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## Research Article

# When Learning Doesn't Linger: Teachers' Journeys with Learners Experiencing Learning Difficulties

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigated how teachers experience their work with students who have memory and recall academic challenges. The study examined how teachers recognize challenges which learners face while they study because it required teachers to demonstrate their teaching methods and their obstacles to learning. The study applies descriptive phenomenology design to reveal how teachers detect memory problems which learners experience and which factors stop them from learning and which solutions they create to overcome these challenges. The researcher interviewed teachers who taught students with memory and recall problems through their experiences with the students. The researchers used a thematic analysis approach to analyze the data after they transformed the data into a transcribed format which they then used to create codes before they established the main themes. The study results showed that teachers were able to identify memory and recall problems through specific signs which included students forgetting their instructions and their previous learning and their multiple step tasks and their signs of frustration and embarrassment and low confidence. The challenges which teachers faced showed multiple dimensions which included problems with their teaching plans and their teaching methods and their teaching assessments and their classroom control and their workload and the educational system limitations which included large classes and insufficient educational materials and no specialized assistance. Teachers developed multiple strategies to handle student learning needs through different teaching techniques which included repetition and chunking and multisensory activities and various teaching methods which included differentiated instruction and scaffolding and peer tutoring and different types of evaluations which allowed students to select between two assessment methods and which presented condensed evaluation tasks and which offered students extra time.

**Keywords:** *memory and recall difficulties, lived experiences, coping mechanisms, cognitive challenges, teacher adaptation*

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## Introduction

The educational system continuously strive to ensure that learners achieve meaningful and lasting understanding of what they learned. The educational system, however, faces a major problem because students cannot remember what they studied and this incapacity leads to poor academic results. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 results showed that students in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries suffered from serious learning disabilities. Memory and recall represent basic cognitive functions which allow students to learn and remember information for different learning scenarios. Current research shows that memory operates as an active cognitive function which develops through teaching methods, emotional status and environmental conditions according to Almeyda et al. (2024) and Nelson and Eliaz (2023). International research from 2020 onwards shows that memory-related learning difficulties do not exist as individual learner problems because they result from educational strategies, student participation and curriculum development (Winkel & Zipperle, 2023).

The researcher observed that students who demonstrated lesson mastery during classroom discussions would forget the lessons when they came back from short breaks such as weekends or class suspensions. The pattern of students forgetting material required teachers to teach essential skills again before they could start new lessons which made teaching slower while it frustrated both students and teachers. The researcher will study how teachers cope with memory problems because students forget what they learned in daily classroom experiences. The Department of Education in the Philippines establishes learning standards through DepEd Order No. 21 Series of 2023 which creates safe learning spaces by eliminating visual classroom interruptions while establishing guidelines for students who require different methods to remember information. The process of learning requires experts to understand how memory and recall function in classrooms before they can create solutions to improve student performance.

Globally, educational policies recognize the importance of addressing learners' diverse cognitive needs. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms every child's right to quality education that promotes holistic development. In the Philippine context, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 mandates a learner-centered and inclusive curriculum that responds to varied learner needs. Similarly, the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 ensures access to quality basic education through effective school management. Supporting these legal frameworks, the Department of Education, through DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2016, emphasizes differentiated instruction to address learners' diverse abilities, including cognitive challenges. These mandates underscore the responsibility of schools and teachers to respond to learning difficulties such as memory and recall problems.

Several scholars have examined memory and recall challenges in recent years. Abeysekera et al. (2024) emphasize that recall difficulties significantly affect learner comprehension and long-term academic achievement. Rosyada and Apoko (2023) note that teachers frequently observe students forgetting previously discussed lessons, particularly in vocabulary and numeracy tasks. Aprilia and Aminatun (2022) highlight the influence of cognitive-affective factors such as anxiety and depression on memory endurance, suggesting that emotional well-being directly impacts retention. Meanwhile, Kimuge (2021) and Mashele (2025) discuss teachers' experiences in handling learners with reading difficulties and dyslexia, identifying gaps in teacher preparedness and professional support. Collectively, these authors agree that memory-related learning challenges are multifaceted and require contextualized classroom investigation.

