International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

From Policy to Practice: Kindergarten Teachers' Experiences with the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education

Clarissa Mae Jeanne Gonzalez Labalan[1], Danilo Estipona Despi[2]

[1]Teacher VI, Department of Education
[2]Schools Division Superintendent,Department of Education

Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the implementation of DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, or the *Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education*, by kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District. Anchored in Edmund Husserl's (2012) philosophical framework, it employed total population sampling, involving 29 kindergarten teachers in the district. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to capture the teachers' lived experiences in translating the policy into classroom practice. Informed consent and confidentiality were strictly observed. Thematic analysis revealed that all kindergarten teachers were female and primarily mid-career professionals committed to continuous learning through seminars and graduate studies. Teachers demonstrated strong understanding and practical application of the Omnibus Policy, effectively integrating play-based, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate approaches. However, policy implementation was challenged by large class sizes, inadequate learning spaces, and limited instructional materials, which hindered individualized instruction. Enabling factors such as supportive school leadership, collaborative practices, and adaptive resource utilization enhanced teaching effectiveness and literacy instruction. While kindergarten teachers were competent and policy-responsive, systemic barriers constrained optimal implementation. It recommended providing differentiated support for novice teachers, improving access to professional development, and ensuring sufficient resources and manageable class sizes. Furthermore, it called for sustained collaboration among kindergarten teachers, administrators, and parents to strengthen policy enactment and improve learning outcomes. Future research is recommended on class size, parental engagement, culturally responsive teaching, and technology integration in kindergarten reading instruction. Future research may explore how class size, parental involvement, teaching approaches, and use of technology affect the development of early reading skills among young learners.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Research Background

Kindergarten education plays a vital role in laying the foundation for a child's lifelong learning and overall development. As the first formal stage of schooling, it equips young learners with essential skills in literacy, numeracy, social interaction, and emotional regulation, which are crucial for success in later academic stages. In a structured yet nurturing environment, children learn to communicate, cooperate, and build relationships with peers while engaging in activities that promote problem-solving, creativity, and

independent thinking. These early learning experiences not only stimulate brain development but also foster confidence and adaptability, helping children reach their full potential and preparing them for the challenges of formal education and beyond.

Kindergarten education is supported by several international frameworks that highlight its vital role in a child's holistic development. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) affirms every child's inherent right to education, development, and well-being (UNCRC, 1989), emphasizing that early learning opportunities are foundational to realizing these rights. In alignment with this, Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 urges all nations to guarantee that, by 2030, every child has access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary schooling (United Nations, 2015). Likewise, the 2016 Putrajaya Declaration, endorsed by UNESCO, UNICEF, and regional policymakers, reinforces the shared commitment to advancing equitable, inclusive, and high-quality early childhood care and education throughout the Asia-Pacific region. These frameworks collectively underscore the global recognition that investing in kindergarten education is essential for building a strong foundation for lifelong learning, equity, and social progress.

Across the globe, numerous countries have become benchmarks for delivering high-quality early childhood education (ECE), providing valuable lessons on effective and sustainable practices. As noted by Hughes (2023) and Beatrice (2025), nations such as Finland, Sweden, New Zealand, Denmark, Norway, Japan, and Singapore have established exemplary ECE systems anchored in the philosophy of holistic child development. These systems recognize that early education extends beyond preparing children academically; it also nurtures their emotional intelligence, social competence, creativity, and physical well-being. A common feature across these nations is their strong emphasis on play-based and experiential learning, which allows children to explore, inquire, and construct knowledge through meaningful experiences. This approach fosters curiosity, independence, and problem-solving skills – qualities that serve as the cornerstone of effective early education and lifelong learning.

The Philippines has established a comprehensive legal and policy framework to advance early childhood care and education (ECCE), recognizing its pivotal role in nurturing children's lifelong learning, holistic growth, and future success. Republic Act No. 10410, also known as the Early Years Act of 2013, identifies the period from birth to eight years old as the most crucial phase of human development and mandates the strengthening of a National ECCD System. This system ensures the delivery of integrated, age-appropriate, and accessible services that promote the physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and moral development of young children. Complementing this legislation is Republic Act No. 10157, or the Kindergarten Education Act of 2012, which institutionalizes kindergarten as a compulsory and mandatory entry point into the formal education system for all five-year-old children. Moreover, Republic Act No. 10533, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, further reinforces this provision by embedding kindergarten as the foundational stage of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. Together, these interrelated laws demonstrate the country's commitment to providing equitable access to quality early learning opportunities, ensuring that every Filipino child begins their educational journey with a strong and supportive foundation.

To operationalize these landmark laws, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, otherwise known as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education, which serves as a comprehensive framework consolidating and harmonizing all existing guidelines, standards, and procedures related to kindergarten implementation. This order provides direction for curriculum design,

learning assessment, instructional delivery, and teacher qualification requirements, ensuring consistency and quality across all public and private kindergarten programs.

To further enhance its relevance and responsiveness, the policy was amended by DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2018, and later by DepEd Order No. 015, s. 2025, which introduced refinements addressing emerging educational priorities, contextual challenges, and the evolving needs of Filipino learners. Collectively, these legal and administrative issuances demonstrate the government's unwavering commitment to strengthening early education by ensuring that kindergarten remains inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and anchored on quality standards that support every child's right to meaningful early learning experiences.

The Philippines has not only legislated early childhood education but has also developed frameworks such as the Kindergarten Curriculum Framework (KCF) and the National Early Learning Framework (NELF). These guide the holistic development of five-year-old children across physical, social-emotional, language, cognitive, and values domains. The KCF integrates the contextualization of instruction, with a strong emphasis on the mother tongue as the medium of teaching and learning, aligning with the K to 12 Curriculum Guide (2012). The use of mother tongue aims to create a child-friendly, inclusive, and culturally relevant learning environment (Bartolome, Mamat & Masnan, 2020).

Despite these commendable efforts, the translation of these national policies into classroom practices presents several challenges. These include gaps in teacher training, inconsistencies in implementation, contextual limitations, and the realities of local schools and communities. Kindergarten teachers, being at the frontline of this educational reform, are pivotal in ensuring that policy goals are realized in the daily lives of learners. Hence, understanding their experiences offers vital insights into the strengths and limitations of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (Department of Education, 2016).

Kindergarten education is foundational in developing children's readiness for formal schooling. Multiple studies confirm that the early years are vital for brain development, and interventions during this stage yield the highest returns in terms of future learning and productivity (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). In the Philippine context, children from diverse linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds often enter kindergarten with varied levels of exposure to literacy, numeracy, and social interaction. Consequently, kindergarten teachers face the dual challenge of delivering a developmentally appropriate curriculum while navigating the disparities in children's school readiness.

One of the salient features of the Philippine kindergarten curriculum is its play-based, learner-centered, and developmentally appropriate nature. It underscores the importance of contextualized learning experiences, aiming to reflect the cultural and linguistic realities of learners. However, the challenge lies in translating these pedagogical principles into actual classroom practice, especially in resource-constrained settings. In practice, the implementation of the kindergarten policy is influenced by various structural and systemic factors, including teacher preparedness, availability of teaching-learning materials, parental involvement, and school-community engagement. Teachers often grapple with large class sizes, limited training on contextualized teaching, and inadequate instructional support. The ECCD Longitudinal Study conducted by UNICEF Philippines (2020) revealed the importance of continued support for learners as they progress from kindergarten to higher grades, particularly during language transitions and in conflict-affected communities.

Furthermore, teachers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic brought to light additional concerns about the flexibility and resilience of the kindergarten system. The shift to remote and flexible learning modalities posed significant challenges for kindergarten teachers, learners, and families. Teachers had to

reimagine instruction, maintain learner engagement remotely, and assess learning outcomes with limited digital infrastructure and parental support (Rocamora, 2020; Simbulan, 2020). These realities underscored the need to capture and analyze teachers' narratives, not only to evaluate policy implementation but also to adapt and inform future reforms.

The Republic Act No. 8980, or the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act of 2000, laid the groundwork for a holistic approach to early childhood services in the Philippines. It recognizes parents as primary caregivers and emphasizes a child's right to survival, protection, and development. However, kindergarten teachers often find themselves carrying the bulk of this responsibility in school settings. They serve as the bridge between home and formal education, tasked with not only teaching foundational literacy and numeracy but also fostering values, routines, and social behaviors critical for children's long-term success.

Teachers' perspectives and lived experiences are crucial in bridging the gap between policy and practice. As highlighted by Grantham-McGregor et al. (2020), the most effective early childhood education programs are those that are culturally responsive and adapted to local needs. Teachers need to be empowered not just as policy implementers but also as co-designers of the curriculum, capable of adapting national standards to their unique classroom contexts. This approach requires continuous professional development, supportive supervision, and participatory policy dialogues.

Despite strong policy mandates, the success of kindergarten education in the Philippines continues to depend heavily on local contexts and capacities. While some schools benefit from community support and adequate resources, others face persistent challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and a lack of training in culturally responsive pedagogy (Larawan, 2023). This uneven implementation reveals a critical gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities, highlighting the importance of research that amplifies the voices and experiences of teachers. Reinforcing this concern, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recently underscored the country's "real and widespread" education crisis. As of 2019, 90 percent of Grade 5 learners could not read at the expected level, and 83 percent struggled with basic math, with even more severe conditions in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

According to UNICEF Chief of Education Akihiro Fushimi, the COVID-19 pandemic further deepened these learning gaps, particularly among disadvantaged groups, while recurring natural disasters continue to disrupt educational continuity. In response, UNICEF emphasized the urgent need to invest in children's early years to help rebuild and strengthen the country's educational foundation (Gonzaga, 2025).

Indeed, curricular reforms such as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education are only as effective as their implementation on the ground. International trends in educational reform emphasize inclusive, equitable, and flexible learning systems that respond to the evolving needs of learners (United Nations, 2015). For the Philippines to fully realize the promises of its kindergarten program, it must listen to and learn from its teachers. These frontline implementers offer valuable insights into what works, what doesn't, and what needs to change to ensure that every Filipino child receives a quality early childhood education.

As a kindergarten teacher, the researcher is deeply interested in how national policy, such as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education, translates into classroom realities. Teachers' experiences offer more than implementation accounts. They provide critical reflections that highlight the strengths and gaps in early childhood education. Through their insights, challenges, and strategies, this study seeks to inform more grounded, responsive, and effective ECE policies in the Philippines.

The setting of the Study

This study conducted in Sorsogon West District, one of the four administrative districts under the Department of Education (DepEd) Schools Division of Sorsogon City, currently headed by Schools Division Superintendent Dr. William E. Gando. The Division oversees 83 public schools, 19 private or non-DepEd senior high schools, and the laboratory high school of Sorsogon State University, which remains under DepEd as a provider of basic education.

This study focused on the Sorsogon West District, which comprises 21 public schools, including 19 elementary and 2 integrated schools. A complete list of the participating schools is provided in the section on research participants.

Collectively, these schools serve a total of 9,249 learners, of which 1,162 are enrolled in Kindergarten. The district is staffed by 355 teachers, including 30 Kindergarten teachers. These early childhood teachers are primarily responsible for implementing the Kindergarten curriculum and related interventions aligned with the Department of Education's standards and policies.

This district was selected as the study site because the researcher is based at Sorsogon Pilot Elementary School, which is located within the district. Additionally, the district offers a representative mix of urban and semi-rural school contexts, making it an appropriate setting for examining key issues in early childhood education, including teacher practices and learner development.

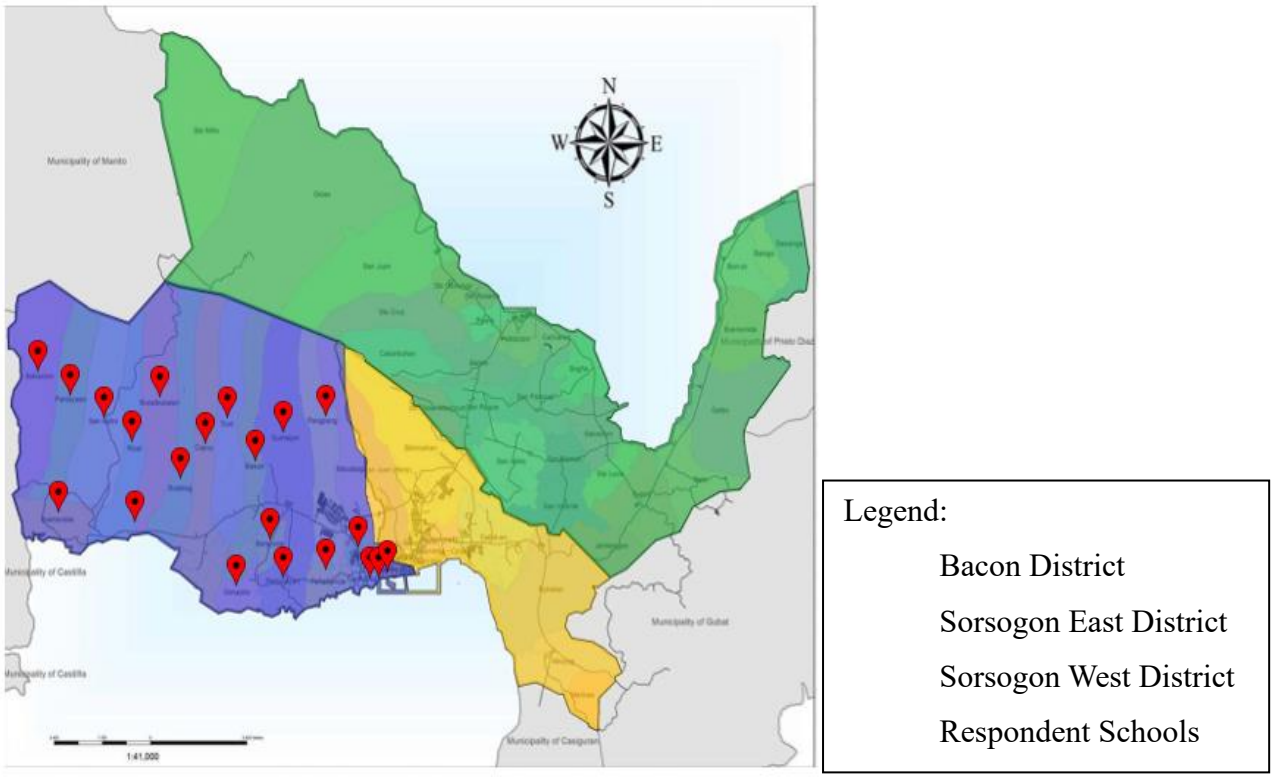


Figure 1. Map of Sorsogon West District Showing the Participant Schools

Problem Statement

This study explored how kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District implement DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, also known as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. While the policy provides a national framework for quality early childhood education, the study examined how its provisions are

understood and applied at the school level, offering insights into how local practices align with or differ from national policy goals. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of kindergarten teachers along with:
1.1 Age
1.2 Gender
1.3 Number of years in service
1.4 Educational qualification
1.5 Seminars/training attended
2. How do kindergarten teachers understand the key provisions of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education?
3. How do teachers implement the policy in their day-to-day classroom instruction and learning activities?
4. What challenges do teachers encounter in translating the policy into practice?
5. What enabling factors support the effectiveness of teachers in the following areas:
5.1 Reading instructional materials development
5.2 Teaching-learning process
5.3 Reading assessment and feedback
6. What professional insights or recommendations can be drawn from teachers' experiences to improve policy implementation at the school level?

Assumptions

This research was initiated with the following assumptions:

1. Kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District have diverse backgrounds in age, gender, experience, education, and training, which may influence how they interpret and implement DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016.
2. Kindergarten teachers possess varying levels of understanding of the policy provisions, which are shaped by their professional training, access to orientation or policy documents, and experience in the field.
3. Kindergarten teachers integrate the policy into their daily teaching practices to the best of their abilities, but the level and fidelity of implementation differ due to contextual factors such as class size, resource availability, and administrative support.
4. Kindergarten teachers face multiple challenges, such as a lack of resources, large class sizes, limited training, and contextual mismatches, that hinder the full and faithful implementation of the policy.
5. Factors such as school leadership support, access to instructional materials, ongoing professional development, and community engagement positively influence effective policy implementation.
6. Based on their firsthand experiences, kindergarten teachers can provide valuable and practical insights that can inform adjustments or improvements to current implementation strategies at the school and policy levels.

Scope and Delimitation

This qualitative study investigated the experiences of kindergarten teachers in implementing the Department of Education's Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education, as outlined in DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, and as amended by DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2018 and DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2022. It explored

how teachers in the Sorsogon West District interpreted the key provisions of these issuances, applied them in their daily classroom instruction, and navigated both the challenges and enabling factors in policy implementation. The study also gathered teacher-driven insights and suggestions for enhancing the policy at the school level.

The scope of the research was limited to kindergarten teachers assigned to the 21 public elementary and integrated schools in the Sorsogon West District during the school year in which the data collection was conducted. Other relevant stakeholders, such as school heads, parents, or DepEd officials, were not included as participants, though their influence was acknowledged in shaping the broader implementation context.

While the study was limited geographically to one district in Sorsogon City and may not be generalizable to all kindergarten contexts in the Philippines, it was designed to provide rich, contextualized narratives that could serve as reference points for similar settings and inform policy improvement efforts and support mechanisms.

Significance of the Study

This study explored the experiences of kindergarten teachers at Sorsogon Pilot Elementary School in implementing the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. The insights derived are expected to contribute to a more responsive, grounded, and effective early childhood education policy and practice. The study is significant for the following:

Department of Education Policymakers. At the national level, the Department of Education can use the findings to align future revisions of the Omnibus Policy with on-the-ground realities. The study provides critical input on teacher training needs, monitoring systems, and implementation gaps that must be addressed to improve policy relevance and effectiveness.

Regional and Division-Level Officials. The study may inform the Regional Director, Schools Division Superintendent (SDS), Kindergarten Supervisor or Focal Person, the Curriculum Implementation Division (CID), and the School Governance and Operations Division (SGOD) of the Schools Division Office of Sorsogon City. It will provide contextualized insights that can guide planning, technical assistance, policy support, and program implementation in their respective areas of responsibility.

School Administrators. Findings can help school heads and instructional leaders better understand how national policies are operationalized at the classroom level. This awareness may guide them in offering more responsive supervision, instructional leadership, and resource allocation.

