

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING-BASED CURRICULUM DESIGN FOR READING AND WRITING COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT: A STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS*

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Abstract

This study analyzes and explores stakeholder perspectives on designing an experiential learning-based curriculum to enhance reading and writing competencies among Grade 1-3 students in a private school in Kalasin, Thailand. Employing a qualitative descriptive design using thematic analysis within McKenney & Reeves' (2012) needs and context analysis framework, the researchers collected data through individual semi-structured interviews with 75 participants from six stakeholder groups. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis with ATLAS.ti software. The findings are organized into three dimensions aligned with the framework: (1) problem analysis – challenges in current literacy instruction, including students' difficulties with reading fluency and spelling, as well as low writing accuracy and confidence; (2) context analysis – contextual factors affecting implementation, such as disparities in family support, teacher expertise, and access to learning resources; and (3) needs analysis – stakeholder-recommended curriculum elements, including more targeted literacy activities,

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regular progress tracking, and better school-home collaboration. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating experiential learning, modern educational tools, and community engagement to improve literacy outcomes.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Literacy Development, Stakeholder Perspectives

Introduction

Providing education for early primary school students is a crucial foundation for developing reading and writing skills, which are essential cognitive competencies necessary for children's future growth. Literacy serves as the fundamental foundation for all 21st-century competencies including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Education at this stage extends beyond language acquisition; it also nurtures communication, creativity, and practical problem-solving abilities—key competencies for success in today's society (Le & Tran, 2023). As a result, contemporary instructional approaches emphasize learner-centered pedagogy, particularly experiential learning, which has proven effective in fostering analytical thinking and writing skills among young learners (Dorland, 2024). This study employs Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, which emphasizes learning through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—a cycle particularly suited to early literacy development. Experiential learning enables students to connect theoretical knowledge with real-life contexts and promotes critical thinking—an essential competency in an era of rapid social and technological change (Roberts, 2018). Thus, early primary education is considered a "golden period" of learning that demands support through well-designed curricula and engaging learning strategies. Designing curricula that emphasize learner-centered instruction and integrate experiential learning can promote holistic skill

development, leading to sustainable learning outcomes and strong literacy foundations.

Although Thailand's national education policy promotes literacy development nationwide, significant disparities in educational achievement persist, particularly at the primary school level. Thai students' average literacy performance remains below both national and international benchmarks (Poulton & Mockler, 2023). The most recent PISA assessment reflects this gap, revealing that reading scores among Thai students continue to fall short of the OECD average—highlighting deficiencies in current instructional approaches that fail to meet learners' actual needs. Thailand's declining PISA scores in reading literacy are reflected in local contexts, including private schools in Kalasin province, where traditional instruction methods fail to meet contemporary learner needs. This situation points to the urgent need to improve curriculum design and teaching practices to ensure greater contextual relevance and effectiveness (Reckermann & Ritter, 2022). Traditional Thai instruction, characterized by rote memorization and teacher-centered approaches, inadequately addresses the active, experiential learning needs of modern primary students. A key limitation is the lack of meaningful involvement from stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and school administrators—despite their vital roles in supporting literacy development (Li & Siriphan, 2023). The absence of systematic stakeholder input compromises both contextual relevance and practical applicability of literacy curricula, particularly regarding real-world implementation challenges. Research has shown that stakeholder engagement in curriculum design enhances the relevance and applicability of content in students' everyday lives (Zhang, 2021).

Nonetheless, many challenges remain, especially in basic education settings. A persistent disconnect exists between top-down policy frameworks and the local needs of communities and schools. Therefore, research that combines