Filipino learners performed below the global average in reading, mathematics, and science, particularly in tasks requiring application and retention of previously learned knowledge which is a knowledge gap that this research will explore on. This difficulty manifests concretely in classroom settings as early as key stage one level where students struggle to remember vocabulary definitions, follow multi-step procedures, reconstruct narrative sequences, and apply previously discussed rules as documented in teachers' daily lesson logs and anecdotal records. Recent results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2022, released 2023) revealed that Filipino learners performed below the global average in this area. Complementing this, internal school records such as quarterly examination results, formative assessments, and remedial class reports show patterns of low mastery levels in competencies that require recall of prerequisite concepts. Teachers' daily lesson logs and anecdotal records frequently indicate that learners struggle to remember vocabulary definitions, follow multi-step procedures, reconstruct narrative sequences, and apply previously discussed rules. Despite these

observable patterns, school-based documentation primarily captures performance scores and does not deeply examine teachers' lived experiences in addressing recurring memory and recall difficulties. There remains a lack of qualitative, phenomenological evidence that explores how teachers interpret, respond to, and cope with this persistent classroom challenge. This gap between performance data and experiential understanding limits the development of context-specific interventions.

In addressing this gap, this study aims to explore and describe the lived experiences of teachers in managing learners who experience difficulties with memory and recall in the classroom. Specifically, it aims to: (1) identify how teachers recognize memory-related learning challenges among learners; (2) examine the strategies they implement to support these learners; and (3) determine the challenges they face and the support systems available to them in handling such learners. By focusing on teachers' narratives, the study aligns with inclusive education principles promoted by the Department of Education and supports policy directions under DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019, which emphasize responsive and learner-centered instruction.

The expected outcome of this study is the development of a deeper understanding of memory and recall challenges from the teachers' perspective, leading to evidence-based recommendations for classroom interventions, professional development programs, and policy enhancement. The findings may contribute to strengthening differentiated instruction practices, improving teacher training modules, and informing school-level support systems consistent with national educational mandates.

## **Methods**

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of seventeen (17) Key Stage 1 teachers from selected public elementary schools in Sinacaban District, Misamis Occidental, during School Year 2025–2026. Using purposive sampling, participants were selected based on their teaching experience and direct involvement in handling learners with memory and recall difficulties. Data were collected through validated semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in depth. The interview guide underwent expert validation and pilot testing to ensure its clarity, relevance, and credibility. Data were analyzed using Clark Moustakas's phenomenological approach, which involved epoche, horizontalization, thematic clustering, textural and structural descriptions, and synthesis of the essence of participants' lived experiences. Throughout the research process, strict ethical standards were observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and secure data management, ensuring the trustworthiness and integrity of the study.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Teachers' Lived Experiences in Handling Learners with Memory and Recall Difficulties**

The findings revealed that Key Stage 1 teachers' lived experiences in handling learners with memory and recall difficulties were characterized by recognizing persistent memory-related challenges, addressing academic learning difficulties, managing behavioral and emotional changes, adapting classroom instruction, and demonstrating resilience despite increasing instructional demands. Teachers consistently observed that learners frequently forgot instructions, struggled to retain previously learned concepts, required repeated prompts, and exhibited low confidence and participation, findings that are consistent with John Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, which explains that limitations in working memory hinder the transfer of information into long-term memory. Likewise, teachers experienced increased workload through continuous re-teaching, individualized instruction, repetition, and scaffolding, while simultaneously balancing the needs of struggling and advanced learners. These findings support the studies of John Sweller as cited by Raymond and Raymond (2024), who emphasized the importance of reducing cognitive load through structured instruction, and Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, which highlights the significance of teacher scaffolding in promoting learner development. Furthermore, the emotional experiences of both learners and teachers reflected the complex interaction between cognition, motivation, and instructional practice, corroborating the findings of Jala (2024), Tadesse et al. (2021), Chew and Cerbin (2021), and Becker and Schad (2022), who emphasized that effective instruction for learners with memory difficulties requires differentiated teaching strategies, continuous teacher adaptation, and sustained professional resilience. Thus, the findings suggest that supporting learners with memory and recall difficulties extends beyond instructional competence and requires patience, flexibility, emotional commitment, and evidence-based pedagogical practices to foster meaningful learning and inclusive classroom environments.