Curriculum Developers and Early Childhood Specialists. Insights from teachers' actual implementation of the Omnibus Policy can assist curriculum planners and early childhood experts in designing instructional materials, training programs, and guidelines that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and feasible in everyday classroom practice.

Teacher Education Institutions. The study can help improve pre-service and in-service training by teacher education institutions through the integration of real-world policy implementation challenges. This can better prepare future educators for the practical demands of early childhood teaching.

Kindergarten Teachers. This study gives voice to kindergarten teachers by highlighting their perspectives, practices, and challenges in implementing the Omnibus Policy. Their lived experiences can inform future policy revisions and provide a basis for targeted support and capacity-building efforts tailored to their actual needs.

Learners and Their Families. Ultimately, the greatest beneficiaries of this study are the young learners and their families. When kindergarten teachers are supported and policies are effectively implemented, children are more likely to experience meaningful, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate early education that promotes their holistic growth.

Future Researchers. This research may serve as a valuable reference for future qualitative studies in early childhood education, teacher experience, or education policy implementation. It may also open opportunities for comparative research across other schools, divisions, or regional settings.

Definition of Terms

To provide clarity and consistency throughout the study, the following terms are defined based on their use in the context of this research:

Challenges in Implementation. Difficulties or barriers encountered by teachers in aligning classroom practices with policy provisions. These may include a lack of materials, limited training, contextual mismatches, or policy ambiguity. Identifying these challenges is a key objective of the study.

Child-centered methodology. It is an educational approach that prioritizes the interests, needs, abilities, and experiences of the learner. It views children as active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information. This method emphasizes play, exploration, collaboration, and differentiated instruction to support holistic development and foster lifelong learning.

Early Childhood Education (ECE). A broad term that encompasses all forms of education provided to children from birth to age eight. In this study, it is used primarily to refer to kindergarten education, as the entry point to the formal basic education system.

Enabling Factors. They are the conditions or support mechanisms (e.g., training, resources, administrative support) that help kindergarten teachers effectively implement the policy. This study explores how these factors contribute to or hinder successful policy enactment.

Gaps. They are the discrepancies or missing links between what is intended and what is actually achieved in a program, policy, or practice. In education, gaps often indicate areas where implementation falls short of policy goals, such as inconsistencies in teacher training, resource provision, or learner outcomes.

Informed Consent. A process that ensures participants voluntarily agree to take part in the research with a clear understanding of its purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. All participants in this study provided informed consent before data collection.

Instructional Strategies. Specific teaching approaches and techniques are employed by teachers to deliver lessons based on the curriculum prescribed by DepEd. In this context, the study looks at how these strategies align with or deviate from the expectations set in the Omnibus Policy.

Kindergarten Education. The first stage of formal basic education is mandated under Republic Act No. 10157. It targets five-year-old children and aims to provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences that support holistic development. This study focuses on how kindergarten education is delivered at Sorsogon Pilot Elementary School in line with DepEd policies.

Kindergarten Teachers. Teachers assigned to handle kindergarten classes, typically licensed early childhood educators responsible for implementing the curriculum and ensuring developmentally appropriate instruction. In this study, they are the primary participants whose experiences and perspectives provide the core data for analysis.

Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. Refers to DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, including amendments from DO 20, s. 2018 and DO 15, s. 2025. It is a comprehensive policy that consolidates all

existing guidelines related to the kindergarten program in the Philippines, establishing standards for curriculum, instruction, learning environment, assessment, and teacher qualifications. In this study, it is the central policy whose implementation is being examined.

Phenomenology. A qualitative research approach focused on exploring and describing the lived experiences of individuals with a particular phenomenon. This study adopts a phenomenological framework to understand how kindergarten teachers experience the implementation of the Omnibus Policy.

Policy. It is a formal set of principles, rules, or guidelines established by an organization or government to direct decisions and actions toward achieving specific goals. In the education sector, policies provide the framework for curriculum standards, teaching practices, and learner support systems to ensure quality and equity in learning.

Policy-based method. It is an approach that aligns implementation strategies and decisions directly with existing policies or official guidelines. It ensures that educational programs, interventions, and classroom practices adhere to the mandates and objectives set by governing bodies, promoting consistency and accountability in execution.

Policy Implementation. The process by which teachers and school leaders translate national policies into classroom practices. This includes understanding, adapting, and applying the guidelines set by DepEd in actual teaching and learning activities. This study investigates how kindergarten teachers implement the Omnibus Policy in their daily instructional routines.

Practice. It refers to the actual methods, strategies, and actions employed by individuals or institutions in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. In education, it denotes how teachers, administrators, and policymakers translate theoretical frameworks and policies into concrete classroom activities and management approaches.

Semi-Structured Interview. A qualitative data collection method that uses open-ended questions guided by an interview protocol, allowing for flexibility in exploring participants' experiences. This format was used to gain in-depth insights into the participants' views, interpretations, and classroom practices.

Teacher Experiences. Refers to the lived experiences, perceptions, practices, and reflections of kindergarten teachers as they interpret and implement the policy. These include both the challenges they face and the enabling factors that support their work in early childhood education.

Thematic Analysis. It is a qualitative method used to examine data, typically drawn from texts such as interviews or transcripts. Through this approach, the researcher carefully analyzes the information to identify recurring themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that consistently emerge.

Conceptual Framework (IPOOI Model)

This study is anchored on the Input–Process–Output–Outcome–Implication (IPOOI) model to explore how kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District implement DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, also known as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. The input includes the policy itself, which serves as the national framework for early childhood education, along with the teachers' knowledge, training, and the contextual factors within their respective schools.

The process involves how teachers interpret the key provisions of the policy and translate them into daily classroom practices, including instructional strategies, learning activities, and classroom management. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to gather in-depth insights into their

experiences, and the responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach allowed the identification of recurring patterns, challenges, and enabling factors that affect policy implementation.

The output represents the professional insights of kindergarten teachers as implementers of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. It highlights the actual classroom practices, the degree to which these practices align with the policy's goals, and the specific barriers and supports encountered by teachers in translating policy into daily teaching.

The outcome of the study is an enhanced understanding of how the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education is implemented in actual classroom settings and the factors influencing its application. This understanding provides evidence-based insights that can guide improvements in teaching practices, inform targeted teacher support, and shape policy refinements. The findings have important implications for early childhood education, suggesting the need to refine policy guidelines, strengthen teacher training programs, and promote support from school administrators and stakeholders. Collectively, these actions aim to enhance policy implementation, improve classroom practices, and ensure more developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and responsive early childhood education for young learners.

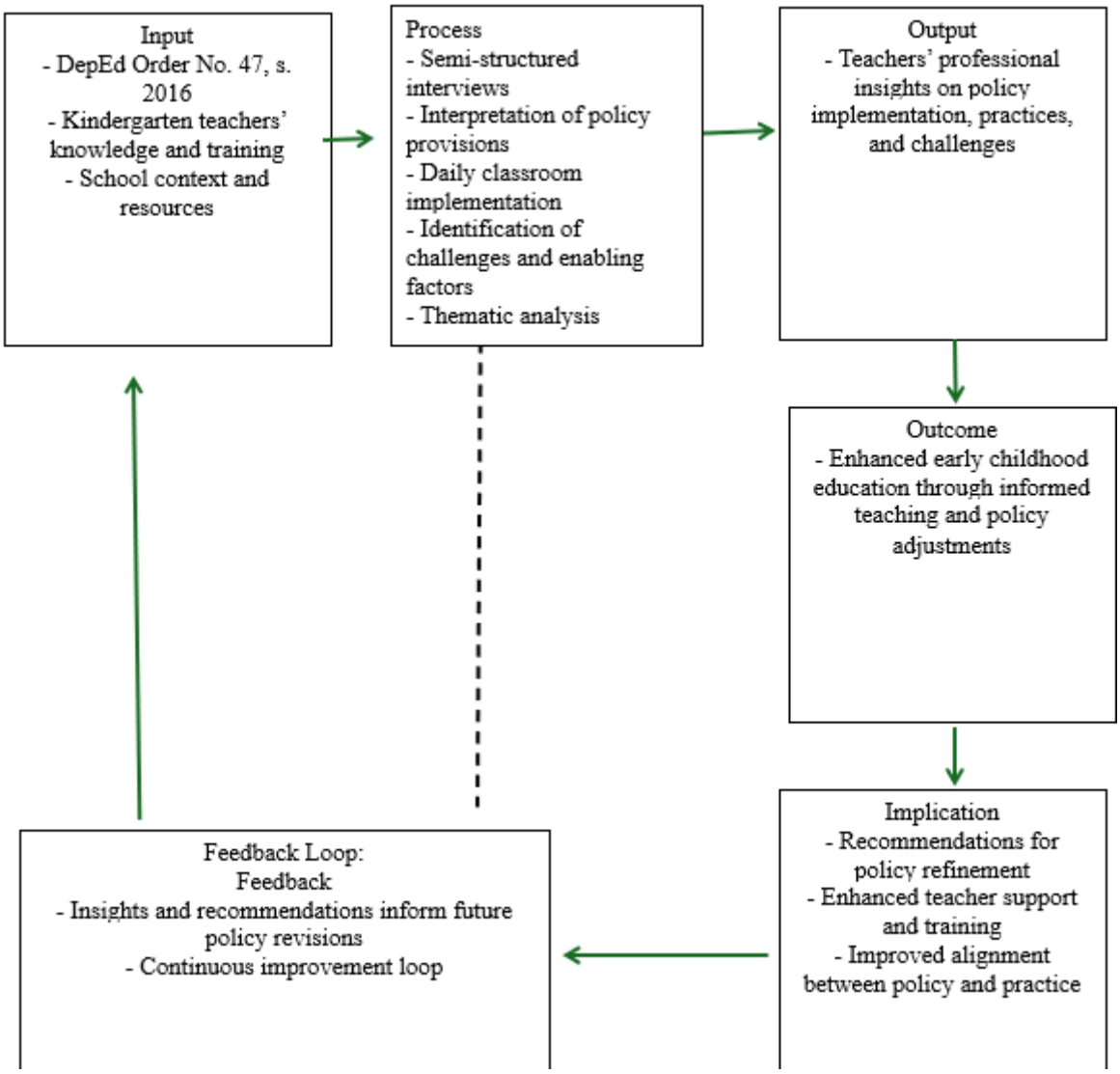


Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents pertinent literature and studies that have been reviewed for their relevance to the present study. To facilitate an effective transition between general concepts, both foreign and local works are organized thematically. The segmentation of cited literature and studies is structured, underscoring the role of language in mathematics learning, the challenges in using the mother tongue in instruction, and the strategies that can enhance the integration of MTB MLE in mathematics education. This thematic discussion was done to strategically build the framework for this qualitative study, emphasizing the significance of the research at hand.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on five classical theories that offer foundational perspectives on early childhood education, teacher behavior, and policy implementation. These theories collectively inform how kindergarten teachers interpret and apply DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, also known as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education.

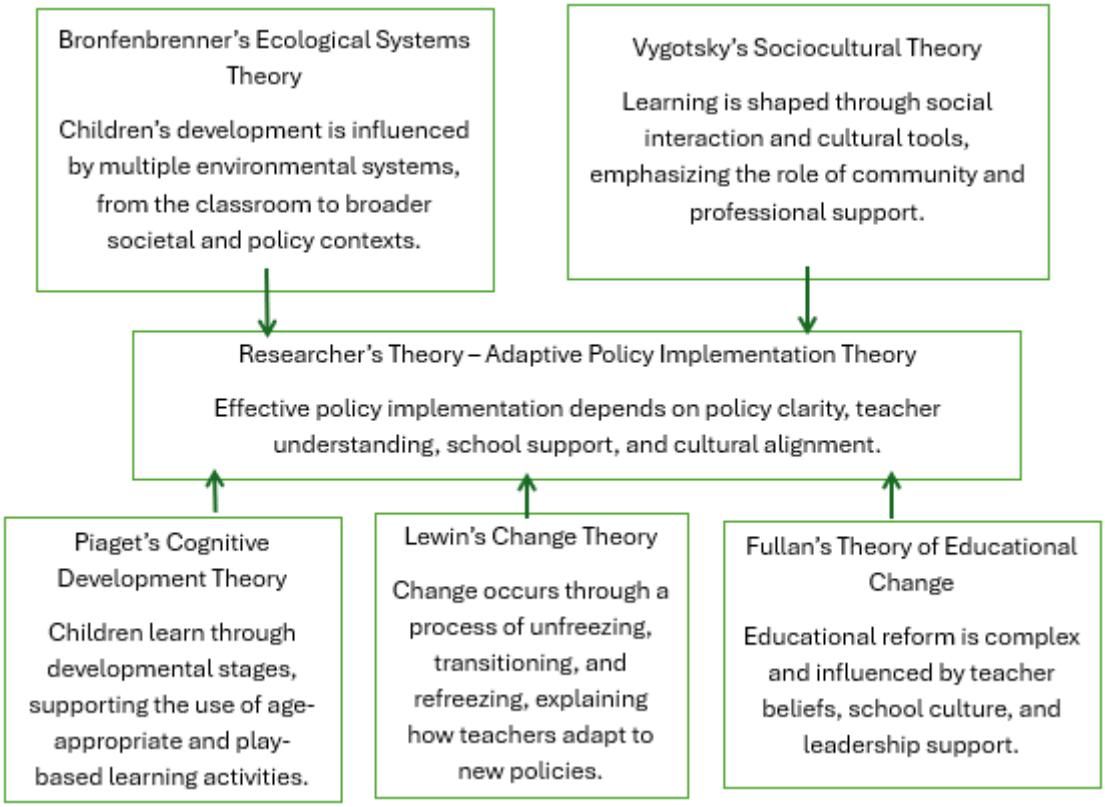
Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the layered environmental influences on a child's development, from the immediate classroom environment (microsystem) to broader societal and policy contexts (macrosystem). This theory supports the notion that policy implementation is shaped by dynamic interactions across these systems. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural tools in learning, suggesting that teachers' understanding and application of policy are mediated by their professional communities and training experiences.

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory provides a developmental lens, guiding the creation of age-appropriate and play-based learning activities, which are central to the policy's pedagogical approach.

Lewin's Change Theory explains the process of adapting to new policies through the stages of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, offering insight into how teachers transition from traditional practices to those aligned with the Omnibus Policy.

Fullan's Theory of Educational Change underscores the complexity of implementing reforms, emphasizing the roles of teacher beliefs, school culture, and leadership in shaping successful policy adoption.

Building on classical foundations, the present researcher proposes an Adaptive Implementation Theory. This theory posits that the effective implementation of DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016 depends on the dynamic interplay of several key factors: the clarity and relevance of the policy, the depth of teacher understanding and agency, the availability of school-level support and resources, and alignment with community and cultural realities. By integrating insights from classical models, this theory emphasizes the critical role of adaptability in how national policies are interpreted, adjusted, and enacted within kindergarten classrooms.



Early Childhood Education in the Philippine Context

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a vital role in shaping the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of young children. Globally, it has been recognized as a cost-effective strategy for enhancing lifelong learning outcomes, particularly in developing countries (UNESCO 2015). In the Philippines, the institutionalization of early childhood education was further strengthened through legislative frameworks such as the Kindergarten Education Act and the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Bustos-Orosa, 2022). These laws made kindergarten compulsory and integrated it into the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, positioning it as a critical foundation for succeeding academic stages.

The Philippines is one of only about 40 countries globally that have mandated at least one year of free, compulsory preschool education before Grade 1 (Abrigo & Francisco, 2024). According to the ECCD Council (2017), the early years from 0 to 6 are addressed through various services spanning health, nutrition, psychological care, parenting education, and early learning. The Philippine Kindergarten Curriculum Framework is designed to develop children's readiness skills, aligning learning experiences to physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and language development needs (DepEd, 2016).

The positive developmental impact of preschool education in the Philippines has been well-documented. Parker et al. (2021), in a longitudinal study by UNICEF, the Department of Education, and the Australian Government, confirmed that students who attended preschool or day care outperformed their peers across literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional domains from Kindergarten to Grade 4. Moreover, these gains were more significant when attendance was more frequent and sustained. These findings reinforced earlier studies emphasizing the benefits of early interventions on later academic and life outcomes (van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018).

Despite the institutionalization of early childhood education, several challenges persist in the Philippine context. Teachers frequently face constraints due to the lack of instructional materials, training, and contextualized learning resources (Jaca & Baroman, 2021; Aquino et al., 2017). Many kindergarten classrooms fail to comply with DepEd's Omnibus Policy standards, including issues related to classroom size, facilities, and furniture (Aquino et al., 2017). Moreover, the limited implementation of special education classes for learners with special needs further highlights inequality in access and quality.

While the ECCD checklist shows that Filipino learners perform at average levels in domains such as fine motor skills and socio-emotional development, delays remain in gross motor, expressive language, and self-help skills (Seguin & Cacho, 2019; Doctor & Macalisang, 2024). Language development, in particular, has been identified as an area needing focused interventions. Children who struggle with receptive and expressive language may find it more difficult to transition into more complex academic tasks (Boada & Januszka, 2019; Ramos, 2021).

Research has also established that children who are developmentally prepared –physically, cognitively, and emotionally – are better positioned to benefit from formal schooling (Pekdogan & Akgul, 2016). Ramos (2021) emphasized the need to evaluate each learner's strengths and developmental limits to implement responsive teaching strategies. Kindergarten readiness indicators such as self-help skills, social competence, and language proficiency have been consistently linked to academic performance (Doctor & Macalisang, 2024).

Equity in access remains an issue. Although the Philippines has achieved a high net enrollment rate in elementary education (around 95%), national and international assessments such as PISA and TIMSS have revealed that Filipino students consistently underperform in reading, math, and science (Abrigo & Francisco, 2024). These findings suggest that early gains made during the preschool years must be consolidated through improved program quality and continued support throughout basic education.

Furthermore, the role of parents in early learning is crucial. Studies have shown that active parental involvement positively impacts children's academic performance (Sangalla et al., 2017; Bartolome et al., 2020). However, teachers must also be equipped to support parental engagement, especially in low-resource communities (Bartolome et al., 2020).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is another essential element in the Philippine context. The use of mother tongue instruction has been proven to enhance learners' understanding and participation (Loniza et al., 2018). However, variability in implementation and availability of localized materials often hampers its effectiveness. Additionally, as Aquino et al. (2017) compared with Malaysia, the Philippines integrates values education rather than a separate spirituality domain and lacks a strong technology component in its kindergarten curriculum.

