

Experiential Learning Approach In Teaching Reading Among Grade Three Learners In Congressional District I, Batangas Province

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a dynamic meaning-making process essential for academic success yet Philippine education system faces a critical challenge, many students can read words, but they cannot understand them. This study explored the Experiential Learning Approach (ELA) as a pedagogical shift to move beyond rote memorization towards active engagement particularly aimed to assess the level of usefulness and extent of utilization of ELA in teaching reading among Grade 3 learners, determine the relationship between these variables, and identify common implementation challenges.

Using a quantitative survey design, the researcher gathered data from 178 Grade 3 teachers in Congressional District I, Batangas Province. Statistical tools included the Weighted Mean, Pearson's r , and Slovin's formula. Result showed that ELA is Highly Useful (3.69) and Highly Utilized (3.64). A strong link was found between active learning and student success which means that when lessons involve real-life experiences, students feel less afraid of reading and more confident in their skills. The results proved that ELA turns a boring lesson into an exciting discovery.

However, the study also found utilization challenges including behavioral management and lack of resources. To bridge this gap, the study proposed "Project L.I.G.H.T.S." (Literacy Integration through Guided High-impact Teaching Strategies). By providing a clear guide for teachers, Project L.I.G.H.T.S. ensures that even in a crowded school, every child can learn to read with joy and purpose. The findings suggested that continued support and targeted interventions are necessary to maximize the benefits of ELA in diverse classroom settings. Future research may explore the adaptability of ELA in other grade levels and subject areas to further enhance educational outcomes.

Keywords: *Experiential Learning Approach, Reading Literacy, Grade Three Learners, Pedagogical Utilization, Enhancement Activities*

Introduction

Reading is no longer viewed as a passive skill but as a dynamic, meaning-making process essential for human cognition. However, global assessments like PISA have highlighted a learning poverty crisis in the Philippines, where students struggle to transition from basic decoding to complex comprehension. Grade 3 represents a critical turning point in the Philippine K-12 system where students must transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn".

The study was grounded in David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and John Dewey's progressive pragmatism. Recent literature by Retnaningtyas et al. suggested that traditional rote memorization fails to engage the Generation Alpha learner, who requires multisensory stimuli to internalize language. By situating literacy within real-world contexts, ELA aims to transform the classroom into a laboratory of discovery.

The primary objective of the study was to assess the level of usefulness and extent of utilization of ELA among Grade 3 teachers in Congressional District 1, Batangas Province. Specifically, the study sought to determine if a significant relationship exists between how teachers value the approach and how frequently they implement it, while identifying the systemic barriers that impede its success.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher employed a descriptive-quantitative design to systematically map the pedagogical practices of teachers. This allowed for a statistical overview of ELA integration while maintaining the focus on classroom reality.

Participants

While records from the DepEd Division Office of Batangas indicate a total population of 320 Grade 3 teachers in the district, a sample of 178 respondents was strategically selected using stratified random sampling.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made survey questionnaire served as the primary instrument. It was validated by a panel of experts. The survey was complemented by an interview guide to capture qualitative insights into the lived experiences of the teachers. The tool measured:

- Level of Usefulness of Experiential Learning Approach in Teaching Reading
- Extent of Utilization of Experiential Learning Approach
- Challenges Encountered by Teachers on the Utilization of Experiential Learning Approach

A combination of Likert-scale and open-ended questions were used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

Data Collection Procedure

After securing approval from the Batangas Public Schools District Superintendent, the researcher coordinated with school heads to administer printed surveys to teachers, allowing a five-day completion window. Complementing the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten selected participants via Google Meet, ensuring sessions were recorded and transcribed with informed consent. All gathered data underwent rigorous statistical processing and thematic analysis to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of results.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using Weighted Mean to describe the level of ELA usefulness and utilization, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) to test the hypothesis regarding the relationship between the study's variables, and the Slovin's Formula to ensure the statistical power of the sample size.

Results

3.1. Level of Usefulness of Experiential Learning Approach in Teaching Reading

The perceived usefulness of the ELA cycle was evaluated based on the four stages of learning: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. The following table summarized the teachers' assessments.