experiential learning with stakeholder participation in curriculum development is essential. This integrated approach has the potential to improve literacy outcomes and provide high-quality learning experiences that are responsive to students' real-world contexts (Li & Siriphan, 2023). Previous research on experiential learning has demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing students' reading and writing competencies, especially at the secondary and post-secondary levels (Waddell, 2021). However, there remains a significant research gap regarding the application of this approach in early primary education—particularly within Thailand's educational context (Le & Tran, 2023; Reckermann & Ritter, 2022). The importance of early literacy development is well-documented, as it lays the foundation for lifelong learning and social communication (Cizmeci & Çiprut, 2019). Despite national efforts to improve literacy instruction, the integration of experiential learning principles in Thai primary education remains limited. Many studies that address literacy development in young learners still lack the depth of experiential approaches or fail to adapt such methods effectively (Syam et al., 2024). Moreover, research conducted at the higher education level does not sufficiently reflect the realities of teaching and learning in early primary settings (Roberts, 2018). This study addresses three critical gaps: (1) focus on early primary level (Grades 1-3), (2) Thai educational context specificity, and (3) integration of experiential learning with comprehensive stakeholder perspectives. Hence, there is a clear need for research that focuses on designing and implementing experiential learning-based curricula in primary schools. Doing so can bridge the gap between theory and practice, addressing the specific developmental needs of early learners in Thailand.



Objectives

The objectives of this study are to: (1) identify current challenges in literacy development among Thai Grade 1-3 students, (2) explore stakeholder perceptions of experiential learning integration into literacy instruction, and (3) determine essential curriculum elements for an experiential learning-based literacy approach tailored to the Thai primary school context.

Research Questions

1. What are the current challenges in developing reading and writing skills among Thai primary school students?
2. How do stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, administrators, curriculum experts, and policy makers) perceive the integration of experiential learning into literacy instruction?
3. What are the needs or recommendations from stakeholders regarding the core curriculum elements necessary for an experiential learning-based approach to literacy development?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using thematic analysis to explore stakeholder perspectives on literacy development among Grade 1-3 students. This study employed a needs and context analysis framework (McKenney & Reeves, 2012) to inform experiential learning-based curriculum design. The three research questions align with McKenney & Reeves' dimensions: (1) Problem Analysis – identifying current literacy challenges; (2) Context Analysis – exploring stakeholder perceptions and contextual factors affecting implementation; and (3) Needs Analysis – determining essential curriculum elements based on stakeholder recommendations. The study sought to understand the multifaceted challenges, contextual factors, and

recommendations for designing an experiential learning-based curriculum through systematic data collection and analysis.

The study involved a total of 75 participants, categorized into six key stakeholder groups: 10 parents of Grade 1 students, 10 parents of Grade 2 students, and 10 parents of Grade 3 students; 10 students each from Grades 1, 2, and 3; four Thai language teachers; one representative from the Kalasin Provincial Education Office; one education supervisor; and nine members of the private school administrative committee. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a method chosen to ensure that individuals with direct experience and relevance to the research topic were included. This sampling strategy enabled the collection of rich, meaningful, and contextually grounded data that aligned closely with the study's objectives.

The research protocol received approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Kalasin University (Certification No. HS-KSU 049/2567). Ethical procedures adhered strictly to internationally recognized standards. These included obtaining informed consent from all participants, maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of their identities, and implementing secure data management practices. All interview data were treated with utmost care to protect participant privacy and were stored and analyzed in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

A semi-structured interview guide adapted from McKenney and Reeves (2012) explored three dimensions: problem-related (nature and scope of literacy challenges), context-related (educational, social, and environmental factors), and needs-related (stakeholder expectations and desired interventions). The instrument was validated through content validity review by three literacy education experts who assessed the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of questions. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Data collection occurred over a three-month period (August-December 2024) using individual semi-structured interviews tailored to each stakeholder

group. Individual face-to-face interviews (45-60 minutes) were conducted with all adult participants including administrators, teachers, curriculum experts, policy makers, and parents to allow for in-depth exploration of their perspectives and to gather authentic insights specific to each stakeholder's unique context and role. Student data were collected through one-on-one sessions (20-30 minutes). Rapport was established through informal conversation before formal interviews began. All questions were open-ended to minimize leading responses and encourage authentic participant perspectives. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis using ATLAS.ti software. The analysis followed a systematic six-phase process: (1) familiarization with data through repeated reading of transcripts, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis within the McKenney & Reeves (2012) needs and context analysis framework. Interview data were coded and organized according to three dimensions: Problem (literacy challenges), Context (stakeholder perceptions and contextual factors), and Needs (recommended curriculum elements). SWOT Analysis served as an organizational framework to categorize themes into Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to experiential learning implementation in the Thai primary literacy context, rather than as a primary analytical method.