Multiple empirical studies have supported the effectiveness of interactive and play-based pedagogies in early childhood education (Omaga & Alieto, 2019; Tranquilan, 2020). However, as Boylan (2017) noted, academic readiness is not limited to mastery of academic content but also includes social and emotional competencies. According to Britto et al. (2017), long-term benefits must be prioritized when evaluating the success of ECE programs.

The Philippine early childhood education system is backed by strong legislative support and demonstrates a commitment to providing inclusive and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. However, persistent issues regarding quality, teacher preparedness, language development, instructional materials, and classroom environments need to be addressed. Effective early childhood education must consider the

complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, social, and linguistic development to ensure that all Filipino children are ready to thrive in the formal education system and beyond.

The Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education

The Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016) serves as a cornerstone of early childhood education in the Philippines by consolidating guidelines on curriculum, teaching approaches, learning environments, and assessment tools into a single coherent framework. Its purpose is to ensure consistent implementation of quality kindergarten programs across the country. The 2018 amendment (DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2018) specifically tightened requirements on classroom facilities such as the size, layout, and strategic location of kindergarten spaces, to better accommodate safety protocols, including emergency evacuation procedures. In 2025, DepEd Order No. 015 refined enrollment guidelines to maintain the mandatory entry age of five by October 31 while allowing late enrollments for children who complete an ECCD program or demonstrate developmental readiness using standardized checklists.

One compelling justification for mandating a full-year kindergarten experience is supported by findings from van Huizen and Plantenga (2018), who argued that program quality and intensity, rather than simply age at enrollment, are critical to measurable long-term benefits. Their meta-analysis found that publicly funded, high-quality pre-primary programs consistently yielded better outcomes than private or mixed models, reinforcing the policy's focus on universal access to structured, publicly delivered kindergarten.

Kindergarten education in the Philippines was institutionalized through Republic Act (RA) 10157 or the Kindergarten Education Act of 2011, making it a mandatory requirement for Grade 1 and officially part of basic education. This was further strengthened by RA 10410 or the Early Years Act (EYA) of 2013, which clarified the roles of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council and the Department of Education (DepEd), assigning responsibility for children aged 0–4 to the ECCD Council and for those aged 5–8 to DepEd. The EYA also aimed to ensure a smooth transition from home-based to school-based learning, emphasizing the need for readiness for formal education starting in kindergarten. RA 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act, supports this transition by promoting learner-centered education from the earliest levels of schooling. In line with these laws, several DepEd Orders were issued, including DO 16, s. 2012 on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, DO 14, s. 2013 on strengthening the K to 12 program, and DO 47, s. In 2016, the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (Ocampo et al., 2020).

Another equally important provision is the policy's emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy, which encourages teachers to adapt learning environments and instruction to students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Bagiati et al. (2019) highlighted that culturally attuned strategies, including the use of mother tongue and incorporation of indigenous traditions, build children's sense of belonging and enhance engagement. Murphy et al. (2020) similarly noted that such pedagogical sensitivity promotes inclusivity and higher cognitive and social-emotional development, validating DepEd's directive for classroom contextualization.

The Omnibus Policy also integrates structured assessment tools such as the ECCD Checklist and Kindergarten Report Card to help teachers track child development across various domains systematically. Seguin and Cacho (2019) demonstrated that this process helps teachers pinpoint learners' strengths and areas needing support (e.g., gross motor or expressive language), which informs the development of targeted learning materials and adaptive teaching strategies.

Despite comprehensive policy provisions, significant implementation gaps persist. Jaca and Baroman (2021) found that while teachers in Cebu were conceptually prepared to localize the curriculum, limited resources, training, and instructional materials hindered effective execution. Nationwide, many kindergarten classrooms fall short of standards related to size, layout, furniture, and inclusive support (Aquino et al., 2017), indicating partial compliance with infrastructure and resource requirements. Alvarado and Lopez (2020) noted strengths in assessment and instruction but observed that individualized teaching, outdoor play, and educational field trips remain underutilized due to resource constraints. Similarly, Wati et al. (2024) and Jenkins and Walker (2021) emphasized that full compliance with policy standards is critical for equity and quality.

The Department of Education, through DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, promotes a 40-week play- and theme-based kindergarten curriculum to enhance early learning. However, challenges persist in translating this into practice. Many teachers struggle with integrating play due to ambiguous curricular guidelines and inconsistent understanding of educational play (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016).

On a more positive note, innovative pedagogical practices consistent with the policy have emerged in some areas. For instance, Tranquilan's (2020) work in multicultural Mindanao schools showed that teachers have effectively integrated culturally diverse content into their lessons, operating in alignment with policy standards. In addition, research demonstrates that focused interventions such as the use of mathematical manipulatives (Guanzon-Pisaras, 2020), PLST language monitoring tools (Salehuddin & Nadiah, 2024), and ECCD literacy-numeracy frameworks (Ayade et al., 2019) supported strong classroom execution of the policy. Another study by Cacao and Tan (2019) revealed that schools with proactive administrative support significantly outperform schools with weaker leadership in policy implementation, highlighting the importance of organizational commitment. Moreover, Harini et al. (2023) and Janius & Amdan (2024) noted that maintaining policy compliance through regular monitoring improves child development benchmarks and teacher performance.

DepEd's Omnibus Policy is both visionary and well-grounded in international evidence. It promotes universal access, curriculum continuity, developmentally appropriate practices, cultural responsiveness, classroom safety, and evidence-based assessment. However, to translate its aspirations into truly effective kindergarten experiences, policymakers and practitioners alike must strengthen teacher training, improve classroom environments, ensure resource availability, and promote responsive administration.

Teachers as Policy Implementers in Early Childhood Education

Teachers play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of early childhood education (ECE), as they are the key drivers of pedagogical practices, curriculum execution, and learner support. In the Philippine context, where diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds shape the classroom environment, teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge but also nurturers of holistic child development.

One of the most essential expectations from early childhood teachers is to design learning experiences and environments that are responsive to children's developmental needs and sociocultural context. According to Bagiati et al. (2019), teachers were expected to incorporate local resources and culturally appropriate activities into their planning, emphasizing the importance of active play as a foundation for learning. International studies affirm that play enhances children's learning outcomes and helps cultivate respect for diversity, non-discrimination, and effective multilingual communication in languages such as English, Filipino, and Mother Tongue (Bagiati et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2022).

Social competence is a vital developmental domain that early childhood educators must nurture. Wysłowska and Slot (2020) underscored the role of prosocial behaviors like initiative, cooperation, and empathy, while Girard et al. (2017) linked strong expressive language skills at age five to increased prosocial conduct. These findings highlight the need to prioritize emotional and social learning alongside academic instruction. As curriculum implementers, teachers influence learners' motivation and overall development (Jaca & Lopez-Baroman, 2021). Bembo (2024) emphasized that meaningful student outcomes emerge when teachers apply developmentally appropriate strategies. However, this requires adequate preparation, orientation, and access to teaching resources. Jaca and Baroman (2021) noted that many teachers in Cebu faced difficulties due to limited training and materials. Similarly, Mostera and Digo (2023) reported that not all teachers received relevant seminars, and some schools experienced personnel shortages, further challenging the effective delivery of early childhood education.

Teacher training and professional development remain central themes in early childhood education. Omaga and Alieto (2019) found that while Filipino teachers recognize the value of play in literacy learning, many need further support to effectively apply it. Mortensen et al. (2017) likewise emphasized the need for targeted strategies, such as test error correction and reward systems for children with special needs, requiring well-trained educators. Nolan and Paatsch (2018) and Khalil et al. (2022) similarly noted that pre-service teachers often lack confidence in implementing play-based learning due to limited exposure and contextual barriers. Beyond pedagogy, professional development equips teachers to assess school readiness more holistically. Pekdogan and Akgul (2016) stressed evaluating physical, cognitive, emotional, and social skills, while Doctor and Macalisang (2024) identified language development gaps despite strengths in self-help skills. Manguilimotan et al. (2023) also reported that while teachers felt confident with time block implementation, many still needed support in emotional regulation and differentiated instruction. As Valente et al. (2020), Gaines and Barnes (2017), and Toropova et al. (2021) asserted, experience alone does not ensure competence; continuous training is vital for enhancing both emotional and instructional capacities.

Bartolome et al. (2020) further emphasized the significance of refining teachers' capacities, especially in promoting parental involvement. Their research presented four core areas for building a school-facilitated parental engagement framework: meaningful communication, in-school engagement, structural home learning support, and continuous teacher development. Teachers' capacity to work collaboratively with families enhances student learning and strengthens the home-school connection.

However, systemic issues in early childhood education continue to hinder effective classroom implementation. Osea and Botor (2016), as cited in Abriol et al. (2022), observed that while many early childhood teachers in the Bicol Region frequently employ demonstration and behavioral modeling as instructional strategies, they often receive inadequate support in lesson planning and the development of instructional materials, both of which are critical for effective teaching. Similarly, Mangaoil (2018) pointed out that kindergarten teachers without a background in early childhood education frequently experience stress, inadequate training, and challenges in building relationships with parents. Despite these obstacles, many of these teachers adopt coping strategies such as participating in professional development seminars and strengthening rapport with families to enhance their classroom practice.

Equally important is the need to support learners with diverse needs and backgrounds. Parker et al. (2021), through the UNICEF longitudinal study, emphasized that teachers must be equipped not only with appropriate strategies and resources but also with the cultural and emotional sensitivity to serve students from varied and sometimes conflict-affected contexts. Their findings revealed that a one-size-fits-all

approach to teaching often falls short, and that some teachers may misinterpret or overlook students' social-emotional behaviors, which are critical to learning and development in early childhood settings.

Furthermore, Seguin and Cacho (2019) emphasized the critical role of personal and social factors in the learning process, highlighting the need for teachers to move beyond purely academic instruction and support the holistic development of every child. This perspective aligns with the findings of Guanzon-Pisaras (2020), who underscored the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary training and tools, such as mathematics manipulatives, to enhance learners' cognitive development and engagement.

Building on these insights, Abriol et al. (2022) referenced (2019), who emphasized the need for a more comprehensive evaluation of teaching strategies to ensure they are developmentally appropriate and aligned with the real and diverse needs of young learners. This call is echoed by Cacao and Tan (2019), who documented disparities in the implementation of kindergarten programs, particularly between large and small schools, and stressed the crucial role of administrative support in enhancing teacher performance and overall program quality.

In sum, the success of early childhood education in the Philippines depends largely on the preparedness, capacity, and continuous support provided to its teachers. Their ability to adapt instruction, foster social-emotional growth, integrate cultural relevance, and engage families plays a crucial role in shaping learners' foundational experiences and lifelong learning outcomes.

Implementation Challenges and Enabling Factors

Despite the clear benefits of early childhood education (ECE), the Philippine context reveals persistent challenges and implementation gaps that hinder the full realization of its goals. Various meta-analytic studies, including those by van Huizen and Plantenga (2018), emphasized that the impact of ECE interventions may vary significantly across demographics such as a child's sex, socioeconomic status, and geographic region. These differences are echoed in local findings, such as those by Abrigo and Francisco (2024), who demonstrated that while kindergarten significantly boosts the probability of functional literacy among Grade 1 pupils, disparities still exist based on regional and economic conditions. Notably, while early literacy may eventually equalize among children regardless of kindergarten attendance, higher-order skills such as reading comprehension remain significantly better among those who attended kindergarten.

Underlying many of these challenges are interlinked issues affecting young children's well-being. Malnutrition, poor health, and early-life abuse are associated with school dropouts, low performance, and learning deficits (Yoshikawa et al., 2020; Grantham-McGregor et al., 2020). When unaddressed, these issues compromise children's rights to survival, growth, and development. Rao et al. (2020) warned that missing critical phases of brain development can result in long-term cognitive deficiencies, underscoring the need for holistic and sustained early interventions. Morgan et al. (2019) also found that many kindergarten pupils failed to develop working memory, placing them at risk in Mathematics, Reading, and Science.

From a programmatic standpoint, local studies reflect these complexities. Hallegado et al. (2022) found that although most kindergarten learners demonstrated average performance on the ECCD Checklist, gender disparities persist, with girls generally outperforming boys. The study also emphasized the importance of regularly revising ECCD assessment tools and using domain-specific evaluations for more accurate monitoring. Additionally, the importance of parental involvement and environmental factors in early development was highlighted, supporting calls for a more inclusive approach to education that meaningfully involved families (Hallegado et al., 2022).

However, implementing such inclusive and adaptive practices remains a challenge. Teachers continue to face difficulties in delivering developmentally appropriate instruction, especially in schools with limited resources. Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021) documented issues such as insufficient preparation time, inadequate instructional materials, and language barriers due to the use of mother tongues in instruction. These constraints are exacerbated by the mismatch between curriculum expectations and actual learner needs, as shown in the longitudinal study by Parker et al. (2021), which noted that most learners were behind expected levels in literacy and numeracy by Grade 4. Yang et al. (2021) added that preschoolers' receptive language delays were linked to challenges in classroom management and instructional support.

Teacher-related challenges are equally critical. As noted by Mangaoil (2018) and by Osea and Botor (2016, as cited in Abriol et al., 2022), many teachers, particularly those without early childhood training, struggle with lesson planning, stress, and building relationships with parents. Claud (2020) and Aquino et al. (2017) also highlighted systemic issues such as the lack of peace education, noncompliance with Omnibus Policy standards (e.g., room size, class size, and provision of learning materials), and infrastructure deficits. Mostera and Digo (2023) observed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation issues were exacerbated by the lack of parental involvement, delayed learning material retrieval, and academic dishonesty in modular distance learning. These shortcomings hinder consistent implementation of the kindergarten curriculum across regions and school types.

Furthermore, a disconnect often exists between home and school environments. While efforts like the Early Language Literacy and Numeracy (ELLN) initiative (Ayade et al., 2019) and localized instructional practices (De Lara, 2017; Iyengar et al., 2016) have been shown to enhance contextual relevance, the lack of widespread access to such interventions limits their impact. Similarly, limited resources for learners who speak minority languages, such as Maguindanaon, reveal persistent inequalities in educational access and outcomes (Parker et al., 2021).

Social factors also play a vital role in learner development. Studies by Seguin and Cacho (2019) confirmed that personal and family circumstances significantly affect children's expressive and receptive language development, highlighting how home environments, parental involvement, and socioeconomic conditions directly influence learning outcomes. These findings reiterated the need for schools to consider learners' broader social contexts when implementing the curriculum. Beyond academic planning, teachers and school leaders must be equipped to understand and respond to the lived realities of their pupils, especially in marginalized or resource-limited communities. Proulx and Aboud (2019) noted that while childcare services may support working parents, poor-quality childcare can lead to adverse behavioral outcomes in children.

The research of Doctor and Macalisang (2024) cited Fung et al. (2019), who emphasized that certain developmental skills, such as self-help and feeding independence, correlate with better academic performance and social competence. Their findings advocated for targeted interventions that support skill development beyond academics, particularly in underserved areas.

The implementation of play-based learning, though endorsed by DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, faces obstacles such as inconsistent conceptualization and a lack of clear instructional guidance (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016). Prioletta et al. (2018) noted varying teacher interpretations, with some separating play and learning, and others integrating the two through diverse instructional strategies. International comparisons further underscore these challenges: Pyle & Bigelow (2015), Chan (2019), and Bubikova-Moan et al. (2019) highlighted that effective play-based learning requires culturally responsive strategies, intentional

teaching, and strong policy alignment. Without such alignment, as Lynch (2015) and Skibbe et al. (2016) observed, academic pressures often reduce time allocated for developmentally appropriate play.

While the Philippine early childhood education system has achieved significant milestones, it continues to face multifaceted challenges. These include disparities in access and outcomes, insufficient infrastructure and materials, uneven teacher preparation, and a need for contextualized and inclusive practices. Addressing these gaps requires sustained commitment from policymakers, teachers, families, and communities to ensure that all Filipino children, regardless of background, receive a strong and equitable educational foundation.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies have examined early childhood education in the Philippines, there remains a significant gap in understanding how the Department of Education's Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, as amended) is being implemented by teachers at the classroom level, particularly across an entire school district. Much of the existing literature tends to focus either on isolated school-based case studies or on broad policy analysis, often lacking the nuanced perspectives of teachers who directly interpret and operationalize the policy in daily teaching practice.

This study addressed that gap by exploring the lived experiences, instructional strategies, and classroom realities of kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District. It also examined both the challenges they encounter and the enabling factors that support policy implementation, such as training access, resource availability, and administrative support. By capturing a district-level perspective that reflects a variety of school contexts, the study offers contextually grounded and practice-based insights into how national policy is translated into actual classroom practice.

CHAPTER III
PROCEDURES

This chapter outlines the research design, participants, data gathering procedures, and analytical methods employed in this study, which seeks to explore the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District in implementing the Department of Education's Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016). Anchored on a phenomenological approach, the study aims to uncover how teachers understand, interpret, and operationalize key provisions of the policy in their day-to-day classroom instruction. It also investigates the challenges they encounter, the enabling factors that support effective implementation, and the strategies they adopt to align their practices with policy expectations. Through in-depth qualitative exploration, the study provides insights into the realities of policy enactment at the classroom level, offering perspectives that may inform future policy refinements and professional support mechanisms.

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological research design, which is particularly appropriate for exploring the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in implementing the Department of Education's Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016). Phenomenology, rooted in the philosophical works of Edmund Husserl (2012), is concerned with describing and analyzing how individuals make sense of phenomena as they appear in their lived reality. As this study aimed to uncover the subjective understandings, meanings, and interpretations that teachers associate with the policy's implementation, the phenomenological approach is methodologically aligned with its objectives.

The decision to adopt this design is reinforced by the recognition, as observed by Manful (2020), that phenomenology is well-suited for research focusing on participants' subjective experiences and perspectives. By allowing participants to reflect on their day-to-day enactment of policy, such as their use of play-based strategies, handling of instructional time blocks, and adaptations to developmental domains, the study captured how national directives are translated into classroom-level practices. It also facilitated the uncovering of challenges, tensions, and coping strategies that might remain hidden in more positivist or quantitative approaches.

