

The Role of Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes in the implementation of Effective Literacy Strategies in Grade 1 Classrooms in Legislative District 5, Isabela

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ABSTRACT

Reading proficiency in early education is essential for academic success and lifelong learning. However, despite the availability of effective literacy strategies, limited attention has been given to how teachers' beliefs and attitudes influence their implementation in Grade 1 classrooms. This study assessed the role of teachers' beliefs and attitudes in implementing literacy strategies among Grade 1 pupils in Legislative District 5, Isabela. A descriptive-comparative design was employed with 80 respondents, consisting of school heads and teachers. Data were gathered using questionnaires, interviews, and documentary analysis, and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and t-test. Findings revealed that literacy strategies were very often used and perceived as very effective. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes significantly influenced instructional practices, while challenges such as class size and parental support persisted. No significant difference was found between the perceptions of school heads and teachers. The study emphasizes the importance of strengthening both teacher dispositions and support systems to improve literacy outcomes.

Keywords: Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, literacy strategies, Grade 1 instruction, literacy outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, written language appears almost everywhere, including in books, signs, websites, and digital platforms. The ability to read and comprehend text is an essential skill that supports learning across subject areas. Children who develop reading skills at an early age are more likely to succeed both in school and in life. Reading proficiency goes beyond simply recognizing words; it involves understanding meaning, reflecting on what is read, and applying that understanding to solve problems. Studies show that students who read well tend to perform better in other academic areas and demonstrate stronger long-term outcomes (Gobyn et al., 2019). Reading comprehension is also closely linked to the development of higher-order thinking and reasoning skills (McNamara & Magliano, 2009).

Despite its importance, many young learners continue to face difficulties in understanding texts. The PIRLS 2016 study found that 18 percent of Grade 4 students could

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not perform basic reading tasks, such as locating and copying information from a passage (Mullis et al., 2017). This figure increased to 25 percent in the PIRLS 2021 results (Mullis, 2023). Reading challenges are not limited to early grades; older learners also struggle. The PISA 2018 study reported that nearly one in four 15-year-olds did not meet the minimum reading proficiency level expected for their age (OECD, 2019). These findings indicate that reading difficulties often begin early and may persist if not addressed effectively.

Several factors contribute to reading difficulties among pupils. One major factor is socioeconomic status. Children from low-income families may lack access to books, learning materials, and academic support at home, limiting their learning opportunities (European Commission, 2012). This situation often creates a cycle in which poor literacy leads to fewer opportunities for success, which in turn further limits literacy development. From the school perspective, instructional practices also play a crucial role. Learners tend to perform better when teachers employ effective teaching strategies, including clear explanations, appropriate materials, and adequate support (Scheerens, 2016).

Among the instructional approaches that support reading development are explicit reading strategy instruction and differentiated reading instruction. Explicit instruction involves directly teaching learners strategies such as predicting, summarizing, and questioning, with teachers modeling and guiding their use (NICHD, 2000). Differentiated instruction, on the other hand, involves adjusting teaching methods based on learners' individual needs, allowing them to progress at their own pace (Parsons, 2017). While both approaches are effective, their success largely depends on how they are implemented, which is influenced by teachers' beliefs and attitudes.

Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning significantly influence their instructional practices. This is particularly important in Grade 1, where foundational literacy skills are developed. Teachers' perceptions of their roles, their pupils' abilities, and the value of reading affect the decisions they make during instruction (Bejos, 2009). Teachers who believe in their pupils' capacity to learn and in their own teaching effectiveness are more likely to use strategies that support learning.

Attitudes also play a critical role in literacy instruction. Teachers who demonstrate enthusiasm and care can create a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages pupils to engage in reading, even when it is challenging (Higgins, 2017). In contrast, negative attitudes or low expectations may discourage learners and reduce their motivation. Pupils' perceptions of reading are often shaped by how teachers interact with them and the classroom environment they create.

Instructional decisions are further influenced by teachers' beliefs about how learning occurs. Some teachers rely heavily on prescribed materials, while others adapt instruction to meet learners' individual needs (Gourneau, 2005). These beliefs affect lesson planning, material selection, and learner support. Although not always explicitly stated, they have a significant impact on teaching practices and learning outcomes.

Another important factor is teacher self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to teach effectively. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt innovative methods, address challenges proactively, and maintain a positive outlook (Nor, 2020). They also tend to set higher expectations for their pupils and create supportive learning environments. A learner-centered approach, grounded in strong teacher beliefs, has been associated with improved literacy outcomes (Silaneh, 2021).

Improving literacy instruction requires strengthening teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Professional development programs can support this by providing evidence-based teaching strategies and opportunities for reflection (Tran, 2014). Collaboration with colleagues also allows teachers to evaluate and refine their instructional practices.

