a teacher, it is very important to really strengthen the teaching of alphabet knowledge so that the learners will have no problem in the future in terms of their reading skills."

Likewise, IDI-03 also stated in the interview that:

"Reading competence of kindergarten learners are developed through learning well the alphabet knowledge in the classroom. For, it is really the basic requirement in learning how to read words, phrases, and sentences."

IDI-04 also shared by saying:

"I can say that alphabet knowledge is very helpful towards learning how to read. We, kindergarten teachers must always keep in minds to really intensify lessons on alphabet knowledge or even extend time on teaching the kindergarten learners."

Further, IDI-06 cited that:

"Mastery of the alphabet knowledge is very crucial for learning to read. It is significant to ensure that these competencies are being mastered by the kindergarten learners to help them learn how to read in the future."

Alphabet knowledge is a term that refers to children's understanding of letter names and forms. It is a major predictor of children's success in learning to read. Knowing letter names is closely tied to children's capacity to recall the structures of written words and to treat words as sequences of letters. The development of children's reading skills is contingent upon their grasp of the alphabetic principle — the notion that letters and letter patterns match spoken language sounds (Texas Education Academy, 2015).

Further, alphabetic Knowledge referred to the ability to sound out and read new words that have not been encountered before including morphological awareness (Letter-Sound Knowledge) (Morin, 2018). The promotion of early childhood alphabet knowledge growth on the basis of scientific evidence that children have the greatest performance when they enter kindergarten knowing 18 uppercase and 15 lowercase letters (Piastra et al., 2012).

The relevance of alphabetic abilities (knowledge of letter names and sounds) for reading development has been shown. Children who can recognize letters (name upper- and lower-case letters, identify beginning and ending word sounds) had better phonological processing and word reading abilities at the end of kindergarten and first grade (Denton & West, 2015; West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000).

Early childhood teachers are increasingly encouraged to support children's development of letter-sound abilities. Assessment of letter-sound knowledge is key in planning for effective instruction, yet the letter-sound knowledge assessments currently available and suitable for preschool-age children demonstrate significant limitations. The purpose of the current study was to use item response theory to create short-form letter-sound assessments that are psychometrically sound, quick and easy to administer, and appropriate for researcher and practitioner use. Letter-sound knowledge data from 940 children attending preschool centers were analyzed. Item response theory analyses indicated that a two-parameter logistic model best fit the data. Further analyses yielded a series of parallel six- and eight-letter forms with adequate test information, reliability, and theta recovery (Piasra et al., 2016).

When children complete preschool with strong alphabet knowledge, there is a higher likelihood that they will read at a level of proficiency or above by third grade. Third grade reading proficiency is highly predictive of school success factors, including continued reading fluency and high school graduation rates. When considering the pace in which the alphabet is taught, some classrooms teach a letter a week whereas other classrooms teach one letter a day. Multiple studies were analyzed to determine the best approach to take in regard to the pace of instruction, group size, order of alphabet instruction, and review cycles. Current literature suggests teaching a letter a day in small groups is more beneficial to students because lessons can be differentiated on what each student needs, and information is repeated multiple times until mastered (Throne, 2020).

Promotion of Writing Skills.

Students who write regularly see improvements in their ability to communicate. Writing is a fantastic approach for students to improve their capacity for communication in their first language, while concurrently boosting the fluency of their second language, which is another advantage of writing for students.

As IDI-02 shared in the interview that:

"Aside that alphabet knowledge enhances or develops the reading skills of our pupils, it can also help promote their writing skills. It is not only their reading skills but also their writing skills must be developed by writing the uppercase and lower case alphabet letters."

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Also, IDI-05 replied that:

“With alphabet knowledge, writing skills also are being taught and developed. Kindergarten teachers do not only focus on reading the alphabet but also writing them.”

Lastly, IDI-10 supported that:

“As a kindergarten teacher, I also develop writing skills of the pupils with alphabet knowledge. It can be noted that reading and writing must come together towards learning the alphabet for kindergarten learners.”

