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Managing every child a reader program: An educational strategy

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Abstract

The study examined how Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) was managed by the Schools Division Office of Tabaco City, focusing on its current status, challenges, strategies, and intervention programs for improving students' reading skills. Studying was important because reading is a basic skill that affects learners' academic performance and overall development. Using a descriptive quantitative design, data were gathered from 41 school heads and reading coordinators through a survey questionnaire and the Phil-IRI results of Grade 4 to Grade 6 learners. The findings showed that many learners were classified as Non-Readers or at the Frustration Level, which showed that literacy problems still existed. The study also found several challenges, such as teachers' heavy workload, limited training, different reading abilities of students, low parent involvement, and inconsistent teaching strategies. To address these issues, a Management Intervention Program was proposed that included differentiated instruction, teacher training, regular monitoring, and collaborative practices to support learners with different reading levels. The study recommended strong leadership, proper coordination, and active participation of teachers, parents, and the community to improve reading skills and ensure the successful implementation of the program. The main objective of this study is to examine how school heads manage Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) in Tabaco City schools and to identify the challenges and strategies in improving students' reading skills. Hence, this study aimed to develop a management intervention program that helped teachers teach reading effectively, supported students at different reading levels, and ensured that all learners became confident and independent readers.

Keywords: Challenges and Opportunities; Open High School Program; Program Design; Program Management; Training Support

1. Introduction

Reading skills were the foundation of all learning and key to the academic success of learners. However, a major challenge in education was the low level of reading skills, as many elementary students struggled to read and understand what they read. This deficiency adversely affected their performance in various subjects, hindering their overall development. In line with this, the Department of Education had aimed to make every Filipino child a reader at their own level through the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP).

The implementation of ECARP and other reading programs notwithstanding, data revealed that the goal of making every child a proficient reader had remained elusive. According to the 2024 Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) survey, 1 in 5 Filipinos aged 10-64 had difficulty understanding what they read. Furthermore, the division consolidated results of PhilIRI had shown that only 1,216 (13%) of 9,056 Grade 4-6 learners were categorized as independent readers, highlighting a very poor reading and comprehension level. This led to a pressing need to examine the management of ECARP, as the way school heads had implemented the program had a significant bearing on students' reading development.

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The investigation was prompted by the fact that ECARP's objectives had not been fully realized, necessitating an urgent review of the program's management. As a flagship initiative of the DepEd, ECARP had been designed to provide a comprehensive approach to reading instruction, catering to learners at various stages of their reading development. The program's emphasis on early intervention and targeted support had been intended to equip students with the foundational skills necessary for academic success. Hence, this study was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of ECARP and provide recommendations to enhance its implementation, helping students become proficient readers.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to examine the management of Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) in the Schools Division of Tabaco City. The research design had provided a clear plan for investigating the problem, while the methodology had outlined the specific procedures and tools used to collect and analyze data. A quantitative approach was adopted as it had facilitated the systematic collection of numerical data, thereby providing an objective understanding of the prevailing condition of ECARP, the challenges encountered by school administrators, and the strategies that were being implemented. The primary data collection instrument, proving apt for this study as it efficiently gathered information from multiple respondents across various schools and ensured consistency in the questions posed. The participants comprised 41 school heads and reading coordinators from the four districts of Tabaco City: South, North, East, and West. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents directly involved in ECARP implementation, thereby ensuring the relevance and reliability of the collected data.

The survey questionnaire, developed by the researcher based on a review of pertinent literature and existing studies on reading programs, was carefully crafted to measure the implementation of ECARP, identify teacher- and administration-related challenges, and evaluate strategies such as reading interventions and coaching. To ensure clarity and effectiveness, the questionnaire was pretested with a small group of school heads and reading coordinators prior to distribution to all respondents.

Data collection involved distributing the questionnaires to selected participants, collecting responses, and organizing the results for analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using weighted mean and grand weighted mean, enabling the researcher to determine the extent of challenges, the effectiveness of administrative strategies, and the overall condition of ECARP. The data were interpreted with the guidance of a statistician to ensure accuracy, credibility, and meaningful conclusions. Hence, this research design and methodology had provided a structured and reliable approach to understanding how ECARP was managed, the challenges faced, and the strategies that supported effective reading instruction for elementary learners.