Moreover, this study is guided by phenomenological concepts such as lifeworld, intentionality, and intersubjectivity, which provided a deeper philosophical grounding. As Cudjoe (2023) emphasized, these concepts highlighted the importance of the relationship between the subject (teacher) and the object (policy), and how meaning is constructed through experience. This aligned with the study's interest in how teachers' professional judgments and school contexts shape their interpretation and operationalization of the policy.

While there are varied phenomenological approaches, this research leans toward Husserlian descriptive phenomenology, focusing on the essence of teachers' experiences rather than interpreting them through a predefined theoretical lens. This is especially relevant in early childhood education policy research, where teachers' perspectives are essential for evaluating the policy's practicality and relevance.

A phenomenological design was appropriate for this study as it captured the depth and richness of teacher experiences, stays true to the philosophical foundations of subjective meaning-making, and provided empirical insights that can inform more responsive and grounded policy improvements.

Research Questions

This study investigated the implementation of DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, or the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education, by kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District. While the policy sets forth a national framework for delivering quality early childhood education, this research focused on how its provisions are interpreted and enacted at the school level. By examining classroom practices and teacher experiences, the study revealed the extent to which local implementation aligns with, adapts to, or diverges from national policy objectives. In particular, it aimed to address the following questions:

1. What is the profile of kindergarten teachers along with:

1.1 Age
1.2 Gender
1.3 Number of years in service
1.4 Educational qualification
1.5 Seminars/training attended

2. How do kindergarten teachers understand the key provisions of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education?
3. How do teachers implement the policy in their day-to-day classroom instruction and learning activities?
4. What challenges do teachers encounter in translating the policy into practice?
5. What enabling factors support the effectiveness of teachers in the following areas:

5.1 Reading instructional materials development
5.2 Teaching-learning process
5.3 Reading assessment and feedback

6. What professional insights or recommendations can be drawn from teachers' experiences to improve policy implementation at the school level?

Participants

This study employed a total population sampling design, which included all 30 kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District, with the researcher excluded from the sample. Out of this total, 29 teachers signified their willingness and actively participated in the study. The use of total population sampling was particularly appropriate for a phenomenological inquiry, as it sought to document the full range of lived experiences regarding the implementation of DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016. By engaging nearly the entire accessible population, the study was able to generate richer, more nuanced, and credible insights into how the policy was interpreted and practiced across diverse school contexts. This approach minimized sampling bias and strengthened the validity of the findings, since it provided perspectives from almost all teachers handling kindergarten within the district. Table 1 presents the detailed distribution of kindergarten teachers per school, showing both the target and actual participation.

Table A. The Participants

Grade Level	***f***
Barayong ES	1
Basud ES	1
Bitan-o ES	1
Bucalbucalan ES	1
Buenavista ES	1
Cambulaga ES	2
Capuy INS	1
Gimaloto ES	1
Guinlajon ES	1
Pamurayan IS	1
Pangpang ES	2
Panlayaan ES	1
Patricia Jesalva Delgado ES	1
Peñafrancia ES	1
Pio Jebulan ES	1
Rizal INS	2
Salvacion ES	1
Sorsogon Pilot ES	6
Ticol ES	1
Tublijon ES	1
Tugos ES	1
TOTAL	**29**

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Ethical safeguards were vital in all research involving human participants, especially in qualitative inquiries such as phenomenological studies that explored personal and professional experiences. Such

research upheld the autonomy, privacy, and dignity of participants at all times (Bhandari, 2021). This study recognized the ethical sensitivity of engaging with kindergarten teachers who were asked to reflect on their experiences in implementing the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016). Thus, the research process was designed to prioritize both informed consent and confidentiality.

Informed consent ensured that participation was voluntary, well-informed, and based on a clear understanding of the study's goals, procedures, risks, and benefits. To uphold this, each potential participant was provided with an informed consent form that outlined the study's purpose, the nature and length of participation, the type of data to be collected, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty (Bhandari, 2021). This aligned with current ethical standards that emphasized voluntary participation and respect for decision-making autonomy (Beach & Arrazola, 2019).

In his phenomenological research, Nabong (2020) ensured ethical clarity by allowing participants to raise questions about the consent form and by obtaining verbal permission to audio-record each interview. At the end of every session, participants were reminded of their rights, including their ability to withdraw or request the removal of their data. The present study adopted the same ethical approach, providing opportunities for clarification before and after each interview and explicitly seeking permission to record conversations.

The principle of informed consent was also grounded in the idea that research participation must be based on trust and integrity (British Sociological Association [BSA], 2017). As Beach and Arrazola (2019) explained, for consent to be valid, it had to be freely given and based on communicated information. This study adopted this view by ensuring that participants were not coerced or misled and were fully aware of their rights and the scope of their involvement.

Confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the research process. Pseudonyms or numerical codes (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2) were used in transcripts, data analysis, and reporting to ensure that no identifying information was revealed. To ensure the security and confidentiality of all research data, both digital and physical files, including informed consent forms, audio recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes, were stored in encrypted, password-protected folders accessible only to the researcher. Any printed materials were kept in a locked cabinet under the researcher's sole access. Following ethical data management practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracy, 2020), all research materials were retained for a maximum of three years following the completion of the study, after which they were securely destroyed or permanently deleted.

This study upheld high ethical standards through a rigorous process of informed consent and confidentiality. These measures were intended not only to protect participants but also to foster trust, respect, and honest sharing, which were essential elements for the success of a phenomenological investigation.

Instrumentality

In qualitative research, particularly in phenomenological studies, the researcher is considered the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike quantitative designs that rely on standardized tools, phenomenological research depended heavily on the researcher's capacity to engage with participants, listen attentively, ask relevant questions, and interpret meanings derived from the participants' lived experiences. This human-centered approach allowed for depth, nuance, and contextual sensitivity in data gathering and meaning-making.

In this study, the researcher acted as the main instrument in conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District. These interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions, but flexibility was maintained to allow participants to express their thoughts freely and elaborate on emerging ideas. The interview guide was pilot-tested and revised as needed to ensure relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's objectives.

In qualitative research, the researcher must create a safe, open environment while being reflexive and aware of personal biases, especially in phenomenological studies where bracketing is essential (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017). To enhance data credibility, interviews were audio-recorded with consent and supplemented with field notes to capture non-verbal cues and context. These materials were transcribed verbatim to ensure interpretations which grounded in actual participant experiences (Birt et al., 2016).

In summary, the researcher, as the principal instrument of inquiry, played a critical role in co-constructing meaning with participants. Through active listening, empathetic engagement, and methodological rigor, the researcher produced rich, authentic insights into how kindergarten teachers experienced and interpreted the implementation of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education.

Data Gathering Procedures

In line with the phenomenological approach of this study, data collection centered on capturing the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in implementing the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016). To achieve this, the primary data-gathering method was in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which were well-suited for exploring participants' subjective meanings, interpretations, and emotions concerning their professional practice (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Before the conduct of interviews, the researcher secured formal approval from the Schools Division Office of Sorsogon City and obtained informed consent from each participant. Interview schedules were arranged at the convenience of the participants to ensure comfort and openness, which were essential in phenomenological studies (Finlay, 2016). Each interview began with a reiteration of the research purpose, a review of participants' rights, including the right to withdraw at any point, and a request for permission to audio-record the session.

The semi-structured interview format allowed for guided yet flexible conversations, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into emerging themes while respecting the unique flow of each participant's narrative (Vagle, 2018). An interview guide was used to ensure consistency, while allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences and reflect on the meanings they attached to policy implementation.

To supplement the interview data, the researcher also took detailed field notes to document non-verbal cues, contextual observations, and reflections during each session. These notes provided important contextual information that supported a holistic understanding of the phenomenon (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019).

All interviews were transcribed verbatim to preserve the accuracy and richness of participant narratives. Transcripts were shared with participants for validation as part of member checking, a strategy that enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

Through these procedures, the study ensured a rigorous, ethical, and methodologically sound process for eliciting and analyzing the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers, core to the integrity of phenomenological inquiry.

Validity

In qualitative research, particularly in phenomenological studies, validity refers to the credibility, trustworthiness, and authenticity of the findings rather than statistical accuracy. It emphasized the extent to which the research accurately captured and represented the lived experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since this study aimed to understand how kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District experienced and implemented the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016), ensuring validity involved several key strategies.

To establish credibility, the researcher used prolonged engagement and in-depth interviews to gather rich, meaningful data from all participants. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed teachers to fully express their views and experiences, which was essential in revealing the underlying meanings of the phenomenon being studied (Tracy, 2020).

Member checking was also employed as a critical validation step. After data transcription and preliminary thematic analysis, selected participants were asked to review summaries of their interviews or emerging interpretations to verify their accuracy and ensure that their perspectives had not been misrepresented (Birt et al., 2016). This feedback loop strengthened the alignment between participants' intentions and the researcher's interpretations.

To support transferability, the researcher provided thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings. This allowed readers to evaluate the extent to which the study's insights might be relevant to other settings with similar educational or policy environments (Nowell et al., 2017).

For dependability and confirmability, the researcher maintained an audit trail of all research decisions, including methodological choices, coding procedures, and analytic memos. Reflexive journaling was also used to monitor potential researcher bias and maintain transparency throughout the study (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018).

In due course, the study's validity rested on its ability to authentically capture the nuanced experiences of kindergarten teachers as they navigated the challenges and possibilities of implementing early childhood education policy. These strategies collectively ensured that the findings were not only trustworthy but also ethically and contextually sound.

Qualitative Data Analysis

This study employed a qualitative thematic analysis within a phenomenological framework to explore and interpret the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in implementing the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016). Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019), was used to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and themes, while phenomenological principles guided the interpretation to capture the essence of participants' lived experiences.

The analysis followed thematic analysis, which is well-aligned with phenomenological inquiry (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher began by immersing in the data through repeated reading of transcripts to gain a holistic understanding, followed by initial coding of significant statements and meaning units. These codes were then clustered into broader themes that captured the essential structures of the phenomenon.

To ensure rigor, phenomenological reduction (bracketing) was applied to set aside personal assumptions and focus on participants' perspectives (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in Neubauer et al., 2019). Memo-writing and reflective journaling were also employed to document analytic insights and maintain transparency throughout the process (Saldaña, 2021).

Credibility was strengthened through member checking, where selected participants reviewed and validated preliminary interpretations of their accounts (Birt et al., 2016). This ensured that findings authe-

ntically reflected participants' intended meanings.

Ultimately, the analysis generated richly textured themes that illustrated how kindergarten teachers in Sorsogon West District interpreted, navigated, and adapted the national kindergarten policy in their school contexts. These themes not only revealed the realities of policy implementation but also provided insights into broader institutional and contextual factors that shaped early childhood education in the Philippines.

Chapter 4:
RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study based on interviews with 29 kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District, focusing on their lived experiences in implementing DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, otherwise known as the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. Although 30 participants were initially targeted, one declined involvement. The presentation of findings is organized around the specific research questions, which explored teachers' profiles, their interpretations of key policy provisions, the strategies they employed in daily instruction, the challenges they encountered, and the enabling factors that supported their effectiveness. It also draws out professional insights and recommendations from teachers' experiences to strengthen policy implementation at the school level.

1. Profile of Kindergarten Teachers

The profile of kindergarten teachers offers important context for understanding their professional background. This section presents emergent themes based on the results of key information on their age, gender, educational qualifications, years of service, and training attended.

1.1 Age

The ages of the 29 kindergarten teachers ranged from 29 to 55 years old. A considerable number of participants were in their late 30s to mid-40s (36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45), while a few were younger (29–33 years old) and some older (50–55 years old).

1.2 Gender

All 29 kindergarten teacher participants in the Sorsogon West District were female.

1.3 Number of Years in Service

The teaching experience of the 29 kindergarten teacher participants ranged from 2 to 17 years. Most respondents reported between 7 to 12 years of service, while a smaller number had fewer than 5 years or more than 15 years of experience.

1.4 Educational Qualification

The educational attainment of the 29 kindergarten teacher participants varied. A majority held a Bachelor's Degree (15 teachers), while several had pursued graduate studies. Specifically, 11 teachers were Master's Degree holders with coursework completed or nearly completed (CAR/units), and 1 teacher was taking a PhD program (18 units earned).

1.5 Seminars and Trainings Attended

All 29 respondents participated in professional development activities related to kindergarten education, consistently attending division, regional, and national-level seminars designed to strengthen their competence in kindergarten instruction.

The most frequently attended were trainings on the Fundamentals of Standards and Guidelines in Early Childhood Education and capacity-building programs on child-centered approaches, play-based activities, and assessment, which were reported by the majority of teachers. Several respondents also attended

school-based and division-level trainings on the MATATAG Curriculum as well as Division DemoFests for Kindergarten Teachers.

In addition, some teachers participated in specialized workshops such as those on receiving learners with special needs, ECCD assessment tools, disaster preparedness and mitigation, and early childhood education policy orientations. A few teachers further reported attendance in regional or master class seminars that focused on enhancing holistic child development and pedagogical innovations.

2. Kindergarten Teachers' Understanding of the Key Provisions of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education

Interviews revealed that teachers' awareness of the policy was primarily shaped through faculty meetings, seminars, orientations, and official memoranda. For example, Participant 1 shared, *"Through a school orientation and discussion during faculty meetings, seminars, trainings,"* while Participant 6 recalled, *"I first heard about DepEd Order No. 47 Series 2016 during the Division Orientation conducted by the Division Office."*

Teachers also recognized the main goals of the policy, particularly its emphasis on holistic child development, mandatory kindergarten, play-based pedagogy, and Grade 1 readiness. As Participant 2 explained, *"I understand that the main goals of this policy are to strengthen the kindergarten program, ensure that it is developmentally appropriate, and promote the holistic development of young children."* Similarly, Participant 3 stated, *"The main goal of this policy is to develop the kindergarten pupils holistically,"* while Participant 8 noted, *"The policy aims to make kindergarten fun, engaging, and developmentally appropriate, focusing on the holistic growth of the child to prepare them for Grade 1."*

When asked about policy clarity, most teachers described it as "very clear" and "straightforward." Participant 2 affirmed, *"The policy is very well written and easy to understand. The guidelines are straightforward, and the objectives are clearly defined."* Participant 5 added, *"The DepEd Order No. 47, Series 2016 is very clear to me because it clearly outlines the guidelines and principles for the implementation of the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum."*

However, a few respondents reported confusion, particularly regarding age requirements and practical implementation. Participant 4 shared, *"It is a little confusing. The policy is too broad, and it needs to be broken down into parts for it to be properly discussed and understood."* Participant 23 raised concerns about the age cut-off, while Participant 16 observed, *"For me, the policy is very clear in its goal but challenging in practice. It explains what we should do, but it's less detailed on how to do all this when resources, class size, and space are limited."*

3. Teachers' Implementation of the Kindergarten Policy in Daily Instruction

Teachers consistently emphasized aligning their lesson plans, teaching strategies, and classroom routines with the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. Participant 1 explained, *"I follow the policy by aligning my lesson plans and teaching strategies with the developmental standards for kindergarten. I provide age-appropriate activities to ensure a safe environment."* Similarly, Participant 5 stated, *"I make sure my classroom routines and activities match the policy by planning lessons based on the curriculum guide, applying strategies that encourage active learning, promoting respect and inclusivity, and regularly assessing if my methods meet the standards in DepEd Order No. 47."*

A recurring theme was the consistent use of play-based and child-centered strategies, such as storytelling, games, role-playing, and hands-on activities. Participant 7 shared, *"I use play-based strategy in lesson plans, storytelling, games, and hands-on activities,"* while Participant 16 noted, *"I prepare hands-on*

activities such as games, songs, role-play, storytelling that develop specific skills while keeping learning enjoyable."

Teachers also described holistic and inclusive practices, including the use of mother tongue, fostering parent involvement, and ensuring classroom cleanliness and safety. Participant 4 explained, *"I align my daily routines and activities with the policy. The activities are play-based, holistic, and developmentally appropriate. I use the mother tongue as a medium of instruction so that the learner fully understands. I always maintained the cleanliness and orderliness of my classroom. I give assessment and involve the parents in the activities that are needed."*

Differentiated instruction and cultural responsiveness were also prominent. Participant 1 noted, *"I usually use differentiated activities that are suited to and based on my individual abilities and skills,"* while Participant 17 added, *"I use differentiated activities to cater to the needs of my learners and also provide additional extra time for these learners with disabilities."* Participant 23 emphasized grouping learners by ability to ensure that activities matched their skills.

Teachers highlighted experiential approaches by linking lessons to real-world contexts. Participant 2 shared, *"In our Community Helpers Unit, we invite local community members to speak to the class. This activity promotes understanding of the world around them and encourages community involvement."* Similarly, Participant 29 explained, *"Letting the children go around the school and find out what fruits/vegetables they see in the surroundings, building using blocks, identifying colors/shapes, hands-on activities."*

Finally, reflective practice and continuous professional growth were evident. Participant 3 stated, *"I make notes that will remind the policy, so sometimes (s) I check and read it. I also ask and collaborate with colleagues, attend seminars and trainings."* Participant 15 emphasized staying updated with policy revisions and teaching innovations through training and collaboration.