Mentorship is another important support mechanism. Experienced teachers can guide less experienced ones by sharing effective strategies and providing constructive feedback (Ryan & Hendry, 2022). This support helps build confidence and fosters positive attitudes toward literacy instruction.

A supportive school environment further enhances teaching effectiveness. School leaders can contribute by providing necessary resources, encouraging collaboration, and recognizing teachers' efforts (Hutchison, 2012). A culture of continuous improvement motivates teachers to remain committed to enhancing literacy outcomes.

Within the classroom, teachers can promote reading development by creating a print-rich environment and providing meaningful reading activities. Strategies such as reading aloud, using a variety of texts, and encouraging discussions make reading more engaging and enjoyable (Hilmawan, 2020). These practices help learners view reading as both valuable and rewarding.

Sustaining learner motivation is equally important. When reading tasks are too difficult or uninteresting, pupils may disengage, leading to a decline in their skills. However, teachers who provide appropriate support and maintain positive expectations can help learners remain engaged (Vansteelandt, 2019). Encouraging independent reading and providing access to diverse texts help develop interest and establish lasting reading habits (Romero-González, 2023).

Thus, this study aims to assess the role of teachers' beliefs and attitudes in implementing literacy strategies among Grade 1 pupils. Understanding how these internal factors influence instructional practices may contribute to improving literacy instruction in early education.

This study is anchored on the premise that teachers' beliefs and attitudes significantly influence literacy instruction. Pajares (1992) emphasized that teacher beliefs are strong predictors of instructional behavior, often outweighing formal training in shaping classroom practices. Teachers who hold positive beliefs about their effectiveness and their pupils' ability to learn are more likely to implement engaging and supportive literacy instruction (Buehl & Beck, 2015).

The effectiveness of literacy strategies such as Explicit Reading Strategy Instruction (ERSI) and Differentiated Reading Instruction (DRI) depends on how these strategies are implemented. ERSI involves direct instruction, modeling, and guided practice to enhance comprehension (Reutzel & Fawson, 2005), while DRI ensures that instruction is responsive to learners' diverse needs (Connor, 2011). Both approaches require careful planning and strong teacher commitment, which are influenced by teachers' beliefs and instructional orientations (Yeo & Ng, 2014).

Teachers with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater persistence and flexibility in addressing learners' reading difficulties (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In contrast, negative or fixed beliefs may lead to less effective instruction and lower learner engagement (Fang, 1996). Moreover, teachers who view literacy as meaningful and socially relevant tend to create more engaging and supportive learning environments (Street, 2003). Literacy strategies are most effective when teachers not only understand them but also believe in their value and consistently apply them (Williams & Baumann, 2008).

Statement of the problem

The study aimed to assess the role of teachers' beliefs and attitudes in implementing literacy strategies among Grade 1 pupils in public elementary schools in Legislative District 5, Isabela, for the school year 2025–2026. Specifically, it sought to determine the profile of the

respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, present position, latest performance rating, length of service, and level of in-service training attended. It also aimed to examine the beliefs and attitudes of Grade 1 teachers toward literacy instruction, identify the literacy strategies implemented in the district, and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in teaching Grade 1 pupils. Furthermore, the study investigated how teachers' beliefs and attitudes influence their implementation of literacy strategies and identifies the challenges encountered by teachers in this process. Finally, it determined whether a significant difference exists between the perceptions of teachers and school heads regarding teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward literacy instruction.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to examine Grade 1 teachers' beliefs and attitudes and their role in implementing literacy strategies in public elementary schools in Legislative District 5, Isabela, during the school year 2025–2026. The descriptive component was used to present the respondents' profiles, beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices, while the comparative aspect determined differences between the perceptions of teachers and school heads.

The study was conducted in eight municipalities within Legislative District 5, Isabela. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents, which consisted of 40 school heads and 40 Grade 1 teachers, for a total of 80 respondents.

Data were collected using a questionnaire checklist as the primary instrument, supported by unstructured interviews and documentary analysis to validate and clarify responses. The questionnaire covered respondents' profiles, beliefs and attitudes, literacy strategies, effectiveness of strategies, influence of beliefs, and challenges encountered.

The data gathering procedure involved securing permissions, validating the instrument, administering and retrieving questionnaires, and organizing the collected data for analysis.

For data analysis, the study utilized the following statistical tools: frequency and percentage to describe the respondents' profile, weighted mean to analyze responses to key variables, and t-test to determine significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and school heads.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed that in terms of demographics, school heads were generally older, with the largest group aged 51–55 (25%), while teachers were relatively younger, with the highest proportion aged 26–30 (25%). Both groups were predominantly female, particularly among teachers (100%), and most respondents were married. In terms of professional qualifications, a considerable proportion of both groups had pursued graduate studies, indicating engagement in continuous professional development. School heads also demonstrated extensive experience, with many having 26–30 years of service (25%), whereas teachers were mostly within 11–15 years of service (27.5%). Performance ratings were notably high, with all school heads rated “outstanding” and 72.5% of teachers receiving the same rating.

