

# Strengthening Early Literacy: Insights of Policy Modifications in the Implementation of the National Reading Program

Janet L. Pinuela<sup>1</sup>, Hermie D. Bullos<sup>2</sup>, Jirah Glyness B. Saludaes<sup>3</sup>, Jeanette B. Redondo<sup>4</sup>, and Pablo D. Junto<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Graduate Student, Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo and a Local School Board in one Public School in the Province of Iloilo Philippines.

<sup>4,5</sup>Graduate Student, Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo.

**Abstract**— This case study was conducted to determine the impact of a National Reading Program (NRP) in a public elementary school. This study is only limited to the teachers of a public school. The researchers used descriptive research design in this study. The researchers personally distributed and retrieved the instrument. The data gathered were classified and subjected for thematic analysis. The implementation of the National Reading Program was very effective in improving the skills of the struggling learners related to phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. However, teachers faced challenges because of lack of sufficient teaching resources, insufficient time for reading interventions, too crowded or large class sizes and lack of parental involvement. Despite the challenges, NRP have addressed the needs of struggling readers through the implementation of individualized instruction, differentiated materials, ample scaffolding, focused phonics and comprehension strategies, multisensory activities, and opportunities for repeated practice, allowing them to learn at their own pace with targeted support to overcome specific reading difficulties.

**Keywords**— NRP, Reading, Oplan Kaalaman, Pagbasa, RACMES, Bulig Basa.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is known to be one of the most crucial factors in learning (Gilbas, 2022) as well as one of the four basic skills that every learner needs to develop in the classroom. The Department of Education (DepEd) have launched various programs to cater the reading needs of the learners since it must be made as a priority in the academic community since it is the backbone of learning. Assessing the reading capability of every learner must be conducted to ensure that they have a good foundation for all academic learning. Moreover, a learner who was not able to master basic reading skills will experience a lot of struggles to be successful resulting to deprivation of being a literate and productive individual (Gilbas, 2022).

The DepEd mandated a system wide delivery from national to school levels of a reading program. The school level emphasized the collaboration and coordination of higher authorities while ensuring a contextualized school reading program to improve the delivery system (Dayrocas & Junsay, 2023).

Teachers on the other hand need to be prepared in implementing the National Reading Program (NRP) and one of the programs that school principals implemented was the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) to

enhance their skills and abilities resulting to becoming competent teachers in terms of reading instruction (Plata et al, 2024).

Despite the sufficient laws and supporting policies that comprise the NRP, there were still some gaps being observed particularly with regards to the availability and funding of facilities and instructional materials. Also, there were still the need to conduct regular teacher training. Moreover, there were still hindrances in the learners with regards to attend the reading intervention sessions because they feel embarrass and anxious to attend tutorial type of reading while others were not allowed by their parents because they need to do the house chores at home on time. Thus, the researchers investigated the implementation of NRP to address to develop better strategies in implementing the policies, guidelines and various programs related to NRP.

## Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to determine the impact of a National Reading Program in an elementary school.

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Determine the effect of the Implementation of the National Reading Program towards the reading

proficiency levels of the students across different grade level, particularly struggling readers;

2. Elaborate the key challenges faced by teachers during the implementation of the National Reading Program; and
3. Explain how the program addresses the needs of struggling readers in their learning.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

According to Estrella (2022), teachers are highly ready to teach reading in terms of content and motivational aspect, however, there is moderate readiness in terms of procedural aspect. Teachers must work on their competence, academic qualification and experiences. There is also need to establish a 10-minutes habit and utilization of materials in accordance with their reading level to develop learner's reading skills (Layugan & Algodon, 2023). Challenges encountered during the implementation process include non-adherence of teachers do the interventions because of their busy schedules, insufficient instructional reading materials, lack of technological facility and limited library resources (Abril et al, 2022). They tend to disengage and be uncooperative in providing an effective comprehension. Thus, foundational reading comprehension is still a serious issue because of low literacy levels, limited vocabulary, and varying student abilities (Apiles, 2025).

## III. METHODOLOGY

The participants of the study were the teachers of a public elementary school in Iloilo, Philippines. Purposive Sampling was being utilized, thus, there were four (5) participants who voluntarily agreed to answer the research instrument. The case study used descriptive research design qualitative method of gathering data which consist of an interview guide regarding the implementation of the NRP. Data were analyzed using through Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Implementation of the National Reading Program*

For Participant 1, she said, "A well-structured reading program improved the skills like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary of the struggling readers."

