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Implementation of The Parents and Teachers' Initiatives in Teaching Grade 1 Learners in Phonetic Blending Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

Ramil P. Manguilimotan, *Gengen G. Padillo, Maria Richiel Bustillo, Engel C. Quilaton, Noime P. Pajares, Reylan G. Capuno, Eric R. Villarin

Cebu Technological University – Main Campus, College of Education

Abstract:

This research determined the implementation of the parents' and teachers' initiatives in teaching Grade 1 learners phonetic blending in the public elementary school in Cebu during the School Year 2020-2021 as the basis for a home reading action plan. It utilized the adapted descriptive-comparative research design using survey questionnaires and supported interviews to gather data. The respondents are 84 learners with phonetic blending difficulty, 29 Grade 1 teachers, and 231 parents. Collected data were statistically treated using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and rank. Results showed that parent-respondents are mostly 29-35 years old, female, high school graduates, dominated by mothers, available materials at home are books and grandmothers as other learning adults at home. Teacher-respondents are all females, under 29-40 years old, with masteral units, teacher III and taught for more than ten years. Parents perceived the level of learners' phonetic blending ability as skilled and less skilled for teachers.Moreover, the level of implementation of the respondent groups' initiatives in the development of the learners' phonetic blending abilities is perceived as implemented for parents and highly implemented for teachers. Results show that the parents' and teachers' perceptions are significant. Lastly, the extent of the problems encountered by the respondents is found to be high for parents and teachers. Hence, it is concluded that both respondent groups differ in implementing initiatives in phonetic blending during the pandemic. Adoption of the home reading action plan is recommended.

Key words: Early Childhood Education, phonetic blending, teaching initiatives, descriptive-comparative, Cebu

I. Introduction

Millions of lives have been turned upside down due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. (Haldane et al., 2021; Kooli, 2021). Educational institutions across 192 countries have temporarily shut their doors (Aji, 2021; Mahaye, 2020; Mouloudj et al., 2021). With the worse situation that school learners are forced to stay home than school(Sahlberg, 2020), a higher or even beyond what is expected is considered in the context of disengaging learners from or their deprivation of education(Azevedo et al., 2021; Duby et al., 2022). While the impact of the pandemic has threatened both developed and developing countries(Khlaif et al., 2021), it is critical to note that these have vulnerable implications for learners as they are faced with advantages due to socio-economic constraints that disallow them to access technological, educational, and financial resources(Cullinane & Montacute, 2020; Hassan et al., 2021).

At the pandemic's peak, the need to keep literacy alive has to be an optimum prioritization. Literacy skills are most notable to learners in the primary levels; hence, reading must be regarded as an essential skill to be looked into. Every child has to learn reading, requiring literacy skills to have life choices and opportunities. Research has shown that learners have more opportunities for academic success and future success if they acquire foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy(Rolla et al., 2019). Deficiency in functional skills is strongly linked to social exclusion and reinforcement of inequalities and disadvantage. It is just sad to accept that literacy is under threat. Even if learners can access distance learning materials, many do not have literate parents who can help them.

Literacy and numeracy skills has always been a top priority in the Philippines for development to every school learner (Gatcho & Bautista, 2019). To read and write altogether would allow every individual to explore reality through life experiences contributory to meaningful existence. Interacting with the community and realizing one's worth is through empowering literacy. Through it, one can do and eventually make an individual contributor to a sustainable development in the society. Attaining such has also been an effort of the government to really ensure that every child is a reader.

At present, Department of Education mandates on the implementation of reading programs have become a part of the system (Abril et al., 2022; Llarena, 2023). Concerns relative to reading in schools based on certain assessment techniques are catered through various intervention initiatives which are either teacher or school-based. Such efforts are aligned with the shared goal of the Department of Education with the support of the Philippine government to really produce Filipino graduates who are literates and who can connect with genuine interactions to the community for life survival.

At this time of pandemic, the need to tie up with stakeholders is encouraged in order foster cooperation from the clients especially the community at the same time to heighten success of the suggested activities for enhancement. Tapping of para- teachers and potential learning adults at home and in the community prompts a better initiative(Tupas & Linas-Laguda, 2020).

Despite all the programs, alternative initiations and concerted efforts from the top management, reality speaks that the new educational set is far different compared to the usual practice. Learning modalities are adopted so as not to sacrifice the education privileges of the learners. These are in support to distance learning that is thought to be the best option while pandemic has still affected everyone. One of which that is primarily adopted by schools is modular modality where are provided with printed modules for parents to administer to their learners doing home schooling. Activities that require reading skills are stipulated in the modules for completion.

Public schools are one with DepEd in this quest on reading drive for learners and an implementing institution of the designed reading interventions by the department of education nationwide. But with the occurrence of pandemic, the implementation has been greatly affected. It poses challenge to the school and the division to produce fluent readers among set of reading aspirants mentioned despite the mandatory inclusion of kindergarten level in the elementary level. Yet, the case is manageable and considerable since the teachers are deprived of face-to-face teaching deliveries to learners. Such deprivation for sure have caused the occurrence of such problems. For this reason, the researchers are interested to dig down the causes of such taking into account the factors contributory to such reading struggles.

1.1 Theoretical-Conceptual Framework

This study is in consonance with the three selected theories namely Constructivism Theory by Lev Vygotsky, Behaviorism Theory by B.F. Skinner and Humanism Theory by Maslow which are student-centered in nature and are aligned with the practices of inclusive education that caters learners with needs relative to reading skill development. These are supported with the legal bases comprising of Republic Act No. 7743 or the Act providing for the Establishment of Congressional, City and Municipal Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers Throughout the Philippines; Republic Act No. 10556 which also known as "The Araw ng Pagbasa in 2013", DepEd Order No. 032, series of 2020, DepEd Order No. 14, series of 2018 otherwise known as the Policy Guidelines on the Administration of the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory and DepEd Order No. 18, series of 2017 Every Child a Reader Program Funds for the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Program.