Results

The findings from stakeholder interviews are organized according to McKenney & Reeves' (2012) three-dimensional framework, addressing each research question systematically.

RQ1: Current Challenges in Literacy Development

Analysis revealed three primary categories of challenges in developing reading and writing skills among Grade 1-3 students:

Reading Fluency Challenges: Students demonstrated considerable difficulty with reading fluency and complex vocabulary. Teachers reported that many Grade 1-2 students struggle to read age-appropriate texts fluently. The inconsistency of reading habits among early-grade students was identified as a significant gap in foundational literacy skills.

Spelling and Phonemic Awareness Difficulties: Systematic spelling difficulties emerged as a significant concern. Students demonstrated confusion with similar-sounding Thai characters and inconsistent application of spelling rules. Parents and teachers identified this as a persistent obstacle to writing development.

Writing Accuracy and Confidence Issues: Low writing accuracy and student confidence emerged as interrelated challenges. Students expressed anxiety about making mistakes during writing tasks, leading to reluctance to attempt independent writing. Administrators and curriculum experts emphasized that traditional teacher-centered approaches contribute to this confidence deficit by emphasizing error correction over creative expression.

RQ2: Stakeholder Perceptions of Experiential Learning Integration

2.1 Stakeholder Perceptions of Experiential Learning Integration

Teacher Perceptions: Teachers expressed strong support for experiential learning principles; however, they emphasized practical implementation challenges, including resource limitations, time constraints within the existing curriculum structure, and inadequate professional development in experiential pedagogy.

Parent Perceptions: Parents demonstrated enthusiastic support for experiential approaches, particularly activities that connect literacy learning to real-life contexts. They emphasized the need for instructional approaches that

make learning meaningful while building students' confidence. However, parents also expressed concerns about maintaining academic rigor and whether experiential methods would adequately prepare students for standardized assessments.

Administrators and related educational stakeholders, including the representative from the Kalasin Provincial Education Office, the education supervisor, and members of the private school administrative committee, recognized that experiential learning aligns with contemporary educational reform initiatives. However, they emphasized systemic challenges, including the need for teacher professional development, adequate resource allocation, and alignment with national curriculum standards. They also stressed the importance of evidence-based implementation and the systematic evaluation of learning outcomes.

Student Perceptions: Students expressed strong preferences for "learning by doing" activities, games, and opportunities to create their own stories and projects.

2.2 Contextual Factors Affecting Implementation

Family Support Disparities: Interviews revealed diverse levels of parental involvement in students' educational experiences. Many parents expressed strong desire to actively engage in their children's learning by assisting with homework and reading aloud. However, access to learning resources varies greatly among families, with some lacking adequate materials, thus limiting opportunities for practice outside the classroom.

Teacher Expertise Gaps: Teachers reported challenges in addressing the diverse needs of students within classrooms, compounded by pressures to meet standardized curriculum requirements. Limited pre-service and in-service training in experiential learning pedagogy was identified as a critical gap.

Learning Resource Variations: Schools equipped with appropriate learning tools and resources foster more effective and motivating learning environments. However, disparities in educational resources among schools have tangible implications for student outcomes.

Home-School Disconnect: The disconnect between home engagement and school expectations highlights the need for collaborative efforts to improve literacy outcomes. Schools that promote strong community ties and parental engagement create more conducive environments for skill development.

RQ3: Stakeholder-Recommended Curriculum Elements

Stakeholders across all groups identified essential curriculum elements for an effective experiential learning-based literacy approach:

Concrete Experiential Activities: Stakeholders emphasized the need for hands-on literacy activities using manipulatives, real-world writing tasks, and multisensory experiences. Curriculum experts noted that these activities align with Kolb's concrete experience stage, providing direct engagement with literacy concepts.

Reflection and Metacognition Opportunities: Stakeholders recommended structured reflection activities where students discuss what they learned, how they solved literacy challenges, and connections to their lives. This addresses Kolb's reflective observation component, building metacognitive awareness essential for literacy development.

