

# Teaching of Reading to Public School Elementary Learners: Accounts of Teachers

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*Abstract* — The study was conducted in Plaza Elementary School, one of the complete public elementary schools in Tabon, Bislig City. The researcher is interested in knowing the experiences of teachers in the teaching of reading along with the causes of poor reading skills, thus, a qualitative approach was deemed proper for this study. The experiences of teachers in teaching reading would depend on their preparation and oftentimes, their interest in reading; this study identified the following: presence of learners-at-risk; presence of nonreaders; learner's poor health condition; presence of learners with special needs in regular class; lack of interest in reading; lack of orientation and training to teach reading; frequent absenteeism of learners; no culture of reading; no opportunity for independent reading; lack of reading materials; failure to give learner sufficient guidance for reading; absence of parents, teachers and reading partners; lack of teachers' commitment; lack of teachers' confidence in teaching reading; improper implementation of reading program; and no monitoring of learners' progress during intervention. The perceived causes of poor reading skills and non-mastery of the elements of reading are: no phonological awareness, non-mastery of alphabet knowledge, non-mastery of phonics, poor word recognition and vocabulary, poor fluency skills, and lack of comprehension. The researcher proposes the following program and the important aspects of this program. The following suggested reading programs and activities shall form part in the creation of contextualized reading curricula and be used as reading literacy initiatives in the schools. These proposed initiatives are categorized as Literacy Program, Individual Reading Recovery Program and Enrichment/Enhancement Program.

*Keywords* — *Teaching reading, elementary teachers, reading skills, experiences, causes*

## I. Introduction

In the Philippines the late and former President Benigno Aquino III sets out the ten-point Educational Agenda in which one of these points concerned on literacy program to make every child a reader in Grade 1. In fact, *Every Child is A Reader Program* was introduced as enclosure in DepEd Order no. 70, s. 2011 that aims to equip elementary pupils in public schools with strategic reading and writing skills to make them independent young readers and writers. Among activities lined up in ECARP are the Read-a-Thon, "A Paragraph A Day" sessions, DEAR program, Big Brother/Big Sister, Kaklase Ko, Sagot Ko, Shared Reading, Pull-Out Remedial Class, Reading Assistance Program, Remediation Classes, Intensified Remedial Reading, Five Words A Week (FWAR), A Paragraph A Day (APAD), and Library Hour A Week.

In compliance to the program, teachers are mandated to implement *Every Child A Reader Program*. They are free to choose any of the reading remediation programs which they think best fit and appropriate to the learning needs of the children in their respective classes.

For instance, *Drop Everything and Read* (DEAR) is a fifteen to twenty (15-20) minute daily activity devoted to reading books or any materials available in the school; Big Brother/Big Sister/Kaklase Ko, Sagot Ko/Shared Reading, in this activity, older students or independent readers mentor pupils who are at the frustration reading level or non-reading level; Pull-Out Remedial Class/Reading Assistance Program/Remediation Classes/Intensified Assistance Program/Remediation Classes/Intensified Remedial Reading. Remedial lessons are given to children in the frustration reading level by teachers or class advisers; *Five Words A Week* (FWAW), *A Paragraph A Day/Library Hour A Week*. In this activity, the pupils are encouraged to learn and master one word a day, five days a week, and to read aloud one or two paragraphs a day before classes starts to develop oral communication; and Reading Camp, and activity that aims to highlight the pupils' talents in communication arts through competition.

In support to the program, the Bureau of Elementary Education (BEE) develop the "Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil IRI) which aims to address its thrust to make every Filipino child a reader. Its goal is to enable every Filipino child to communicate both in English and Filipino languages through effective reading program. The Phil IRI has been administered to all public elementary schools since 2011 up to present to assess the progress and levels of reading ability and comprehension of the pupils after the reading intervention or remediation program implemented by the teachers (Madrid, 2012).

However, despite the implementation of reading remediation programs, there are many cases that a child is promoted to another grade level without learning the skill of reading. For instance, a pupil is promoted from one grade level to another grade level with poor word recognition skill and poor reading, which fall under frustration level. Thus, reading remains a problem in many of the public schools and a culprit of low academic achievement. In the fact, in the recently conducted colloquium, a part of the School Heads Development Program Foundation Course, the Schools Division Office of Marinduque found out that 93% of the problems that schools' heads in both elementary and secondary schools presented concerned oral reading and reading comprehension (Division Memorandum No. 4, s. 2017).

Teachers play a major role in the development of students' reading habits and interests which was repeatedly stressed by many journal articles. Educators make a difference in the success of their students when they demonstrate earnest passion and believe that all children have the capacity to learn to read and make anything happen with skills and determination. They base their classroom practices on sound reading theory, utilize different means of instruction available which are purposed to meet the specific learning needs of students, create an organized and stimulating learning environment, and regularly assess their students' reading achievement. Teachers have a pivotal role in helping children to develop and maintain a positive attitude towards learning and

literacy. Motivated readers read more, use more complex cognitive strategies, and thus become better readers.

One of the important things' teachers need to do is adapt their instruction to match their students' current development in reading, knowing full well that children will need to spend less time developing as they progress, and practicing some skills and more time on others. They are expected to use classroom time more effectively, maximize available resources to spearhead instructions among large-groups, smallgroups, and individuals.