To compare the writing of names and letters from pre-school to kindergarten, Molfese et al. (2015) studied 286 children (157 women and 129 males). For example, the proper letter sequence was checked against two scoring rubrics (i.e., letter formation only). With several rubrics, compared to the single rubric of the variable, no more information was offered. Writing scores predicted development better than letter and word reading scores, but no writing scores predicted it. An intentional and consistent writing teaching is investigated in preschool courses.

Various studies carried out with preschoolers found the moderate level and simultaneous correspondence among name writing, alphabet knowledge, and phonological skills (Diamond et al., 2008; Mohamed Isa et al., 2015; Puranik & Lonigan, 2012). However, there are differences among studies as to the level of correspondence between name writing and the development of grapheme and phoneme knowledge of children. For example, even though Molfese et al. (2015) found a simultaneous correspondence between name writing and the development of grapheme and phoneme knowledge of preschoolers, they identified that this correspondence was not significant later while Blair and Savage (2006) reported a strong correlation between phonological awareness and phoneme knowledge and name writing skills of children, Welsch, Sullivan, and Justice (2003) did not find a correlation between phonological awareness and name writing skills. Instead, they found a correlation between alphabet recognition and print knowledge and name writing skills.

The current study used a pretest–posttest randomized control group design with 73 Head Start students, ages 3–5 years. The researcher served as the interactive writing teacher for the treatment group, rotating to five different classrooms in one Head Start center 3–4 days a week for 13 weeks. The results of the study showed that children receiving interactive writing identified more lower case and upper-case letters at the end of the study relative to children in the control, but no differences were observed on letter sounds. While continued evaluation of the interactive writing strategy is needed in the preschool setting, the evidence from the current study shows encouraging trends in alphabet knowledge skill development as a result of this strategy (Hall et al., 2014).

Introduction to Letter Sounds. Letter-sound knowledge (also known as "graphemic knowledge") enables pupils to "decode" written language and teach themselves new words, since they may employ letter-sound patterns to pronounce unfamiliar words. Learning that there are regular correlations between sounds and letters enables youngsters to apply these patterns to both known and novel words, so enabling them to begin reading fluently. The purpose of phonics teaching is to teach and enable youngsters to use the Alphabetic Principle.

As mentioned by IDI-07:

“In teaching the alphabet knowledge, it is important to introduce letter sounds. Letter sounds are crucial factor in learning the alphabet especially for young learners.”

Further, IDI-08 commented that:

“Introducing the letter sound to the kindergarten learners can help support mastering the alphabet knowledge. Kindergarten can take extra time in introducing letter sounds to the pupils.”

And IDI-09 also mentioned that:

“Letter sounds mastery is critical towards mastering also the alphabet knowledge. It is not difficult for the kindergarten pupils to learn the alphabet because they also already knew its sounds.”

Letter names and letter sounds are both concepts that have been taught in varying combinations within classrooms – either letter names, letter sounds, or letters and sounds (Bilodeau, 2013; Roberts et al., 2018). Research conducted by Cassano & Dougherty (2018) showed that knowing letter names helps students learn the letter sound because many of the letter names have the sounds in their name. Teaching letter names and sounds together is more effective than teaching them independently (Gerde et al., 2019).

The alphabetic principle is the understanding that there are relationships between written words and spoken sounds (Titus, 2017). Language is created from distinct sounds and the letters that represent each sound (Huang et al., 2014). When teaching the alphabet, children need to be aware of the big picture and know the importance of letters and their connection to words and writing (Duke & Mesmer, 2019). Understanding the alphabetic principle is a critical part of literacy development as it transitions the child from emergent literacy to a more conventional reader (Huang et al., 2014).

Simply being able to sing the ABC song does not demonstrate alphabet knowledge; identifying and naming letters is a better representation of knowledge (Titus, 2017). Associating the symbols of letters with their name and sound is an important step in early reading development (Jones & Reutzel, 2012). Despite the importance of learning the letters, this is not an easy task as there are 40 distinctive shapes within the alphabet that need to be learned and memorized (Titus, 2017). There are some examples (Ss, Mm, Ww) where the upper and lowercase letters have the same shape; those letters are easier for students to identify (Titus, 2017).

