



Managing the Implementation and Evaluation of the School Reading Program

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author NEL designed the proposal of the study. Author MBR performed the data analysis. Author JPN designed the research questions and wrote the protocol. Author FMT facilitated the conduct of the focus group and transcribed the information. Author SSI reviewed and managed the related literature relevant to the study. Author FE served as the editor of the entire article. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: Non-reading phenomenon among students is a worldwide problem. This problem continues to balloon despite the various governments' program. This study was conducted to determine the positive and negative experiences met by the school managers during the implementation and evaluation of the reading program in their respective area.

Study Design: Qualitative- phenomenology.

Place and Duration of Study: Digos City, Davao del Sur, Philippines, School Year 2018-2019.

Methodology: Purposive; Focus-Group Discussions; Validated Researcher-made questionnaire.

Results: Nine themes surfaced from the data analysis; implementation of the program; appointment of reading coordinator; amelioration of reading teachers; initiative of school administration; availability of reading materials; involvement in SIP/AIP creation; variations on identified challenges; heartening situations; satisfaction with co-workers and DepEd personnel; and recommendations for improvement.

Conclusion: Contextualization of the reading program allows learners to connect and interact with the texts. School heads need to be consistent with their policies. They need to involve the teachers concern not only those chosen few because it creates partition and conflict. Teachers' dedication and initiative to the program is essential; however, school managers need to provide relevant materials for its smooth implementation. Further, success of any program depends on the cooperation among the implementers. Unity and understanding among workers are essential in order to achieve the purpose of any endeavor.

Keywords: Implementation; evaluation of reading program; Digos City; Davao del Sur.

1. INTRODUCTION

No educational institution is immune from problems that converge with varied factors that work in and out of the school. This identifies challenges need to be addressed not only by teachers but also by school heads, who constantly manage and foresee the school's situation. There are various concerns assailing the educational system, especially in the public school. These include high dropout rate, quality educational service, management and supervision of the holding capacity, and working in the limited resources. In terms of quality education, the ability to read of students remains the greatest obstacle [1]. This reading problem affects both developing and developed countries. In a research conducted by [2], reading abilities of Yemeni students continues to increase despite government's program. On the other hand, [3] finds that in the United States of America, it is estimated that around 6 million of the 48 million students enrolled have reading problems. As a result, various international organizations initiate intervention programs to address non-reading phenomenon.

In the Philippines, reading problems cut across not only in elementary but also in the secondary level. In the study of [4] he finds that there are some levels of reading comprehensions that were weak with the grade seven students in CARAGA State University, namely interpretative, critical, and application. Moreover, in the Division of Digos City, the presence of learners with reading difficulties remains a problem to all schools. Every school year, numbers of pupils who belong to the non- reader and frustration levels are being reported which lead to the frustration of teachers and school managers. This immense reading issue requires desirable

intervention program coming from the top leaders down to the front liners in order to solve the very root cause of the reading problem.

The Department of Education as the focal agency mandated to provide quality education initiated the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) targeting successful readers by the end of Grade 3 and zeroing the number of non-readers in Grade 4. One of the two attached programs of ECARP is the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PhilIRI) which is an assessment component utilized by teachers for their learners, and the other one is Reading Recovery Program purposely developed for low literacy achievers' pupils [5]. In addition, reading corners in each school with varied reading materials are established to nourish motivation for learners and back-up the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time in each class.

The latter aspiring programs and initiatives of the department to address reading problems are infused with management paradigm. The DepEd provided framework for the governance of school programs or projects like the ECARP. This structure leads to the adoption and implementation of SBM – School-Based Management anchored on the decentralization principle (RA 9155 of 2001). SBM describes the empowerment of the department to the school heads, teachers and other stakeholders, as well as the provision on some resources to the school level on the notion that they know better the root and solution to the problem. In relation to the implementation of School Based ECARP program, the program supervisors, school heads, teachers and school reading coordinator work hand in hand in the implementation and governance of the school reading program. Central, Regional and Division offices provide

trainings for school heads and reading teachers on the management of reading program (DepEd Order No.18, S.2017). Collaborative efforts were done by the implementers to achieve a successful result on the literacy rate of all learners.