Participant 2 also mentioned, "The programs allowed teachers to tailor interventions as based on each of our student's specific needs and reading level. It has supported our struggling readers effectively."

The school was found out implementing a School Improvement Plan "Oplan Kaalaman sa Pagbasa" and remedial reading every Friday Friday "RACMES Bulig Basa" peer tutoring to address the gaps.

Based on the study of Lim (2024), teachers perceived the NRP as being "effectively implemented" because of they were provided with sufficient administrative assistance and resources. However, the implementation was not significantly influenced their demographic factors. Moreover, there was a weak correlation between the perceived NRP implementation learners' reading levels.

### *Challenges faced by Teachers during the Implementation of the NRP*

In terms of challenges, Participant 3 mentioned, "I have a hard time implementing NRP because I am handling large class sizes and I could not provide individualized attention to struggling readers effectively. Also, we are allotted with only sufficient time to deliver the reading instruction. It is also hard to coordinate with parents and establishing home-school reading connections. I and my colleagues struggle on high workload and pressure in covering other subject areas."

Another challenge was shared by Participant 4 who said, "I have difficulty since this is a new program to implement and I have no enough training about how to deliver it, I felt not that confident in doing the required teaching reading for struggling readers. We have to face also different level of difficulty when it comes to what teaching methods we will use to address diverse learning needs of each learner. Aside from the limited access to technology and supplementary learning tools, there was also inadequate support from school administration regarding reading program implementation."

Furthermore, Participant 5 said, "I experienced low motivation and lack sufficient trainings to address the diverse learning needs."

### *Needs of Struggling Readers under NRP*

During the discussion on the perspective of the teachers on the needs of the learners who struggle in reading, Participant 1 emphasized, "The program addressed the needs of struggling readers by providing individualized instruction, differentiated materials, ample scaffolding, focused phonics and comprehension strategies, multisensory activities, and opportunities for repeated practice, allowing them to learn at their own pace with targeted support to overcome specific reading difficulties."

Moreover, Participant 2 said, "The program provided reading materials at appropriate difficulty levels to ensure success and build confidence. It enabled us to provide close support and model reading strategies for the struggling readers. It enabled us to let our struggling readers be paired with stronger readers to provide support and model fluent reading. Moreover, I was able to allow them to select books based on their interests to increase engagement and motivation."

Additional information was given by Participant 3 who shared, "The program addressed the needs of struggling readers through the implementation of a systematic teaching of phonics sounds and letter-sound relationships which effectively improved our learner's decoding skills. It also enables us to teach key vocabulary words before reading to enhance comprehension. I even provide praise and encouragement to build their self-esteem and confidence."

According to the study of Abellanos et al (2025), there was non-reader learners became slow readers through daily reading monitoring and progress checks. Thus, there is a need to use a suitable reading material in improving the reading level of learners

## **Implementation of NRP and Approach to Teaching Early Literacy**

Participant 2 described NRP, "The program's emphasis on phonics and fluency has been helpful, but I feel that it could benefit from a greater focus on fostering a love of reading through storybooks and creative reading activities. A more balanced approach that includes both structured lessons and a variety of engaging reading materials might better support students' long-term literacy development. I'd suggest that future policies consider incorporating more opportunities for students to explore reading in a fun and meaningful way."

For Participant 4 added more information about NRP implementation and said, "Since the program's implementation, I've noticed a more consistent approach across the school in teaching literacy. We now have a standardized set of strategies to follow, which helps in maintaining uniformity. However, I believe that while the program is effective for most students, it doesn't cater enough to students with learning disabilities or those who are significantly behind in reading."

For Participant 5, "The implementation of the National Reading Program has provided a clear structure for my

lessons, making it easier to plan and deliver instruction. The guidelines and materials provided by the program have helped me focus on key literacy skills such as phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. However, I feel that more emphasis should be placed on individualized learning, as each child progresses at a different rate."

In the study of Gazith (2024), early literacy requires routinizing, establishment of foundational literacy skills, classroom intervention, and closing learner reading gaps.

