Challenges and Difficulties Encountered in Teaching and in Learning Algebraic Word Problems

George B. Santiago, Dandy D. Moises, Glenn Jay M. Paleng, Jan Aldrin M. Zambrano, Shyma May T. Mabli, Melodee T. Pacio, and Jufelia B. Paduyao

Abstract

Word problems help deepen students' understanding by linking concepts learned to real life situations. However, the purpose of word problems seems to be hindered by some factors. This study aimed to identify the challenges and difficulties encountered in teaching and in learning Algebraic word problems. A researcher made test administered to fifty randomly selected College Algebra students, interviews with ten students from the same class, and interviews with five tertiary Mathematics teachers who were chosen based on their experiences in teaching Algebraic word problems, served as data sources. Analysis and interpretation of data gathered was done following the phenomenological design of qualitative research. The findings revealed three categories of challenges and difficulties encountered by teachers and students in dealing with Algebraic word problems: Comprehension, Translation, and Computation. The Use of Mathematical Terminologies, Intrinsic Factors, Educational System, Nature of the Problem, and Use of Technology were the five identified categories of reasons behind these challenges and difficulties. The results of the study may help in making teachers see the possible problems in their teaching strategies. This may also help curriculum developers and book authors see possible adjustments in their line of work for the enhancement of the mathematics education.