

# Teachers' Lived Experiences in the Implementation of Catch-Up Fridays in the Philippine Context

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## ABSTRACT

This research focused on the description and analysis of implementing the Catch-up Friday's program within Magsaysay Elementary Schools Teachers. It aimed to measure and describe the difference between policy planning and classroom practice, to identify the problems faced by the teachers, and the processes they followed in dealing with such challenges. This is a qualitative study that utilized a phenomenological design to understand the lived experiences of teachers in Magsaysay Elementary School using the program. The study was with selected teachers in Magsaysay Elementary Schools. Five (5) teachers selected as the primary participant to took part in the study. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which were administered face to face interview for the purpose of convenience of the participant. The data collected were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Jonathan Smith to understand individual experiences and perception. Consequently, from the findings of the evaluation, it was shown that teachers faced different hindrances in rolling out the Catch-up Fridays program. They included lack of orientation and training, poor resources, overloaded workloads, poor student participation, and inappropriate application of gamification that veered off the fundamental objectives of the program. Regardless of these issues, teachers utilized strategies like structured peer learning, cooperative classroom activities, and feedback. Participants proposed the utilization of small, mixed-ability classes with collaborative approaches like Think-Pair-Share and Jigsaw to reduce the teaching load while promoting teamwork, responsibility, and engagement on the part of students. Applying distinct rubrics for qualitative and quantitative feedback was also proposed to develop a positive learning culture and enhance classroom performance. Moreover, the research inspires students to assume responsibility for learning by peer teaching and reflection on practice, hence cultivating motivation, self-confidence, and self-regulation. Lastly, the research suggests that subsequent studies investigate the long-term effects of the Catch-up Friday's program across different settings, and assess the strength of various models of feedback, including digital and anonymous feedback systems. These recommendations are intended to enhance the sustainability, equity, and learner focus of the program, ultimately fostering collaboration, resilience, and lifelong learning.

**Keywords:** catch-up Fridays Program, policy implementation, classroom practice, phenomenological study, teacher experiences.

## I. Introduction

Education is a basic right and a crucial factor in the development of children, communities, and nations. However, education standards vary across regions, and many students in the Philippines continue to face learning challenges. According to the World Bank's (2022), learning poverty statistics, nearly 90% of ten-year-old children in the Philippines are unable to read and understand a simple text, a significant increase from 70% before the pandemic. Such a critical level of learning poverty requires immediate and efficient interventions. To address such a challenge, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented Catch-up Fridays, a weekly

intervention program intended to emphasize foundational skills, particularly reading and literacy development.

The program allocates half of every Friday to reading and writing exercises, including appropriate texts for each age, such as Kay Asya, and the other half to values education, health, and peace education. The intention is to assist in bridging the growing gap in reading among Filipino learners by providing systematic opportunities for reading practice and development within the school context. Ever since its nationwide launch on January 12, 2024, Catch-up Fridays has incorporated programs like the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) initiative, read-a-thons, and interactive storytelling. These are created to foster a culture of literacy and reading in elementary and secondary schools and community learning centers (CLCs).

The program is in accordance with DepEd guidelines (DO O 13, s. 2023) and supports the National Reading Program (NRP), which is the central subprogram of the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP). Teachers are instructed to utilize developmentally appropriate reading materials and make learners reflect, creatively write, and discuss, to enhance not only reading fluency but also comprehension and critical thinking. Yet, this program's success depends greatly on teacher implementation and leadership. Teachers are responsible for creating rich reading experiences, facilitating learners through comprehension strategies, and monitoring and supporting progress through reflection of journals and forms of written expression. The teacher's capacity to craft stimulating and responsive reading instruction is key to closing the reading gaps. In Magsaysay Elementary School, although there was a high teacher initiative to involve learners, actual implementation deviated from DepEd's focused reading intention. With low attendance on Fridays, teachers used gamification techniques, offering rewards or prizes in exchange for involvement.

While this strategy brought students back to the classroom, it occasionally resulted in a focus to switch away from reading and literacy growth, at the heart of the Catch-up Friday's program. This straying evidence of tension between policy fidelity and teacher adaptation highlights questions regarding how to preserve the program's reading goals while coping with legitimate classroom challenges. Even with such straying, the teachers' role remains crucial. As captured by Gepila Jr. (2020), teachers are agents of national development; their character, qualifications, and pedagogy are at the heart of the success of any education reform.