However, even though the efforts of the different levels of the department coming from the top down to the school in governing the reading program properly were massive. It is alarming that for the past years the results of the Phil-IRI still present data with learners who need more assistance in performing reading tasks. It's prevalent from each school that teachers echoed their frustrations on having pupils with difficulty on reading and the complexity of the demand to manage well the program. It can be said that this result maybe an indicator that there are gaps with the management and governance of the reading program. The supervision and monitoring on the implementation and evaluation of the reading program are key factors for the success of the management.

Hence, this study is conducted to explore the factors that caused the existence of the gap of managing the reading program and on how the reading program is managed, implemented, and evaluated.

1.1 Research Questions

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the experiences of the participants in managing the implementation and evaluation of the schools' reading program. Particularly, it sought answers to the following relevant information.

1. What were the efforts made by the DepEd to address the reading problem of the learners?
2. What were the positive and negative experiences encountered by the reading coordinators during the implementation and evaluation of the reading program?
3. What were the proposed mechanisms that would help improve the schools' management on the implementation and evaluation of the reading program?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Instrument

This research instrument used in this study was the researchers-made interview guide. These

interview guide questions were based on the research questions and the same was subjected to validation of experts. [6] aver that validation of questionnaire is essential to determine the reliability and concurrent validity of the questions while [7] say it is significant for outcome efficiency. The researchers believe that validation of the interview guides would allow them to modify and re-think for the appropriate questions to be asked to the participants.

2.2 Research Design

This study used the qualitative method particularly the phenomenological approach. Qualitative method is used when investigators want to understand the target audiences' range of behavior and perceptions which drive them [8]. Moreover, [9,10] mention that its focus is to ascertain the essence of individual's experiences; while [11] says qualitative method narrates personal confessions and reflections. Likewise, [12,13] says that in qualitative research a natural setting, multiple inter-active and humanistic methods, emerging of information instead of prefigured, and fundamentally interpretative are considered. [14] also mentions that qualitative method involves 'non-rigid collection of information'. On the other hand, phenomenological approach focuses on the experience-based design [15,16]. It describes how an individual orient himself to live his experience [17,18] and it tackles what is and what to know in this world [19]. It also answers "what really matters?" [20]. Moreover, focus group discussion according to [21] is a better way to put together individuals from similar backgrounds with shared experiences. [22,23,24] also stress that focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when the interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, when time to collect the information is limited, and when individuals are hesitant to provide information. In this study, the personal experiences and stories of the participants in managing and evaluating the reading program of their schools were in focus. The information were culled through the focus group using the validated interview guide questions.

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection procedures follow three stages. Preliminary Stage: During this stage, the

researchers obtained approval to conduct the study through a formal letter from the Digos City Division Superintendent. After the permission was obtained, formal letters of invitations were also sent to the different school reading coordinators for their participation. Attached to the letters were the informed consents and protocols. Data Collection Preparation Stage: At this phase, the researchers validated, revised, and finalized the research questions. After which, the focus group discussion was conducted. In the focus group, the participants were given equal chances to participate in the discussion. The researchers made it sure that there was no manipulation by facilitating the discussion. With permission from the participants, the researchers recorded the entire interview procedures. Also, notes were taken by the researchers in order to assist in accuracy and transcription. After the interviews, the researchers verbatimly transcribed the proceedings. Data Analysis Stage: This phase of the data collection procedure involved the memoing, coding, and thematic analysis. In memoing, the data analyst made a vertical analysis of the information. In vertical analysis, reflections were formed. Together with the diagonal analysis, the data analyst made coding of the information. Then, patterns of responses were done to make themes and core ideas.

After the recorded interview is transcribed, the same is given to a data analyst. The data analyst conducts memoing, coding, and thematic analysis. [25] mention that memoing is used to assist in making the conceptual leaps from the raw data. Additionally, [26,27] point out that memoing is used to make reflections on the data under analysis. On the other hand, coding of the raw is conducted to facilitate the process of reading to create a storyline; to categorize the information into codes; and to clarify and interpret the information [28]. Finally, thematic analysis is used to look for patterns in the responses of the participants [29] and identifying meaning [30]. It is also used to make the information more sophisticated [31] and rigor [32].