4. Challenges Encountered by Kindergarten Teachers in Translating the Policy Into Practice

The thematic analysis revealed several persistent challenges that teachers face in translating DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016 into classroom practice. One of the most cited issues is large class sizes and high teacher-pupil ratios, which impede the implementation of individualized and play-based learning. As Participant 1 shared, *"Sometimes large class sizes, pupils' behavior, lack of materials, insufficient training"*, while Participant 3 explained, *"One problem I face when trying to follow the policy is the challenge of managing large class sizes, which make it difficult to implement individualized play-based learning and provide an appropriate environment for every child."* Participant 4 echoed this difficulty, noting, *"The lessons or activities were not finished on time. Not all students fully understood the lessons because of the large number of learners."*

Another major problem is the limited availability of learning resources and instructional materials, particularly those that are developmentally appropriate and culturally contextualized. Participant 2 stated, *"One problem is the limited availability of resources and materials that are truly developmentally appropriate and aligned in the local context,"* while Participant 12 added, *"Lack of learning materials and play resources and large class size [make it] difficult to give each child attention."* As a result, teachers reported modifying activities. Participant 12 further explained, *"These problems affect my teaching because I sometimes have to shorten or simplify activities, which limits the variety of experiences I can give."*

Teachers also identified diverse learner needs as a significant challenge. Participant 4 pointed out, *"Children have different first languages, making it harder to pick [materials] that fit everyone,"* while

Participant 17 emphasized, *"Problems encountered, pupils with disabilities, lack of knowledge for proper approach…Lack of attention focus, difficulty in giving the suited activities attention and time."*
In addition, low parental involvement was highlighted as a barrier. Participant 10 shared, *"Low parent involvement and awareness…This affects much to the learning of the pupils, especially if there's no follow-up at home,"* while Participant 25 explained, *"Some parents don't fully understand the importance of kindergarten…It's harder to do activities well when resources or parent support are missing."*
Other issues raised by teachers included time constraints, unclear policy provisions, and inadequate classroom space. Participant 8 noted, *"Limited resources as well as time constraints for implementing all aspects of the policy effectively,"* while Participant 7 added, *"Sometimes their age cutoff is a little confusing…As of now, mahirap turuan ang mga batang 4 years old palang nasa kindergarten na, masyadong baby pa sila."*
Collectively, these challenges compelled teachers to modify lessons, simplify activities, and reduce interactive strategies. Participant 13 explained:
"These problems affect my teaching by limiting the use of creative and interactive methods, making lessons less engaging…For my pupils, it affects their learning because they receive less individual attention, have fewer opportunities for hands-on activities, and may struggle to develop foundational skills."

5. Enabling Factors Supporting the Effectiveness of Teachers

The findings revealed that several interrelated factors enable teachers to effectively develop reading instructional materials, manage the teaching-learning process, and provide meaningful assessment and feedback. These enabling factors can be categorized as professional support and collaboration, access to resources, and structured pedagogy and assessment strategies.

5.1 Reading Instructional Materials Development

Teachers consistently highlighted the importance of professional guidance, training, and collaboration in developing reading instructional materials. Participant 1 said, *"Having access to sample reading materials and guidance from experienced CISOs and colleagues helps me to create appropriate resources."* Similarly, Participant 5 explained, *"I use my knowledge of the curriculum, adapt materials to my pupils' reading levels, and include colorful visuals to make reading more engaging."*
Collaboration also emerged as a key factor. Participant 2 shared, *"Sharing ideas and resources with colleagues is particularly beneficial,"* while Participant 6 mentioned, *"Collaborating with other teachers to share materials and attending workshops on creating age-appropriate and engaging learning materials helps me follow the policy effectively."* Teachers further highlighted the use of technology, as Participant 9 explained, *"I consider their reading level, interest, and the words they hear. I use free online templates and printables, then adapt them for our context, and I make materials colorful, big, and clear so they catch children's attention."*

5.2 Teaching-Learning Process

Teachers emphasized the importance of structured lesson planning, classroom routines, and engaging strategies in managing effective instruction. According to Participant 5, *"Having a clear lesson plan, preparing materials ahead of time, and setting consistent routines help me manage and deliver daily classroom activities effectively."* Participant 4 added, *"Follow the blocks of time. Prepare materials suitable for the ability of learners. Encourage the pupils to participate in all tasks. Use songs, storytelling, and movements to keep energy and engagement high."*

Professional and administrative support was also cited as critical. Participant 1 remarked, *"Good training, support from co-workers, school heads, enough teaching materials, collaboration…helps me follow the policy."* Similarly, Participant 15 said, *"Guidance and resources from school leaders…Communication and partnership with parents…help me follow the policy effectively."*

5.3 Reading Assessment and Feedback

Teachers highlighted the importance of structured assessment and immediate feedback in supporting learner progress. Participant 1 shared, *"Regular assessment using rubrics and keeping detailed records of pupils' progress for constructive feedback to his or her parents and reward for motivation."* Participant 5, stated *"I listen carefully to each child and take note of their strengths and areas for improvement, and give feedback in a simple, encouraging way so they stay motivated to read."*

Individualized monitoring was also emphasized. Participant 13 explained, *"Using clear assessment tools, having regular reading activities, and maintaining open communication with each child."* Parental engagement was further described as crucial, as Participant 26 stated, *"Keeping parents informed about the child's reading progress, involving them in the feedback process."*

6. Professional Insights and Recommendations for Policy Implementation

Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of sustained professional development to ensure effective policy implementation. Participant 1 suggested, *"Provide regular orientation and training for teachers to ensure a clear understanding of the policy."* Participant 5 recommended *"offering regular training for teachers on creative, play-based strategies"* to make classroom instruction more engaging and aligned with the policy.

Teachers pointed out that having sufficient resources is vital for meaningful lesson delivery. Participant 3 stressed the importance of *"an ideal class size and classroom setting,"* while Participant 25 requested *"more learning materials and more training for kindergarten teachers."* Access to technological tools and age-appropriate instructional materials was also identified as a key factor in supporting effective implementation.

Collaboration and peer mentoring emerged as strong enabling factors in classroom practice. Participant 2 proposed *"a mentorship program where experienced teachers can guide new educators on policy implementation"* and suggested creating *"a digital platform for teachers to share resources, lesson plans, and best practices."* These initiatives highlight the importance of collegiality in strengthening instructional practice.

Teachers underscored the importance of strong school–home partnerships and clearer policy directions. Participant 4 explained that *"parental involvement is important in a child's learning,"* while Participant 19 emphasized the need to *"strengthen parent understanding of this policy so we work as partners in the child's growth."* At the same time, Participant 8 recommended *"developing easy-to-follow teaching guides and providing regular training sessions…especially for newly hired teachers,"* underscoring the need for clearer and more accessible policy guidelines.

Rationale

Teachers' lived experiences serve as a powerful lens through which the realities of policy implementation can be understood. Their feedback highlights that while policies may be well-intentioned, their success depends largely on how they are translated into daily classroom practices. In early childhood education, where developmental appropriateness and play-based learning are central, the gap between policy and practice can be bridged only through intentional support mechanisms that empower educators.

One of the most consistent themes emerging from teacher feedback is the need for continuous professional development. Teachers emphasized that regular orientation and training sessions are essential to ensure a clear understanding of policy goals and instructional strategies. Without ongoing capacity-building efforts, educators may struggle to implement new approaches effectively, especially those that require a shift in pedagogy, such as play-based learning. Professional development must be sustained, relevant, and responsive to the evolving needs of teachers.

Equally important is the availability of adequate resources. Teachers pointed out that ideal class sizes, well-equipped classrooms, and access to age-appropriate learning materials are critical for meaningful lesson delivery. The lack of these resources can hinder the implementation of even the most well-designed policies. Ensuring that schools are equipped with the necessary tools—both physical and digital—creates an enabling environment where policy can thrive. Collaboration and mentorship also emerged as key enablers of effective policy implementation. Teachers advocated for peer mentoring programs and digital platforms for sharing best practices. These collaborative structures not only foster professional growth but also build a sense of community among educators. When teachers are supported by their peers, they are more likely to innovate, reflect, and refine their practices in alignment with policy goals.

Another vital component is the strengthening of school–home partnerships. Teachers recognized that parental involvement is essential in reinforcing classroom learning and ensuring continuity at home. Policies that actively engage parents and provide them with clear, accessible information can foster shared responsibility for children's development. When parents understand and support educational policies, they become allies in the learning process.

Finally, the need for clear and accessible policy guidelines cannot be overstated. Teachers called for simplified teaching guides, visual aids, and regular updates to help them navigate policy expectations. Ambiguity in policy documents can lead to inconsistent implementation and confusion. By providing user-friendly materials and structured support, policymakers can ensure that teachers are not only aware of the policy but are also equipped to implement it effectively.

Objectives:

1. Enhance teacher capacity through sustained, targeted professional development.
2. Ensure resource adequacy for effective and engaging instruction.
3. Promote collaborative teaching practices through mentorship and peer support.
4. Strengthen school–home partnerships to align learning goals and policy understanding.
5. Clarify and simplify policy guidelines for better accessibility and implementation.

Policy Recommendations Agenda:

1. Sustained Professional Development

Teachers play a pivotal role in translating educational policies into effective classroom practices. To ensure alignment with evolving policy goals—particularly those promoting inclusive, play-based, and developmentally appropriate instruction—teachers must be equipped with ongoing, targeted professional development. Regular training not only enhances pedagogical skills but also fosters a deeper understanding of policy intent, enabling educators to implement strategies with fidelity and creativity.

Action Points:

- Implement quarterly training sessions focused on play-based learning, inclusive education, and differentiated instruction tailored to early childhood settings.

- Develop structured induction programs for newly hired teachers to ensure they are well-versed in policy expectations and classroom strategies from the outset.
- Create modular, self-paced online courses that allow teachers to engage in continuous learning at their own pace, with content aligned to current policy directions and classroom needs.

Implications

Ongoing, targeted professional development enhances teacher confidence, competence, and understanding of policy goals. It reduces gaps in implementation, fosters instructional innovation, and ensures equitable access to growth opportunities for all educators. Over time, this leads to improved learning outcomes, more consistent application of policy, and a more empowered teaching workforce.

2. Resource Provision and Infrastructure Support

Effective teaching and learning in early childhood education require more than just sound pedagogy—they demand a well-resourced and conducive learning environment. Teachers consistently emphasized that access to age-appropriate instructional materials, manageable class sizes, and well-designed classroom layouts are foundational to delivering meaningful lessons. Without these essential supports, even the most well-crafted policies risk falling short in practice.

Action Points:

- Allocate a dedicated budget for the procurement of age-appropriate instructional materials, manipulatives, and educational technology to support play-based and inclusive learning.
- Establish and enforce standards for ideal class sizes and classroom layouts that promote interaction, movement, and engagement, especially in early childhood settings.
- Provide comprehensive resource kits tailored for kindergarten and early grades, including thematic learning materials, visual aids, and teacher guides aligned with policy goals.

Implications

Adequate resources and well-designed learning environments empower teachers to implement policies effectively and creatively. They support differentiated instruction, equitable access to quality education, and engaging, developmentally appropriate lessons. Long-term, resource investment strengthens consistency in policy application and contributes to improved educational outcomes for young learners.

3. Mentorship and Peer Collaboration

Collegial support is a powerful driver of instructional improvement and policy fidelity. Teachers thrive in environments where they can learn from one another, share experiences, and co-develop strategies that align with policy goals. Mentorship and peer collaboration not only build professional competence but also foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose among educators. These practices are especially valuable for new teachers navigating the complexities of early childhood education policies.

Action Points:

- Establish a formal mentorship program that pairs experienced educators with newly hired teachers to provide guidance, share best practices, and support policy implementation.
- Launch a digital platform where teachers can upload and access lesson plans, instructional strategies, classroom innovations, and success stories, fostering a culture of sharing and continuous improvement.
- Organize monthly learning circles or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to encourage reflective practice, collaborative problem-solving, and peer-led professional development.

Implications

Mentorship and collaborative structures foster professional growth, reduce teacher isolation, and create a culture of shared learning. By promoting collective reflection, problem-solving, and innovation, these

practices enhance instructional quality, teacher retention, and consistent policy implementation across classrooms.

4. Strengthening School–Home Partnerships

Parents and families play a crucial role in reinforcing classroom learning and supporting the successful implementation of educational policies. When parents are informed, engaged, and aligned with school goals, they become active partners in their child's development. Teachers emphasized that parental involvement is especially vital in early childhood education, where learning is deeply connected to the child's home environment. Strengthening these partnerships ensures that policy goals are supported both in school and at home.

Action Points:

- Conduct regular parent orientation sessions to explain the policy framework, curriculum goals, and how parents can support learning at home.
- Develop take-home guides and activity sheets that mirror classroom instruction, enabling parents to reinforce key concepts and skills in a playful, age-appropriate manner.
- Encourage ongoing parent–teacher dialogues through scheduled conferences, feedback forms, and informal check-ins to build trust and ensure shared understanding of the child's progress and needs.

Implications

Engaged and informed parents become active partners in reinforcing learning and supporting policy goals. Strong school–home collaboration builds trust, ensures continuity of learning, and promotes holistic child development. Over time, this leads to improved student outcomes, greater parental satisfaction, and more effective policy enactment.

5. Clear and Accessible Policy Guidelines

Teachers are more likely to implement policies effectively when guidelines are clear, concise, and actionable. Complex or ambiguous policy documents can lead to misinterpretation, inconsistent practices, and reduced compliance. Teachers have expressed the need for simplified materials that translate policy into practical classroom strategies. By making policy documents more user-friendly, educators can confidently align their instruction with policy goals.

Action Points:

- Translate policy documents into easy-to-follow teaching guides that break down key concepts, expectations, and instructional approaches in plain language.
- Provide visual aids, flowcharts, and sample lesson plans to illustrate how policies can be applied in real classroom scenarios, especially in early childhood settings.
- Include FAQs and case studies in policy manuals to address common challenges and showcase successful implementation practices from various schools.

Implications

Simplified, user-friendly policy materials empower teachers to implement policies with clarity and confidence. Reducing ambiguity ensures consistent practice across classrooms, improves compliance, and enables all educators to align instruction with policy goals. Ultimately, clearer guidelines support more effective teaching and better learning outcomes.

Proposed Framework: "ELEVATE"

Empower through training

Leverage resources

Engage in collaboration

Value partnerships
Act with clarity
Transform practice
Evaluate impact
This framework encapsulates the holistic approach needed to elevate policy implementation from paper to practice.
The proposed ELEVATE Framework, designed to guide and strengthen school-level policy implementation in early childhood education:
Empower through Training
Empowering teachers begins with equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement policy effectively. Regular, targeted professional development ensures that educators understand the intent and practical applications of policies, especially those promoting inclusive and play-based learning. Empowerment through training fosters confidence, adaptability, and a sense of ownership among teachers, making them active agents of change rather than passive recipients of directives.
Leverage Resources
Resources are the backbone of effective instruction. Leveraging both physical and digital materials—such as age-appropriate learning tools, technology, and well-designed classroom environments—enables teachers to deliver engaging and meaningful lessons. This component of the framework emphasizes the importance of equitable access to instructional materials and infrastructure, ensuring that no teacher or learner is left behind due to resource constraints.
Engage in Collaboration
Collaboration among educators enhances professional growth and policy fidelity. Through mentorship programs, professional learning communities (PLCs), and digital platforms for sharing best practices, teachers can learn from one another and co-create solutions to implementation challenges. This collaborative culture fosters innovation, reduces isolation, and builds a supportive network that sustains policy efforts over time.
Value Partnerships
Strong partnerships between schools and families are essential for holistic child development. When parents are informed and involved, they reinforce classroom learning and support policy goals at home. This element of the framework promotes regular communication, shared understanding, and joint responsibility for children's educational progress. Valuing partnerships ensures that policy implementation is a community effort, not just a school-based initiative.
Act with Clarity
Clear and accessible policy guidelines are critical for consistent implementation. Teachers need simplified documents, visual aids, and practical examples to understand and apply policy directives effectively. Acting with clarity reduces confusion, enhances compliance, and empowers educators to make informed decisions in their classrooms. This component calls for user-friendly materials that translate policy into actionable steps.
Transform Practice
Policy implementation should lead to meaningful transformation in teaching and learning. By integrating new strategies, embracing inclusive approaches, and adapting to the developmental needs of learners, teachers can elevate their practice. This transformation is not just about compliance—it's about

reimagining instruction to better serve all students. The framework encourages reflective practice and continuous improvement as key drivers of change.

Evaluate Impact

Ongoing evaluation is essential to understand the effectiveness of policy implementation. Schools must establish mechanisms to monitor progress, gather feedback, and assess outcomes. This includes evaluating teacher development, resource utilization, student engagement, and family involvement. By evaluating impact, stakeholders can make data-informed decisions, refine strategies, and ensure that policies are achieving their intended goals.

Embedded within each component of the ELEVATE framework is a commitment to equity and inclusion. Whether through differentiated instruction, resource allocation, or family engagement, the framework ensures that all learners—regardless of background or ability—have access to quality education. This focus aligns with broader educational goals and reinforces the importance of inclusive practices in early childhood settings. For policy implementation to be effective long-term, it must be sustainable. The ELEVATE framework promotes practices that can be maintained and scaled across schools and districts. By building teacher capacity, strengthening partnerships, and institutionalizing collaborative structures, the framework ensures that policy efforts are not one-time initiatives but enduring commitments to educational excellence.

Finally, the ELEVATE framework ensures that all actions are aligned with the broader vision and goals of the education system. It provides a coherent structure that connects classroom practice with policy intent, stakeholder engagement, and student outcomes. This alignment fosters unity of purpose, strategic direction, and shared accountability among all actors in the education ecosystem.

Chapter 5
DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results presented earlier, focusing on the emergent themes drawn from interviews with 29 kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District regarding their experiences in implementing the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. Guided by Husserl's phenomenological approach (Drummond et al., 2019), the analysis highlights teachers' profiles, understanding of key provisions, classroom practices, challenges, enabling factors, and professional insights. The findings are thematically organized to address the research questions, with thematic analysis used to systematically interpret the interview transcripts and capture recurring themes from participants' responses.

1. Profile of Kindergarten Teachers

This section outlines the profile of kindergarten teachers, highlighting their age, gender, educational qualifications, years of service, and training attended. These background details serve as the basis for identifying emergent themes related to their professional context.

1.1 Age: Mid-Career Professional Maturity

An important theme that emerged was mid-career professional maturity, reflecting the profile of kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District. This indicates that many are in their prime professional years, combining stability, resilience, and sustained energy for teaching. Such a profile mirrors both local and international trends. The U.S. National Teacher and Principal Survey (NCES, 2022) reported an average teacher age of 42.9 years, with more than half between 30–49 years old. Similarly, Murthy and Kayabu (2024) in India found that nearly half of teachers were aged 31–40, while Salvan and Hambre (2020) observed that most K–12 teachers in Mindanao were in their late 20s to early 30s.

Collectively, these findings highlight teaching as a mid-career profession, where teachers dedicate their most productive years to service before transitioning toward retirement. For kindergarten teachers, this maturity brings valuable experience, adaptability, and commitment, which are vital for implementing policies and meeting the demands of early childhood education.