To this end, Catch-up Fridays provides teachers with an opportunity to reflect on and enhance their practice. Grounded in David Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning (1984), this research investigates how teachers' experience lived through active engagement, reflection, and experimentation drives their professional development and affects the extent to which the program enhances literacy development. Through the lenses of teachers' experiences, this study seeks to underscore the struggles and triumphs of conducting Catch-up Fridays, particularly regarding their reading component. Seeing how teachers modify the program to suit their setting without compromising on its core goal of enhancing reading proficiency will be crucial in fortifying its efficacy. In the end, supporting reading through properly executed interventions can really mitigate learning poverty and lay the grounds for a lifetime of learning for Filipino students.

Despite the Department of Education's comprehensive implementation of Catch-up Fridays in January 2024, which dedicates half a day to targeted reading interventions and the other half to values, health, and peace education, the 90% learning poverty rate among ten-year-olds remains a significant concern. Preliminary research identifies major implementation challenges, including insufficient teacher training, a lack of differentiated instruction, limited resources, and the absence of long-term strategies. Phenomenological studies indicate that teachers experience confusion, stress, and mixed emotions during the initial stages of implementation, although professional optimism emerges when interventions yield improvements in literacy. In addition, research suggests that the long-term success of Catch-up Fridays is uncertain in the absence of adequate planning, resource allocation, and structured guidance. While existing studies document challenges such as training deficiencies, resource limitations, and ambiguous directives, they also report on teachers' initial emotional responses and coping mechanisms.

This study explores the lived experiences of Magsaysay Elementary School teachers in implementing the Catch-up Friday's program. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the perspectives of teachers prior to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays; the experiences encountered by Magsaysay Elementary School teachers implementing Catch-up Fridays; and how do teachers describe the implementation of the Catch-up Friday's program.

## II. Methodology

### Research Design

This research adopted a qualitative approach in descriptive Phenomenological design, that focuses on the lived experiences of the teachers in relation to the implementation of the Catch-up Friday program of the Department of Education in Elementary public school for an intensive reading intervention and functional literacy. Phenomenology was chosen as its design because it facilitates a profound exploration of the meaning individuals ascribe to their experiences (Polit & Beck, 2010). Guided by Husserl's descriptive phenomenology,

the study adhered to the steps of bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and reflecting to capture the essence of the phenomenon.

The study was conducted in Magsaysay as one of the densely populated areas in the municipality of Santa Rita, with 2,365 residents and among these are the 378 elementary students and 15 teachers who lack stable internet connectivity, limited access to updated information about the curriculum and availability of resources relevant to students' educational needs. Employing random sampling, five key participants were involved and interviewed using an in-depth interview to collect essential data. Denscombe (2014) asserts that interviewing is an effective research method for exploring complex and nuanced phenomena such as opinions, feelings, and experiences, as well as issues requiring detailed understanding or privileged information. In this study, interviews were conducted to obtain comprehensive insights into teachers' lived experiences with the implementation of Catch-up Fridays.

The study utilized Braun and Clark's (2013) six-step thematic framework: familiarization with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing, defining, and naming themes, and finally writing. To ensure trustworthiness, the research adhered to the criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity. Ethical consent was observed throughout the study. The participants were provided with informed consent, confidentiality of the pieces of information was strictly maintained, participation to this endeavor was voluntary and they have the right to withdraw any time.

### III. Results and Discussion

This section presents a qualitative analysis of teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the implementation of Catch-up Fridays at Magsaysay Elementary School. The analysis examines teachers' initial perceptions, the challenges encountered, strategies employed, and the overall impact on teaching practices and student learning. Data were collected through teacher interviews, focusing on pre-implementation perspectives, experiences during implementation, and post-implementation reflections. The results offer valuable insights into the effectiveness and feasibility of the program.