Due to the importance of alphabet knowledge, it is a goal throughout many preschool classes to maximize learning (Piasta et al., 2010). The National Early Literacy Panel (2008) identified alphabet knowledge as the strongest predictor of later literacy success. When kindergarten students know letter names, they tend to learn those letter sounds by the conclusion of the school year (Stanley & Finch, 2018). Also, students in kindergarten with an increased knowledge of letter names and sounds tend to have stronger skills in reading in the first grade (Stanley & Finch, 2018).

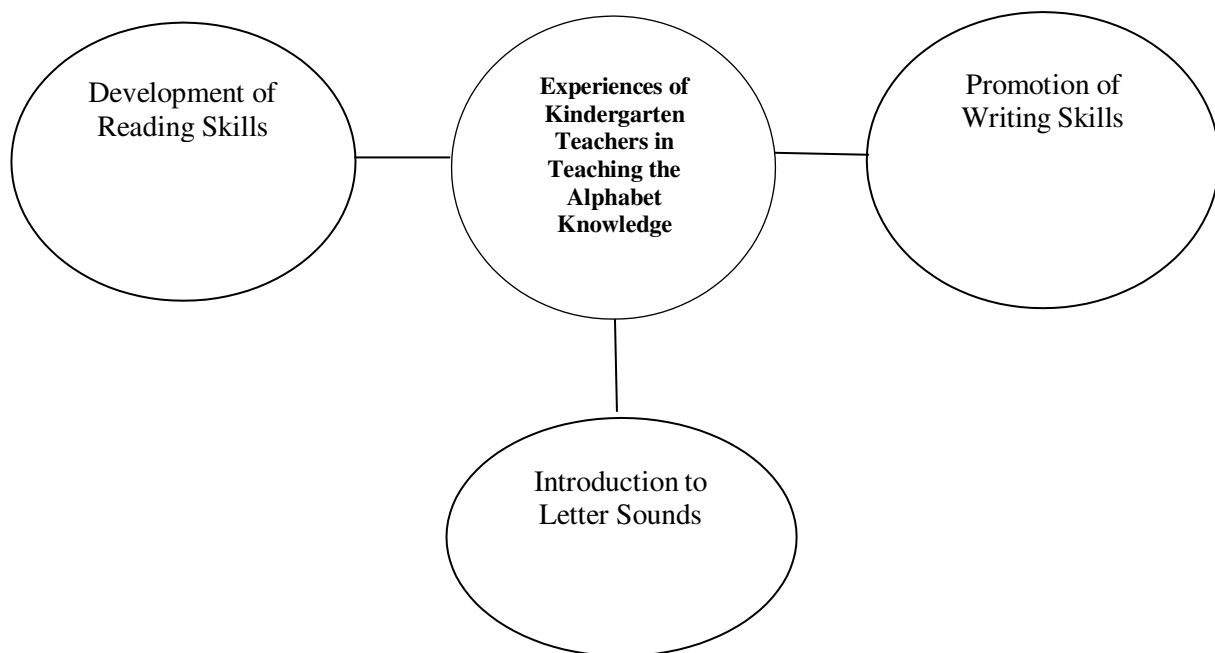


Figure 3. Experiences of Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching the Alphabet Knowledge

Insights of the Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching the Alphabet Knowledge

After a thorough analysis, when the participants were asked on their insights from the experiences that can be shared to others in terms of their experiences in teaching the alphabet knowledge, they mentioned various themes. After a thorough analysis of the transcription, the following themes emerged: Intensifying Literacy Skills Development, Selecting Appropriate Teaching Pedagogy, and Improving Learners' Academic Outcomes

Intensifying Literacy Skills Development. Literacy skills assist pupils in acquiring information via reading and the use of media and technology. These abilities assist pupils in creating knowledge via writing as well as media and technological development. The development of literacy is essential to your child's entire development. It is the basis for academic success, socialization, problem-solving, decision-making, growing independence, managing money, and employment.

IDI-01 shared her experience by expressing that:

"We have to bear in mind that pupils' mastery on alphabet knowledge is crucial for the literacy skills development which is one of the foci of our department today. As a kindergarten teacher, I am compliant to this call."

Further, IDI-03 also expounded that,

“Learning the alphabet knowledge by the kindergarten learners can support the literacy development among them. Enhancing their literacy skills can elevate their academic achievement.”