Explicit Skill Instruction: Teachers and curriculum experts emphasized the need for systematic, developmentally appropriate instruction in phonics, spelling patterns, and writing conventions, corresponding to Kolb's abstract conceptualization stage. The recommended approach balances experiential discovery with explicit teaching.

Authentic Application Tasks: All groups recommended opportunities for students to apply literacy skills in meaningful contexts, such as writing for real

purposes and creating authentic literacy products. These tasks represent Kolb's active experimentation phase.

Progress Tracking and Differentiation: Stakeholders emphasized regular formative assessment integrated into activities, individualized support based on student needs, and clear learning progressions allowing students to advance at appropriate paces.

School-Home Collaboration: Parents and teachers identified structured communication systems as essential, including regular progress updates, home literacy activity suggestions aligned with school curriculum, and parent workshops on supporting experiential literacy learning at home.

Table 1 Strategic SWOT Analysis

Dimension	Issues
Strengths	Strong theoretical foundation in educational research (Curriculum Experts, Policy Makers); Student enthusiasm for hands-on learning (Students, Teachers); Alignment with national education reform initiatives (Policy Makers, Administrators); Parent support for innovative approaches (Parents).
Weaknesses	Limited teacher training in experiential pedagogy (Teachers, Administrators); Resource constraints in provincial contexts (Administrators, Teachers); Large class sizes limiting individualized attention (Teachers); Inconsistent home literacy support (Teachers, Parents).
Opportunities	Growing recognition of 21st-century competency development needs (Policy Makers); Increasing availability of educational technology (Administrators, Curriculum Experts); Potential for community engagement and partnerships (Administrators, Parents); Provincial education reform momentum (Policy Makers).

Threats	Pressure to meet standardized assessment benchmarks (Teachers, Policy Makers); Potential resistance to pedagogical change (Teachers, Administrators); Budget limitations for curriculum development (Administrators, Policy Makers); Competing educational priorities (Policy Makers).
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The SWOT analysis reveals a comprehensive picture of factors affecting reading and writing skills development among primary school students in Kalasin Province.

Internal strengths include active parental involvement, strong teacher support, and student motivation, which form a solid foundation for development. However, weaknesses such as difficulties decoding complex vocabulary in the Thai orthographic system, limited teaching resources, and lack of specialized teacher training remain significant barriers to learning.

External opportunities from national reading promotion policies, digital technology, and culturally responsive pedagogy open pathways for innovation. Meanwhile, threats from digital distractions, socioeconomic disparities, and limited parental knowledge require systematic management.

The proposed curriculum should emphasize differentiated instruction, multimodal learning materials, cultural relevance, strengthened parent-school partnerships, and continuous professional development for teachers. This holistic approach addresses multiple system levels simultaneously, cultivating a sustainable and equitable learning environment that nurtures foundational literacy competencies essential for students' lifelong academic success. Such an environment effectively nurtures foundational reading and writing competencies that are essential for students' lifelong academic success, as illustrated in Figure 1.

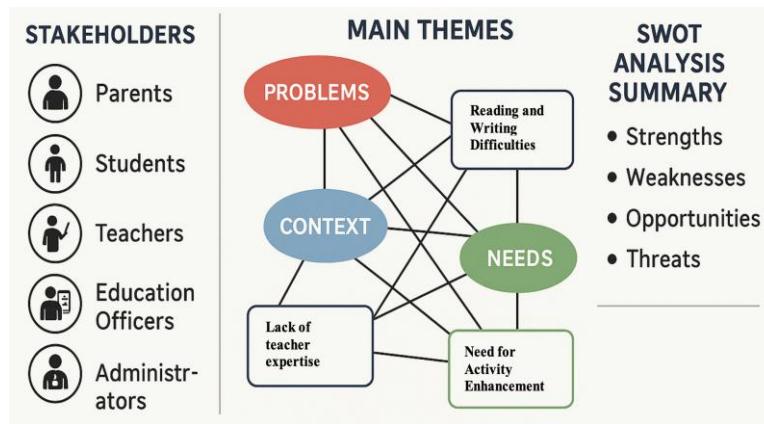


Figure 1 Key Themes Derived from Stakeholder Interviews and SWOT Analysis

Discussion

The identified reading fluency and writing confidence challenges align with international research on early literacy development, but reveal unique Thai contextual factors. The inconsistency of reading habits among early-grade students highlights a significant gap in foundational literacy skills vital for advancing literacy development (Inayah et al., 2024). The anxiety exhibited by struggling readers underscores the necessity of supportive interventions from both teachers and parents (Romeo & Ryan, 2023), particularly in Thai educational contexts where traditional emphases on error-free performance may amplify student anxiety.