#### **Theme 1: Perspectives Prior to Implementation of Catch-up Fridays**

The Magsaysay Elementary School teachers expressed mixed reactions to the introduction of Catch-up Fridays, ranging from optimism, apprehension, and guarded anticipation. Most saw the promise of the program to enhance the quality of students' learning by bridging gaps in understanding, but some were hesitant about the additional workload and lack of preparation. Some of the teachers, such as Teacher 1 and Teacher 3, complained about having a higher workload, citing how the extra planning and activity preparation added to the already heavy burdens. This complaint corroborates results from Magtala and Eduvala (2024), who revealed that Philippine teachers suffer high levels of stress and burnout due to workload. In the same view, Joe and Mtsi (2024) establish that South African teachers' workloads were too high and prevented teachers from finishing syllabi to the detriment of student performance. The Alberta Teachers Association (2012) further observed that overloaded teachers dedicate less time to planning and tracking pupil progress, leading to lower classroom performance.

"Having Catch-up Friday was additional preparation of activities and an added workload to teachers." – Teacher 1.... "Initially, I was disheartened by the workload. But when I understood its purpose, I realized it helped enhance student learning." – Teacher 3

Even with apprehensions, most teachers believed that the program had the potential to better support individual students with special time for remediation and enrichment. They envision enhanced student understanding, self-assurance, and achievement, particularly through one-on-one instruction and small-group settings.

"It enables me to pinpoint where pupils need help and provide focused interventions." – Teacher 3.... "CUF is helpful in reinforcing reading and writing skills, especially for Grade 4 learners transitioning to a more academic setting." – Teacher 5

But a few teachers emphasized that the success of Catch-up Fridays would hinge greatly on the resources, clear instructions, and appropriate training. The lack of direct training was a common complaint. Teachers said that they had either been given none or only passing references in more comprehensive curriculum meetings.

"No training or seminar received for the implementation of Catch-up Friday." – Teacher 2.... "It was mentioned in our Matatag Curriculum Training, but no specific session was held. I relied on reading guidelines and support from our principal." – Teacher 5

Research supports these concerns, showing that professional development is needed for programs like this to work well. Darling-Hammond et al. (2023) found that ongoing teacher training helps students learn more. Without support from the school, programs may not be consistent or effective. Teachers' past experiences with

similar programs also shaped their expectations. Those who had good experiences with remedial programs were more hopeful about Catch-up Friday. This matches Chen and Yu (2016), who found that teachers' past experiences affect how they view new programs. In the Philippines, Guban and Revilla (2022) found that earlier remedial programs improved student performance and teacher satisfaction, but lack of resources and training were still problems.

"Yes, I've used similar programs like remediation and saw how they boosted students' confidence and comprehension." – Teacher 3... "This is similar to RRE activities we do year-round." – Teacher 5

### **Subtheme 1. Challenges Encountered by the Teachers**

"Before Catch-up Friday started, teachers were not equally prepared and did not get official training. All teachers surveyed said they had no formal training. Some only heard about the program in passing during broader training sessions. Most support came from peers, parents, and school leaders. This uneven preparation shows a weakness in the system that affects how well the program works. Research by Mahara (2024) and Cheung & Wong (2012) shows that a lack of training and resources makes it hard to start new programs. The World Bank (2023) also links poor learning results in the Philippines to weak teacher training systems.

"No training or seminar received for the implementation of Catch-up Fridays." – Teacher 2.... "Before Catch-up Fridays were implemented, there was no formal preparation or training provided. However, I prepared by researching effective strategies for catch-up sessions and brainstorming interactive activities that could help students reinforce what they learned during the week. I focused on creating engaging materials and finding ways to make the sessions both educational and enjoyable for students, ensuring that they would be motivated to participate and benefit from the extra time." – Teacher 3... "No training or seminars I receive." – Teacher 4... "I don't remember attending any specific training about this CUF (Catch-up Friday) implementation. However, it was mentioned in our Matatag Curriculum Training last year." – Teacher 5

## **Theme 2: Experiences Encountered during the Implementation of Catch-up Fridays**

This section looks at teachers' experiences while running Catch-up Fridays, including the challenges they faced, the strategies they used, and the support they received.