In addition, IDI-05 shared that,

“I am grateful with this Teacher Induction Program (TIP). through this, I can be able to enhance myself professionally and my personal growth also will be developed.”

Likewise, IDI-06 articulated that:

“Being a kindergarten teacher, part of our curriculum is teaching the alphabet knowledge to the learners. Through this also, we can enhance their literacy skills which are very important element to be successful in the future.”

The National Early Literacy Panel (2008) revealed alphabetical skills as significant predictors of decoding, learning, and spelling in a meta-analysis of research papers on the relationships between emerging literacy abilities in preschool and alphabetic readability in the early school period. Not only were excellent readers a significant predictor of non-English-speaking children's reading abilities in English-speaking samples, but they were also strong predictors of non-English-speaking children's reading abilities in English-speaking samples (Lyytinen et al., 2014). The findings suggested that children's writing abilities improved significantly because of their increased alphabetical knowledge. This study examined the concept that children's writing fosters the development of alphabetical knowledge and aids in the development of letters recognition and word reading abilities in preschool and kindergarten children.

The results of the study pointed to significant differences among all skills concerning socioeconomic status (SES). Low SES children got lower scores in all sub-skills. The study also compared early literacy performances of children based on the educational level of mothers, and significant differences were found among groups in all sub-skills. As the educational level of mothers increased, the scores of children out of all sub skills also increased. Another result got by the study is that the name writing skills of children have a significant predictive effect on print knowledge, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness. This study is important as it indicates about the early writing skills in a language like Turkish, which has transparent orthography, and it can pave the way for future research on the subject (Altındag Kumas, Sümer Dodur, & Yüzbasıoglu, 2021).

Print knowledge includes understanding the difference between print and picture, letters and digits, and rules of print (having a space between words, linear writing). Researchers have reported that print knowledge is an important step in gaining literacy skills (Elias et al., 2014; Sandai et al., 2013; Puranik et al., 2011). Understanding the phoneme-grapheme correspondence is an important part of understanding the rules and functions of print

Teaching the alphabet to students is one of the primary objectives in a preschool classroom. Preschool is often the first educational setting that a child attends to learn the alphabet, and alphabet knowledge is important for the future skills of students (Piasta & Wagner, 2010). Proficiency in naming letters is one of the best indicators that a child will have success with reading as they age (Heilmann et al., 2018). When preschool students learn their letters quickly, it allows more time to make advanced progress towards other literacy skills (Jones et al., 2013). After a student leaves kindergarten, very little time is devoted to teaching the alphabet so it is imperative that students are familiar with their letter names and letter sounds, otherwise they may struggle during literacy activities (Tortorelli et al., 2017).

Selecting Appropriate Teaching Pedagogy. Choosing the appropriate teaching method brings instruction to life while encouraging students to actively engage with content and develop their knowledge and skills. Pedagogy is important because it gives teachers an insight into the best practices for a classroom setting. It allows them to understand how different students learn so they can tailor their lesson to suit these needs. As a result, this will improve the quality of their teaching as it will be well received by students.

IDI-02 sincerely expressed that,

“As a kindergarten teacher, I need to contextualize my teaching strategy or pedagogy in teaching the alphabet knowledge. I infused technology, and other teaching and learning resources which I think relevant to my strategy.”

IDI-04 also shared that,

“When teaching the alphabet knowledge, teachers must use appropriate teaching pedagogy which is suited to the kindergarten learners. It is very significant that teachers are employing various teaching strategies including ICT-based instruction.”

IDI-07 further said that,

“Teachers need to strategize when teaching the alphabet knowledge to the learners. When it is needed, kindergarten teachers also need to employ or use appropriate instructional materials.”

Generally, teaching young children could be difficult this is due to the focus of young children is different from elderly since they could only focus on something for short period of time. Introducing the fun and interactive learning could grab the attention therefore enhance teaching and learning for young learner. Fun-learning emphasized interactive learning through play, songs; dance, drama and the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Research showed that fun learning also increase the ability to memorize and understanding of the user. Flashcard is one of the learning approaches to teach children the alphabet. The tangible manner of flashcard introduce the interaction of learning therefore it could create the joyful learning. However, the potential of flash-card could be further enhance through the use of AR technology. Therefore, introducing the use of AR could encompass fun learning since AR offer rich media learning. Besides displaying each alphabet upon presentation of its corresponding pattern marker, children have the options to see 3D models of objects that begin with each alphabet character. Observation of the children behaviors during study corroborates this finding. Most students requested to use the AR book repeatedly. These results suggest the potential of AR book as a tool to create fun learning environment especially for preschool children. Furthermore, the brief interview with the teacher of the preschool also suggested that the system seem to grab the attention of the children (Rambli, Matcha, & Sulaiman, 2013).