In the Theory of Constructivism, learning process is established by the facilitator and is exercised by the learners themselves. The provisions in this theory explains the roles of reading adults in school and at home as well as para-teachers who can be utilized especially at this present educational set-up. Learning how to read requires interaction and collaboration between the reading aspirants as well as the reading experts.

Moreover, the Theory of Behaviorism behavior is shaped through reinforcements. Both positive and negative reinforcement raise the probability that the antecedent behavior will happen again. In contrast, punishment decreases the likelihood that the antecedent behavior will happen again(Agazzi et al., 2020). There is learning when there is change in behavior in the learner. In this school of thought, the proponents believes that any acting, thinking, and feelings of an organism can be considered a behavior. This has a great implication on teaching reading to learners, that is to sustain interests and motivation in learning the skill.

Next is the Humanist Learning Theory which approaches learning as fulfilling an individual's potential rather than meeting specific learning targets. The theory holds that self-actualization is the end goal of each learner. Learners are believed to determine their own goals, set standards, and evaluate their own work(An & Mindrila, 2020). Learners are at the heart to each humanist classroom. Teachers are facilitators, guides at the side and coaches, recognizing the unique needs of each learner and supporting their academic and social development (Hagiwara et al., 2020). To this regard, the reading adults' roles in learning the craft play essential role in achieving the reading goals.

On the other hand, Republic Act No. 7743 was enacted to promote the moral and intellectual well-being of the Filipino by increasing the literacy rate and emphasizing the significant role of education in nation-building. Provisions of reading printed materials are mandated under this law in order to address insufficiency of the reading enhancement tools. Installation of reading centers in the locality can help para–teachers provide assistance to teachers in the quest of developing basic reading skills of learners. This ensures Filipino learners to have access to a wide variety of up-to-date learning.

Additionally, Republic Act No. 10556 recognizes and supports endeavors that promote reading and literacy, motivate awareness and uphold Filipino heritage and culture, including educational activities influenced by great writings of different individuals, and recognizes the value of promoting reading as a shared activity among the youth, families, educators and the private sector, thereby emphasizing personal interaction and facilitating the exchange of ideas throughout the country. This reiterates reading associations concerning to plan and implement activities for the observance emphasizing reading day to be annually celebrated. Such reading activities are not limited to story – telling sessions and reading skills modules.

DepEd Order No. 032, series of 2020 issuance prompts the adoption of learning delivery modalities to ensure the continued provision of learning opportunities to its learners, while protecting the health and safety of both tis personnel and learners. Under the provision, the implementation of the said issuance demands for a holistic approach and a stronger partnership among schools, households and communities. As the teachers and DepEd personnel tackle the additional tasks, challenges and new expectations in the new normal,

the program necessitates the complementary and bigger roles that parents, guardians and other household partners and members of the community play to support learning process of the learners at home. The need is anchored on the conditions and situations namely: learners who cannot manage independent learning including learners with special needs just like that of the reading aspect; learners who do not have a family member or any significant adult available to give instructional support and facilitate distance learning delivery modalities; and household parents / guardians with full time jobs who may not able to monitor and guide the child's learning at home.

Moreover, DepEd Order Number 14, series of 2018 aims to develop every Filipino child to become reader and writer at his/her present grade level. The Bureau of Learning Delivery-Teaching and Learning Division (BLD-TLD) continue to administer the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) assessment to public elementary schools nationwide. The implementation is used as a classroom-based assessment tool aims to measure and describe the learners' reading performance in both English and Filipino languages in oral reading, silent reading and listening comprehension. These three types of assessment aim to determine the learner's independent, instructional and frustration levels. It also serves as one of the bases in planning, designing/redesigning the reading instruction of the teachers and the school's reading programs or activities to improve the overall school's reading performance.

In line with the K to 12 Programs and the goal of making every child should be a reader, the Department of Education (DepEd) is strengthening its reading program through the implementation of the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Program. The ECARP is a national program that addresses the thrust of DepEd to make every Filipino child a reader at his/her own level. It is designed to equip learners with reading and writing skills and make them independent young readers and writers. It also provides a year-long training for teachers to make them multi-literate and independent problem solvers.

With the distance learning adapted in different modality, parents themselves have diverted their roles as para - teachers who have to establish the missing routines in the formal education set – up. As a result, parents of reading needs learners strive through a trial-and-error process to find what works - and what doesn't, just to encourage their learners to engage with online learning and/or face-to-face classes that looks much different than it did before COVID-19.

1.2 Related Literature and Studies

In today's society, the ability to read is necessary to access general education content, utilization of emerging technology, and in embracing lifelong learning opportunities. The acquisition of literacy skills is especially important for individuals with special cases. For them, knowing how to read leads to more independence in everyday life and higher social participation(Sari, 2020).

According to (Newman & Latifi, 2021), learners learn best when working collaboratively with those whose proficiency level is higher than their own, allowing them to complete tasks they are not yet able to do independently. In newly adopted educational change, learners are still in the core of focus while teachers still act as the learning facilitator. However, the change in the system as to learning modalities implemented, adjustments have to conform to the needs at the same time the nature of the learning mode. Parents, now become frequent learning facilitators at home that should dedicate their time throughout the school year in maintaining the social–emotional environment for home schooling while teachers' roles comprise of being mediators between learners and parents doing a great share in the learning process at home than teachers who serve as back-up or support to the parents in order to allow great ownership of the environment and learning at home.