### **Subtheme 1: Experiences of the Teachers in the Implementation**

Teachers' experiences with Catch-up Fridays varied widely, ranging from extremely positive to significantly challenging. While others cited substantial success and documented their positive impacts on learning, others faced great challenges. Among these challenges was the deficiency of resources. Most teachers faced challenges without an effective lesson plan, current textbooks, or technology to access, so preparing instructional materials was labor-intensive and slowed their efficient utilization of Catch-up Fridays. As Teacher 2 noted, creating lesson plans without proper resources was particularly burdensome. Time management was also an issue, with teachers having to juggle the workload of preparing extra lessons, creating materials, and providing individual student support in addition to their normal tasks. In addition, sustaining student motivation was challenging, with some students perceiving Catch-up Friday as a holiday instead of an opportunity to learn. Such results in disengagement to address this, teachers attempted to design motivating activities, offer choices, and set clear expectations for student participation.

"Making of lesson plan for Catch-up Friday sessions because there are no resources in making lesson plan and time consuming to the teacher's preparation of IM's." – Teacher 2

Teachers' concerns about the "Catch-up Fridays" program reflect broader challenges in education, including inadequate resources, time constraints, and student motivation. Studies indicate that insufficient resources and time significantly impact teachers' ability to effectively plan and deliver lessons. Likewise, Pelletier et al. (2023) discovered that students' motivation to attend voluntary remedial learning sessions was affected by both instrumental support and relational support (e.g., supportive teacher-student relationships). Without this support, students might think of remedial sessions as a break and not a learning experience, resulting in disengagement. The overall impact of low resources, limited time, and student disengagement can cause teacher burnout. Research has shown that overburdening teachers with workload is detrimental to learners' metacognition and academic achievement.

### **Subtheme 2: Strategies for Successful Implementation**

Teachers have tried different ways to make Catch-up Friday work in their classrooms. They adjusted lesson plans to include review exercises, practice, and different teaching methods to meet students' needs. Giving one-on-one and small group help lets teachers focus on individual learning gaps. Adding activities based on students' interests helped keep them motivated and created a positive classroom environment. Support from school leaders, other teachers, and parents also played a big role. Working together and sharing ideas helped improve teaching and student performance. Shand and Goddard (2024) found that teacher collaboration leads

to better student learning and professional growth. However, when support was inconsistent, some teachers felt alone and said more teamwork and coordination were needed for the program to succeed.

“Yes, translate into your mother tongue so that all learners will understand the lesson.” – Teacher 2.... “Yes, I had to adjust my lesson plans. I began pacing my weekly lessons with Catch-up Friday in mind, ensuring that key concepts were covered by Thursday so students could review or make up for any missed work by Friday.” – Teacher 5.... “Schedule one-on-one or small group sessions for learners who need extra help and allow learners to explore or enrichment activities for the advanced learners.” – Teacher 2.... “I incorporated the extra time on Fridays by using it strategically for remediation, enrichment, and one-on-one support.” – Teacher 5

### **Subtheme 3: Specific Instances and Significant Experiences: Successes and Setbacks**

Teachers have used many methods to make Catch-up Friday part of their teaching. They changed lesson plans to include review, practice, and different ways of teaching to meet students' needs. One-on-one and small group help gave students personal support to fill learning gaps. Activities based on students' interests kept them motivated and helped create a positive classroom culture. The program's success also depended on support from school leaders, other teachers, and parents. Research shows that when teachers work together and share ideas, teaching and student results improve. Shand and Goddard (2024) found that teacher collaboration leads to professional growth and better teaching. Still, when support was lacking, some teachers felt alone, showing the need for more teamwork and coordination.

“Some challenges I encountered preparing appropriate materials or learning resources to make the sessions effective and meaningful.” – Teacher 3

### **Theme 3: Teachers' Overall Assessment of Catch-up Fridays**

This section presents teachers' comprehensive assessment of the Catch-up Fridays program, encompassing its impact on teaching, student learning, and work-life balance.