## **On the Improvements for NRP Implementation**

The participants also shared some recommendations that the NRP could be better implemented, as follows:

**Evidence-Based Instruction.** "Teachers need to be trained in the science of reading, which emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension." (Participant 1)

**Differentiated Instruction.** "Recognizing that students learn at different paces and have diverse needs, teachers require training in how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners, including those who are struggling or advanced. Implementing regular assessments to monitor student progress and identify areas where students may need additional support is vital." (Participant 2)

**Ongoing Support.** "Providing ongoing professional development and mentorship to teachers is essential to ensure they can implement the program effectively and adapt to changing student needs." (Participant 3)

**Collaboration.** "Fostering a collaborative environment where teachers can share best practices and learn from each other is crucial for program success. Engaging parents in the reading program and providing them with resources and strategies to support their children's reading development is important." (Participant 4)

**Adequate Resources.** "Ensuring that schools have access to the necessary resources, such as books, materials, and technology, is crucial for supporting the program's implementation." (Participant 5)

According to LaBad (2024), the teachers must integrate their teaching strategy in the NRP implementation with leisurely activities. They need to "innovate and strategize beyond the recommendations of the DepEd order and memorandum by incorporating."



## ***On a More Effective NRP for All Learners***

Participant 1 said, "Focus on Foundational Skills by prioritizing explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies. Ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement research-based reading instruction practices. Create a literacy-rich environment in schools and classrooms that encourages reading and writing."

Moreover, Participant 2 shared, "Recognize that students learn at different paces and have varying needs. Provide differentiated instruction and interventions to address individual learning gaps."

In addition to this, Participant 3 mentioned, "Use a variety of high-quality, age-appropriate, and culturally relevant reading materials to spark interest and motivation. Utilize technology to enhance reading instruction and engagement, such as interactive reading apps, online libraries, and digital resources."

Furthermore, Participant 4 did emphasize, "Teach students effective reading comprehension strategies, such as making inferences, predicting, summarizing, and questioning. Use ongoing assessments to monitor student progress and provide timely and effective feedback to students and teachers."

Lastly, Participant 5 highlighted, "Provide opportunities for students to practice oral reading and develop fluency through repeated readings and guided practice. Engage families in supporting their children's reading development through workshops, reading clubs, and home reading activities."

According to the study of Macale & Abanto (2024), there are more opportunities for improvement in the implementation of NRP including productivity-focused workshops, online communication optimization, and

Systematic maintenance schedules for hardware.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

This study underscores the critical role of the National Reading Program (NRP) in strengthening early literacy development among learners. Through the perspectives of participating educators, it becomes evident that while the program has brought significant structure and focus to reading instruction, several aspects require further enhancement to ensure its effectiveness across diverse learner profiles. Targeted interventions such as "Oplan Kaalaman sa Pagbasa" and "RACMES Bulig Basa" have

proven beneficial in addressing learning gaps, yet there remains a need for more tailored, data-driven strategies to maximize reading outcomes.

Teachers highlighted the importance of individualized instruction, differentiated learning materials, and scaffolding, especially for struggling readers. However, implementation challenges ranging from large class sizes, insufficient training, limited parental involvement, and lack of resources have hindered their ability to fully deliver the program's potential. Despite these obstacles, educators remain committed and offered valuable insights for improvement, including the need for ongoing professional development, stronger administrative support, and integration of technology into reading instruction.

The study also emphasizes that fostering a balanced and inclusive approach to literacy one that combines foundational skills with creativity, student interest, and family engagement is essential to cultivating a lifelong love for reading. Finally, to ensure the NRP becomes more responsive and sustainable, schools must adopt a collaborative, resource-supported, and technologically empowered environment where all learners, regardless of their reading levels, can thrive and succeed.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that while the National Reading Program (NRP) has brought structure and focus to literacy instruction, several gaps and challenges remain in its implementation. These challenges include issues related to class size, teacher workload, insufficient training, and the need for more tailored interventions for struggling readers. Moreover, despite positive perceptions of the program, there is a need for continuous improvement to ensure it effectively addresses the diverse learning needs of all students. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the implementation of the NRP, address the challenges identified by educators, and support the development of early literacy skills among learners.