With the current learning situations like learning in a one –size – fits- all, some learners are suppressed with their chance to learn accordingly. Some learners need more academic assistance and support than others because of documented physical or cognitive disabilities. To accommodate the variety of reading needs present in today's academic set up, schools must create a variety of intervention strategies based on the severity of the needed assistance. Regardless with the presence and absence of the classrooms and classmates, teacher can still establish a modified way of collaboration with the inclusion of the relevant persons contributory to the success of home schooling in a constructivist way.

On the one hand, training in phonemic awareness and teaching phonics with a systematic approach are essential to enable learners to read words efficiently (Khan & Khan, 2021). Moreover, learners must also be trained to read texts fluently and to understand what they read (Brun-Mercer, 2019). It is also recommended to link the learning of reading and of spelling, which are two facets of the same learning.

In this time of COVID-19 pandemic, parents of learners with reading needs have increased due to the new educational set – up. Teachers as instructional leaders in the classrooms while parents are facilitators at home. Education in time of a pandemic threatens the lives and future of the school learners. Authorities are considering proposals to allow limited face-to-face classes in low-risk areas. But for the most part, classrooms will remain empty due to safety concerns.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This research determined the implementation of the parents and teachers' initiatives in teaching Grade 1 learners in phonetic blending of the identified public elementary schools in Cebu during the School Year 2020-2021 as basis for home reading action plan.

Specifically, this research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the parent-respondents in terms of age and gender, highest educational attainment, potential learning adults at home, and learning resources available at home, and other learning adults at home?
2. What is the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms teachers age and gender, highest educational attainment, academic rank, and number of years in teaching?
3. As perceived by the respondent groups, what is the level of learners' phonetic blending ability?
4. What is the level of implementation of respondent groups' initiatives in the development of the students' phonetic blending abilities amid the pandemic?
5. Is there a significant difference between the perception of the parents and teachers on the learners' phonetic blending ability?
6. Is there a significant difference between the implementation of the parents and teachers' initiatives in the development of the students' phonetic blending abilities amid the pandemic?
7. What is the extent of the problems encountered by the respondent groups contributory to the difficulty in developing students' competency in phonetic blending with the implementation of the modular distance learning?

2. Materials and Methods

Table 1 Age and Gender of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
50 and above	4	1.59	2	0.80	6	2.39
40-49	41	16.33	9	3.59	50	19.92
30-39	87	34.66	32	12.75	119	47.41
20-29	62	24.70	14	5.58	76	30.28
Total	**194**	**77.29**	**57**	**22.71**	**251**	**100.00**

The research design, respondents, environment, instrument, data gathering procedure, and statistical treatment are all covered in this section.

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized descriptive-comparative method with the use of survey questionnaires supported with interviews for data collection. Such combination of data collection under quantitative method was decided in order to cater parent-respondents who were less fortunate in literacy. Utilization of interviews modes and survey questionnaires made data gathered more reliable and less open to argument.

2.2 Respondents

The respondents of this study were the 29 teachers and the 251 parents of grade 1 learners with reading struggles relative to phonetic blending adapting modular modality in the identified schools.

2.3 Instrument

This study makes use of the modified survey questionnaires adapted from (Torgesen et al., 1999) designed for both parents and teachers respectively to gather data relative to phonetic blending. The instrument is composed of parts which includes demographic profiling of the respondents, level of learners as to blending of phonetics, the level of difficulties in teaching the competency to the learners amidst the pandemic and the adopted educational set–up and the initiatives taken in order to address the cited problems in the implementation of modular approach that have affected the learners' level of acquiring mastery on phonetic blends.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers secured a written permit from the school division offices to conduct the study. Consent letters from the participants were also obtained, ensuring that the established ethical standards in special education research, including protecting the data sources and that the data genrated in the study exclusively use for educational purposes only. Similarly, the researchers allocate enough time for the respondents and participants to answer the questionnaire.

2.5 Statistical Treatment

To obtain the quantitative results, frequency, percentage, weighted mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, rank, and thematic analysis were the statistical tools used.

3.0 Results

3.1. Age and Gender of the Parent- Respondents

As shown in Table 1, there were 194 out of 251 respondents who are females which comprised 77.29 percent of the respondents while there were 57 or 22.71 percent of them were male parent respondents. As to age of the respondents, the highest percentage falls on the age range of 30 – 39 where there is about 47.41 percent or 119 parent respondents that comprise of 87 or 34.66 female parent respondents and 32 or 12.75 are male parent respondents. This is followed by the age bracket 20-29 where 76 or 30.28 percent of the parent respondents are noted which is composed of 62 of the female parent respondents belong that equates to 24.70 percent and 14 are from the male parent respondents with 5.58 percentage assignment. On the contrary, there is only about 19.92 percent or 50 parent participants who are aging 40 – 49. This includes the 41 or 16.33 female parents and 9 or 3.59 percent male parent respondents. Nonetheless, minimal data has been recorded based on the responses as to age bracket 50 and above that takes 6 or 2.39 percent for the parent respondents where 4 of them or 1.59 percent are female parents while 2 or 0.80 percent are male parents.