2.4 Research Participation

The study was conducted in the public elementary and secondary schools in Digos City Division. Three main public secondary schools namely Ruparan National High School, Kapatagan National High School and Digos City National High School including its extension and

annexes such as Igpit, Matti, Dawis, Aplaya, Soong, Balabag, Binaton, and Napan. Hence, there were 11 reading coordinators who were considered in this study. They were chosen because they held knowledge of the topic under investigation. [33] mentions that purposive sampling needs criteria in choosing the participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presented below are the results of the interview conducted among the reading coordinators of the different schools. In classifying the information obtained, the frequency was considered *General* if the responses have 50% of more recurrence; *Typical* if there is 21-49 percent reactions specified in the interview; and *Variant* if the reactions' occurrence was 20 percent and below [34]. Moreover, [35] mention that for better understanding and presentation of the results, a table may be included although the use of it in qualitative method is still debated.

3.1 Implementation of the Program

Generally, the participants conducted a daily reading session with their non-reader students for 20 minutes to one and half-hour at noon time or late in the afternoon when all lessons were done. Moreover, assigned reading teachers accommodated all the non-reading students and see to it that all are present. Some students find the reading session enjoyable. Relevant to this finding, [36] mention that usually schools make extended day session to address the literacy needs of non-readers and teachers find afterschool instructional time more effective because they have focus and control. [37] added that students need professional supports to solve their reading difficulties. Moreover, [38] points out that direct instruction helps students to comprehend the texts.

Variantly, other participants mention that identifying first the students' reading proficiency is relevant so that appropriate actions may be given. Also, others shared that in their school, they implemented the pair-reading approach where a non-reader was paired with a reader student. By this approach, a good rapport may be developed among students. Other participant also mentioned that they initiated to have reading corner for the students to stay while other teacher shared that some non-reading students hired private reading tutor for help. Further, other participant prepared differentiated reading

materials which appropriately address the reading needs of the students. Sadly, other participant mentioned that few teachers threatened students if the latter cannot read. They were asked to stay behind after the class for remedial reading.

3.2 Appointment of Reading Coordinator

Generally, the participants mentioned that the reading coordinator was informally offered to them by their principals. Out of respect, they had no choice but to accept. Other participants revealed that they were surprised by the

announcement while others were given explanation that everyone was fully loaded and there was nobody to accept the position. Further, some teachers were lucky to be sent for trainings on readings and after which the reading coordinator was given to them. These findings run contrary to the usual procedures in choosing the right person for the job. Reading focal person may be selected based on qualifications because his or her jobs are to improve reading content area [39]; to make reading assessments [40]; to provide training and supervision [41]. Thus, how can all these things be materialized if the person assign has little knowledge of his or her job?

Table 1. Themes and Core Ideas on Reading Program

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Implementation of the program	General	- doing practice reading daily - identifying first the students' reading level
	Variant	- pairing non-reader with reader students - putting reading corner - hiring private reading tutor - classifying differentiated materials - threatening the students
Appointment of reading coordinator	General Typical	- having no choice - lacking of personnel - sending to seminars
Amelioration of reading teachers	General	- participating in reading training
Initiative of school administration	Variant	- involvement mothers - asking donations from PTA - conducting reading after class - accommodating students during vacant time
Availability of reading materials	Typical	- sourcing and downloading from the internet
	Variant	- modifying the reading materials
Involvement in SIP/AIP creation	Typical	- relaying to teachers y school heads - letting teachers involved to know the needs
Variations on identified challenges	Variant	- preparing of the materials - late submission of reports - conflicting ideas on the forms
Heartening situations	General	- persevering non-readers - developing love for reading - admittance of students to other schools
Satisfaction with co-workers	General	- providing necessary support materials - loving the learner
Satisfaction with DepEd personnel	General	- dedicating time for learners - unsatisfying and not extending help
Recommendations for improvement	Typical	- implementing no read no pass
		- undergoing learning difficulty consultation - providing guidelines who should pass

3.3 Amelioration of Reading Teachers

Enhancement of the reading teachers was generally experienced by the participants. They were usually sent to training-seminars or attend the re-echo seminar on the proper conduct of the reading. However, although this was a good development, some teachers raised suggestion that all teachers may be sent to the trainings. Teachers observed that school principals only sent few selected teachers who were their favorite and could deal with. Others who were involved in the reading program were ignored. Hence, this practice resulted to jealousy, conflict, and partition.