Furthermore, teachers' expectations of and relationships with their students profoundly affect students' learning. This has been widely supported by numerous research studies in literacy that show students are more academically successful when they feel welcomed, esteemed, and provided with materials that challenge them hence, their knowledge, experiences, and interests are enriched. Willis (2000) noted that when these attitudes, behaviors, and curriculum considerations are missing, there is great chance that children may resist learning, especially those who with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This stresses the importance of expectations and relationships between teachers and students in a classroom.

The study was conducted in Plaza Elementary School, one of the complete elementary schools in Tabon, Bislig City. The choice of the locale was due to the deep concern of the researcher in improving the teaching of reading of the learners. The researcher is interested in knowing the experiences of teachers in the teaching of reading along with the causes of poor reading skills, thus, a qualitative approach was deemed proper for this study. This study was conducted in the current school year 2022-2023.

Teachers committed to excellence in reading instruction know that there is no single program or method that is effective for all as there are various considerations an educator must investigate. It is of utmost importance that teachers improve their professional knowledge individually and within a team, and view themselves as lifelong, reflective learners thus, they seek out opportunities to expand their knowledge by participating in peer coaching, mentorships, professional reading circles, networking opportunities with colleagues, and literacy workshops and conferences. Additionally, teachers need an ongoing professional development that allows for growth in expertise across all learning areas.

### *Causes of Poor Reading Skills*

Teachers show lack of commitment to reading as they don't have clear reading plan, reading materials and tools. The following are perceived causes of poor reading skills (Konza, 2011).

There are three underlying issues that affect the poor reading skills of learners, to wit: 1) Non-mastery of the elements of reading; 2) Presence of learners-at-risk; and 3) No culture of reading.

*Non-Mastery of the Elements of Reading.* The perceived causes of non-mastery of the elements of reading are: no phonological awareness, non-mastery of alphabet knowledge, non-mastery of phonics, poor word recognition and vocabulary, poor fluency skills, and lack of comprehension.

1. No phonological awareness was observed. The Grade 1 learners in Filipino experienced difficulties on sound blending. They did not know the strategy that by putting up phonemes together they will be able to read a word. For instance, one of the learners was told to put the speech sound /m/ add /a/, then add /s/, that is, (/m/ + /a/ + /s/). Instead of blending /m/ + /a/ + /s/ correctly, he pronounced it differently. His transcription /mas/ was different from the intended.
2. Non-mastery of alphabet knowledge Also, as per observations, there was a clear confusion among grade one learners between the letter name and letter sound. The learners' difficulty to distinguish letters from one another was very evident. They added vowels to every consonant, e.g. letter m is read as ma.
3. Non-mastery of phonics Reversals like *ya* for *ay* in Filipino, insertions (pinirito to prito), deletion (say for says), addition of letters (nanay to nanaya) were some of the common errors in the informal reading analysis or running records done. It is expected that Grade one learners in Filipino were taught about the letter-sound relationships of several of the vowel phonemes. Then consonants were introduced. But as per general observation among Grade 1 learners of their difficulty in blending the various sounds or phonemes of a word together in proper order to arrive at a pronunciation.
4. Poor word recognition and vocabulary Most of the tested Grade 1 learners have a very limited bank of sight words as shown in their Dolch Basic Sight Word Test Results in English. Most of them can only read *cvc* words. This shows that the teachers do not integrate basic sight words for the grade level in oracy lessons. Learners have limited vocabulary as well.
5. Poor fluency skills Learners who find difficulty in learning the skill in decoding words tend to refuse to read. No continuous opportunities were provided by the teachers in the content that the learners are more comfortable. Children learn to read more easily when this instruction is based on strengths and resources they already possess.
6. Lack of comprehension It is very evident from the results that few learners got perfect scores in reading in Filipino. Though the reading material was written in their Mother Tongue, still they can hardly answer the questions. There were Grades 1 and 2 learners who can read fluently in Filipino but without comprehension. This can be attributed to the focus of the teachers in reading instruction which is decoding. Learners have limited vocabulary as well.

*Presence of Learners-at-Risk.* The causes of presence of learners-at-risk are presence of nonreaders, learner's poor health condition, presence of LSENs in regular class, lack of interest in reading, lack of orientation and training to teach reading, and frequent absenteeism of learners.

1. Presence of nonreaders. For the Grade 1 nonreaders, they could not even identify the letter name and letter sound. I asked two learners to write all the letters they knew but unfortunately one learner was able to write two letters only and he didn't even know the name of the letters he wrote. The other one was able to write 3 letters. Most of the cases in Grades 1 and 2 had difficulty in reading words with -ng in Filipino (beginning, middle, ending).
2. Learner's poor health condition the poor health condition of some learners affects their ability to assimilate instruction and building their self-confidence.
3. Presence of LSENs in regular class Learners with special needs were included in some schools. There was no specific assessment utilized for the LSENs. Some teachers use the assessment materials for the regular learners which affect the class performance in reading.
4. Lack of interest in reading Low self-concepts among struggling readers interfere with progress in overcoming reading problems. Convinced that the learners cannot succeed, such learners only fall farther and farther behind. Many poor readers refuse to cooperate with those who would help them due to negative reinforcement.
5. Lack of orientation and training to teach reading. Most of the Grade 1 teachers with the greatest number of nonreaders or struggling readers were handled by new teachers. They do not have any training in beginning reading. According to the principals they were assigned to handle the Grade 1 class because they were the last to in in the school.
6. Frequent absenteeism of learners This can be attributed to the low socio-economic status of parents. Sometimes the learners help at home in running errands and taking care of their younger siblings. Some learners opt to be absent in classes because of their inability to read.