Analysis of beliefs and attitudes toward literacy instruction revealed a strong consensus between groups. School heads obtained an average weighted mean of 4.90 for beliefs and 4.77 for attitudes, while teachers recorded 4.83 and 4.78, respectively, all interpreted as strong agreement. This indicates that both groups highly value early literacy, differentiated instruction, and continuous improvement in teaching practices. The findings suggest a shared professional orientation toward effective literacy instruction.

In terms of instructional practices, literacy strategies were reported as frequently implemented, with average weighted means of 4.57 (school heads) and 4.72 (teachers), interpreted as “very often.” Among these, phonics instruction and guided reading emerged as the most consistently used strategies. Furthermore, these strategies were also perceived as highly effective, with average weighted means of 4.73 and 4.74, respectively. This reflects a strong alignment between practice and perceived effectiveness, suggesting that commonly used strategies are also considered impactful in developing literacy skills.

The influence of teachers’ beliefs and attitudes on the implementation of literacy strategies was also strongly affirmed. School heads reported an average weighted mean of 4.83, while teachers reported 4.88, both indicating strong agreement. This demonstrates that internal factors such as motivation, confidence, and positive attitudes toward learners significantly shape instructional decisions and classroom practices.

Despite these positive findings, several challenges were identified. Both groups rated the overall level of challenges as “serious,” with average weighted means of 3.97 (school heads) and 3.99 (teachers). Key issues included large class sizes, lack of parental support, low learner readiness, and language barriers. These constraints highlight systemic and contextual factors that may hinder the effective implementation of literacy strategies.

Finally, inferential analysis using the t-test revealed no significant difference between the perceptions of school heads and teachers regarding beliefs and attitudes toward literacy instruction (p-values of 0.072 and 0.813, both greater than 0.05). This result indicates a shared perspective between the two groups, reinforcing the consistency of findings across respondents.

On the whole, the results imply that both school heads and teachers possess strong, aligned beliefs and attitudes that support effective literacy instruction. However, external challenges remain critical factors that need to be addressed to further enhance literacy outcomes among Grade 1 pupils.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the central role of teachers’ beliefs and attitudes in shaping the implementation of literacy strategies in early grade instruction. The respondent profile reflects a professionally stable educational context, characterized by experienced school heads and relatively younger but actively developing teachers. This combination suggests a dynamic instructional environment where leadership experience and teacher adaptability can complement each other. Sustained professional development remains essential to ensure that both groups continue to refine their pedagogical competencies in literacy instruction.

The consistent and frequent use of literacy strategies, particularly phonics instruction, guided reading, sight word recognition, shared reading, and read-alouds, indicates strong adherence to evidence-based instructional practices. Their perceived high effectiveness in developing pupils’ literacy skills reinforces the validity of these approaches within the local context. These findings affirm that maintaining and strengthening the implementation of such strategies is critical to sustaining literacy gains among Grade 1 learners.

Importantly, the study highlights that teachers’ beliefs and attitudes are not merely peripheral factors but core determinants of instructional practice. The strong agreement observed across both groups suggests that positive dispositions—such as confidence in teaching, commitment to learner-centered instruction, and responsiveness to pupils’ needs—serve as enabling conditions for effective literacy instruction. This underscores the need for professional development initiatives that go beyond skill acquisition to include reflective and attitudinal dimensions of teaching.

Despite these strengths, the presence of serious challenges—particularly those related to class size, learner readiness, parental involvement, and resource limitations—points to systemic constraints that may hinder optimal instructional delivery. While existing literacy interventions are perceived as effective, the persistence of these challenges indicates the necessity for more structured, context-responsive support mechanisms. Addressing these barriers requires coordinated efforts at the school and system levels, including resource allocation, parental engagement initiatives, and instructional support programs.

The absence of a significant difference between the perceptions of school heads and teachers further suggests a shared understanding of literacy instruction and its underlying principles. This alignment is beneficial for the effective implementation of literacy programs, as it facilitates collaborative planning, consistent instructional practices, and unified educational goals. Strengthening this professional alignment through collaboration and shared leadership practices can further enhance teaching effectiveness.

Generally, these findings suggest that effective literacy instruction in early grades is a function of both internal teacher factors and external support systems. While positive beliefs and consistent instructional practices provide a strong foundation, addressing contextual challenges remains critical for maximizing learning outcomes. Future research may extend this work by examining the direct impact of literacy strategies on pupils' academic performance and by exploring instructional dynamics across different educational settings, including private institutions, to enhance the generalizability and applicability of findings.

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