3.2. Highest Educational Attainment of Parent Respondents.

Table 2 Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Attainment	f	%
College Graduate	28	11.16
College Level	45	17.93
High School Graduate	85	33.86
High School Level	50	19.92
Elementary Graduate	20	7.97
Elementary Level	23	9.16
Total	**251**	**100.00**

As shown in Table 54, there were 8 out of 251 respondents who are mostly high school graduates which comprised 33.86 percent of the respondents while there were 50 or 19.92 percent of them were high school level. Likewise, 45 or 17.93 percent of the parents are college levels followed by 28 or 11.16 percent of them are parents in the college graduates. Moreover, there were 23 or 9.16 percent of them obtained elementary level and 20 of them are elementary graduates which equates to 7.97 percent.

3.3. Potential Learning Adults at Home

Table 3 Potential Learning Adults at Home

Potential Learning Adults	f	Rank
Mother	178	1
Father	58	2
Sister	36	3
Brother	18	4

*Multiple Response

Table 3 shows the evident presence of potential learning adults considered by the parent – respondents at home which is dominated by "mothers" with 188 recorded responses which topped in the survey. Fifty- eight parent – respondents responded "father" as their potential learning adults available at home and ranked second in the list. Likewise, there are thirty - six who responded "sister" in the tool which equates to 3rd in rank. Lastly, there are eighteen parent respondents who claimed to have "brother" as their available learning adults visible at home.

3.4. Learning Resources

Available at Home

Table 4 Learning Resources Available at Home

Learning Resources Available	f	Rank
Books	170	1
Reference Materials	67	2
Magazine	26	3
Newspaper	1	4

*Multiple Response

As shown in Table 4, 170 parents claimed that "books" are the only available learning resources at home and ranks 1 in the survey. On the other hand, 67 parents who answered "reference materials" ranks 2 and is followed by twenty – six parents who answered "magazine" as their learning resource by which ranks 3. On the contrary, there is only one respondent to responded to have "newspaper" as his/ her learning material found at home.

3.5. Other Learning Adults at Home

Table 5 Other Learning Adults at Home

Other Learning Adults	f	Rank
Aunt	69	1
cousin	57	2
grandmother	41	3
None	20	4
Uncle	19	5
Grandfather	12	6
Other relatives	10	7
Niece	5	8
Nephew	1	9

*Multiple Response

Table 5 reveals that 69 of the parent – respondents disclosed to have "aunt" as the other learning adult significant at home which ranks 1. This is followed by 57 parents who claimed to have "cousin" as substantial at home as other learning adult. Moreover, there were 41 of them who claimed to have "grandmother" living with them aside from the direct family members. Likewise, other than the top three, other learning adults visible at home though in minimal numbers are uncle (19 , grandfather (12), other relatives (10) , niece (5) and nephew (1). On the contrary, there are 20 parent - respondents who responded with "none".

3.6. Age and Gender of the Teacher – Respondents

Table 6 Age and Gender of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
48-57	3	10.34	0	0	3	10.34
38-47	12	41.38	0	0	12	41.38
28-37	11	37.93	3	10.34	14	48.28
Total	**26**	**89.66**	**3**	**10.34**	**29**	**100.00**

Table 6 exposes dominance of female teachers over males in the mentioned locales which shows 26 or 89.66 percent while 3 or 10.34 are male teachers out of 29 total teachers surveyed. As to age range, there is 48.28 percent in totality for both male and female teachers are aging 28 – 37 where females comprise of 11 responses out of 26 which equates to 37.93 percent and all 3 male teachers that is with 10.34 percentage assignment. However, in details, female teachers topped as evident on 38 – 47 where 12 of them responded or 41.38 percent. Moreover, 3 from the female teachers are under the age bracket 48 -57.

3.7. Highest Educational Attainment

Table 7 Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Attainment	f	%
With Doctoral units	2	6.90
Master's Graduate	1	3.45
With Masteral Units	23	79.31
Bachelor's Degree	3	10.34
Total	**29**	**100.00**

As shown in Table 7, out of 29 recorded teacher respondents, there were 23 or 79.31 percent who have units in their masters' studies while only 2 or 6.90 percent are acquiring units in the doctoral degree. Meanwhile, there is only about 10.34 percent or only 3 teachers who have not continued professional development through taking graduate studies courses, instead, who are only just bachelor's degree holders. On the other hand, there is only one female teacher is who claimed to have graduated in the masters in education and that takes 3.45 percent in totality.

3.8. Academic Rank of the Teacher – Respondents

Table 8 Academic Rank of the Respondents

Academic Rank	f	%
Master Teacher I	1	3.45
Teacher III	9	31.03
Teacher II	12	41.38
Teacher I	7	24.14
Total	**29**	**100.00**

Table 8 reveals that out of 29 faculty members, 12 of them takes the majority slot as Teacher I teachers which is 41.38 in percentage while 9 of them are in the Teacher III positions taking about 31.03 percent of the sample. Moreover, there are 7 or 24.14 percent of them who are in the Teacher I academic rank while only 1 master teacher is noted in the position and which takes 3.45 in the percentage.

3.9. Number of Years in Teaching

Table 9 Respondents' Number of Years in Teaching

Number of Years in Teaching	f	%
Above 15	4	13.79
11-15	11	37.93
6-10	5	17.24
1-5	9	31.03
Total	**29**	**100.00**

Table 9 presents the number of years in teaching of the teacher respondents handling grade 1 learners in the three identified schools of this study. Based on survey, there are 11 or 37.93 percent of them are under 11 - 15 years of experience followed by 9 or 31.03 percent of the 29 respondents are having 1 – 5 years of experience. On the other hand, there is about 23.53 percent or is equivalent to 5 teachers who are into 6 – 10 years of experience and 4 or 13.79 percent of which are having 15 years and above in experience.