ELA Stages	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
3.1.1. Concrete Experience	3.57	Highly Useful	4
3.1.2. Reflective Observation	3.66	Highly Useful	3
3.1.3. Abstract Conceptualization	3.73	Highly Useful	2
3.1.4. Active Experimentation	3.76	Highly Useful	1
Composite Mean	3.68	Highly Useful	

The data revealed that Grade 3 teachers perceived the Experiential Learning Approach as a "Highly Useful" pedagogical tool, with a composite mean of 3.68. Active Experimentation ranked the highest indicating that teachers believe students gain the most value when they are given the autonomy to apply reading concepts to new, practical situations. This is followed closely by Abstract Conceptualization which teachers value for its ability to help students build logical frameworks and mental maps from their experiences. Interestingly, while Concrete Experience ranked fourth, it remains a critical entry point; teachers noted its significant impact on reducing learner anxiety and creating an inclusive classroom atmosphere where reading is viewed as an engaging activity rather than a stressful drill.

3.2. Extent of Utilization of Experiential Learning Approach

This variable measured how frequently and deeply the teachers actually integrate ELA strategies into their daily literacy instruction.

Indicators of Utilization	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
3.2.1. Promoting Critical Thinking	3.65	Highly Utilized	2
3.2.2. Enhancing Active Participation	3.59	Highly Utilized	3
3.2.3. Real-World Application	3.68	Highly Utilized	1
Composite Mean	3.64	Highly Utilized	

The extent of utilization earned a composite mean of 3.64, interpreted as "Highly Utilized." The most prominent area of implementation is Real-World Application, where teachers consistently bridge the gap between classroom texts and functional life skills, such as reading manuals or writing letters. Promoting Critical Thinking, also showed high utilization, specifically through the use of "what-if" scenarios that require students to predict and synthesize information.

3.3. Relationship between the Assessments on the Level of Usefulness and on the Extent of Utilization of Experiential Learning Approach

The tables presented below exhibit the relationship between specified variables of usefulness of Experiential Learning Approach and the extent of its utilization in teaching reading in Congressional District 1, Batangas Province.

3.3.1. Relationship between the Usefulness of Experiential Learning Approach (Concrete Experience) and Extent of its Utilization. This section examines the statistical connection between how teachers perceive the value of direct sensory engagement and the frequency of their actual classroom implementation. The following table presents the computed values that reveal the strength and significance of this relationship across different literacy domains.

Variables	p-values	Computed r-values	Interpretation	Decision on Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Critical Thinking Skills	0.000	0.534	Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant
Active Participation and Engagement	0.000	0.612	Strong Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant
Application of Reading in Real-World Contexts	0.000	0.547	Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant

Legend: $p < 0.05$ – Reject Ho, Significant $p > 0.05$ – Accept Ho, Not Significant
0.60 – 0.79 Strong Positive Relationship, 0.40-0.59 Moderate Positive Relationship

The data confirmed that there is a strong link between providing hands-on experiences and the successful teaching of reading. Because all results were statistically significant, it is clear that when students use their senses to learn, they become much more active and engaged in the lesson. This is consistent with the findings of Kolb (2021), who defines this stage as the direct, sensory engagement with a new event that provides the raw material for all subsequent learning. By valuing these concrete encounters, teachers establish a safe and engaging environment that facilitates higher utilization of active literacy strategies.

3.3.2. Relationship between the Usefulness of Experiential Learning Approach (Reflective Observation) and Extent of its Utilization. This section explored the statistical link between the perceived value of having students step back to observe and process their experiences and the actual frequency of these reflective practices in reading lessons.

Variables	p-values	Computed r-values	Interpretation	Decision on Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Critical Thinking Skills	0.000	0.582	Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant
Active Participation and Engagement	0.000	0.526	Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant
Application of Reading in Real-World Contexts	0.000	0.604	Strong Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant

Legend: $p < 0.05$ – Reject Ho, Significant $p > 0.05$ – Accept Ho, Not Significant
0.60 – 0.79 Strong Positive Relationship, 0.40-0.59 Moderate Positive Relationship

Data showed that there is a significant positive relationship between the reflective observation stage of the experiential cycle and its classroom application. The strong link to real-world application supported the idea that without reflection, experience remains isolated; it is the reflective observation stage that allows Grade 3 learners to bridge the gap between schoolwork and the outside world.