#### **Subtheme 1: Overall Impact on Teaching and Learning: A Balanced Perspective**

Teachers' overall feedback on the Catch-up Friday program has been overwhelmingly positive, with teachers indicating better students' comprehension, greater confidence, and greater participation. These benefits are frequently linked to the provision of one-to-one support and the filling of learning gaps. Some teachers have nonetheless raised concerns regarding the efficacy of the program and the need for adjustments. These concerns are often the result of issues with resource deployment and motivating students. The impact of Catch-up Friday on teachers' work-life balance is unclear; although some indicate it as positive in workload management, others view it as adding to stress and more workload. The extra planning and preparation effort related to Catch-up Friday tends to lead to longer working hours and less individual time. Literature shows that too much teacher workload has a negative impact on learners' metacognition and academic achievement. A research study by Joe and Mtsi (2024) pointed out that an overload of work in South Africa caused teachers stress and prevented them from finishing the syllabus within schedule, adversely affecting learners' performance. These observations accentuate the need to match expectations with resources present to foster a sustainable education system that caters to both the quality of education

“Catch-up Fridays significantly improved my ability to address individual pupils' needs and fostered a more supportive learning environment. Pupils benefited from the extra time and personalized attention, showing improved understanding and confidence.” – Teacher 1.... “I've noticed a positive overall impact on both my locking and my student learning.” – Teacher 2.... “Catch-up Fridays have had a positive impact on both my teaching and my students' learning. It has allowed me to address learning gaps, provide targeted support, and reinforce key concepts.” – Teacher 3.... “Catch-up Fridays have helped me manage lessons better and give students more time to understand their work. It's been helpful for reviewing and catching up. Yes, the program met my expectations I thought it would help with unfinished tasks.” – Teacher 5

#### **Subtheme 2: Recommendations and Suggestions for Improvement: A Path Forward**

Educators have made some proposals to improve the efficiency of the Catch-up Friday program. A major recommendation is to expand the provision of resources, including pre-prepared lesson plans, teaching materials, and access to technology, to simplify the preparation of the workload. They also stressed the requirement for more training to empower educators with effective measures for executing Catch-up Friday efficiently. In addition, enhancing communication and collaboration among teachers and administrators was considered crucial to facilitating consistent implementation and maximizing the overall effectiveness of the program. In Davao del Norte, teachers pinpointed the scarcity of formal training and resources that hampered them from implementing the program effectively (Requillo et al., 2024). In the same vein, in Ilocos Sur, first-time teachers cited the importance of extensive orientation workshops and availability of teaching materials to minimize stress and facilitate effective program implementation, according to the study by Rafanan et al.

(2024). These results emphasize the importance of improved readiness, facilitation of resources, and assistance by education authorities to make the CUF program more effective.

“I hope that the teacher must be equipped with this program, especially the materials that the teacher needs.” – Teacher 5... “One improvement could be ensuring that lesson scripts are complete for all subjects and all quarters, which would make the program more consistent and manageable. Additionally, providing more training or resources to help teachers effectively engage all students during this time could improve the overall impact of the program.” – Teacher 3... “My recommendation would be that teachers must be trained, and catch-up plans materials must be provided.” – Teacher 4... “Capability building and seminars for teachers.” – Teacher 4

### **Subtheme 3: Areas for Improvement in Implementation: Refining the Process**

Researchers noted the responses of teachers during the interviews, where teachers pointed out certain significant areas that must be worked upon to enhance the overall efficacy of the Catch-up Friday program. One of the largest problems was the need for more precise and adaptable lesson plans, which would minimize the load of preparation on teachers while allowing instruction to better address students' diverse learning needs. This is in line with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, in which scaffolding and adaptive instruction are presumed to be crucial to motivate learners in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). The fair distribution of resources among classrooms was also deemed crucial because the availability of learning tools is the basis for active participation and cognitive development, as highlighted by research conducted by Hattie (2009). Such forms of sustained assistance represent the tenets of professional learning theory, which stresses continuous, job-embedded learning to improve teacher effectiveness and instructional quality (Pena, 2018). Also, these developments are central to facilitating teachers to implement the program more effectively and address students' learning gaps in a responsive and equitable manner, as emphasized in a study by Garet et al. (2001), displaying the benefits of professional development on teaching quality.