3.2 Level of The Learners' Phonetic Blending Ability

Teaching literacy to learners means giving learners the ability to communicate clearly and effectively which basically primarily starts with phonetics.

3.2.1 Parent - Respondents' Perspective

Table 10 Level of the Learners' Phonetic Blending Ability as Perceived by the Parent-respondents

S/N	Indicators	WM	INTERPRETATION
1	Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one vowel letter-sound correspondences	3.09	Skilled
2	Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one local consonant letter-sound correspondences	3.10	Skilled
3	Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to- one foreign consonant letter-sound correspondences	2.82	Skilled
4	Associate the short sounds with the common spellings for the five major vowels	2.86	Skilled
5	Associate the long sounds with the common spellings for the five major vowels	2.84	Skilled
6	Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs	2.92	Skilled
7	Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words	2.96	Skilled
8	Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words	2.92	Skilled
9	Blend CVC words with local consonants	2.61	Skilled
10	Blend CVC words foreign consonants	2.59	Skilled
Aggregate Mean		**2.87**	**Skilled**

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00-Highly Skilled; 2.50 – 3.24-Skilled; 1.75 – 2.49-Less Skilled; 1.00 – 1.74 –Not Skilled

Table 10 shows that aggregated mean of 2.87 which means the learners in the three locales when it comes to phonetic blending ability, as perceived by parents are "skilled" which comprise all of the indicators shown above. Thus, it is noted that the learners are " skilled" in: demonstrating basic knowledge of one-to-one vowel letter-sound correspondences (3.09) , demonstrating basic knowledge of one-to-one local consonant letter-sound correspondences (3.10), demonstrating basic knowledge of one-to- one foreign consonant letter-sound correspondences (2.82), associating the short sounds with the common spellings for the five major vowels (2.86), associating the long sounds with the common spellings for the five major vowels (2.84), knowing the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs (2.92), decoding regularly spelled one-syllable words (2.96), decoding regularly spelled two-syllable words (2.92), blending CVC words with local consonants (2.61) and blending CVC words foreign consonants (2.59).

3.2.2. Teacher – Respondents' Perspective

Table 11 Level of the Learners' Phonetic Blending Ability as Perceived by the Teacher-respondents

S/N	Indicators	WM	INTERPRETATION
1	Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one vowel letter-sound correspondences	3.12	Skilled
2	Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one local consonant letter-sound correspondences	3.06	Skilled
3	Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to- one foreign consonant letter-sound correspondences	2.89	Skilled
4	Associate the short sounds with the common spellings for the five major vowels	2.91	Skilled
5	Associate the long sounds with the common spellings for the five major vowels	2.98	Skilled
6	Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs	2.82	Skilled
7	Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words	2.82	Skilled
8	Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words	2.76	Skilled
9	Blend CVC words with local consonants	2.63	Skilled
10	Blend CVC words foreign consonants	2.63	Skilled
Aggregate Mean		**2.86**	**Skilled**

As revealed in Table 11, learners are generally rated as "skilled" by the teacher respondents in as much as phonetic blending skill is concerned. The results show an aggregated mean of 2.86 in all indicators. Specifically, it is noted that the learners are " skilled" in: demonstrating basic knowledge of one-to-one vowel letter-sound correspondences (3.12) , demonstrating basic knowledge of one-to-one local consonant letter-sound correspondences (3.06), demonstrating basic knowledge of one-to- one foreign consonant letter-sound correspondences (2.89), associating the short sounds with the common spellings for the five major vowels (2.91), associating the long sounds with the common spellings for the five major vowels (2.98), knowing the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs (2.82), decoding regularly spelled one-syllable words (2.82), decoding regularly spelled two-syllable words(2.76), blending CVC words with local consonants (2.63) and blending CVC words foreign consonants (2.63).

3.3. Level of Implementation of The Parent – Respondents in The Development of The Learners' Phonetic Blending Abilities

3.3.1 Parent – Respondents' Initiatives

Table 12 Level of Implementation of the Parent-respondents' Initiatives in the Development of the Learners' Phonetic Blending Abilities

/N	Indicators	WM	INTERPRETATION
1	Take time to study reading with the child.	3.19	Implemented
2	Texting or calling the teacher to help the child with his or her difficulties.	2.75	Implemented
3	Keep a cellphone to join the group chat conducted by the teacher.	2.92	Implemented

4	Use other methods to communicate important tasks for the child	3.16	Implemented
5	Attending meeting or parent conferences about the difficulties the child is facing.	3.07	Implemented
6	Deliver the module to the nearest center/ward.	3.44	Highly Implemented
7	Take the module to the nearest center/ward.	3.39	Highly Implemented
8	Conducting follow-up activities at home.	3.27	Highly Implemented
9	Establish a system to monitor the child's learning	3.18	Implemented
10	Provide feedback on the child's status to the teacher for assistance	3.05	Implemented
Aggregate Mean		**3.14**	**Implemented**

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00-Highly Implemented; 2.50 – 3.24-Implemented; 1.75 – 2.49-Less Implemented; 1.00 – 1.74 –Not Implemented

As indicated in Table 64, statistical treatment showed a 3.14 aggregated mean of the parent initiatives interpreted as "implemented". There are ten indicators cited in this section wherein three of these are noted as "highly implemented" which are as follows: delivering the module to the nearest center/ward, taking the module to the nearest center/ward and conducting follow-up activities at home and establishing a system to monitor the child's learning with a weighted mean ranging from 3.27 – 3.44 respectively. Moreover, there are seven indicators which fall under "implemented" namely: taking time to study reading with the child (3.19), texting or calling the teacher to help the child with his or her difficulties (2.75), keeping a cellphone to join the group chat conducted by the teacher (2.92), using other methods to communicate important tasks for the child(3.16), attending meeting or parent conferences about the difficulties the child is facing (3.07), establishing a system to monitor the child's learning (3.18) and providing feedback on the child's status to the teacher for assistance (3.05).