3.3.3. Relationship between the Usefulness of Experiential Learning Approach (Abstract Conceptualization) and Extent of its Utilization. This section explored the statistical link between the perceived value of Abstract Conceptualization and the actual frequency with which teachers use experiential strategies in their reading lessons. By analyzing these two variables, the study identified if a teacher's appreciation for logical generalization and theory-building serves as a catalyst for more advanced literacy instruction.

Variables	p-values	Computed r-values	Interpretation	Decision on H0	Verbal Interpretation
Critical Thinking Skills	0.000	0.628	Strong Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant
Active Participation and Engagement	0.000	0.541	Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant
Application of Reading in Real-World Contexts	0.000	0.519	Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant

Legend: $p < 0.05$ – Reject Ho, Significant $p > 0.05$ – Accept Ho, Not Significant
0.60 – 0.79 Strong Positive Relationship, 0.40-0.59 Moderate Positive Relationship

Abstract Conceptualization served as a critical cognitive engine that drives the utilization of experiential learning, particularly in developing higher-order thinking skills. The strong link to critical thinking aligned with the views of Facione (2020), who described critical thinking as a disciplined process of conceptualizing and evaluating information. By valuing this stage, teachers empower Grade three learners to not only decode words but to construct a reasoned understanding of the world through literacy.

3.3.4. Relationship between the Usefulness of Experiential Learning Approach (Active Experimentation) and Extent of its Utilization. This examined the statistical link between the perceived value of Active Experimentation and how frequently teachers actually implement these hands-on strategies. By correlating these variables, the study explored whether a teacher's belief in the importance of practical application serves as a primary motivator for more active classroom engagement.

Variables	p-values	Computed r-values	Interpretation	Decision on Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Critical Thinking Skills	0.000	0.548	Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant
Active Participation and Engagement	0.000	0.593	Moderate Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant
Application of Reading in Real-World Contexts	0.000	0.658	Strong Positive Relationship	Reject	Significant

Legend: $p < 0.05$ – Reject Ho, Significant $p > 0.05$ – Accept Ho, Not Significant
0.60 – 0.79 Strong Positive Relationship, 0.40-0.59 Moderate Positive Relationship

Results showed a strong link between testing out new skills and the actual use of these activities in the classroom. This means that when teachers let student practice reading through real-world tasks and role-playing, students become much more involved and better at solving problems.

All statistical results were impactful because it proved that the primary driver for pedagogical change in District I was teacher conviction. This finding underscored the need for professional development that focuses not just on "how" to teach, but on the "why" behind experiential methodologies.

3.4. Challenges Encountered by Teachers on the Utilization of Experiential Learning Approach

This section assessed the challenges encountered by the teachers on the utilization of experiential learning approach in teaching reading in Congressional District 1, Batangas Province.

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. aligning hands-on activities with the specific literacy curriculum objectives (e.g., phonics, comprehension).	3.93	SA	8
2. assessing individual reading accurately while learners are working in groups on a hands-on project.	3.69	SA	11
3. behavioral management due to learners' increasing freedom and autonomy during experiential tasks.	3.98	SA	2.5
4. encouraging meaningful reflection and verbal processing of the learning among primary learners.	3.70	SA	10
5. integrating technology (e.g., simple video creation, digital tools) effectively into experiential literacy projects.	3.48	A	12
6. lack of administrative or supervisory understanding of the instructional value of experiential literacy methods.	3.30	A	14