1.2 Gender: Feminization and Gender Implications

The data reflected feminization and gender implications, as all participants were female, highlighting the dominance of women in the teaching profession, particularly in early childhood education. This trend mirrors global patterns: nearly 77% of U.S. public school teachers in 2020–21 were female (NCES, 2022), and in India, women slightly outnumber men at 50.2% (Murthy & Kayabu, 2024). Locally, Salvan and Hambre (2020) similarly observed the predominance of women in the teaching workforce. While this ensures consistency and stability in early learning, it also raises concerns regarding gender inclusivity, as the limited presence of male teachers may reduce learners' exposure to diverse role models and perspectives.

In the Philippine context, early childhood education (ECE) forms a critical foundation for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, institutionalized through legislation such as the Kindergarten Education Act and the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Bustos-Orosa, 2022; Abrigo & Francisco, 2024). Teachers are expected to implement developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive practices, using play-based and localized strategies to enhance literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional growth (DepEd, 2016; Bagiati et al., 2019; Tranquilan, 2020). However, challenges such as limited instructional materials, inadequate training, and constrained classroom infrastructure can hinder the quality and inclusivity of learning (Jaca & Baroman, 2021; Aquino et al., 2017; Mangaoil, 2018). The gendered composition of the workforce further shapes classroom dynamics, potentially affecting learners' social and cognitive development (Seguin & Cacho, 2019; Parker et al., 2021). Supporting teachers through professional development, adequate resources, and culturally responsive guidance remains essential for delivering equitable, high-quality ECE (Bartolome et al., 2020; Guanzon-Pisaras, 2020; Doctor & Macalisang, 2024).

1.3 Number of Years in Service: Variations in Experience and Readiness

The responses highlighted a theme of variations in experience and readiness, reflecting the diverse teaching backgrounds of the participants. Many teachers appeared to be in the mid-phase of their careers, which suggests that they already possess substantial classroom exposure, accumulated professional practice, and a degree of confidence in handling curricular and policy demands. Such mid-level experience often translates into a balanced perspective, neither overly idealistic as novice teachers may be, nor resistant to change as some nearing retirement might feel. At the same time, the presence of less experienced teachers points to a continuing need for mentoring, coaching, and structured professional development to ensure their smooth integration into policy implementation. This mix of novice and seasoned practitioners creates a dynamic workforce that can combine fresh perspectives with tested strategies. In comparison, other studies have reported more veteran teaching groups with longer years of service, highlighting how teaching profiles can vary across contexts and influence the way educational policies are interpreted and enacted (Salvan & Hambre, 2020).

1.4 Educational Qualification: Commitment to Professional Growth

Teachers' educational attainment reflected a strong commitment to professional growth and continuous development. While most held undergraduate degrees in education, many had taken steps toward advanced studies, with several pursuing or having completed graduate-level coursework. This pattern demonstrates

not only a recognition of the value of higher education but also a willingness among kindergarten teachers to strengthen their professional competence through further study. Such engagement in graduate education can enhance pedagogical expertise, broaden perspectives, and contribute to more informed implementation of policies. However, the fact that many teachers were still in progress with their studies also suggests the presence of barriers such as workload demands, limited access to graduate programs, or financial constraints. Other studies have reported similar trends, noting that a substantial proportion of teachers pursue graduate education while only a smaller segment completes master's or doctoral degrees. These patterns underscore the role of institutional support and enabling conditions in ensuring that teachers' aspirations for advanced studies translate into completed qualifications that can fully benefit both their professional growth and classroom practice.

1.4 Seminars and Trainings Attended: Culture of Continuous Learning

The kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District demonstrated a strong culture of continuous professional development, reflecting their dedication to professional growth and responsiveness to curriculum reforms. Their training experiences largely centered on school-based and division-level initiatives, particularly on the implementation of the Matatag Curriculum. These were complemented by capacity-building workshops that reinforced child-centered approaches, play-based learning, and developmentally appropriate assessment. Such engagement indicates the Department of Education's deliberate effort to align teachers' competencies with ongoing reforms while ensuring that instruction remains responsive to young learners' developmental needs.

Beyond curriculum-focused training, many teachers also participated in sessions on the theoretical and policy underpinnings of early childhood education, strengthening their understanding of foundational principles in holistic child development. These were further enriched by specialized professional development opportunities, such as workshops on disaster preparedness, inclusive education for learners with special needs, and participation in demonstration festivals. By diversifying training opportunities, teachers were not only equipped with pedagogical skills but also prepared to address contextual challenges in education.

Some teachers also engaged in regional and national-level seminars and webinars, reflecting adaptability to broader educational demands and exposure to emerging perspectives. Participation in such programs highlighted resilience in the face of global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, while also fostering innovation and professional networking beyond the local context. This willingness to engage in higher-level learning spaces underscores teachers' openness to evolving educational practices.

The professional development profile of these teachers illustrates both commitment and adaptability. Consistent participation in training nurtures instructional quality, promotes inclusivity, and prepares teachers to respond to emerging curricular and societal challenges. These findings resonate with Babilone and Hipolito-Casupanan (2022), who found that teachers generally engage in multiple training opportunities throughout their careers, underscoring a culture of continuous learning. Similarly, Mahmood et al. (2022) highlighted that sustained professional development contributes to improved teaching quality, fostering inquiry-based practices, autonomous learning, and technology integration. At the same time, the persistence of barriers such as workload pressures, limited accessibility to graduate education, and financial constraints points to the need for systemic support. Addressing these barriers through scholarship opportunities, reduced workloads, and more accessible graduate programs could strengthen teachers' pursuit of advanced qualifications.

Taken together, the kindergarten teachers in Sorsogon West District can be characterized as a mid-career, professionally engaged, and developmentally committed workforce. Their consistent participation in diverse training opportunities not only demonstrates their readiness to implement the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education but also positions them as valuable partners in sustaining DepEd's long-term reform agenda. Institutionalizing this strong culture of professional development is essential to ensure sustained teacher effectiveness, adaptability, and innovation in early childhood education.

2. Kindergarten Teachers' Understanding of the Key Provisions of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education

The analysis of the teachers' accounts regarding their understanding of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education revealed common threads that reflect both their professional orientations and the conditions shaping their practice. From their responses, four major themes surfaced:

Commitment to Professional Growth

Teachers' awareness of the policy was largely shaped by participation in faculty meetings, orientations, seminars, and official communications. This demonstrates a strong culture of professional engagement, where educators actively seek opportunities to familiarize themselves with policy provisions and enhance their instructional competencies. Such commitment reflects broader trends in early childhood education, emphasizing that continuous learning through structured training is essential for effective curriculum implementation (Valente et al., 2020; Gaines & Barnes, 2017). Moreover, professional development ensures that teachers are equipped with practical strategies to translate policy into classroom practice, which is particularly important in contexts where resources vary and localized challenges arise.

Alignment with Policy Goals

Teachers exhibited a comprehensive understanding of the policy's main objectives, including holistic child development, mandatory kindergarten, play-based pedagogy, and preparation for Grade 1. This level of comprehension suggests that professional development activities and capacity-building initiatives aligned with the national curriculum are effective in equipping teachers to meet evolving educational standards (Ocampo et al., 2020; Guanzon-Pisaras, 2020). Their recognition of the holistic approach reflects an understanding that early childhood education extends beyond cognitive learning to include social, emotional, and physical growth, which are all essential components of child development. Furthermore, teachers' alignment with policy goals indicates a commitment to ensuring that instruction is developmentally appropriate, engaging, and inclusive, thus supporting learners' readiness for the next stage of schooling. This understanding also demonstrates teachers' ability to translate broad policy objectives into classroom practices that foster well-rounded development, highlighting the crucial link between national directives and local instructional strategies. The findings suggest that sustained and targeted professional development not only reinforces teachers' knowledge of policy goals but also enhances their capacity to apply these goals in ways that are responsive to the needs, abilities, and contexts of young learners.

Adaptability and Implementation Challenges

While the policy was generally considered clear and straightforward, some teachers reported difficulties in interpreting specific provisions, such as age requirements and practical implementation strategies. These challenges highlight the gap between policy clarity and operational feasibility, emphasizing the importance of local adaptation. Teachers' ability to contextualize lessons and manage limitations, such as large class sizes or limited learning resources, demonstrates resilience and professional judgment. This

aligns with findings from Bagiati et al. (2019) and Jaca and Baroman (2021), who observed that inclusive and developmentally appropriate pedagogy requires flexible approaches responsive to contextual constraints. The results suggest that successful policy implementation relies not only on awareness of objectives but also on practical guidance and supportive structures to navigate real-world classroom conditions.

Barriers to Advanced Qualifications

Despite strong engagement in professional development, many teachers face obstacles in pursuing graduate studies or formal early childhood education credentials, often due to workload, financial limitations, and the accessibility of advanced programs. This limitation suggests that while teachers are motivated and capable of implementing policy provisions, systemic support is necessary to enhance their professional capacity further. Participant feedback reflects the national reality that teachers without formal early childhood education training may encounter stress and difficulty in fully meeting curriculum expectations (Mangaoil, 2018). Additionally, as Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021) noted, insufficient preparation time and inadequate instructional resources constrain teachers' opportunities for higher education, which can impact their long-term career growth and instructional effectiveness. Addressing these barriers through scholarships, reduced teaching loads, and accessible graduate programs could strengthen teachers' knowledge base and ensure sustained quality in kindergarten education. Moreover, enhancing teachers' academic qualifications complements ongoing professional development efforts, creating a more robust and competent teaching workforce capable of translating policy intentions into meaningful educational experiences for young learners.

3. Teachers' Implementation of the Kindergarten Policy in Daily Instruction

The results indicate that teachers in the Sorsogon West District consistently integrate the provisions of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education into daily instruction. Several themes emerged that reflect both their strengths and challenges:

The findings revealed that kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District actively integrate the key provisions of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education into their daily instruction. Their responses can be synthesized into four broad themes:

Curriculum Alignment and Policy Fidelity

Teachers consistently showed efforts to align their lesson plans, routines, and strategies with the standards and expectations outlined in DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016. This demonstrates policy fidelity, ensuring that instructional delivery remains anchored on developmentally appropriate practices and the intended learning competencies. Bustos-Orosa (2022) and the ECCD Council (2017) emphasized that early childhood education must be anchored in structured, developmentally suitable pedagogy, as children benefit when experiences are carefully aligned across cognitive, social, and emotional domains. Parker et al. (2021) also highlighted that maintaining consistency across developmental areas is critical for fostering holistic growth. Teachers' awareness of the policy provisions and their conscious effort to integrate them into planning reflect readiness to uphold DepEd standards, though sustaining such alignment requires continuous monitoring and support.

Play-Based and Child-Centered Pedagogy

The consistent use of play-based and interactive strategies is a defining feature of teachers' instructional practices. Storytelling, role-play, games, songs, and hands-on activities were widely employed to engage learners in meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. This approach resonates with Omaga and

Alieto (2019) and Tranquilan (2020), who identified play-based methods as central to early childhood education, as they stimulate creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration. Boylan (2017) further stressed that play is not merely recreational but foundational to academic readiness, as it nurtures cognitive flexibility and resilience. Teachers' preference for child-centered approaches also indicates responsiveness to learners' developmental needs, ensuring that instruction fosters joy, curiosity, and discovery rather than rote memorization. Such practices highlight that policy directives are not only being followed but also meaningfully translated into classroom pedagogy.

Inclusivity, Differentiated Instruction, and Holistic Development

Teachers demonstrated sensitivity to learners' diverse needs by adopting differentiated instruction, using the mother tongue for clearer comprehension, and integrating parental involvement. Participant responses reflected an awareness of inclusivity, particularly in supporting children with disabilities and ensuring that classrooms are safe, clean, and culturally responsive. These practices align with Ramos (2021) and Doctor and Macalisang (2024), who emphasized the value of individualized and developmentally responsive approaches in reducing inequities in early learning. Similarly, Loniza et al. (2018) and Bagiati et al. (2019) asserted that mother tongue-based instruction enhances engagement and comprehension, while culturally rooted practices strengthen socio-emotional well-being. By fostering inclusivity and holistic development, teachers operationalize the Omnibus Policy's principle of equity and accessibility, ensuring that no child is left behind despite varying backgrounds and abilities.

Experiential Learning and Reflective Practice

Teachers also highlighted the integration of real-world experiences into classroom instruction, such as inviting community members or conducting exploratory activities within the school environment. These practices reflect the Omnibus Policy's emphasis on experiential and contextualized learning (DepEd, 2016). Ocampo et al. (2020) and Ayade et al. (2019) affirmed that contextualized instruction not only deepens engagement but also strengthens mastery of concepts by linking learning to familiar experiences. At the same time, teachers' emphasis on reflective practice, such as note-taking, collaboration with colleagues, and participation in training, demonstrates their commitment to continuous improvement. Omaga and Alieto (2019), Jaca and Lopez-Baroman (2021), and Mortensen et al. (2017) all underscored that reflective and professionalized teaching practices are essential for sustaining policy implementation over time. Thus, teachers are not only applying policy provisions but also critically evaluating their approaches to ensure alignment with evolving standards.

4. Challenges Encountered by Kindergarten Teachers in Translating the Policy Into Practice

The findings revealed that while kindergarten teachers make efforts to implement the key provisions of DepEd Order No. 47, s. In 2016, they continued to face persistent challenges that limited the full realization of play-based, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate instruction. These challenges were categorized into four main themes:

Classroom Constraints: Large Class Sizes and Limited Space

Overcrowding undermines one of the Omnibus Policy's central objectives: individualized and developmentally appropriate learning. With too many pupils in a single classroom, teachers are unable to provide adequate attention, resulting in incomplete activities and diminished comprehension. Aquino et al. (2017) and Jaca and Baroman (2021) similarly noted that insufficient space and high teacher–pupil ratios remain widespread barriers in Philippine early childhood settings. International studies, such as those by van Huizen and Plantenga (2018), further emphasized that smaller class sizes contribute to higher-

quality interactions, stronger teacher–child relationships, and improved developmental outcomes. These findings suggest that unless class sizes are reduced and physical environments are optimized, teachers will continue to struggle in implementing policy-driven practices such as play-based learning and differentiated instruction.

Resource Limitations: Lack of Instructional Materials and Training

The lack of adequate learning materials not only restricts teachers' creativity but also reduces the opportunities for pupils to engage in meaningful, hands-on learning experiences. According to Fesseha and Pyle (2016), inadequate resources are a widespread concern in early childhood classrooms globally, with direct consequences on children's engagement and mastery of concepts. In the Philippine context, Omaga and Alieto (2019) pointed out that resource gaps, compounded by limited training, hinder teachers' ability to maximize the potential of play-based pedagogies. Similarly, Aquino et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of providing both sufficient materials and professional development to ensure that teachers are capable of adapting instruction to diverse classroom needs. These findings underline that resource provision must go hand in hand with continuous teacher capacity-building if the Omnibus Policy is to be effectively translated into classroom practice.

Learner Diversity and Special Educational Needs

Learner diversity reflects both the strength and complexity of Philippine classrooms. While the Omnibus Policy emphasizes inclusivity and the use of mother tongue in instruction, many teachers are challenged by the reality of linguistic diversity and the presence of learners with disabilities. Bagiati et al. (2019) and Parker et al. (2021) stressed that differentiated instruction and culturally responsive pedagogy require both adequate preparation and resources. Without these, teachers struggle to meet the developmental, linguistic, and socio-emotional needs of all pupils. Yang et al. (2022) further argued that supporting learners with special needs requires specialized training, which many kindergarten teachers lack. Thus, while diversity enriches the classroom, it also demands systemic support in the form of professional development, accessible resources, and collaboration with specialists.

Home–School Gaps: Limited Parental Involvement

Parental engagement is a cornerstone of early childhood education, yet the findings reveal that many parents lack the time, awareness, or resources to actively support their children's learning. Bartolome et al. (2020) emphasized that strong home–school partnerships enhance children's readiness and long-term academic success. Similarly, Sangalla et al. (2017) found that when parents are involved, children benefit from greater consistency between school and home learning environments. However, in low-resource settings, teachers often face the dual challenge of addressing classroom demands while also compensating for gaps in parental support. This underscores the need for systematic parent education initiatives and school–community programs that foster active family engagement. By equipping parents with both knowledge and strategies, schools can help extend the learning environment beyond the classroom, ensuring continuity and reinforcement of skills.

5. Enabling Factors Supporting the Effectiveness of Teachers

The findings revealed that several interrelated factors enable teachers to effectively develop reading instructional materials, manage the teaching-learning process, and provide meaningful assessment and feedback. These enabling factors can be categorized into three themes:

5.1 Reading Instructional Materials Development

The findings confirm that teachers rely heavily on collaboration, training, and resource adaptation to des-

ign effective literacy materials. This echoes Jaca and Baroman (2021), who emphasized that workshops and collegial mentoring significantly improve teachers' capacity to produce culturally responsive reading resources. The participants' reliance on both online resources and shared materials demonstrates teachers' resourcefulness in combining formal and informal sources of support to respond to the needs of diverse learners. Moreover, the emphasis on modifying and contextualizing materials reflects the principle of learner-centered education outlined in DepEd's policy frameworks, where instructional tools must align with pupils' backgrounds and contexts (DepEd, 2016). The findings highlight that teachers thrive when there are avenues for professional collaboration and when they are empowered to adapt materials rather than rely solely on prescriptive resources.

Teaching-Learning Process

The results show that teachers view structured routines, creative methods, and institutional support as essential to successful instruction. This resonates with the argument of Tranquilan (2020) who said that structured yet flexible classroom routines cultivate a positive learning environment. The teachers' use of songs, games, and storytelling supports the literature on play-based learning, which enhances not only literacy but also social and emotional growth (Bagiati et al., 2019). Importantly, the findings underscore that effective instruction does not happen in isolation; it is sustained by supportive leadership and collegial networks. Cacao and Tan (2019) emphasized that administrative encouragement, paired with peer collaboration, empowers teachers to overcome instructional challenges. Thus, the teaching-learning process is most effective when both pedagogy and institutional structures align to reinforce one another.

Reading Assessment and Feedback

Assessment and feedback practices were consistently highlighted as central to effective literacy development. The findings reveal that teachers use both formal tools, such as checklists, and informal methods, such as verbal encouragement, demonstrating a balance between structured monitoring and child-centered reinforcement. Bartolome et al. (2020) argued that formative assessment is a crucial mechanism for identifying pupils' needs early, while Sangalla et al. (2017) stressed that parental involvement strengthens the home-school partnership in literacy development. The accounts of the teachers affirm these points, showing that when feedback is simple, constructive, and consistent, it motivates pupils to persist in learning. Additionally, involving parents in the process ensures continuity of support beyond the classroom. The results suggest that assessment and feedback are not merely evaluative tools but essential mechanisms for sustaining learner motivation, strengthening family engagement, and ensuring that no child is left behind in reading instruction.