“One improvement could be ensuring that lesson scripts are complete for all subjects and all quarters, which would make the program more consistent and manageable.” – Teacher 3... “My recommendation would be teachers must be trained, and catchup plans materials must be provided.” – Teacher 4... “I hope that the teacher must be equipped with this program, especially the materials that the teacher needs.” – Teacher 5... “The school administration and colleagues could improve support by organizing collaborative planning sessions and sharing best practices.” – Teacher 3... “Enough support like technical assistance the program of financial support for the materials used in the program.” – Teacher 4... “The school administration could support us by giving short training sessions or letting us collaborate more with our co-teachers.” – Teacher 5

### **Theme 4: Empower Fridays for Holistic Growth**

The thematic analysis of participants' responses revealed consistent support for the continuation of the Catch-up Friday's initiative, with most of the teachers having a wish to continue it and improve it as targeted. The dominant theme focuses on the prospect of the program developing into an even more structured, supportive, and inclusive intervention addressing both learning outcomes and overall well-being among students and teachers

#### **Subtheme 1: Continuation with Modifications**

Most respondents favored the continuation of Catch-up Fridays, but with the monitoring of well-considered modifications. Teachers underscored the need for better planning, fine-tuning the program's design so that it would be complete and more planned out in all quarters, and making its goals more aligned with the real needs of learners and classroom requirements. These changes are viewed as necessary to maintain the program's effectiveness and viability over time, as argued by the research of Fullan (2007), which highlights the necessity of ongoing improvement in educational programs to make them effective. Likewise, studies by Pasi (2011) indicate that matching educational efforts with the changing needs of learners and the pedagogical need of teaching increases their sustainability. Lastly, Darling-Hammond (2008) posits that aligning and incorporating overarching comprehensive planning with actual classroom practice is critical for sustaining the success of educational reforms. Such adjustments are, in turn, connected with wider education guidelines emphasizing adaptive and responsive instructional approaches to sustain effectiveness within programs over time.

“I hope Catch-up Fridays become even more effective in supporting both pupils' learning and teacher well-being. This requires ongoing evaluation and adaptation of the program's structure and support systems. I believe the program should continue, but with modifications to further enhance its effectiveness and address any challenges that have arisen.” – Teacher 1

#### **Subtheme 2: Strengthened Support System**

Teachers noted gaps in the provision of teaching materials and requested several improvements to strengthen the efficacy of the program. To start with, they highlighted the importance of intact and retrievable learning

materials to guarantee that students' varying learning needs are catered to, aligned with Graham et al. (2014), who stressed that access to well-crafted instruction materials plays a key role in developing effective learning settings. Teachers also indicated the need for more explicit implementation guidelines to assist in ensuring consistency and coherence in program implementation, as supported by research by Desimone (2009), which emphasizes the significance of clear, detailed guidelines in the effective implementation of educational reforms. Also, teachers requested greater logistical and administrative assistance to reduce the implementation burdens, a request also evident in the research of Stronge (2018), who posited that efficient teacher support systems, such as administrative support, are critical to the effective implementation of educational programs.

“Looking ahead, I hope Catch-up Fridays will be strengthened with complete materials and more support for teachers to maximize its impact. I believe the program should continue because it helps address learning gaps, but it should be improved with better resources and clearer guidelines for smoother implementation.” – Teacher 3

### **Subtheme 3: Promoting Equity and Student Confidence**

Teachers reported major disparities in learning materials on offer and requested a set of major alterations to guarantee the effective operation of the Catch-up Friday initiative. Among the most basic issues was the absence of extensive and available learning material, which is required for the provision of high-quality, inclusive instruction. This aligns with the results of Mishra and Koehler (2006), which emphasized that well-designed content materials augment teachers' instructional capacity as well as students' engagement. Teachers also expressed the need for having more detailed implementation instructions to provide direction and consistency, an agreement with Fixsen et al. (2005), who noted that the success of instructional innovations hinges chiefly on explicitly defined and shared implementation procedures. In addition, additional logistical and administrative support was also seen to be needed to assist in minimizing teachers' workload and maximizing program efficiency. This argument is reinforced by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), who discovered that strong institutional support, for example, administrative support, is crucial to teacher satisfaction and retention in school reforms.