7. lack of readily available, relevant materials or resources (e.g., props, real-world texts) for hands-on activities.	3.98	SA	2.5
8. learners tends to focus only on the 'fun' activity rather than the underlying reading being taught.	3.98	SA	2.5
9. limited physical space in the classroom to organize activity stations or conduct movement-based literacy games.	3.96	SA	5.5
10. limited time in the daily schedule to complete the full experiential learning cycle	3.96	SA	5.5
11. managing classroom noise and movement during active, collaborative literacy tasks (e.g., simulations, role-playing).	3.98	SA	2.5
12. managing time to design and set up authentic, engaging reading tasks.	3.95	SA	7
13. providing differentiated support to learners with varying literacy levels during activities.	3.87	SA	9
14. securing parental consent or logistical support for reading focused field excursions or community-based projects.	3.42	A	13
15. transferring the literacy knowledge gained in the experiential setting back to traditional seatwork or tests.	3.03	A	15
COMPOSITE MEAN		3.75	SA

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA), 2.50 – 3.49 Agree (A),
WM – Weighted Mean, VI – Verbal Interpretation*

Data revealed that Grade 3 teachers face significant hurdles when implementing the Experiential Learning approach in reading instruction, as indicated by a "Strongly Agree" composite mean of 3.75. The most pressing challenges, all tied for the highest rank with a weighted mean of 3.98, include classroom behavioral management due to increased student autonomy, a lack of readily available hands-on materials, and the tendency of learners to focus on the fun activity rather than the underlying literacy goal. Conversely, securing parental consent for field excursions and dealing with a lack of administrative understanding were ranked lower but still perceived as notable challenges. Finally, the lowest-ranked hurdle involves transferring experiential literacy knowledge back to traditional seatwork or standardized tests.

3.5. Proposed Enhancement Activities Utilizing Experiential Learning Approach

Maximizing student engagement requires a deliberate shift toward immersive, hands-on education. Through the implementation of Project LIGHTS, this initiative seeks to cultivate critical thinking, robust problem-solving skills, and real-world relevance within the curriculum.

Project L.I.G.H.T.S.

(Literacy Integration through Guided High-impact Teaching Strategies)

Illuminating the path toward reading by using the Experiential Learning Approach as the primary fuel

I. Instructional and Pedagogical Interventions

Strengthening the transition from "Active Experience" to "Reflective Observation" to ensure literacy gains.

Key Result Area	Intervention Activity	Objectives	Key Actions / Mechanism
Concrete Experience	The "Action-to-Alphabet" Stations	To provide learners with a sensory-rich foundation before formal reading.	Create "Movement Stations" where learners perform a physical task. They cannot leave the station until they match the physical object with its written name and phonetic sound.
Reflective Observation	"Stop-Look-Listen" Literacy Breakers	To facilitate immediate reflection on the active experience to prevent "distraction by fun."	During activities, a whistle sounds for a "Reflective Stop." Students must identify one "Power Word" they encountered during the play and explain its meaning to a partner before resuming.
Abstract Conceptualization	The "Word-Logic" Mapping	To help learners categorize and understand the rules of the language they just experienced.	Using "Word Walls" in the classroom, students take the vocabulary from their physical activities and "pin" them under correct categories (e.g., Nouns/Verbs or vowel sounds), turning the experience into a mental concept.

II. Resource and Space Optimization Interventions

Overcoming physical classroom constraints in while integrating "Low-Tech" ICT.

Key Result Area	Intervention Activity	Objectives	Key Actions / Mechanism
Environment Management	The "Halamanan" (Garden) Reading Trail	To utilize outdoor school spaces for "Active Experimentation" (AE) without crowding.	Laminated "Story Quest" cards are placed in the school garden. Students move through the trail, using their reading skills to solve "missions" (e.g., "Find the tree described in paragraph 1").
ICT Integration	Offline "Phygital" Literacy Hub	To provide modern technology interaction even with limited classroom devices/Wi-Fi.	Utilize a single smartphone/tablet with offline reading apps. Students use the device to record themselves reading a story they just "acted out," allowing them to hear and reflect on their own fluency.
Material Development	"Scraps-to-Scripts" Kits	To create localized, tactile resources using recycled materials (Bayanihan spirit).	Teachers and parents collaborate to build "ELA Kits" (e.g., sand trays for finger-tracing letters or bottle-cap word builders) that represent objects found in the local Batangas community.