*No Culture of Reading.* Under no culture of reading, the perceived causes are no opportunity for independent reading, lack of reading materials, failure to give learners sufficient guidance for reading, absence of parents, teachers and learners reading partnership; lack of teacher's commitments and confidence to teach reading; improper implementation of reading program; and no monitoring of learner's progress during intervention.

1. No opportunity for independent reading There was no balanced reading program in the schools. Some of the fast readers assisted the struggling readers instead of doing independent reading activities. Enhancement of reading performance is not a regular

- activity in reading. The schools do not have graded reading materials with answer key so that learners can check their work anytime and monitor their reading and comprehension progress independently.
2. Lack of reading materials. Many schools especially from the far-flung areas do not have varied story books which are appropriate for the grade level of the learners. No picture books are available for beginning readers/nonreaders. The picture books will allow them to be creative in composing their own story even in the mother tongue only. There were story books developed by the LRMDS but these materials were not yet reproduced for maximum utilization.
  3. Failure to give learners sufficient guidance for reading. Reading teachers were new and they do not have any orientation regarding the teaching of beginning reading. Some teachers were more comfortable in the strategies that they used instead of the suggested approaches or strategies.
  4. Absence of parents, teachers and learners reading partnership. Some teachers do not look upon the parents as people who can help diagnose and correct the child's learning difficulties. Parents seem to be resistant because they were not trained on how to teach phonics among beginning readers.
  5. Lack of teacher's commitment and confidence to teach reading. Lack of commitment was manifested through in adequacy of teaching devices displayed in the classroom and in the result of oral reading test results. When teachers were asked why they have many nonreaders, e.g. 6/24, or 9/27 they tend to be defensive about their shortcomings. They blamed parents for not doing follow-up at home.
  6. Improper implementation of reading program. Although reading teachers were taught on the different approaches in teaching reading, they implement it in the classroom the short cut way. They teach right away the alphabet knowledge even without teaching reading readiness first. And they combine two approaches at a time as manifested by the finger counting of the Grades 1 and 2 learners, for example, Anggulo Approach (ba, ka, da) and Marungko Approach (phonics approach). A learner read mas as masa in Filipino. Remediation activities were not documented. Some teachers forgot that testing and measurement are essential in a reading program, while others did not properly document the reading intervention programs in schools.
  7. No monitoring of learner's progress during intervention. Observing individual progress will help a reading teacher provide appropriate activities to overcome learners' difficulties. It is informative to look back at the cumulative records of the changes that have occurred. Grades 1 and 2 teachers claimed that they do reading remediation but undocumented. Because according to them they do not know some assessment tools to



monitor the progress of the learners. Consequently, they do not follow up the reading interventions at home.

### *Individual Reading Recovery Program*

The Individual Reading Recovery Program (IRRP) is patterned with Catch Them Early (CTE) program by Santos (2001), which can be a good means of such an intervention. This program includes individual tutoring, daily 30–45-minute sessions, informal diagnosis and daily/weekly monitoring of progress, reading aloud three books daily supported by a variety of picture books and storybooks, and a tentative support in learning to read.

**Individual Tutoring.** Wasik and Slavin (1993) recommend the one-on-one arrangement as the most powerful form of intervention instruction. It enables the tutor to plan an individual program for the learner; to closely observe his daily reading and writing behaviors to monitor his progress; and give him full attention. Sitting beside the learner is more reassuring. If there are other learners in the program, they may get together for story reading by the tutor once a week, either on first day or last day of the week. This allows them to interact with peers who are also experiencing some difficulties in learning to read and listen together to good reading modeled by the teacher/tutor.

**Daily 30 - 45 Minute Sessions.** Tutorial session is held daily for 30 - 45 minutes. Clay's (1990) work with Reading Recovery has shown that briefly daily one-on-one instruction increases the power of intervention. Rowan and Guthrie (1989) confirmed that there is no sufficient research evidence to show that longer intervention sessions held two or three times a week would result in better progress.

**Informal Diagnosis and Daily/Weekly Monitoring of Progress.** The IRRP uses informal assessment tools to diagnose the learner's reading status, results of which are the basis for designing an intervention plan for the child. These are as follows: Book and Print Orientation Record, Test on Mastery of the Alphabet, Test on Phonetic Awareness, Textual Read-Aloud Inventory, and Story Writing.

The following assessment tools are administered regularly and recorded systematically: Weekly Phonemic Awareness, Daily Textual Read-Aloud Inventory, and Best of the Week in Story Writing. The Weekly Phonemic Awareness Check is given at the end of each week to assess the learner's progress in writing down sounds he/she hears in words. The Daily Textual Read-Aloud Inventory records the learner's miscues and fix-up strategies he/she uses to correct his/her miscues as he/she reads aloud. The teacher takes note of difficulties for which the learner does not have fix-up strategies and take these up in the Word Identification Phase of the tutorial session. This is done daily. The Best of the learner's daily story writing is collected weekly and analyzed to monitor his progress in graphically representing his/her own ideas, the quality of the message of his/her stories, and his/her knowledge of print conventions. These are filed in the learner's portfolio.