The finding that access to learning resources varies greatly among families, with some lacking adequate materials, directly impacts opportunities for practice outside the classroom. Schools equipped with appropriate learning tools and resources tend to foster more effective and motivating learning environments (Listiani, 2025). Notably, disparities in educational resources among schools have tangible implications for student outcomes, consistent with findings on provincial-rural gaps in Thailand's education system. Schools that promote strong

community ties and parental engagement create more conducive environments for skill development, suggesting that addressing resource disparities requires coordinated policy interventions at both school and provincial levels.

The disconnect between home engagement and school expectations highlights the need for collaborative efforts to improve literacy outcomes (Winangun & Darmawan, 2019). Parents' strong desire to actively engage in their children's learning by assisting with homework and reading aloud represents a critical but underutilized resource. The call for more structured communication from teachers regarding children's academic progress underscores an area where schools can enhance collaboration with families (GÜNER & Aslan, 2023). Regular progress updates would empower parents and actively involve them in their children's literacy development, creating a more integrated support system across home and school contexts.

The pronounced need for professional development focused on effective reading and writing instructional strategies reflects a critical gap in teacher preparation. Teachers reported challenges in addressing diverse student needs within classrooms, compounded by pressures to meet standardized curriculum requirements. Providing targeted training opportunities is critical to equip educators with the skills necessary to improve literacy instruction (Yin & Rong-hua, 2022). This finding suggests that curriculum reform efforts must be accompanied by systematic investment in teacher professional development to ensure successful implementation.

Conclusion

This study successfully identified core elements for designing an experiential learning-based literacy curriculum tailored to Thai Grade 1-3 students through comprehensive stakeholder needs analysis. The research contributes to the field by: (1) bridging experiential learning theory with early primary literacy

application in the Thai context, (2) providing empirically grounded, context-specific evidence for curriculum design, and (3) demonstrating a systematic stakeholder-inclusive approach that balances theoretical rigor with practical viability.

Findings collectively indicate that effective literacy development at the early primary level requires curricula integrating active, experience-based learning within a supportive ecosystem addressing resource, training, and policy dimensions. The alignment of stakeholder recommendations with Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle validates experiential learning as an appropriate pedagogical framework for Thai primary literacy instruction, while the identified challenges and contextual factors provide crucial guidance for implementation. The study underscores the necessity of moving beyond traditional teacher-centered, rote memorization approaches toward learner-centered, experientially grounded instruction that develops both technical literacy skills and broader 21st-century competencies including creativity, critical thinking, and communication. Success requires coordinated efforts across multiple levels: curriculum and materials development, teacher professional development, family engagement initiatives, and supportive policy frameworks.

Recommendations

Based on findings revealing significant literacy challenges among Thai Grade 1-3 students, including foundational skill gaps, resource disparities, and teacher preparation gaps, five strategic recommendations are proposed:

1. Develop Experiential Learning-Based Curriculum: Design comprehensive Grade 1 - 3 curriculum grounded in Kolb's Model, incorporating concrete experiences, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation with differentiated instruction for diverse learners.

2. Implement Teacher Professional Development: Provide intensive training and ongoing coaching in experiential pedagogy and literacy instruction to strengthen teacher capacity in addressing diverse student needs.

3. Establish School-Family-Community Partnerships: Create structured communication systems, parent workshops, and family literacy events to bridge home-school disconnect and strengthen collaborative support.

4. Address Resource Disparities: Develop and distribute contextually appropriate literacy materials including manipulatives, culturally relevant books, and digital tools suitable for provincial contexts.

5. Conduct Implementation Research: Design and evaluate experiential literacy curricula using experimental methods to assess impacts on student outcomes, confidence, and 21st-century competencies.

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