III. Professional Collaborative Support Interventions

Sustaining the Experiential Learning Approach framework through teacher mentorship and administrative synergy.

Key Result Area	Intervention Activity	Objectives	Key Actions / Mechanism
Teacher Support	ELA "Innovation Sprint" LAC	To provide a venue for teachers to troubleshoot the 4 stages of Kolb's cycle.	Monthly Learning Action Cell sessions focus on "Stage-Specific" problems. Teachers share successful 5-minute activity "hacks."
Stakeholder Engagement	Parent-Partner "Reading Kinship"	To extend the "Active Experimentation" stage of reading into the home and community.	Orient parents on how to ask "Reflection Questions" at home. When children see words in the community (e.g., signs at the market), parents encourage them to "Decode and Describe."
Professional Growth	Micro-Teaching Video Exchange	To provide visual evidence of ELA manifestations in Grade 3 learners.	Teachers record short clips of students showing "Active Experimentation" (using a new word correctly in a new context) and share these in a group chat for peer feedback and encouragement.

Discussion

The statistical findings present an encouraging yet complex reality regarding how Grade 3 teachers in Congressional District I, Batangas Province, bring the Experiential Learning Approach (ELA) into their reading classrooms. High marks for both usefulness (3.68) and actual use (3.64) show that educators genuinely believe hands-on learning transforms routine reading drills into exciting discoveries. This teacher conviction is backed by strong statistical links showing that when lessons connect directly to real life, primary learners become highly active, lose their fear of reading, and grow much more confident. However, teachers reached an absolute consensus on severe systemic hurdles specifically citing difficulties with classroom behavioral management during active tasks, a painful shortage of physical materials, and the constant risk that children focus entirely on the "fun" rather than the reading skill.

These patterns align perfectly with the foundational educational theories grounding this research while shining a spotlight on local classroom struggles. The clear path from direct sensory interaction to meaningful reading comprehension mirrors David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which proved that firsthand encounters served as the essential spark for all deeper cognitive growth. Similarly, the way teachers successfully tie reading texts to functional life skills reflects John Dewey's progressive pragmatism, showing that bringing literacy into real-world contexts transforms the classroom into a natural laboratory of discovery. Yet, the heavy day-to-day challenges reported by the teachers proved that a heavy curriculum load and cramped physical spaces often force them to skip or rush through critical parts of the learning cycle, though a low administrative friction score indicates a supportive leadership baseline ready for structured interventions.

The real-world implications of this study demand an urgent shift in both daily teaching practices and regional educational policies. For classroom teachers, the results prove that experiential reading cannot simply be treated as unstructured play; it requires a deliberate, practical framework like the proposed "Project L.I.G.H.T.S." (Literacy Integration through Guided High-impact Teaching Strategies) to firmly anchor active experiences to clear learning goals. Educators may protect class time for Reflective Observation to pause the excitement and solidify vocabulary retention before moving on to abstract concepts. At the policy level, the Department of Education (DepEd) Division of Batangas may move away from rigid, top-down instruction mandates and instead provide targeted training on active classroom management while supporting parent-assisted resource development through regular Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions.

Conclusion

The Experiential Learning Approach is not merely a teaching strategy; it is a vital intervention for the Philippine literacy crisis. The study concluded that ELA significantly enhances student engagement and comprehension by making reading a tangible, lived experience. While teachers are highly competent in the theory of ELA, they require more structural support to implement it consistently.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the collected data, the researcher recommends the following detailed, action-oriented steps:

1. Teachers may ensure that reading lessons consistently progress through all four stages, specifically allotting more time for Reflective Observation to help students process their concrete experiences.
2. School heads may encourage teachers to design reading tasks that mimic everyday life to further increase the utilization of literacy in real-world contexts.
3. The schools may organize "Best Practice" sessions where teachers who highly value the approach can mentor others in its execution.
4. The administration may provide specialized training in "Active Classroom Management" to help teachers facilitate movement-based literacy games without compromising discipline or instructional time.
5. It is highly recommended that the proposed enhancement activities may be integrated into the Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions to provide a standardized, evidence-based roadmap for teaching reading.

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