Supported by a Variety of Picture Books and Storybooks. The learner reads aloud at least three books daily. Thus, the program should be supported by a variety of picture books and storybooks with the following features: Use of natural language, Uncontrolled vocabulary, Predictable language, Patterned text, Rich illustrations, large print for easy reading, and Simple storyline. Pictureless versions of popular storybooks may be used to present increasing levels of challenge to the learner and give him/her the chance to use the word identification skills and strategies he/she has gained.

Tentative Support in Learning to Read. The IRRP is not a permanent program. Its duration depends on the learner's progress. Some learners may need 10 - 12 weeks to catch up with their peers in learning to read. Others may need more time. The learner should be continuously monitored by his/her teacher until he/she shows the ability to read as well as his/her classmates who are doing average performance.

The learner is not expected to read as well as the best reader in his/her class, but he/she can work towards it. Teachers may not be able to help the learners with speech and hearing difficulties or other disabilities that have to do with learning to read. Such learners should be referred to Specialist.

For this study, I utilized Freebody and Luke's (1990) four resources model, wherein they posit that to be a successful reader in a society, an individual usually enacts and sustains four roles or family of practices (Luke & Freebody, 1999): code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst. While we discuss the four roles individually below, we want to emphasize that readers do not assume one role at a time in a developmental fashion. While reading texts, good readers simultaneously assume more than one of these roles as part of the reading process and engage with texts aesthetically even as they also decode or read them critically.

First, code breaker deals with readers being able to decode words and understand how texts work (e.g., understanding sound-letter relationships). Freebody and Luke emphasize that even though being a code breaker is an essential component of literacy, additional literacy skills and practices needed. An autonomous view of literacy, as Street (2005) points out, limits reading to a set of skills, and that is not an accurate portrayal of what kids do when they read.

The second role in the four resources model is that of the text participant wherein the reader addresses the meaning system of the text. With this role, individuals draw inferences and understand textual elements. In addition, Freebody and Luke specify that for English Language Learners (ELLs), background knowledge is essential to be a text participant. ELLs bring "varying bodies of cultural knowledge and competence to bear on the text" (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Thus, the authors emphasize a need for guided and explicit instruction when there are texts that make meaning demands on students.



Text user is the third role in this model wherein individuals participate in reading and writing as social experiences. It is through socio-cultural experiences that individuals conceptualize what to do with texts.

The last role is that of a text analyst wherein readers understand that texts are not neutral objects; rather, the authors of texts are people who have their own orientations and dispositions toward the world and share those with readers. It is the text analyst's role to be a critical reader of texts and to question the author(s).

Through the four resources model, Freebody and Luke suggest that literacy is multifaceted. They do not privilege one reader role over the others. Rather, they posit that each role is relevant to the other for one to be an effective reader and that readers draw on all four resources to make sense of texts.

## II. Methodology

I used the phenomenology study design (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) defines a phenomenology study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear. Stake (1995) defines a phenomenology study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single phenomenon, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.” In other words, the phenomenology study is a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures. I used the phenomenology study methodology because I was dealing with a single phenomenon, looking at a specific grade and a specific number of participants in a particular area and community.

I chose the school where I was teaching with two teachers for each grade level, which gave a total of twelve (12) teachers who participated in the study. The reason was to ensure that the data generated by such several participants would be manageable given the limited time in which I had to conduct the research (Mugo, 2006).

Maxwell (2005) defines purposeful selection of cases as “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be forgotten as well from the choices.” This study used purposive selection of participants. The teacher-participants were selected from public schools where Cebuano (or Bisaya) is the language of teaching and learning.

In this study, the principle of triangulation for determining validity and reliability was applied as a wide range of data collection methods were used in this study (Schurink, 1998). The triangulation principle of hypothesis-generating, writing theoretical memos and theoretical sampling was applied.

I first develop an objective and constraints of the problem. The collection of data phase involves a careful review of data and careful studying of the phenomenon in question. It furthermore indicates the set of data that may be relevant to the investigation. I kept the record of theoretical memos. Theoretical memos are important tools to both refine and keep track of the experiences just after they happen. I collect data, codes, and analyses and then decide what data to collect next and where to find it. Charmaz (2000) suggests that theoretical sampling is best used when key concepts have been discovered. Initial data collection is commenced with a random group of people, who have experienced the phenomenon under study to begin to develop concepts. Theoretical sampling is then used to generate further data to confirm and refute original categories. Content analysis was reviewed to determine what is understood by the teaching of reading comprehension. In the next paragraphs, each data collection instrument is discussed in detail.

Wiersma (1991) maintains that qualitative data analysis requires organization of information and data reduction. I employed the systemic guidelines of grounded theory analysis as described by Charmaz (2000). According to Maree (2011), data analysis focuses on constant comparison of the data leading to coding and then categorization of the data.