Traditional learning of the alphabet is often through flashcards and singing. Whilst singing can be an engaging activity-based learning approach, one major drawback to it is student tend to memorize the order of the alphabet. Most of the time when ask to name a single alphabet, student tend to repeat from the beginning until they came to the alphabet in question. Flashcards which tend to be static 2D images of the objects that represent the alphabet is still a popular teaching approach due to its usage simplicity. Moreover, numerous commercially available flashcards are at the teachers' disposal. However, with the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the past decades has seen the adoption of ICT in technology based learning whereby digital format of teaching and learning materials have been widely used. Learning of the alphabets is no exception. Numerous educational and edutainment software have been created for learning the alphabet (Charsky & Ressler, 2011; Ke, 2008).

Furthermore, early childhood educators are increasingly asked to support the alphabet knowledge development of children enrolled in their classrooms. Children in the same classroom, however, often show vastly different alphabet learning needs. Moreover, recent research suggests that some letters are more difficult to learn. These facts run counter to one-size-fits-all whole-class instructional approaches, which typically provide the same instruction to all children and for all letters. The purpose of this article is to encourage early childhood educators to move beyond whole-class approaches and instead provide alphabet instruction that is aligned with current emphases on assessment-driven decision making and differentiated instruction. The article reviews the importance of alphabet knowledge with respect to theory, research, and the current educational context, summarizes recent research concerning children's alphabet knowledge development, and provides a framework in which assessment guides differentiated alphabet instruction, along with empirically validated practices for such instruction (Piasta, 2014).

A popular strategy among preschool educators is teaching students one letter per week throughout the school year (Reutzel, 2015). During these lessons, the weekly letter is introduced and students practice saying the letter name, writing the letter, and learning the letter sound (Stahl, 2014). In addition, there may be a theme that coordinates with the letter, including crafts (Wouri, 2009). When teaching one letter a week, it takes the better part of the school year to learn the entire alphabet; there is not enough time to cycle through letters again (Jones et al., 2013).

Some students start the school year knowing multiple letters; they do not need entire weeks devoted to letters they already know (Sunde et al., 2019). For students who do not know any letters when starting school, this style of teaching means the student will not officially know all of the letters until 26 weeks into the school year (Jones et al., 2013). This can cause delays when students miss school due to illness, vacations, or moving; and is especially troublesome during times such as the Covid-19 pandemic when schools close and students are unable to officially learn the entire alphabet.

Another option for alphabet instruction is teaching a letter a day to students. This method allows the students to learn the alphabet during different cycles throughout the year (Jones et al., 2013). The entire alphabet can be taught within 26 school days, which, depending on how many days a school is in session during the week, could take 6-7 weeks (Jones et al., 2012). After the first cycle through, students are assessed to determine what they learned and what they need additional time practicing (Stahl, 2014). Accounting for the varying levels of alphabet knowledge within the classroom, small group differentiated instruction ensures students are learning materials that benefits them directly (Sunde et al., 2019).

When learning one letter a day, there are different orders in which the alphabet can be presented to be the most effective for the students (Cassano & Dougherty, 2018). Research strongly suggests the first letters a child often knows are the letters in his/her own name, therefore alphabet instruction should begin with those letters (Heilmann et al., 2018). After letters in names are taught, future cycles could focus on alphabetical order, letter popularity, and letter-name and letter-sound relationships (Cassano & Dougherty, 2018; Stahl et al., 2019).