3.3.2 Teacher – Respondents' Initiatives

Table 13 Level of Implementation of the Teacher-respondents' Initiatives in the Development of the Learners' Phonetic Blending Abilities

S/N	Indicators	WM	INTERPRETATION
1	Conduct of Home Visitations for skill development	3.66	Highly Implemented
2	Making Follow – ups through texts and calls as to home practices and activity completions	3.72	Highly Implemented
3	Creation of Group Chats as a method of communication for parental monitoring as to provision of assistance on skill development	3.72	Highly Implemented
4	Utilization of FB and other platforms for information dissemination for parents	3.69	Highly Implemented
5	Administration of Parent Conferences and Orientations in any platform as to learners performance	3.76	Highly Implemented
6	Distribution of Modules as well as the additional activities and instructional materials at home or to the nearest drop off points	3.72	Highly Implemented
7	Retrieval of Modules and additional activity outputs and instructional materials at home or to the nearest pick up points	3.69	Highly Implemented
8	Individualized administration of skill delivery and assessments forms	3.41	Highly Implemented
9	Utilization of modified mechanisms on the Conduct of Performance Tasks and other forms of assessments relative to the competency focused	3.45	Highly Implemented
10	Conduct of updated feed backing of learners performance to parents in any platforms preferred	3.62	Highly Implemented
Aggregate Mean		**3.64**	**Highly Implemented**

As presented in Table 13, the teachers' initiatives done for learners came out to have an aggregated mean of 3.64 with an obtained interpretation of "highly implemented" Specifically, all the ten indicators are labelled as highly implemented comprising of weighted mean ranging from 3.41 – 3.76. This implies that there is active involvement of teachers in each of the initiatives stated above to

learners for them to develop the skill expected of the learners. Literacy is an essential tool for functioning in a modern society and, as such, it is often taken for granted when developing second language learning curricula for people who need to learn another language.

3.4. Test Of Significant Difference On The Perception Of The Parents And Teachers On The Learners' Phonetic Blending Ability

Table 14 Test of Significant Difference on the Perception of the Parents and Teachers on the Learners' Phonetic Blending Ability

Source of Difference	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	Computed t- value	p-value	Decision	Result
Parents	28.70	6.60	0.09	0.167	0.868	Do not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Teachers	28.61	6.23					

Table 14 poses the test significant difference on the perception of the parents and teachers on the learners' phonetic blending ability using t – test at 0.05 level of significance. The computed mean for the perception of the parents on the learners' phonetic ability is 28.70 with a standard deviation of 6.60 while the computed mean for the perception of the teachers on the learners' phonetic ability is 29.61 with a standard deviation of 6.23 having a mean difference of 0.09. This difference was tested with a computed t-value of 0.167 and a p-value of 0.868 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected which means that there is no significant difference between the perception of the two groups on the learners' phonetic ability. The table implies that the claims of the parents and teachers as to their perceptions of the phonetic blending ability of learners are similar as to their respective viewpoints. And that, there is a no noted difference between the two claims from the two sources of perspectives. In other words, there is consistency of the perceptions from both sectors.

3.5. Test Of Significant Difference Between The Implementation Of The Parents' And Teachers' Initiatives In The Development Of The Learners' Phonetic Blending Abilities

Table 15 Test of Significant Difference between the Implementation of the Parents and Teachers' Initiatives in the Development of the Learners' Phonetic Blending Abilities

Source of Difference	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	Computed t- value	p-value	Decision	Result
Parents	31.45	5.89	5.00	-6.148*	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Teachers	36.45	3.90					

*significant at p<0.05 (two-tailed)

Table 15 presents the test of significant difference between the implementation of the parents' and teachers' initiatives in the development of the learners' phonetic blending abilities using t- test at 0.05 level of significance. The computed mean for the implementation of parents is 31.45 with a standard deviation of 5.89 while the computed mean for the teachers' implementation is 36.45 with a standard deviation of 3.90 having a mean difference of 5.0. The difference was tested with computed t - value of -6.148* and a p -value of 0.000 which is lesser than 0.05 significance level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected which means that there is significant difference between the initiatives implemented by both parents and teachers in the development of the learners' phonetic abilities.

3.6 Extent Of The Problems Encountered By The Respondents Contributory To The Difficulty In Developing Learners' Competency In Phonetic Blending

This section introduces the extent of the problems encountered by the respondent groups contributory to the difficulty in developing learners' competency in phonetic blending. Varied problems are faced by both parents and teachers during the COVID – 19 pandemic particularly in the primary school.