Data analysis proceeded simultaneously and in progression of the data collection processes. Analysis commenced from individual teachers' interviews, classroom observation and focus group interviews. The actual words of the teacher participants were analyzed and interpreted. Themes and categories emerged from the teachers' responses to the research questions. I suspected there would be a repetition of certain themes. This entailed transcribing the data in verbatim form. I read the entire transcript to get a global impression of the content and look out for themes emerging from the text. I highlighted units of meaning with markers of different colors to denote related themes.

In this study, themes and categories were teachers' responses, in which they reported on their live experiences, meanings and the reality which they attached to teaching reading comprehension. According to Braun and Clark (2006), thematic analysis can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality. I incorporated categorized, related codes. These categories reflected themes, which I shall use in the discussion of the topic. From an interpretive paradigm, I compared my findings with guiding ideas and expectations. I checked the relationship between the research findings and the textual data. I presented the findings of each instrument in relation to the research questions.

### III. Results and Discussion

#### *Experiences of teachers in teaching reading to elementary school learners*

The experiences of teachers in teaching reading would depend on their preparation and oftentimes, their interest in reading; this study identified the following: *presence of learners-at-risk; presence of nonreaders; learner's poor health condition; presence of learners with special needs in regular class; lack of interest in reading; lack of orientation and training to teach reading; frequent absenteeism of learners; no culture of reading; no opportunity for independent reading; lack of reading materials; failure to give learner sufficient guidance for reading; absence of parents, teachers and reading partners; lack of teachers' commitment; lack of teachers' confidence in teaching reading; improper implementation of reading program; and no monitoring of learners' progress during intervention.*

#### *Causes of poor reading skills that posed as challenges among elementary school learners*

The perceived causes of poor reading skills and non-mastery of the elements of reading are: *no phonological awareness, non-mastery of alphabet knowledge, non-mastery of phonics, poor word recognition and vocabulary, poor fluency skills, and lack of comprehension.*

*No phonological awareness* was observed. The Grade 1 learners in Filipino experienced difficulties on sound blending.

*Non-mastery of alphabet knowledge.* Also, as per observations, there was a clear confusion among grade one learners between the letter name and letter sound.

*Non-mastery of phonics.* Reversals like ya for ay in Filipino, insertions (pinirito to prito), deletion (say for says)/addition of letters (nanay to nanaya) were some of the common errors in the informal reading analysis or running records done.

*Poor word recognition and vocabulary.* Most of the tested Grade 1 learners have a very limited bank of sight words as shown in their Dolch Basic Sight Word Test Results in English.

*Poor fluency skills.* Learners who find difficulty in learning the skill in decoding words tend to refuse to read.

*Lack of comprehension* It is very evident from the results that few learners got perfect scores in reading comprehension in Filipino.

#### *Initiatives introduced by the school to improve reading literacy among elementary school learners*

The researcher discovered that no official reading program exists in the school. Children are taught reading by teachers who are not trained to handle reading programs. The researcher proposes the following program and the important aspects of this program.

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*The Proposed School Reading Program to Eliminate Reading Difficulties*

Reading skills is part of the instinctive skill of every individual as such starts at birth. However, prior experiences and knowledge brought by students upon entry to basic education determine their entry reading level. Some of the most regarded contributors of this process are the developed reading skills-related attitudes and behaviors, the manner their reading-related cognitive development is supported, the type of opportunities provided for them and what kind of guidance they are offered.

Thus, the establishment of an enrichment learning environment suitable for the language acquisition and cognitive development of the child is important. The basic requirements needed for the acquisition of effective reading skills and healthy reading are correct perception, sound recognition, word recognition, word discrimination, semantics, syntax, linguistic processes, and comprehension.

The establishment of reading environments based on reading requirements may be effective in overcoming reading difficulties. In addition, the use of appropriate methods and teaching as well as considering individual differences in individuals are contributory to the elimination of these difficulties. Also, the early diagnosis of students with reading difficulties and the integration of intervention programs for reading difficulties in their curriculum are of great importance.

The following suggested reading programs and activities shall form part in the creation of contextualized reading curricula and be used as reading literacy initiatives in the schools.

These proposed initiatives are categorized as Literacy Program, Individual Reading Recovery Program and Enrichment/Enhancement Program.

*Proposed Initiatives 1. Literacy Reading Program*

*Literacy Program Reading* is a form learning for decoding texts and making meaning from texts. The Literacy Program (LP) has the following elements called “The Big Six”. For the learners to be effective readers, they should be able to combine the six elements. Therefore, an integrated approach to explicit reading instruction is important in providing relevant interconnected learning experiences. While teachers may emphasize individual component at various instances, they are not a set of isolated skills and needs to be integrated throughout reading opportunities across the day. So, for instance, while the systematic teaching of phonics is an important component, the same is insufficient for learning to read. DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019 presented some conceptual considerations in reading program and discussed the following: Oral Language Having a very limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with language structures renders impossibility of understanding the written form of a language. The vocabulary and familiarity could be developed before a child enters a school (Reese, Sparks, & Leyva, 2010; Skeat et al., 2010).

Therefore, oral language provides the prerequisite skills to reading and is directly linked to overall reading achievement. When children are by and included in increasingly complex conversations, they expand their vocabulary; increase the complexity of the language structures they use; become language risk-takers; develop confidence in the way they communicate; clarify their thinking and deepen their understanding of their world; and tune into the sounds of standard language.