“One important aspect of my experience that this research should highlight is how Catch-up Fridays supports equity in the classroom. Not all students learn at the same pace or have some access to support outside of school.” – Teacher 2.... “One thing I'd like to share is how Catch-up Fridays help build student confidence. They feel proud when they finish their work. It's important for the research to see how the program helps create a more caring and supportive classroom environment, not just academic progress.” – Teacher 5

### **Subtheme 4: Building Collaborative Classroom**

Certain teachers said that there was a development of spontaneous student support systems among the learners. Teacher 1 has noted, "Watching my pupils have fun and assisting one another to learn was crucial in bringing about a joint learning atmosphere." Such a shared environment not only added to school improvement but to a more affectionate and support-based classroom community, a feature the teachers consider must be nurtured even further (T1). This finding is consistent with Johnson and Johnson (2009), who stressed that cooperative learning structures not only promote academic success but also positive social relationships and psychological well-being. Likewise, Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the pivotal role of social interaction in learning, especially through peer collaboration within the learners' Zone of Proximal Development. In addition, Gillies (2016) discovered that organized peer instructions play a major role in student motivation, self-esteem, and empathy, further supporting the need to foster such collaborative classroom cultures.

“Seeing my pupils enjoy and help each other learn was important in fostering a collaborative learning environment.” – Teacher 1

## **IV. Conclusion**

This study highlights the significant role of teachers' experiences, insights, and contextual realities in the effective implementation of remedial interventions such as Catch-up Fridays. While the program demonstrates strong potential to address learning gaps and provide individualized support for students, its success is often constrained by several systemic challenges. These include limited formal training, insufficient learning resources, inconsistent administrative support, and the additional workload placed on teachers. Such challenges reflect a broader issue within the education system the gap between policy-level program design and the actual conditions encountered in classrooms. In addition, existing research tends to focus primarily on the theoretical effectiveness and outcomes of remediation programs, often overlooking the lived experiences of teachers who implement them. Centering teacher perspectives, this study emphasizes the importance of providing adequate structural and professional support to ensure meaningful program outcomes. For Catch-

up Fridays and similar initiatives to become sustainable and effective, stronger alignment between policy intentions and classroom realities is necessary. This includes providing comprehensive teacher training, sufficient learning materials, and institutional support mechanisms. Future studies should continue examining teachers' experiences to develop more realistic and context-sensitive implementation models that effectively respond to both instructional challenges and students' learning needs.

### V. Recommendations

To address the lack of structured support and to reduce the heavy instructional demands of Catch-up Fridays, teachers are encouraged to integrate structured peer-learning and feedback mechanisms within the program. One effective approach is organizing students into small, mixed-ability groups with rotating roles such as explainer, checker, and recorder. Cooperative learning strategies such as Think–Pair–Share and Jigsaw can enhance academic engagement while promoting responsibility, collaboration, and positive interdependence among students. In addition, teachers should guide students in providing both qualitative feedback and quantitative ratings using clear rubrics. This approach can improve academic outcomes while reducing teacher workload and fostering a respectful and supportive classroom environment, making Catch-up Fridays more collaborative and sustainable. Moreover, students are encouraged to take an active role in their learning by participating in peer teaching and reflective practices during Catch-up Fridays. Engaging in structured peer discussions can enhance both confidence and understanding, as students become more involved in supporting each other's learning. Moreover, students should use peer feedback as a tool for self-regulation and continuous improvement. Reflecting on strengths, identifying areas for growth, and planning actionable next steps can help develop resilience, motivation, and ownership of learning. Over time, these practices can strengthen peer support networks and cultivate lifelong learning habits.

Future studies may investigate the long-term academic and socio-emotional effects of Catch-up Fridays across multiple school years and various educational contexts. Researchers may also explore different peer feedback models, such as anonymous versus non-anonymous and digital versus face-to-face approaches, to determine which strategies best support collaboration, self-regulation, and student engagement. Additionally, examining the integration of technology-enhanced feedback systems alongside teacher guidance and analytics-based assessments may provide insights into improving critical thinking, equity, and personalized learning. Further research focusing on under-resourced public schools can contribute to developing scalable and context-sensitive improvements for national interventions such as Catch-up Fridays.

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