### ***A. NRP Implementation and Reading Program Outcomes***

To enhance the implementation of the National Reading Program (NRP), it is crucial to sustain and expand targeted initiatives such as "Oplan Kaalaman sa Pagbasa" and "RACMES Bulig Basa." These programs provide continuous support and encourage peer-assisted learning, which can be instrumental in bridging reading gaps among learners. Institutionalizing tailored

interventions based on regular assessments of students' reading levels will allow for differentiated instruction that focuses on key literacy components such as phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Furthermore, maintaining strong administrative support through consistent coordination between school leaders and teaching staff is essential to ensure the availability of resources and strategic guidance. Lastly, the use of progress monitoring tools is recommended to promote data-driven decision-making, helping educators adjust interventions based on learner development and outcomes.

## ***B. Challenges Faced by Teachers During NRP Implementation***

Teachers face numerous challenges in implementing the NRP, notably the issue of large class sizes that limit their ability to provide individualized attention to struggling readers. To address this, schools should consider deploying co-teachers or teaching assistants during reading sessions. Allocating specific time blocks for reading instruction within the curriculum can help reduce content overload and ensure literacy development remains a priority. Another major concern is the difficulty in establishing home-schools connections. This can be mitigated by promoting parent involvement through literacy partnerships and parent-focused workshops. To improve teacher capacity, professional development programs should include modules on the NRP framework, inclusive education, and practical pedagogical strategies. Additionally, equitable access to instructional technology and materials must be ensured, while recognizing the high workload of teachers by assigning reading specialists or integrating reading instruction into other subjects can provide much-needed relief.

## ***C. Needs of Struggling Readers Under NRP***

Addressing the needs of struggling readers requires a consistent application of individualized instruction that includes scaffolding, multisensory activities, and repeated reading opportunities. These strategies allow learners to progress at their own pace while receiving targeted support. Incorporating interest-based reading materials enhances motivation and engagement, making learning more enjoyable and effective. Peer tutoring and reading modeling can also be powerful tools, as pairing struggling readers with more fluent peers fosters both skill development and confidence. Additionally, integrating vocabulary pre-teaching and explicit phonics instruction helps improve decoding and comprehension. To further support learners, teachers should consistently

provide praise and encouragement to boost students' self-esteem and promote a positive learning environment.

## ***D. Teaching Approaches and Literacy Development***

A balanced literacy approach is essential for fostering comprehensive reading skills. This involves combining phonics instruction and fluency practice with creative and story-based reading tasks to develop both technical and emotional engagement with reading. Standardizing core literacy strategies across grade levels can enhance instructional consistency, while also allowing for flexibility to adapt to the diverse needs of learners. Special education needs must be addressed with tailored interventions and accessible materials to ensure inclusivity. Furthermore, fostering a love for reading through creative, interest-driven content will encourage lifelong reading habits and enrich students' learning experiences.

## ***E. Suggested Improvements for NRP Implementation***

To further improve the effectiveness of the NRP, it is important to train teachers in evidence-based practices grounded in the science of reading. These include instruction on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Implementing differentiated instruction techniques is also essential, enabling teachers to adjust their lessons according to individual student needs. Providing ongoing professional development and mentorship will ensure teachers stay updated and confident in applying the NRP framework. Encouraging collaboration through peer learning circles and the sharing of best practices fosters a culture of continuous improvement. Additionally, ensuring access to adequate resources such as print-rich classrooms, well-stocked libraries, and updated digital tools is necessary to support effective literacy instruction.

## ***F. Towards a More Effective NRP for All Learners***

An effective NRP must focus on foundational literacy skills through explicit, systematic instruction in core areas like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Creating a literacy-rich environment in both schools and classrooms with access to diverse books, visual print, and writing materials can greatly encourage reading habits. Leveraging technology through interactive reading apps, online libraries, and digital platforms can further enhance instruction and engagement. Formative assessments should be utilized regularly to track student growth and guide instructional planning. Moreover, involving

families through reading-focused activities, take-home learning kits, and workshops can significantly extend learning support beyond the classroom.

### G. Technological and Structural Enhancements

To support NRP implementation from a technological and infrastructural standpoint, it is recommended to conduct productivity-focused workshops that equip teachers with skills to integrate digital tools effectively into reading instruction. Optimizing online communication platforms will facilitate better collaboration among educators and foster stronger engagement with parents. Additionally, establishing systematic maintenance schedules for hardware will ensure that technological resources remain functional and reliable for instructional use, thereby supporting seamless delivery of reading programs in a modern learning environment.

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