3.4 Initiative of School Administration

The participants relayed different initiatives so that their non-reader students may be catered. In one school, it involved mothers who would let their child read in the intended hour. According to [42,43,44] reading practitioners and specialist support the need for increasing parents' involvement to the literacy of their children. Further, other school sought the assistance of the Parent-Teacher Association for the construction of a well-structured reading center. Some other conducted reading class after class in the afternoon while other accommodated non-reading students during the vacant period. [45] avers that affective reading program can be attained if there is cooperation among stakeholders.

3.5 Availability of Reading Materials

Availability paraphernalia is very essential in reading task. It revealed that only few schools received the reading materials from the Department of Education. Typically, the participants stated that with the material support provided by the school heads such as laminating machines, they enthusiastically obtained supplemental reading texts from the internet. Few teachers expressed that they spent personal money when doing the downloading of reading materials. To make the materials sturdy and last long, they laminated vocabulary words. Variantly, other teachers mentioned that they modified the reading materials to address the different types of readers. In relation to these findings, [46] stresses that students are encouraged to read when they see abundance of reading materials available and the reading takes place when students have more access to reading materials. On the other hand, [47] points out the

significance of availability of instructional and learning materials necessary for the implementation of any program. Thus, we could say that in the absence of essential materials for the reading program, then its implementation may be short-lived and ineffective.

3.6 Involvement in SIP/AIP Creation

Although teachers were considered as implementers of the activities in the school, they were involved in the SIP/AIP. Typically, some participants revealed that their school heads were usually present in the SIP/AIP meeting and the results of the SIP/AIP meeting would be relayed to them. Thus, the teachers suggested that involving the teachers might be considered so that needs would be identified and addressed. [48] reiterate that teachers' presence in planning is essential because they are the individuals who determine the structure and organization of the reading program. Likewise, [49] mentions that teachers' instructional planning decision is significant in authentic reading context.

3.7 Variations on Identified Challenges

Interestingly, although the participants had common issue of concern, they identified various challenges. One was in the preparation and production of the reading materials. Some teacher, probably because of tight schedule or bulk of work, didn't show concern. Hence, the reading coordinator could no longer designate someone to re-produce the reading materials. Moreover, some teachers openly expressed blame to the teacher of the lower level why they passed the non-readers. Others showed concern on the late submission of reports while others found confusion on the forms to be filled in. These variations of concerns among teachers from different schools implies that contextualization of the reading program requires adjustment on the part of the implementers. It also indicates that teachers' concerns are not focused on the students' reading difficulties rather on the reading materials and on the decision made. It is worthy to note there is no clinical diagnostic approach to determine the students' difficulties; as a result, the reading program is haphazardly done. [50] reiterate that teachers must consider the need for explicit, systematic reading instructions for struggling readers while exploring the constructivist approach. [33] also points if teachers want a change in the reading skills of students, knowing and learning their needs is urgent. The

participants in their suggestions which are found on the later part of this paper are somehow correct to suggest that proper diagnosis on students' reading disability must be conducted to address the issue.

3.8 Heartening Situations

All teachers would love to see success of the students they handled, especially the struggling ones. Generally, the participants' most delightful experience was when they witnessed non-readers push themselves to their limits. They become interested to read and eager to learn. Thus, improvement was somehow evident. Some teachers were also happy to know that some of their previous non-readers were able to pass the admission exams which required reading skills. These findings coincide with [51] who mentioned that teachers feel their effectiveness if they witness their students' engagement in reading. Similarly, [49] mention that because of students' engagement practices, reading comprehension is achieved. Thus, students' achievement in reading due to their persistent attitude brings affective delight to their mentors.