3.6.1. Problems Encountered by Parents

Table 16 Extent of the Problems Encountered by the Parents Contributory to the Difficulty in Developing Learners' Competency in Phonetic Blending

S/N	Indicators	WM	INTERPRETATION
1	Inaccessibility of internet connection that can be used by the learners in learning.	2.27	Low
2	Unfamiliar words stated in modules	2.27	Low
3	Struggling in reading statements found in modules	2.23	Low
4	Difficulty in understanding the instructions/ activities given	2.21	Low
5	Difficulty in reaching out for teachers' consultation/ communication with regards to modular instructions.	2.05	Low
6	Difficulty in completing the activities needed	2.26	Low
7	Scarcity of resources like gadgets, cellphones, load and other instructional materials needed related to competence development.	2.29	Low
8	Lack of learners' interest in the completion of the self-learning modules	2.37	Low
9	In availability of parents and other learning adults at home that could guide the learners for the activities	2.18	Low
10	Difficulty in building positive and responsive environment for the conduct of phonetic blending activities through modular learning	2.25	Low
11	Time limitations for answering modular activities	2.24	Low
12	Poor parental support towards child's behavior management while on home schooling	2.18	Low
13	Difficulty in the administration of assessment procedures relative to the skill	2.22	Low
14	Many distractions that have affected in the administration of skill developmental activities	2.19	Low
15	No one could teach the child at home	2.12	Low
16	Difficulty in building positive and responsive environment for the conduct of phonetic blending activities through modular learning	2.09	Low
Aggregate Mean		**2.21**	**Low**

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00-Very High; 2.50 – 3.24-High: 1.75 – 2.49-Low; 1.00 – 1.74 –Very Low

Table 16 dwells on the extent of the problems encountered by parents that contribute to the difficulty in developing learners' competency in phonetic blending that is interpreted as "low" with an aggregated mean of 2.21 of the 16 established indicators. Likewise, all the indicators were rated similar to the overall result. Congruent to the data presented, the results entail that the parents perceived having low extent as to the challenges encountered which means that the problems encountered by parents only have less effect to the enhancement of the learners' phonetic blending skill development which means that despite the problems they encountered relative to the implementation of their initiatives, those do not greatly affect in the development of their learners' phonetic blending skills.

3.6.1. Problems Encountered by Teachers

Table 17 Extent of the Problems Encountered by the Teachers Contributory to the Difficulty in Developing Learners' Competency in Phonetic Blending

S/N	Indicators	WM	INTERPRETATION
1	Inaccessibility of internet connection in the work place for modular related preparations and parent /student communication mechanism	3.21	High
2	Unavailability of internet connection at home for modular – related preparations and parent / student communication mechanism	3.28	Very High

3	Daily struggle relative to load consumption for parents and learners follow - up utilization	3.03	High
4	Scarcity of resources in the production of modules, designing of instructional materials as well as in the preparation of assessment tools relative to the competence development	2.93	High
5	Unreachability of parents with no gadgets or devices for consultations and communication for GC's, FB pages, texts and on – call mechanisms	3.62	Very High
6	In availability of parents and other learning adults at home during home visits	2.52	High
7	Difficulty in building positive and responsive environment for the conduct of phonetic blending activities through modular learning	3.07	High
8	Lack of interests of learners in the completion of the self learning modules	2.66	High
9	Time limitations for modular preparations, individualized – home monitoring mechanism and assessment measures	2.48	Low
10	None familiarization of respective locations of learners and parents for home visitations	2.52	High
11	None or less cooperation from parents and / or family members of learners in the distribution, retrieval, completion and in setting conducive learning environment at home	2.69	High
12	Poor parental support towards child's behavior management while on home schooling	2.62	High
13	Less or none cooperation of the parents with the school's initiatives	2.62	High
14	Difficulty in maintaining emotional support to the child through proactive communication while accomplishing activities in the modules	2.28	Low
15	Struggle on the distance of the learners' residence from school	2.31	Low
16	Lack of transportation means for home visitations and other initiatives	2.07	Low
17	Difficulty in the administration of assessment procedures relative to the skill	2.45	Low
18	Many distractions that have affected in the administration of skill developmental activities	2.55	High
19	Occurrence of multi- tasks that require compliances which consume teachers' time instead to be utilized for home visitations	3.14	High
Aggregate Mean		**2.74**	**High**

Table 17 discloses data resulting to a "high" extent of the problems encountered by the teachers in relation to the difficulty encountered in the development of the learners' competency in phonetic blending with an aggregated mean of 2.74. Similar results were reflected as "high" in 13 indicators with a weighted mean combination ranging from 2.52 to 3.21 which are as follows: inaccessibility of internet connection in the work place for modular related preparations and parent /student communication mechanism (3.21), daily struggle relative to load consumption for parents and learners follow - up utilization (3.03), scarcity of resources in the production of modules, designing of instructional materials as well as in the preparation of assessment tools relative to the competence development (2.93), unavailability of parents and other learning adults at home during home visits (2.52), difficulty in building positive and responsive environment for the conduct of phonetic blending activities through modular learning (3.07), lack of interests of learners in the completion of the self - learning modules (2.66), none familiarization of respective locations of learners and parents for home visitations (2.52), none or less cooperation from parents and / or family members of learners in the distribution, retrieval, completion and in setting conducive learning environment at home (2.69), poor parental support towards

child's behavior management while on home schooling (2.62), less or none cooperation of the parents with the school's initiatives (2.62), many distractions that have affected in the administration of skill developmental activities (2.55) and occurrence of multi-tasks that require compliances which consume teachers' time instead to be utilized for home visitations (3.14).

On the contrary, there are only two indicators garnering "very high" rating with weighted means 3.28 and 3.62 respectively. These are as follows: unavailability of internet connection at home for modular – related preparations and parent / student communication mechanism (3.28) and unreachability of parents with no gadgets or devices for consultations and communication for GC's, FB pages, texts and on – call mechanisms (3.62). Moreover, there are five of the 19 indicators which has "low" extent to its implication to the development of the phonetic blending skills. These are as follows: time limitations for modular preparations, individualized – home monitoring mechanism and assessment measures (2.48), difficulty in maintaining emotional support to the child through practice communication while accomplishing activities in the modules (2.28), struggle on the distance of the learners' residence from school (2.31), lack of transportation means for home visitations and other initiatives (2.07) and difficulty in the administration of assessment procedures relative to the skill (2.45).