Improving Learners' Academic Outcomes

Having course learning objectives provides a number of benefits, including: establishing agreed expectations between teachers and students Aiding pupils in learning more efficiently. Providing educators with clear instructions when making choices about teaching and evaluation. In order for students to be motivated to improve their grades and to have a good academic future, especially in alphabet knowledge, both teaching and learning strategies must be modified. Frequently, students do not pay attention during lectures, preventing them from acquiring accurate knowledge. Implementing the tactics for improving learning outcomes may, in fact, improve all facets of learning. Students must pursue the learning goals at their own speed. Students may use the wide availability of technology to improve their academic performance.

IDI-08 replied in the interview that,

“When kindergarten pupils have mastered the alphabet knowledge, they can also increase their academic achievement in the classroom. it really goes along.”

Moreover, IDI-09 accentuated that,

“For kindergarten learners, mastery of the alphabet knowledge can improve their academic performance in the classroom. For me, as a kindergarten teacher, this is my very goal for my kindergarten learners.”

Lastly, IDI-10 expressed in the interview that,

“One thing I am sure of when the kindergarten pupils can master the alphabet knowledge is that they can also increase or improve their academic achievement in school. Indeed, the learners are trying their best in order to learn alphabet knowledge in the classroom so that they can also enhance their classroom performance.”

Having strong alphabet knowledge early in life is a powerful predictor of long-term reading and academic outcomes. Upon tracking the alphabet knowledge of 172 children enrolled in their first year of Head Start, we identified that most of the children could name fewer than 10 letters at the beginning of the academic year. Approximately, one third of the children with low alphabet knowledge in fall made significant progress and demonstrated mastery of 10 or more letters in spring. For the children who started the year knowing fewer than 10 letters, receptive vocabulary was the best predictor of who would make gains in alphabet knowledge throughout the year. In addition, most children who entered Head Start knowing fewer than 10 letters knew letters from their first names and the letters A, B, or O. Implications for the management of emergent literacy skills for children at-risk for academic difficulties are discussed (Heilmann, Moyle, & Rueden, 2018).

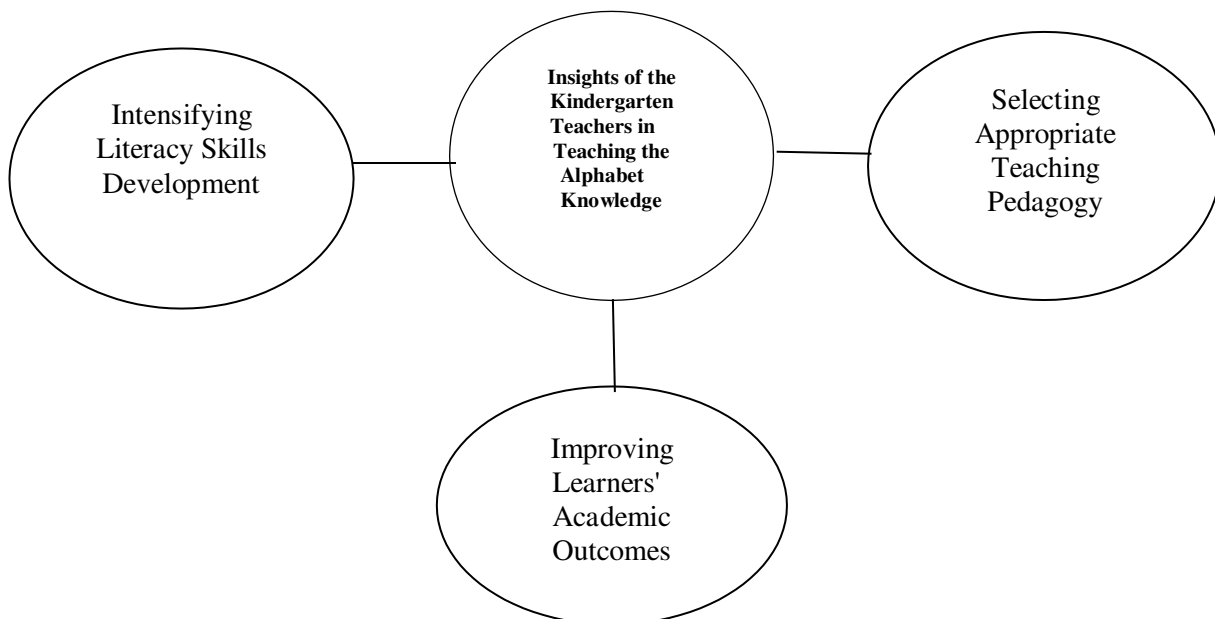


Figure 4. Insights of the Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching the Alphabet Knowledge