6. Professional Insights and Recommendations for Policy Implementation

Teachers' experiences provide valuable perspectives on how policy implementation can be improved at the school level. The findings revealed four major areas of insight:

Strengthening Teacher Training and Professional Development

The findings revealed that teachers place a premium on professional development, highlighting it as one of the most crucial factors for successful implementation of the Kindergarten Education Omnibus Policy. Their emphasis on regular orientation sessions, workshops, and mentoring reflects the reality that kindergarten instruction requires unique pedagogical skills compared to higher grade levels. This is consistent with Jaca and Baroman (2021), who argued that specialized training in early childhood education enhances teachers' ability to provide developmentally appropriate and engaging instruction. Mortensen et al. (2017) further supported this by demonstrating that teachers who participate in continuous

training are more likely to sustain innovative practices in their classrooms.

Beyond skill acquisition, professional development also boosts teacher confidence and ownership of policy implementation. When teachers are well-equipped with practical strategies, they become more willing to embrace play-based, individualized instruction and integrate culturally responsive pedagogy into their teaching. This observation aligns with Omaga and Alieto (2019), who emphasized that well-supported teachers are more capable of translating policies into classroom practice and adapting strategies to learner needs. It also suggests that divisions and schools should not only provide one-off training but establish mentoring systems where experienced teachers guide new hires. Such continuous and layered professional support can help address gaps caused by high teacher turnover and ensure consistency in how the policy is understood and applied.

Ensuring Adequate Resources for Instruction

Teachers' call for sufficient and contextually relevant resources underscores a recurring challenge in the implementation of education policies: the mismatch between policy expectations and available materials. The findings align with Parker et al. (2021), who emphasize that age-appropriate and culturally adapted instructional resources are indispensable for engaging young learners. Similarly, DepEd (2016) highlighted that providing quality and accessible instructional materials is a prerequisite for policy compliance at the classroom level. Without such resources, teachers are forced to improvise, which may lead to uneven quality of instruction across schools.

Furthermore, the teachers' mention of ideal class size and classroom conditions draws attention to the structural constraints faced by many public schools. Research by van Huizen and Plantenga (2018) showed that smaller class sizes are linked to stronger teacher-student interactions and improved learning outcomes in early childhood education. The lack of adequate teaching space and overcrowded classrooms, therefore, not only burdens teachers but also limits children's opportunities for meaningful engagement. Addressing these concerns requires systemic solutions such as increased budget allocation for early childhood infrastructure, provision of low-cost but effective learning aids, and the use of digital tools to supplement physical resources.

Enhancing Collaboration and Support Networks

The findings clearly indicate that teachers view peer collaboration and mentorship as powerful enablers of effective policy implementation. By proposing mentorship programs and digital platforms for sharing resources, the teachers reveal their recognition that teaching is most effective when grounded in collective practice rather than isolated effort. Omaga and Alieto (2019) said that structured peer learning and professional learning communities provide spaces for teachers to exchange strategies, reflect on practice, and adapt policies to classroom realities. Similarly, Bagiati et al. (2019) argued that professional collaboration enhances teacher innovation, ensuring that instructional strategies remain relevant to learners' needs.

Collaboration also creates a culture of shared accountability, where teachers are not only responsible for their own practice but also for the collective progress of their peers. This collegial culture reduces professional isolation and encourages reflective practice, which are vital in early childhood education, where challenges often demand adaptive solutions. Such insights are supported by Mortensen et al. (2017), who emphasized that collaborative structures within schools help sustain high-quality instruction and improve policy enactment. The suggestion to establish a digital platform also reflects teachers' openness to integrating technology for professional growth. If institutionalized, such initiatives could ensure

equitable access to resources across schools and sustain professional support even in geographically dispersed divisions.

Promoting Parental Engagement and Clearer Policy Guidelines

The teachers' emphasis on parental engagement reflects a recognition that effective policy implementation extends beyond the classroom. Early literacy and numeracy skills, which are central to kindergarten, are best developed when school and home provide consistent support. Bartolome et al. (2020) and Sangalla et al. (2017) confirmed that active parental involvement significantly improves learners' literacy outcomes by reinforcing classroom instruction at home. This suggests that parental orientations on the Omnibus Policy should be institutionalized so that families fully understand their role in supporting their child's educational journey.

Equally critical is the need for clearer policy guidelines, as ambiguity often results in inconsistent implementation across schools. Teachers' calls for simplified teaching guides and targeted training for newly hired teachers highlight that even well-intentioned policies can falter when instructions are unclear. Cacao and Tan (2019) and Jaca & Lopez-Baroman (2021) similarly observed that unclear communication from education authorities leads to varied interpretations of policy, which undermines standardization and quality assurance. Addressing this requires the development of user-friendly teacher manuals, frequent policy orientations, and monitoring mechanisms that provide constructive feedback rather than punitive measures.

By promoting parental engagement and clarifying policy directions, schools can ensure a more holistic approach to early childhood education where home, school, and policy are seamlessly aligned. This not only strengthens the implementation of the Omnibus Policy but also ensures that learners experience continuity and consistency in their developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of early childhood education implementation, particularly in the context of the DepEd Kindergarten Education Omnibus Policy. The results support theories of teacher professional development, play-based learning, and inclusive pedagogy, highlighting how collaboration, resource adaptation, structured routines, and reflective teaching influence both teacher effectiveness and learner outcomes. By capturing the lived experiences of teachers, the study demonstrates that theoretical models of pedagogy must consider contextual realities, such as classroom size, learner diversity, and parental involvement. These insights reinforce the relevance of phenomenological approaches in education research, emphasizing the interplay between teacher experience, policy interpretation, and the practical enactment of early childhood education frameworks.

Practical Implications

This study offers actionable insights for educators, school administrators, and policymakers. Teachers can leverage the findings to enhance instructional strategies, adapt learning materials, and design child-centered, culturally responsive lessons. School administrators are encouraged to provide continuous professional development, mentorship, and adequate instructional resources to support teachers' capacity in implementing play-based and inclusive practices. For policymakers, the study underscores the need for clear, user-friendly policy guidelines, systemic support for manageable class sizes, and initiatives that promote parental engagement, ensuring that policy directives translate effectively into classroom practices.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was

confined to 29 kindergarten teachers from the Sorsogon West District, limiting the generalizability of findings to other regions. Second, the study relied primarily on semi-structured interviews, which may be influenced by self-reporting biases or participants' perceptions of socially desirable responses. Third, the study's cross-sectional design captures experiences at a single point in time and does not account for the long-term effects of policy implementation. Lastly, contextual factors, such as differences in school resources, teacher workloads, and community support, may have influenced the results and limited applicability beyond similar school settings.

Future Research Directions

Building upon this study, future research can explore the following:

1. Impact of Class Size on Kindergarten Learning Outcomes – Investigate how varying teacher–pupil ratios affect play-based instruction and holistic development.
2. Role of Parental Engagement in Early Childhood Education – Examine the influence of home–school collaboration on literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional outcomes.
3. Culturally Responsive Teaching in Kindergarten Classrooms – Study how teacher adaptation of materials to local contexts enhances learning engagement and inclusion.
4. Integration of Technology in Developing Reading Instructional Materials – Explore the effectiveness of digital tools in supporting play-based and inclusive literacy instruction.

Chapter 6:
CONCLUSION

This chapter consolidates the discussions from the preceding section and presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the specific research problems. It revisits the essential features of the study, restating the purpose of this phenomenological inquiry and the process followed in drawing out the findings and conclusions. The interview transcripts were analyzed and interpreted to capture the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in implementing the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education.

Summary

This study investigated the implementation of DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016, or the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education, by kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District. Guided by a phenomenological approach rooted in the philosophical works of Edmund Husserl (2012), it employed a total population sampling design that included all 30 kindergarten teachers in the district, with the researcher excluded from the sample. Out of this number, 29 teachers expressed willingness and actively participated in the study. The use of total population sampling was considered highly appropriate for a phenomenological inquiry, as it sought to capture the full range of lived experiences of teachers in implementing the policy.

Informed consent was secured to ensure that participation was voluntary, well-informed, and based on a clear understanding of the study's objectives, procedures, risks, and benefits. Confidentiality was strictly upheld throughout the research process, with pseudonyms or numerical codes (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2) used in transcripts, data analysis, and reporting to avoid revealing any identifying information. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, which provided guided yet flexible conversations that allowed for probing deeper into emerging themes while respecting the natural flow of each participant's narrative.

As the principal instrument of inquiry, the researcher played a vital role in co-constructing meaning with participants through active listening, empathetic engagement, and methodological rigor. This process

yielded rich and authentic insights into how kindergarten teachers experienced and interpreted the implementation of the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education. Thematic analysis, employed within the phenomenological framework, was used to explore and interpret these lived experiences, ensuring that both individual and collective perspectives were carefully examined and meaningfully represented.

Problem Statement

This study examined how kindergarten teachers in the Sorsogon West District implemented DepEd Order No. 47, s. In 2016, the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education was implemented. Focusing on classroom practices and teacher experiences, it explored how the policy was interpreted and enacted at the school level, highlighting areas where local implementation aligned with, adapted to, or diverged from national objectives. Specifically, the study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the profile of kindergarten teachers along with:

1.1 Age
1.2 Gender
1.3 Number of years in service
1.4 Educational qualification
1.5 Seminars/training attended

2. How do kindergarten teachers understand the key provisions of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education?
3. How do teachers implement the policy in their day-to-day classroom instruction and learning activities?
4. What challenges do teachers encounter in translating the policy into practice?
5. What enabling factors support the effectiveness of teachers in the following areas:

5.1 Reading instructional materials development
5.2 Teaching-learning process
5.3 Reading assessment and feedback

6. What professional insights or recommendations can be drawn from teachers' experiences to improve policy implementation at the school level?

Findings

Drawing from the thematic analysis of the data and the summary of discussions in

1. Kindergarten teachers in Sorsogon West District are all female, mostly mid-career professionals with strong engagement in professional growth through seminars and graduate studies. Their profile reflects a mature, policy-responsive workforce, though novice teachers and gender inclusivity require more targeted support.
2. Teachers demonstrate a strong grasp of the DepEd Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education, shaped by training and official communications. However, barriers such as workload and limited access to graduate programs hinder further qualification and local adaptation of certain policy provisions.
3. Teachers effectively apply the policy through play-based, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate strategies aligned with lesson plans. They integrate experiential learning and parental involvement to contextualize instruction despite resource limitations.
4. Large class sizes, limited space, and insufficient materials restrict individualized and play-based instruction. Teachers also face challenges with learner diversity and low parental involvement, underscoring the need for systemic support and targeted interventions.

5. Collaborative practices, adaptive resource use, and supportive leadership enhance literacy instruction and overall teaching effectiveness. Structured routines, creative strategies, and balanced assessments contribute to sustained pupil engagement and learning continuity.
7. Teachers emphasize the need for ongoing professional development, adequate resources, and manageable class sizes to support policy implementation. They also advocate for mentorship, digital resource sharing, stronger parental engagement, and clearer policy guidelines.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The kindergarten teaching force in Sorsogon West District is professionally mature and committed to growth, but requires differentiated support for novice teachers and greater gender inclusivity.
2. Kindergarten teachers possess a strong understanding of the DepEd Omnibus Policy, though systemic barriers hinder their ability to fully advance and localize its implementation.
3. Despite contextual challenges, teachers successfully translate policy into inclusive, play-based, and developmentally appropriate classroom practices.
4. Significant resource and environmental constraints limit the full realization of policy goals, necessitating targeted systemic interventions.
5. Collaborative practices, adaptive strategies, and supportive leadership create a conducive environment for effective literacy instruction and policy implementation.

6. Sustained professional development, adequate resources, and stronger partnerships are essential to achieving consistent and high-quality early childhood education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researcher put forward the following recommendations:

1. DepEd provides differentiated mentoring and professional support programs for novice teachers while promoting gender diversity in early childhood education staffing.
2. Establish accessible graduate pathways and localized policy adaptation mechanisms to support teachers' continued professional growth and contextual implementation.
3. Strengthen instructional support through resource provision and pedagogical coaching to sustain inclusive, play-based, and developmentally appropriate practices.
4. Invest in infrastructure improvements, reduce class sizes, and ensure consistent access to instructional materials and specialized support services.
6. Institutionalize collaborative structures and leadership support to maintain effective literacy instruction and foster continuous professional development.
7. Develop a comprehensive support system that integrates training, resource access, mentorship, and family engagement to ensure consistent policy implementation.
8. Conduct further studies on kindergarten teaching, focusing on class size, parental engagement, culturally responsive teaching, and technology integration in reading instruction.
9. Future researchers may consider exploring the following topics:

- The Impact of Class Size on Kindergarten Reading and Learning Outcomes in Sorsogon Schools
- Parental Engagement and Its Role in Enhancing Early Childhood Literacy Development
- Exploring Culturally Responsive Teaching and Technology Use in Kindergarten Reading Instruction

Significance of the Study

The present study provides valuable insights into the implementation of the DepEd Kindergarten Education Omnibus Policy at the school level in the Sorsogon West District. By examining teachers' understanding, practices, and challenges, the research highlights the factors that facilitate or hinder effective policy enactment, offering evidence-based guidance for educational planning. For policymakers and school administrators, the findings underscore the importance of continuous professional development, adequate instructional resources, and supportive classroom environments to ensure quality early childhood education. For teachers, the study affirms the value of play-based, child-centered, and inclusive instructional approaches while identifying areas for capacity building. Additionally, the study contributes to the broader field of early childhood education research in the Philippines by documenting contextualized experiences and enabling factors that can inform policy refinement, teacher training programs, and home–school collaboration strategies. Overall, the research emphasizes that aligning national policy with local practice is critical to fostering holistic child development and preparing learners for success in Grade 1 and beyond.

REFERENCES

1. Abrigo, M. R. M., & Francisco, K. A. (2024, September). Compulsory kindergarten education and early teenage literacy in the Philippines. *International Journal of Educational Development, 109, Article 103087*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2024.103087
2. Abriol, Majalla, Alapoop, Ma, Margallo, Lailani, Ancheta, Rosein Jr, Manalastas, Rebecca, Manguilimotan, Ramil, Capuno, Reylan, Espina, Raymond, Etcuban, Jonathan, Calasang, Veronica, & Padillo, Gengen. (2022). Experiences of Parents and Teachers on Kindergarten Pupils' Readiness in the New Normal. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy, 3, 109–115*. https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2022.3.4.424
3. Alvarado, A. E., & Lopez, Jr., M. R. (2020). Implementation of the Omnibus Policy on kindergarten education. *Asian Journal of Assessment in Teaching and Learning, 10(2), 34–54.* https://doi.org/10.37134/ajatel.vol10.2.5.2020
4. Aquino, L. N., Mamat, N., & Che Mustafa, M. (2017). Comparing the kindergarten curriculum frameworks of the Philippines and Malaysia. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education and Care, 6, 27–40.* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1207991.pdf
5. Ayade, M. M., Dela Calzada, R. P., Sabanal, J. P., & Saballa, M. M. (2019). Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Implementation. *SMCC Higher Education Research Journal (Teacher Education Journal), 1(1), 28–38.*
6. Babilone, A. P., & Hipolito-Casupanan, I. (2022). Teachers' in-service training and teaching performance in the new normal at Olongapo City National High School. *The American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (THE AJHSSR), 5(4), 57–70.* https://www.theajhssr.com/V-5_4/THEAJHSSR_A0504070010100570.pdf
7. Bagiati, A., Yoon, S., Demetra, E., & Ngambeki, I. (2019). Engineering Curricula in Early Education: Describing the Landscape of Open Resources. *Early Years Journal, 12(2). Purdue University, NY.*
8. Bartolome, Melissa, Mamat, Nordin, & Masnan, Abdul Halim. (2020). Exploring kindergarten teachers' perspectives on parental involvement in the Philippines. *Southeast Asia Early Childhood Journal, 9, 44–58.* https://doi.org/10.37134/saecj.vol9.1.4.2020

9. Bartolome, Melissa. (2022). Parental Involvement in The Lens of Kindergarten Children. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bitara UPSI, 15, 211–221.* https://doi.org/10.37134/bitara.vol15.sp.19.2022
10. Beach, D., & Arrazola, B. V. (2019). Ethical review boards. In Busher, H., & Fox, A. (Eds.), Implementing Ethics in Educational Ethnography: Regulation and Practice (pp. 32–47). Routledge.
11. Beatrice. (2025, March 25). 5 top countries for preschool education: A global comparison. Kids Education Franchise. https://www.kidseducationfranchise.com/archives/9758
12. Bembo, A. M. L. E. (2024). Effectiveness of Project BRIGHT (Bridging Reading Interventions, Goal for Higher Thinking) in improving the reading proficiency of Grade Five pupils. *DRIVE: Development through Research and Innovations on Variables of Education, Journal of Educational Research of DepEd Sorsogon City, 8–15.*
13. Bhandari, P. (2021). Informed consent in research: Types, templates, and examples. Scribbr. https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/informed-consent/
14. Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member Checking. *Qualitative Health Research, 26, 1802–1811*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870
15. Boada, R., & Januszka, M. (2019). Understanding the Role of Language and Literacy Development in Kindergarten Readiness. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 47(5), 563–570.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-018-0925-3
16. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11, 1–9.* https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806
17. British Sociological Association. (2017). Statement of ethical practice for the British Sociological Association. https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf
18. Britto, P. R., Lye, S. J., Proulx, K., Yousafzai, A. K., Matthews, S. G., Vaivada, T., ... & Lancet Early Childhood Development Series Steering Committee. (2017). Nurturing care: promoting early childhood development. The Lancet, 389(10064), 91–102.
19. Bustos-Orosa, M. A. (2022). Early Childhood Education in the Philippines. In Symaco, L. P., & Hayden, M. (Eds.), International Handbook on Education in South East Asia. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8136-3_3-1
20. Cacao, M. M., & Tan, C. S. (2019). Extent of implementation of kindergarten program and its impact on school readiness year-end assessment (SReYA) in the elementary schools in one division in the Philippines. *International Journal of Advanced Research, 7(3), 786–805.* https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/9564
21. Camillo, C. (2017). Street-level bureaucracy. In Farazmand, A. (Ed.), Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance (pp. 1–5). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31816-5_654-1
22. Claud, G. (2020). Teachers' Preparedness in Teaching Kindergarten in Private Schools in the Division of Meycauayan City, Bulacan. *SSRN Electronic Journal.* https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3639982
23. Crawford, M. (2020). Ecological Systems Theory: Exploring the Development of the Theoretical Framework as Conceived by Bronfenbrenner. *Journal of Public Health Issues and Practices, 4, 170.* https://doi.org/10.33790/jphip1100170
24. Cudjoe, E. (2023). Making sense of Husserlian phenomenological philosophy in empirical research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 22, 1–9.* https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231171099