*Phonological awareness.* Phonological awareness refers to the ability to focus on the sound of speech. It connotes an awareness of rhythm, rhyme, sounds, and syllables. Awareness often commences with rhythm, for instances, children clapping to the beats of their name. The second step is rhyming: producing rhyming patterns like king, wing, and sing. This exhibits early phonemic awareness which is the most important subset of phonological awareness in the development of reading and spelling. In addition, phonological awareness enables children to focus on the separate sounds in words called phonemes. The children at this step learn to divide syllables into separate sounds and manipulate them to form different words. Letter-sound relationships can then be introduced, and children can be taught phonemic and phonics skills simultaneously from this point.

*Phonics.* Phonics recognizes the relationship between letters and sounds, sometimes called the “alphabetic principle”. Teaching beginning and struggling readers using a synthetic approach to phonics are supported by the current empirical evidence (Johnston & Watson, 2003; Rose, 2006). This approach emphasizes teaching single letters and common letter combinations in a discrete, systematic, and explicit way. The way they are arranged to be taught facilitates their blending into simple words so that children can immediately practice their new skills, building automaticity, and confidence. The research also recommends that these new skills be practiced as early as possible by having children listen to high quality texts and read connected text themselves. Explicit phonetics instruction is material for most beginning and all struggling readers. However, it must be implemented alongside many elements of an effective reading program, such as “rich oral language instruction, and modelled and guided reading” (Konza, 2011).

Phonics instruction is not appropriate to help children understand irregular “sight” words such as said, was, and saw. These words must be learned by recognizing the words until the point of automaticity. Hence, sight words must be taught based on an explicit system, rather than being addressed only when children encounter these words in text. Providing plenty of practice to use newly learned sight words in context can support comprehension. That is, immediate recognition of some words accurately can allow learners to concentrate on new or less familiar words and focus on giving them meaning, rather than just decoding.

*Vocabulary.* Knowing the meaning of a word implies the likelihood of the ability to read it and interpret it contextually. There is a need to continually expand the range of words that can be understood and used in context. “Vocabulary development” as an outcome of comprehension and a precursor of the same, has word meanings making up as much as 70% - 90% of the

comprehension (Bromley, 2007). Vocabulary is, for the most part, can be enhanced by encountering new words repeatedly in conversations, story listening, reading, and through different media (Sénéchal, 1997). Encountering words in meaningful situations makes meanings clear. Also, children can then easily add them to their word bank. This type of indirect vocabulary acquisition is particularly effective for children who have been exposed to a wide and rich vocabulary even before entering the school. For other children who have a more limited vocabulary and have less access to the vocabulary resources, the explicit teaching vocabulary is important (Beck & McKeown, 2007).

*Fluency.* Fluency does not amount to reading quickly. It is the ability to make reading sound like spoken language. Also, it is reading with appropriate phrasing, expression, and pace. Someone who is fluent can understand and make meaning of the text as they read. Its core components include accuracy, pace and expression, and volume. Fluency is correlated with comprehension. Familiarity with words contributes to fluency. There is a need for texts at the independent reading level. Hence, beginning, and struggling readers need simple texts at their independent level to build speed and confidence. Children who are sent home with the books they can read, they can develop appropriate expression, practice chunking and pausing, and most importantly, build their confidence. Reading quickly without attending to punctuation, expression, and comprehension is not fluency. Reading rates should not be at the expense of comprehension.

*Comprehension.* What makes reading effective is the understanding of the purpose of the reading itself and adjust the behaviors according to that purpose. These behaviors include skimming, scanning, or reading closely for details. The texts may appear to look different in terms of unidentified purpose, context, and audience. The understating of the different features of texts can contribute to interpretation. Proficient readers keep track of their understanding as they read, by integrating new information with existing knowledge and experience. They focus on appropriate parts of the text to distinguish salient content from minor detail. They create and track predictions and assess content as they read. For this to happen, there is a need for the learners to learn how to adjust their reading strategies, pace, and vocabulary knowledge, as well as their strategies, for decoding and chunking to read the unfamiliar.

### *Proposed Initiatives 2. Individual Reading Recovery Program*

The Individual Reading Recovery Program (IRRP) is patterned with Catch Them Early (CTE) program by Santos (2001), which can be a good means of such an intervention. This program includes individual tutoring, daily 30 - 45-minute sessions, informal diagnosis, and daily/weekly monitoring of progress, reading aloud three books daily supported by a variety of picture books and storybooks, and a tentative support in learning to read. Individual Tutoring The IRRP involves individual tutoring. Wasik and Slavin (1993) recommend the one-on-one arrangement as the most powerful form of intervention instruction. It enables the tutor to plan an individual program for the learner; to closely observe his daily reading and writing behaviors to monitor his progress; and give him full attention. Sitting beside the learner is more reassuring. If



there are other learners in the program, they may get together for story reading by the tutor once a week, either on first day or last day of the week. This allows them to interact with peers who are also experiencing some difficulties in learning to read, and listen together to good reading modeled by the teacher/tutor.