Implications and Future Directions

In this chapter, the summary of the study is presented. From the summary of findings, I drew the implications for future directions. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of kindergarten teachers in teaching alphabet knowledge to the learners in District 1, Division of Panabo City. It further investigated their insights that were drawn from the findings of this study. At this stage of research, the experiences of kindergarten teachers were generally defined as their learning and challenging experiences in teaching kindergartners' alphabet knowledge.

To achieve this research objective, I made use of qualitative – phenomenological method with the use of thematic analysis. In adherence to Creswell's guidelines (2006) in which 'open-ended' questions for interview were applied to get authentic understanding of people's experiences. Furthermore, through this interview approach, I encouraged my participants to offer their own definition or meaning of the phenomenon.

Major findings revealed that when participants were asked about their experiences as kindergarten teachers in teaching the alphabet knowledge, and after a careful analysis of their responses, the following themes were noted: Development of Reading Skills, Promotion of Writing Skills, and Introduction to Letter Sounds. Furthermore, after a thorough analysis, when the participants were asked on their insights from the experiences that can be shared to others in terms of their experiences in teaching the alphabet knowledge, they mentioned various themes. After a thorough analysis of the transcription, the following themes emerged: Intensifying Literacy Skills Development, Selecting Appropriate Teaching Pedagogy, and Improving Learners' Academic Outcomes.

Implications

In the light of the analysis and discussion of the result of the study, the following implications are drawn: The findings imply that accurate assessments of student progress are crucial because they enable teachers to detect particular gaps in students' reading knowledge and integrate this information into their lessons. To better understand how preschool teachers make such judgements, it was necessary to evaluate what they knew about their children's unique literacy development and to identify the types of information they utilize to guide their thinking.

Further, it is also implied that alphabetical awareness was demonstrated in the writing skills of children to have an observable increase. In specific, this research explored the belief that children's writing promotes development of alphabetical knowledge and facilitates the development of preschool and kindergarten children of letters recognition and word reading skills.

Likewise, children with long-term lack of vocabulary development and lower degree of confidence and desire to read are slower in literacy. Furthermore, the children's developing literacy abilities in pre-schools and kindergartens can be a highly predictive predictor of their potential success later in elementary schools.

It was therefore of practical interest to consider the circumstances under which pre-school teachers render the most detailed judgements. Although individualized tests can reliably test early language skills and literacy skills for children, the time and resources involved were enormous.

Alphabetic knowledge can recognize letters and their tones and call them. The study indicates that it is important to learn alphabet skills before children can effectively participate in phonemic awareness. Any populations of students are sadly failing to acquire the skills needed to develop alphabetical competence in the classroom to become skilled readers. These students are at risk of not completing school and being completely informed.

Future Directions of the Study

Since this study was limited to ten (10) participants of Panabo City Division, the following implications for future research are forwarded:

Future research is encouraged to further explore the roles of school heads on their support towards the enhancement of the learners' alphabet knowledge. In as much as this study was particularly conducted to the teachers in District 1, Panabo City Division, future research could be done to study the same phenomenon among the school administrators in both public and private from the other districts or school division offices in the region.

With the information gathered from the key informants, the Division of Panabo City may design policies and programs that encourage teachers and school principals to improve the alphabet knowledge of learners. In addition, the report recommends that the Department of Education-Division of Panabo City let school principals as well as our education stakeholders to work for the benefit of schoolchildren in

terms of improving their alphabet knowledge. However, the department is also strongly urged to provide technical help to school administrators, teachers, and stakeholders in areas where they still need development.

A focus group discussion as a data gathering tool may be used in order to arrive at a more valid and reliable findings about the experiences of teachers in improving the alphabet knowledge of learners. FGD depends on enabling participants to agree or disagree with one another in order to offer insight into how a group thinks about an issue, the spectrum of opinion and ideas, as well as the contradictions and variance that exist in a community's beliefs and practices about improving the alphabet knowledge of kindergarten learners.

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