25. De Lara, K. (2017). Contextualization and Localization: Acceptability of the Developed Activity Sheets in Science 5 Integrating Climate Change Adaptation. In Proceedings of the International Conference on Climate Change (pp. 20–24).
26. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines. (2016, June 28). DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016: Omnibus policy on kindergarten education [Department order]. Department of Education. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/DO_s2016_47.pdf
27. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines. (2016, May). Standards and competencies for five-year-old Filipino children. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Kinder-CG_0.pdf
28. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines. (2018, April 19). DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2018: Amendment to DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016 (Omnibus policy on kindergarten education) [Department order]. Department of Education. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/DO_s2018_020_0.pdf
29. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines. (2025, June 4). DepEd Order No. 015, s. 2025: Amendment to DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016 (Omnibus policy on kindergarten education) as amended by DepEd Order No. 020, s. 2018 [Department order]. Department of Education. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/DO_s2025_015.pdf
30. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines. (2025, June 4). DepEd Order No. 015, s. 2025: Amendment to DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016 (Omnibus policy on kindergarten education) as amended by DepEd Order No. 020, s. 2018 [Department order]. Department of Education. https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/DO_s2025_015.pdf
31. Doctor, Froselin & Macalisang, Denmark. (2024). School Readiness Among Kindergarten Learners: Basis for Policy Recommendation. *Spring Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Volume 3. 26-34.* 10.55559/sjahss.v3i2.219.
32. Drummond et al. (2019) *Husserl: German perspectives*. *Retrieved from* https://www.questia.com/read/127977917/husserl-german-perspectives
33. Ducusin, R. J. C., & Dy, M. (2016). Parental perceptions on the importance of play in early childhood. *Journal of Human Ecology, 5(1), 1–10.*
34. ECCD Council. (n.d.). Early learning programs. Early Childhood Care and Development Council. https://eccdcouncil.gov.ph/early-learning-programs/
35. Fesseha, Ellen, and Pyle, Angela (2016). Conceptualizing Play-Based Learning from Kindergarten Teachers' Perspective. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.1174105.
36. Finlay, L. (2016). Phenomenology for therapists: Researching the lived world. Wiley-Blackwell.
37. Gaines, T., & Barnes, M. (2017). Perceptions and attitudes about inclusion: Findings across all grade levels and years of teaching experience. *Cogent Education, 4(1), 1313561.*
38. Gilson, L. (2015). Lipsky's Street Level Bureaucracy. Chapter in Page E., Lodge M, and Balla S (eds) Oxford Handbook of the Classics of Public Policy. Oxford: Oxford University Press
39. Girard, L. C., Pingault, J. B., Doyle, O., Falissard, B., & Tremblay, R. E. (2017). Expressive language and prosocial behaviour in early childhood: Longitudinal associations in the UK Millennium Cohort Study. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 14(4), 381-398.*
40. Gonzaga, P. (2025, June 19). The Philippines is facing a 'real, widespread' education crisis, says UNICEF. Rolling Stone Philippines. https://rollingstonephilippines.com/state-of-affairs/power/education-crisis-unicef-philippines/

41. Grantham-McGregor, S., Adya, A., Attanasio, O., Augsburg, B., Behrman, J., Caeyers, B., Day, M., Jervis, P., Kochar, R., Makkar, P., Meghir, C., Phimister, A., Rubio-Codina, M., & Vats, K. (2020). Group Sessions or Home Visits for Early Childhood Development in India: A Cluster RCT. Pediatrics, 146(6), e2020002725. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-002725.
42. Guanghui, C. (2024). Ecological Systems Theory. In: The ECPH Encyclopedia of Psychology. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-6000-2_742-1
43. Guanzon-Pisaras, G. (2020). Mathematics Manipulatives for the Development of the Numeracy Skills of Kindergarten Pupils. *SMCC Higher Education Research Journal, 7(1), 45-64.*
44. Hallegado, S. A., Quines, L. A., & Rodriguez, G. D. (2022, November). An assessment of the DepEd's Philippine Early Childhood Development Program: Basis for a proposed teachers' ECCD enhancement program. *International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications, 5(11).* https://www.ijarp.org/published-research-papers/nov2022/An-Assessment-Of-The-Depeds-Philippine-Early-Childhood-Development-Program-Basis-For-A-Proposed-Teacherseccp-Enhancement-Program.pdf
45. Harini, H., Wahyuningtyas, D. P., & Ausat, A. M. A. (2023). Marketing strategy for Early Childhood Education (ECE) schools in the digital age. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 7(3), 2742 2758.* https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v7i3.4454
46. Hughes, D. Sr. (2023, January 25). Countries with the best early childhood education. Eduedify. https://eduedify.com/countries-with-the-best-early-childhood-education/
47. Husserl, E. (2012). Ideas about a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy: First book: General introduction to a pure phenomenology (Vol. 2). Springer Science and Business Media
48. Iyengar, Kalpana, Walroth, Ellen (2016). Contextualization of Students' Experiences and Topic Choice for the Interdisciplinary Inquiry Project in a Capstone. *Teacher Education Course Vol. 3 Issue 1 Mar-June 2016 IJARET.*
49. Jaca, Cristie Ann & Lopez-Baroman, Janna. (2021). Challenges and Extent of Readiness Among Teachers in the Implementation of the Kindergarten Curriculum in Select Public Elementary Schools in the Philippines. *International Journal of Elementary Education. 10. 134.* 10.11648/j.ijeedu.20211004.15.
50. Janius, N., & Amdan, M. A. B. (2024). Children's health learning through Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. *Inter J. of Science and Research Archive, 12(2), 899-906.* https://doi.org/10.30574/ijsra.2024.12.2.1 293
51. Jenkins, M., & Walker, J. D. (2021). COVID-19 Practices in Special Education: Stakeholder Perceptions and Implications for Teacher Preparation. *Teacher Educators' J., 14, 83-105.* https://doi.org/10.12927/TEJ.2021.129627 7
52. Khalil, Nibal; Aljanazrah, Ahmad; Ghadeer, Hamed andMurtagh, Elaine M. (2022). Exploring teacher educators' perspectives of play-based learning: A mixed-method approach. https://doi.org/10.3390/ educsci12020095.
53. Larawan, Jayson Mark. (2023). Problems Encountered in the Implementation Of Kindergarten Program In Selected Public and Private Schools in Narra District. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371069398
54. Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2018). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (5th ed., pp. 108–150). SAGE Publications.

55. Loniza, A. F., Saad, A., & Che Mustafa, M. (2018). The effectiveness of digital storytelling on language listening comprehension of kindergarten pupils. *International Journal of Multimedia and Its Applications, 10(6), 131–141.* https://doi.org/10.5121/ijma.2018.10611
56. Lynch, Meghan (2015). More play, please: The perspective of kindergarten teachers on play in the classroom. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1070249.
57. Mahmood, Shumaila & Butt, Muqaddas & Manzoor, Aisha. (2022). The Impact of In-service Training on Teachers' Teaching and Students' Learning. *Global Educational Studies Review. VII. 322-335.* 10.31703/gesr.2022(VII-I).32.
58. Manful, E., Abdullah, A., & Cudjoe, E. (2020). Decision-making on child neglect: Ghanaian social workers' views and experiences. *International Journal on Child Maltreatment: Research, Policy and Practice, 3(2), 271–285.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s42448-019-00041-6
59. Mangaoil, P. R. (2018). Non-Early Childhood Education Graduates in Their Pedagogical Journey as Kindergarten Teachers: A Phenomenology of Adaptation Challenges. Tin-aw, 2(1), 1-18.
60. Manguilimotan, R. P., Pino, R. M. P., Petancio, G. T., Geyrozaga, E. P., Padillo, G. G., Capuno, R. G., & Etcuban, J. O. (2023). Teachers' preparation for implementing blocks of time in kindergarten. *Russian Law Journal, 11(5).* https://www.russianlawjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/2974
61. Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
62. Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Wang, Y., Hillemeier, M. M., Oh, Y., & Maczuga, S. (2019). Executive function deficits in kindergarten predict repeated academic difficulties across elementary school. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 46, 20–32.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.06.009
63. Mortensen, A., T. F. McLaughlin, T., Neyman, J. & Girshick, B. (2017). The Effects of Model, Lead, and Test with Reward to Teach a Preschool Student with Developmental and Language Delays to Demonstrate an Understanding of Number Quantity. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 1(1), 12-23.*
64. Mostera, Marimar & Digo, Gerry. (2023). Teachers' profiles and the implementation of the kindergarten program during the pandemic. *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif. 13.* 10.23960/jpp.v13.i1.202309.
65. Murphy, K. M., Yoshikawa, H., & Wuermli, A. J. (2018). Implementation research for early childhood development programming in humanitarian contexts. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1419(1), 90–101*. https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.13789
66. Murthy, R. K., & Kayabu, B. (2024). Demographic determinants of secondary school teacher distribution: Impacts on education quality. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research, 11(12), 338–345*. https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2412639.pdf
67. Nabong, J. C. D. (2020). A phenomenological study of the performance and job commitment of employees in the School Governance and Operations Division of DepEd Sorsogon City (Doctoral dissertation, Annunciation College of Bacon, Sorsogon Unit, Inc.).
68. National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Teachers' age and sex: Average and median age of public K–12 school teachers and percentage distribution of public school teachers, by age category, sex, and state: 2020–21 [Data table]. In the National Teacher and Principal Survey. U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/estable/table/ntps/ntps2021_sflt02_t1s

69. Neubauer, Brian, & Witkop, Catherine, & Varpio, Lara. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education, 8.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2.
70. Nilsen, P. Making sense of implementation theories, models, and frameworks. *Implement Sci. 2015;10(1):53.*
71. Nolan, Andrea, & Paatsch, Louise. (2018). Pre-service teachers' perceptions of their role in play-based learning: A comparative study across teacher education programs in Australia. htpps://www.tandf.co.uk/journal.
72. Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1).* https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847
73. Ocampo, Dina Joana, & Lucasan, Kathrina Lorraine, & Gonzales, Junette, & Fontanos, Naomi, & Romero, Donna, & Villafranca, Cynthia. (2020). Policy Investigations in Support of the Filipino Learner: The UP CIDS ERP Research Agenda 2019-2024. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25023.53925.
74. Omaga, J. F., & Alieto, E. O. (2019). Teaching literacy through play: Perspective from Filipino early childhood teachers. *Science International (Lahore), 31(3), 477–481.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333994710_TEACHING_LITERACY_THROUGH_PLAY_PERSPECTIVE_FROM_FILIPINO_EARLY_CHILDHOOD_TEACHERS
75. Parker, R., Cheng, J. H., Anderson, P., Cloney, D., & Monty, A. (2021). Research Snapshot: UNICEF Philippines Early Childhood Education Kindergarten to Grade 4 Longitudinal Study. Australian Council for Educational Research. https://research.acer.edu.au/early_childhood_misc/31
76. Pekdogan, S., & Akgul, E. (2016). Preschool Children's School Readiness. *In International Education Studies. Canadian Center of Science and Education. 10(1), 144-154,* https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v10n1p144
77. PhilAtlas. (n.d.). Sorsogon City, Sorsogon. https://www.philatlas.com/luzon/r05/sorsogon/sorsogon-city.html
78. Prioletta, Jessica, Plye, Angela, & Poliszczuk, Daniel. (2018). The Play-Literacy Interface in Full-day Kindergarten Classrooms. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643 017-0852-z.
79. Proulx, K., & Aboud, F. (2019). Disaster risk reduction in early childhood education: Effects on preschool quality and child outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Development, 66, 1–7.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2019.01.007
80. Pyle, Angela, & Bigelow, Ian. (2015). Kindergarten teachers' views on play-based learning: Implications for practice and professional development. https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=L175sQ4AAAAJ.
81. Ramos, K. C. (2021). Readiness of Kindergarten Learners Using Early Childhood Care and Development Checklist: Basis for A Proposed Interactive Activities. *International Journal of Advance Multidisciplinary Studies, 1(10), 44-56.*
82. Rao, N., Mirpuri, S., Sincovich, A., & Brinkman, S. A. (2020). Overcoming challenges in measuring early childhood development across cultures. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, 4(5), 352-354.*
83. Republic of the Philippines. (2000, December 5). Republic Act No. 8980: Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act [Law]. The Lawphil Project. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2000/ra_8980_2000.html

84. Republic of the Philippines. (2000, June 11). Republic Act No. 8806: An Act authorizing the establishment and operation of private schools and other institutions of learning [Law]. The Lawphil Project. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2000/ra_8806_2000.html
85. Republic of the Philippines. (2012, January 20). Republic Act No. 10157: An act institutionalizing the kindergarten education into the basic education system and appropriating funds therefor [Law]. The Lawphil Project. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2012/ra_10157_2012.html
86. Republic of the Philippines. (2013, March 26). Republic Act No. 10410: An act recognizing the age from zero (0) to eight (8) years as the first crucial stage of educational development and strengthening the early childhood care and development system, appropriating funds therefor and for other purposes [Law]. The Lawphil Project. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10410_2013.html
87. Republic of the Philippines. (2013, May 15). Republic Act No. 10533: An act enhancing the Philippine basic education system by strengthening its curriculum and increasing the number of years for basic education, appropriating funds therefor and for other purposes [Law]. The Lawphil Project. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10533_2013.html
88. Rocamora, J. A. L. (2020, July 11). No regular face-to-face classes in August: CHED. Philippine News Agency. https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1108687
89. Saldaña, J. (2021). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
90. Salehuddin, Khazriyati & Nadiah, Fatin. (2024). Assessing Children's Language Development: A Systematic Literature Review on Early Language Milestone Scales. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies. 24. 17-46.* 10.17576/gema-2024-2404-02.
91. Salvan, V. J. C., & Hambre, M. M. (2020). Teachers' demographic profile on the learners' performance using the K-12 Earth and Space module. *Journal of Education & Social Policy, 7(4), 125–133.* https://doi.org/10.30845/jesp.v7n4p14
92. Sangalla, H., Monterona, D., Mabiscay, K. & Ramos, E. N. (2017). Demystifying Parental Involvement in Kindergartens' Homework: A Phenomenological Study. *ARETE, 5(1), 47-59.*
93. Seguin, M., & Cacho, M. (2019). Developmental Readiness of Kindergarten Pupils. *Ascendens Asia Singapore – Union Christian College Philippines Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Abstracts, 2(1).* https://ojs.aaresearchindex.com/index.php/aasguccphjmra/article/view/2653
94. Simbulan, N.P. (2020). COVID-19 and its impact on higher education in the Philippines. *Higher education in Southeast Asia and beyond, 8. The Head Foundation.* https://headfoundation.org/wp content/uploads/2020/06/ HESB-8-COVID19_2020.pdf
95. Toropova, A., Myrberg, E., & Johansson, S. (2021). Teacher job satisfaction: The importance of school working conditions and teacher characteristics. *Educational Review, 73(1), 71–97.* https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1705247
96. Tranquilan, T. P. (2020). The Implementation of Kindergarten Program in Multicultural Schools in Agusan Province, Philippines. *JPAIR Institutional Research Journal, 15(1),24-32.*
97. UNESCO, UNICEF, ARNEC, & Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2016). Putrajaya Declaration on Early Childhood Care and Education. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243975
98. UNICEF Philippines. (2020, May 8). Early childhood education, Kindergarten to Grade 4 longitudinal study – Round 5 report: Longitudinal study of the effects of early childhood education on the learning experiences and performance of Kindergarten to Grade 4 students in the Philippines (Rounds 1 to 5) [Report No. 43260221]. Department of Education; Department of Social Welfare

and Development; ECCD Secretariat. https://www.unicef.org/philippines/media/4601/file/UNIPH-2022-longitudinalresearch-report1to5.pdf

99. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2015). Education for All 2015 National Review. UNESCO, 1–67.
100. United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child
101. United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda
102. Vagle, M.D.. (2018). Crafting phenomenological research, second edition. 10.4324/9781315173474.
103. Valente, S., Veiga-Branco, A., Rebelo, H., Lourenço, A. A., & Cristóvão, A. M. (2020). The relationship between emotional intelligence ability and teacher efficacy. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 3(8), 916–923.*
104. Wang, Y., Wong, E. L. Y., Nilsen, P., Bai, X., & Luk, T. T. (2023). A scoping review of implementation science theories, models, and frameworks – An appraisal of purpose, characteristics, usability, applicability, and testability. *Implementation Science, 18(1), 43.* https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-023-01296-x
105. Wati, E. S., Zaman, B., & Ramdani, C. (2024). Parents' Perception of Their Role in Character Education for Early Childhood in Indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi Pendidikan, 8(2), 225-234.*
106. Wysłowska, O., & Slot, P. L. (2020). Structural and process quality in early childhood education and care provisions in Poland and the Netherlands: A cross-national study using cluster analysis. *Early Education and Development, 31(4), 524-540.*
107. Yang, W., Huang, R., & Li, H. (2022). Coaching early childhood teachers: A systematic review of its effects on teacher instruction and child development. *Review of Education, 10(1), e3343.*
108. Yoshikawa, H., Wuermli, A., Britto, P., Dreyer, B., Leckman, J.F., Lye, S.J., Ponguta, L.A., Richter, L.M., & Stein, A. (2020). Effects of the global coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic on early childhood development: short-and long-term risks and mitigating program and policy actions. *The Journal of Pediatrics, 223, 188-193.*
109. van Huizen, T., & Plantenga, J. (2018). Do children benefit from universal early childhood education and care? A meta-analysis of evidence from natural experiments. *Economics of Education Review, 66, 206–222.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.08.001