## **Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Handling Learners with Memory and Recall Difficulties**

The findings revealed that teachers encountered multifaceted challenges in handling learners with memory and recall difficulties, encompassing instructional planning, lesson delivery, assessment, classroom management, time constraints, diagnostic processes, workload, emotional well-being, and systemic limitations. Teachers reported spending considerable time preparing differentiated lessons, multisensory instructional materials, and scaffolded activities while balancing curriculum demands with individualized learner support. They also experienced difficulties in designing fair assessments that accurately reflected learners' understanding rather than their memory limitations, managing classroom engagement, and identifying the underlying causes of learners' difficulties due to limited training and access to specialists. These findings are consistent with John Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, which emphasizes the need to reduce cognitive overload through structured instruction, and with the work of Lev Vygotsky, who underscored the importance of scaffolded learning and individualized support. Furthermore, the challenges of large class sizes, insufficient instructional resources, limited parental involvement, multigrade teaching, and increased administrative responsibilities intensified teachers' workload and emotional stress, corroborating the findings of Jala (2024), Donato (2023), Quirino (2025), Agayon et al. (2022), and Chew and Cerbin (2021), who emphasized that effective support for learners with memory difficulties requires institutional support, continuous professional development, adequate resources, and collaborative partnerships among schools, families, and specialists. Hence, the findings highlight that addressing memory and recall difficulties is not solely an instructional concern but also a systemic issue that demands comprehensive educational support to enable teachers to provide equitable and inclusive learning experiences.

## **Coping Mechanisms of Teachers in Handling Learners with Memory and Recall Difficulties**

The findings revealed that teachers employed a combination of instructional, adaptive, professional, and personal coping mechanisms to effectively support learners with memory and recall difficulties. These strategies included the consistent use of repetition, chunking, visual aids, multisensory activities, differentiated instruction, individualized support, peer tutoring, scaffolding, and flexible assessment practices to enhance learners' memory retention and participation. Teachers also strengthened their instructional practices through collaboration with colleagues, parents, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and SPED or guidance personnel while continuously reflecting on and adjusting their teaching strategies based on learners' needs. On a personal level, they sustained their commitment by practicing patience, emotional regulation, self-care, maintaining a positive mindset, and celebrating even small learner achievements as indicators of meaningful progress. These findings support John Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, which emphasizes reducing cognitive overload through structured and scaffolded instruction, as well as Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist perspective, which highlights the importance of collaborative learning and guided support in promoting cognitive development. Likewise, the findings corroborate the studies of Kurniarahman (2023), Chew and Cerbin (2021), Donato (2023), Tadesse et al. (2021), Vaughn et al. (2024), Harawa (2025), Jala (2024), Skelly and Estrada-Chichon (2021), and Bustillo and Aguilos (2022), which emphasize that effective intervention for learners with memory difficulties requires evidence-based instructional practices, professional collaboration, continuous reflective practice, and teacher resilience. Hence, the findings demonstrate that teachers' coping mechanisms extend beyond instructional adaptations and encompass professional growth, emotional well-being, and collaborative partnerships that collectively promote inclusive and meaningful learning experiences for learners with memory and recall difficulties.

## **Conclusions**

The study revealed that teachers' lived experiences in handling learners with memory and recall difficulties encompass recognizing learners' cognitive, academic, behavioral, and emotional challenges, addressing complex instructional and classroom management demands, and employing diverse coping mechanisms to support learner success. Teachers observed that learners frequently forgot instructions, struggled to retain previously learned concepts, exhibited inconsistent academic performance, and displayed reduced confidence and classroom participation, requiring differentiated instruction, continuous repetition, scaffolding, multisensory strategies, flexible assessment, and individualized support. However, these interventions were constrained by challenges such as limited instructional time, large class sizes, inadequate learning resources, insufficient access to specialists, increased workload, and emotional stress, which affected teachers' instructional effectiveness and well-being. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated resilience by collaborating with colleagues, engaging parents, reflecting on their instructional practices, maintaining positive

mindsets, and celebrating incremental learner progress. Overall, the findings underscore that effectively supporting learners with memory and recall difficulties requires not only evidence-based instructional strategies but also comprehensive institutional support, including adequate resources, continuous professional development, access to specialized services, manageable class sizes, and strong school-family partnerships to foster inclusive, equitable, and sustainable learning environments.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that learners actively participate in memory-enhancing activities and communicate their learning needs to teachers; teachers consistently implement evidence-based strategies such as repetition, chunking, multisensory instruction, scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and flexible assessment while engaging in continuous professional development; school heads and administrators strengthen institutional support by providing adequate instructional resources, allocating time for individualized instruction, integrating intervention programs into the School Improvement Plan (SIP), and establishing systematic monitoring of learner progress; parents reinforce classroom learning through consistent home-based practice and close collaboration with teachers; Special Education (SPED) specialists and psychologists become more accessible to provide assessment, consultation, and individualized intervention planning; policymakers formulate policies that strengthen inclusive education through reduced class sizes, sustained teacher training, adequate funding, and specialist support; and future researchers conduct longitudinal and intervention-based studies to examine the long-term effectiveness of instructional strategies, technology-assisted cognitive interventions, teacher well-being, and context-responsive frameworks for supporting learners with memory and recall difficulties across diverse educational settings.

## Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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