4. Discussion

Many of the parent-respondents are high school levels and graduates, some are either college graduates or college levels while few are elementary levels or graduates. It can be noted that the parents are literate and have the capability of providing academic assistance to children at home. Home-based parent involvement that stresses on giving importance of reading readiness skills promotes intrinsic motivation among children, thus, promotes achievement (Froiland, 2021).

Moreover, the parent-respondents are more on mothers than fathers, however, there are also evidence of sisters and brothers labelled as potential learning adults visible at home. Home literacy experiences provided by families provided frequently and with quality contribute to young children's literacy development. Provision of home support in any form of activities stimulate children's literacy development. Thus, family members play crucial roles in this premise.

Also, books are mostly found at home of the respondents as the main learning resources used in their initiatives. Books play important roles in the lives of young children at home. Mothers prefer using print books for they are to employ more strategies to engage with children to focus on the book content. While mothers more naturally facilitated the shared reading using the print book, they liked the interactive digital features and their toddlers' high engagement level with the e-book. The results demonstrate how different book formats are associated with different types of mother-child interactions and support different kinds of learning and development (Bojczyk et al., 2016; Eggleston et al., 2022).

Results also indicate that aunts, cousins and grandmothers placed the top three among the possible other learning adults at home who can provide assistance to the learners aside from the members of the family. Extended family members such as grandparents, but also aunts and uncles, have been acknowledged as relevant actors in the transmission of advantage across generations for they play important and independent roles that affect children's educational attainment. The roles pertain to the back up support to the child in any ways they can (Park et al., 2017). Moreover, extended family support reduced family-to-work conflict and enhanced family satisfaction, while family-to-work conflict reduced family satisfaction. Extended family members are contributory to the children especially on cases like mothers are working. Thus, expanding the definition of the family are useful to working mothers. Hence, it may be necessary for organizations to factor extended family members into their family-friendly policies to enable working mothers manage any unintended negative consequences of utilizing extended family support(Amah, 2021).

With regards to the profile of the teacher-respondents, the number of female teachers out rated the male teachers as the figures reflects a high difference. The conventional age range of the teacher respondents are in the 28 - 47 age category. Most number of teacher– respondents are taking postgraduate studies, taking up units in the masters education. The teacher respondents are mostly in the academic rank of Teachers I – III. There is an adequate inventory of teachers who have 11-15 years of experience while the rest of them 1 – 10 years of teaching experience. Only minimal figures were noted for teachers with 15 and above experience in the field. The quality of education is dependent on the qualifications and competencies of the faculty. The vital role of teachers is to have a great influence in education outcomes. Moreover, the faculty development of teachers is an important factor towards building the strong foundation of an education system to ensure quality education(Padillo et al., 2021). Low teacher qualification inevitably leads to low standards of learning achievement among students.

Moreover, the teacher's training is an important requirement and essential component for all the educational activities including conducive learning environment, curriculum development and implementation and assessment (Ferreira et al., 2020). A trained and skillful teacher has more ability to teach the students and implement the various teaching methods successfully (Franklin & Harrington, 2019) .When teachers apply the various teaching methods and techniques according to the acquired skills then students achieved higher academic results and the interest of the student is also increased (Anwer, 2019). Parents perceive the Grade 1 learners in the three identified schools as skilled when it comes to phonetic blending abilities. Teachers in the grade 1 levels of selected three public elementary schools perceive their learners as skilled in the phonetic blending competency. Identified parent – initiatives relative to the development of the Grade 1 learners' phonetic blending abilities are labelled as implemented. In this era of pandemic, parents are taking equal part as the same role of the teachers. Hence, reading instruction is most effective when it begins by teaching students to decode with small units rather than with larger syllabic units, even when syllables are salient spoken

and written units in the writing system (Sargiani et al., 2022). An awareness of the relationship between speech sounds (phonemes) and letter patterns (graphemes) is one of the important repertoires within the Four Resources model of reading. When reading, learners have to "break the code" of the written language, as well as comprehend texts, understand how texts are used, and to critically analyze texts (TAŞPINAR & Çubukçu, 2020). Additionally, according to Markgraf (2021), the teacher efficacy is essential in an intervention's success, and educators must be competent in their instruction. A focus on selective intervention strategies is suggested and teacher efficacy as significant factors in enhancing literacy skills.

In terms of implementation, the initiatives taken by the teachers towards the enhancement of the Grade 1 learners' phonetic abilities are highly implemented just similar to those of the parents' claims. As noted between the perceptions of parents and teachers and with regards to the Grade 1 learners' phonetic blending ability, there is no significant difference at all. Parents have value to continue education and recognize the need to adapt in the new normal of schooling. Monitoring offline and online activities at home, teaching the concept, and building communication with the child are strategies employed to help understand the concepts of children's lessons. Parents perceived communication with school through teachers for updates as the most important factor for them to execute their roles (Alkinani, 2021). The use of various learning materials and assessment delivered in various modalities are teachers' mechanism to strengthen the skills the way parents recognize teachers' pedagogic capabilities (Dollente & Tan, 2021)

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the essentiality of intensifying reading mechanisms of learners amidst pandemic as reflected in the practices done at home by both parents and teachers is a crucial component on the enhancement for the phonics instruction that is geared towards gaining improvement in their phonetic blending abilities of the young learners while in homeschooling.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the implementation of a Home Reading Action Plan by Grade 1 Learners. The adoption of the action plan promotes active collaboration between teachers and school administrators who are prime movers of the educative wheel.

7.0 Limitations

This study was conducted at the three identified public elementary schools in the province of Cebu.

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