**Daily 30 - 45 Minute Sessions.** The IRRP tutorial session is held daily for 30 - 45 minutes. Clay's (1990) work with Reading Recovery has shown that briefly daily one-on-one instruction increases the power of intervention. Rowan & Guthrie (1989) confirmed that there is no sufficient research evidence to show that longer intervention sessions held two or three times a week would result in better progress.

**Informal Diagnosis and Daily/Weekly Monitoring of Progress.** The IRRP uses informal assessment tools to diagnose the learner's reading status, results of which are the basis for designing an intervention plan for the child. These are as follows: Book and Print Orientation Record; Test on Mastery of the Alphabet; Test on Phonetic Awareness; Textual Read-Aloud Inventory; Story Writing. The following assessment tools are administered regularly and recorded systematically: Weekly Phonemic Awareness Check; Daily Textual Read-Aloud Inventory; and Best of the Week in Story Writing

The Weekly Phonemic Awareness Check is given at the end of each week to assess the learner's progress in writing down sounds he/she hears in words. The Daily Textual Read-Aloud Inventory records the learner's miscues and fix-up strategies he/she uses to correct his/her miscues as he/she reads aloud. The teacher takes note of difficulties for which the learner does not have fix-up strategies and take these up in the Word Identification Phase of the tutorial session. This is done daily. The Best of the learner's daily story writing is collected weekly and analyzed to monitor his progress in graphically representing his/her own ideas, the quality of the message of his/her stories, and his/her knowledge of print conventions. These are filed in the learner's portfolio.

**Supported by a Variety of Picture Books and Storybooks.** The learner reads aloud at least three books daily. Thus, the program should be supported by a variety of picture books and storybooks with the following features: Use of natural language; Uncontrolled vocabulary; Predictable language; Patterned text; Rich illustrations; Large print for easy reading; and Simple storyline. Pictureless versions of popular storybooks may be used to present increasing levels of challenge to the learner and give him/her the chance to use the word identification skills and strategies he/she has gained.

**Tentative Support in Learning to Read.** The IRRP is not a permanent program. Its duration depends on the learner's progress. Some learners may need 10 - 12 weeks to catch up with their peers in learning to read. Others may need more time. The learner should be continuously monitored by his/her teacher until he/she shows the ability to read as well as his/her classmates who are doing average performance. The learner is not expected to read as well as the best reader

in his/her class, but he/she can work towards it. The IRRP program may not be able to help the learners with speech and hearing difficulties or other disabilities that have to do with learning to read. Such learners should be referred to Specialist.

### *Proposed Reading Initiatives 3. Reading Enrichment/Enhancement Program*

The enrichment reading program includes, but not limited to the following: Profiling of learners; Creation of contextualized reading curricula; Establishment of reading center/clinic; Readathon; and Drop Everything and Read;

This can be done by setting aside a 10-minute time every day to read any chosen materials: Gate password; Preparation/development of appropriate, contextualized interesting reading materials read by teachers and learners together (20 minutes); Development of supplementary reading materials (print and non-print) for use during classroom reading instruction or intervention; Capacity-building of reading teachers in teaching reading; and Recognizing most effective reading teacher and reading intervention.

### *Analysis*

The researcher discovered that no official reading program exists in the school. Children are taught reading by teachers who are not trained to handle reading programs. The researcher proposes program and the important aspects of this program. The following suggested reading programs and activities shall form part in the creation of contextualized reading curricula and be used as reading literacy initiatives in the schools. These proposed initiatives are categorized as Literacy Program, Individual Reading Recovery Program and Enrichment/Enhancement Program.

The role of teachers is a factor that affects students' reading interest. The teacher is the second parent for the student. Teachers can help their students develop knowledge for their future. One of the roles of teachers in the learning process is as a motivator. The teacher's role is motivation to read. The role of teachers as a motivator is important in improving the development of student reading activities. Teacher factors in the form of the ability to manage the activities and interaction of teaching and learning, especially in the teaching of reading programs. A good teacher should know the characteristics and interests of the child. Teachers should be able to stimulate and give encouragement to elicit students' potential in terms of reading. One way to motivate students in learning is to arouse students' interest. Therefore, efforts to increase interest and reading habits are also held in schools through the presence of libraries.

Aspects of facilities, namely the library is a factor that affects students' interest in reading. Library as a learning resource that is expected to foster interest in reading for students, it should be managed properly, for example a computerized system that can facilitate students in finding the desired title of the book. Good library should be able to provide a comfortable atmosphere by always maintaining cleanliness, maintaining the neatness of books, as well as arrangement of

reading places that can make students comfortable to linger in the library. A comfortable atmosphere can attract students to read in the library.

In addition to libraries, other facilities that can be used are technology. Parents can use gadgets as a facility to teach children at home. Through gadgets, parents can download e-books. E-book can be an interesting facility because it has pictures, characters, and colors that make children like to read.

Growing interest in reading early has several benefits. The first benefit is to inculcate the habit of reading pleasure. Reading habit needs to be instilled in children from an early age. This is important as their provision in the face of intense competition in the global age. To instill the habit, then we need to present a book that fits the age and level of thinking ability of the child. The book is what we next call children's books.

The second benefit is broadening insight and knowledge. Parents will certainly be proud. It happens if the child shows the depth of his insight and the extent of knowledge in the learning activities. This can be proven by the high achievement of the child.