3.9 Satisfaction with Co-workers

All participants generally agreed that the success of the reading program greatly depend on the cooperation and camaraderie with their colleagues. They all agreed that providing the necessary support materials essentially determined the success of implementation of the program. They also agreed that they needed to show love to their learners and allotting time for them influenced success. This implies that teachers are living the emblem given to them as second parents. [52] say that cooperation among colleagues promotes achievement of common goals; [53,54] on the other hand mention that cooperation correlates with teachers' instructional help and resources.

3.10 Satisfaction with DepEd Personnel

Generally, all participants agreed that they were not satisfied with the DepEd personnel for two reasons. First, they had not extended any effort to address the reading problems and second, they demanded reports to be submitted immediately. Thus, teachers felt frustrated. This implies that DepEd personnel lack the initiative and humanitarian considerations among the front liner teachers who implements the DepEd reading program. This may sound ironic and

paradoxical that the people who steered a program to be implemented are also those who offer little or no support at all. Although teachers were dismayed, they had no courage to complaint the matter to the higher level because of the tedious process or worst it may cost their jobs. The Department of Education (DepEd) made complaint procedures available on websites; unfortunately, those did not include complaints against supervisors. [55] mentions that although teachers' complaint was of public interest, the court usually judged the complaint as purely personal.

3.11 Recommendations for Improvement

Suggestions and comments were important part in any implementation a program. [56] mentions that suggestions 'could improve the conduct of another program'. Typically, the participants suggested to strictly implement the 'no read no pass policy' to stop the blaming game and domino effect. Moreover, others proposed that non-readers needed to undergo learning difficulty consultation to identify the address properly their needs. Lastly, they requested the Department of Education to set clear criteria on who should be passed and failed. Culling from the recommendations, it is observed that the 'no read no pass' of the Department of Education is not observed by teachers. What makes them not abide the policy remains to be found; thus, a mediocrity of situations. Interestingly, evaluation of the Department of Education's personnel in dealing with the teachers should be looked into.

4. CONCLUSION

Contextualization of the reading programs among schools is a good practice. However, the principals' inappropriate procedures of some principals in selecting the reading coordinators does not show fairness. Although teachers are sent to trainings; school principals need to included those who are responsible for the reading program. Likewise, the school heads initiatives in obtaining reading materials is commendable. It implies that for a program to be successfully implemented, school heads should be pro-active and teachers should be dynamic and cooperative. Thus, unity and understanding are essential to achieve the purpose of the endeavor. Moreover, the challenge to make non-readers succeed remains a big hurdle. The findings of this study implicate that a thorough, well-thought, well-funded, and sufficient time preparation may be conceptualized before the

reading program is implemented. The Department of Education may find appropriate time when the reading program can be implemented. Moreover, the department may hire reading specialist, say dyslexia experts to diagnose each students of their reading difficulties. Conducting pre-tests and post-tests may not specifically pin point the problem with the non-reader students. On the other hand, school heads need to follow the protocol in selecting a reading coordinator. Further, school heads may formulate other reading programs in context with their schools' needs. They may propose to have a reading contest for non-readers, which may not only aim to improve the reading proficiency but also the confidence of the students. Likewise, they may also seek the help of private establishments for financial and materials needs. Lastly, the burden of making the students to become a successful reader may not be solely given to the teachers' hands. Parents may also be involved in the implementations of the reading programs because reading does not only involve the students reading capabilities but also their behavioral and emotional aspects which are known to the parents. Thus, hand and hand collaboration between home and school may be considered.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

To address the research ethics, the researchers conducted protocols to handle the confidentiality of the participants' identity and the information gathered. Consent letters were given to the participants to seek for their permissions before the conduct of the interviews. Moreover, the aim and objectives, length of the interviews, and withdrawal clause were also presented. Further, in-depth interviews were conducted in a conducive place to provide ample privacy, little distractions, and comfortable environment to the participants. Also, the participants were assured that the recorded interviews were kept by the researchers for safe-keeping and would be destroyed after two years. The information obtained was used for research purposes only.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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