The last benefit is to form a noble character. It can be proved how to act, speak, and feel in everyday life. The child will respect the older person. And will appreciate peers and children under the age. This will prevent the delinquency of children who are not directed. Because the true child does have a delinquency that is typical of the child's own world.

### *Discussion*

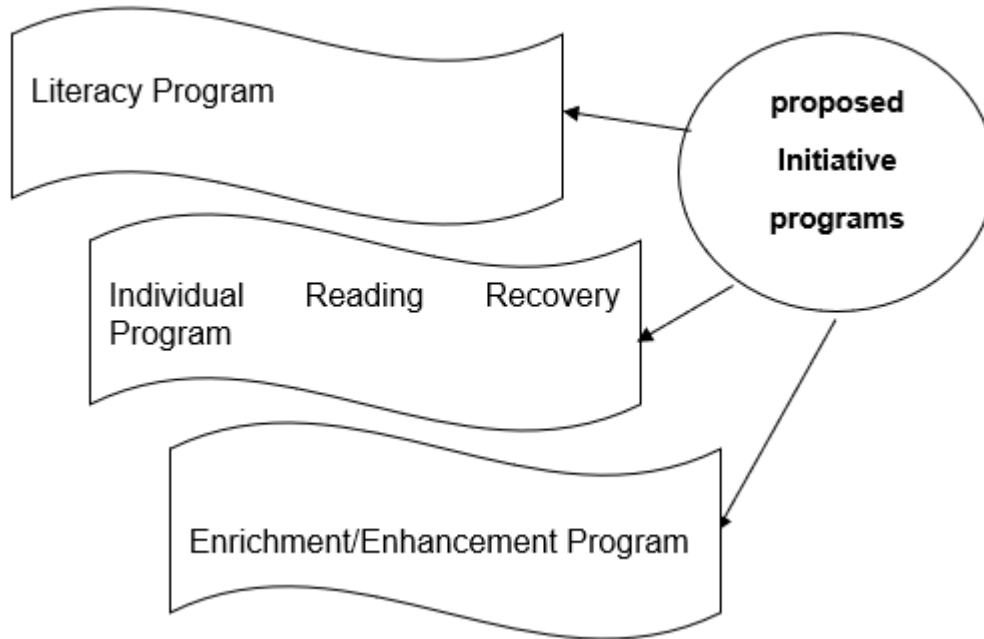
Reading is an activity that has many benefits. Examples are adding knowledge, entertainment, changing a person's point of view about something, even changing one's life. There are still many benefits from this activity. of the many benefits it can be concluded reading is a positive activity. It is regardless of the good or bad of the book. As bad as any book, it will surely give a good message to its readers. Growing interest in reading early is the right choice. Because the age of the children is golden age golden in a person's life. If the habit of reading into a child's favorite, then do not be surprised the child becomes a qualified individual. Individuals are better than those who do not like reading. Individuals who scent the nation, state, religion, family, and surely both parents. Familiarizing children to read early enough to prevent children from activities that are not useful, which can harm himself and others. It is time for the Indonesian people to need a qualified successor generation. This can be achieved by familiarizing children with reading activities.

Reading can be a good habit when trained from childhood so that children will get used to like reading. We cannot spontaneously love reading to become our habit. Therefore, it is important for us as parents to introduce reading and make reading as a good habit that is always remembered and meaningful for the child.

Reading can open the horizon of someone thinking. Through reading, someone can reflect and meditate, so that the culture of reading is more directed to the intellectual culture. By reading quality books, someone has a comparative advantage than people who do not read. Therefore, to build a civilized and advanced society, reading culture needs to be grown.

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**APPENDIX****AUTHOR'S PROFILE****JANICE S. NAPIERE**

The author is 38 years old, married, born on August 26, 1984, at Tabon Bislig City, Surigao del Sur Philippines. She is living very near the school where she is assigned. She finished her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education Major in English at De La Salle John Bosco College located in John Bosco District Mangagoy Bislig City. She took the Licensure Examination for Teachers and was able to pass with a very satisfactory rating. After she got her license, she embarked on a fulfilling career in teaching. She demonstrated exceptional commitment and proficiency in her field, evident in her impressive achievements and accolades throughout her tenure with the Department of Education. Her passion for teaching and her dedication to her students led her to excel in various roles within the education system. From serving as a Grade Level Head to being recognized as an Outstanding Elementary Teacher in 2020. She consistently demonstrated her leadership and pedagogical prowess.

Her contributions to literacy education were further highlighted by her recognition as the second placer in the Search for Outstanding Reading Teacher and her role as a pioneer Storybook Developer of Learning Resource Management Section. Her commitment to quality assurance and professional development also earned her accolades as a leader in the seminar workshop on strengthening Early Language Literacy and Numeracy (ELLN).

In addition to her exemplary teaching career, she is also a prolific author, recognized for her contributions to educational resource materials and storybook development. Her expertise in crafting engaging and effective learning materials has made her an asset in the field of education.

Her dedication to her craft, coupled with her passion for empowering young minds, continues to inspire both her students and fellow educators alike. As she continues her journey in education and writing, she remains a shining example of the transformative power of teaching and storytelling.