3. Materials

Survey Questionnaires for School administrators and Reading Coordinator, Managing Every Child a Reader Program: An Educational Strategy

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the data, the findings of the study revealed the following:

4.1. Current Condition of Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP)

Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) was a national literacy program in the Philippines aimed at making every child a reader by Grade 3. Implemented by the DepEd, ECARP focused on developing teaching materials, training teachers, and implementing reading assessments and interventions (DepEd, 2023). Notably, previous studies had shown mixed results regarding ECARP's effectiveness, highlighting the need for further examination. A study by Garcia et al. (2025) found that ECARP had not been effective in improving reading skills among students in a Bulacan public school, citing lack of monitoring and follow-through by the administration as a major issue. Conversely, other studies had highlighted the program's potential in improving reading skills, particularly when implemented with fidelity (Reyes, 2022; Santos, 2024). ECARP's components included the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), a reading proficiency assessment tool (DepEd, 2023); Reading Recovery (RR), a reading intervention (Smith, 2020); and Philippine Word List in English (PWLE), a tool for building and assessing vocabulary development (Tan, 2021). In light of these components, schools had considered addressing identified challenges to enhance ECARP's effectiveness, such as providing more resources and training for teachers (Garcia et al., 2025; Reyes, 2022). Moreover, administrators and teachers had rated the implementation of ECARP in their schools, providing valuable insights into the program's strengths and weaknesses.

The analysis revealed that teacher-related challenges, administrative support and resources, and reading interventions, with their respective weighted means (WM) and verbal interpretations (VI), were critical aspects of ECARP implementation. Furthermore, coaching and mentoring practices were utilized to support teachers and enhance reading instruction. Collectively, these findings underscored the strengths and challenges of ECARP, illustrating how schools had planned and allocated resources, provided professional development and mentoring for teachers, and implemented strategies to augment teaching and improve students' reading proficiency. The findings further revealed the consolidated results of the Phil-IRI for Grade 4 to Grade 6 learners in the School Division of Tabaco City for SY 2024-2025. A total of 9,056 learners were assessed to determine their reading abilities. The data indicated that a significant number of learners had struggled with reading, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. Across all grade levels, 1,196 learners were classified as non-readers, suggesting that they were not yet able to read at the most basic level. The largest group fell under the instructional level, with 4,157 learners, signifying that these students could read with guidance but still required support to read independently. Finally, the results underscored the need for targeted reading interventions and support programs like ECARP. Strengthening reading instruction, providing additional learning materials, and offering remedial support could have helped reduce the number of non-readers and frustration-level learners while increasing the number of independent readers. Consequently, the findings emphasized the importance of monitoring students' reading progress to ensure that all learners developed the skills requisite for academic success.

4.2. Challenges Faced by School Administrators in Managing Literacy Programs

School administrators had faced numerous challenges in managing literacy programs for elementary pupils, including teacher-related, administrative support, and resource challenges. Specifically, teachers had often lacked qualifications and training in literacy education, and had had limited access to professional development opportunities (Olabiya, 2025; Feng et al., 2025). Consequently, this had hindered their ability to effectively teach literacy skills, leading to poor student outcomes. Furthermore, administrative support had also been lacking, with inadequate leadership, insufficient resources, and limited funding (Feng et al., 2025; Kilag et al., 2024). As a result, there had been a lack of direction and inadequate allocation of resources, further exacerbating the challenges faced by teachers.

In addition to these challenges, schools had struggled with limited access to quality literacy resources, inadequate infrastructure, and poor parental involvement (Santillan, 2023; Olabiya, 2025; Kilag et al., 2024). These challenges had collectively contributed to a challenging environment for teaching and learning literacy skills, ultimately affecting student literacy outcomes. Notably, the teacher-related challenges had been encountered in the implementation of the reading program, which was a critical aspect of literacy education. The findings had revealed that the weighted mean (WM) and verbal interpretation (VI) of each indicator had been based on the responses of the respondents. The data had indicated that teachers had experienced several challenges, as reflected in the general weighted mean (GWM) of 4.70, which had been interpreted as Evident Challenges. Specifically, the highest ratings had been heavy workload of teachers and high student absenteeism and low parental involvement, both with a weighted mean of 4.95, which had been interpreted as evident challenges. This had shown that teachers had been greatly affected by their multiple tasks and responsibilities, as well as by learners' frequent absences and limited support from parents. In contrast, the lowest rating had been too many reading activities or programs from the regional and division office, with a weighted mean of 4.39, although it had still been interpreted as an evident challenge.

Furthermore, the analysis had revealed that the teachers had faced significant difficulties in implementing reading instruction due to heavy workload, diverse learner needs, insufficient training, and limited parental involvement. These challenges had likely affected the effectiveness of reading instruction and the overall implementation of the program. Therefore, the results had suggested that support systems for teachers and stronger collaboration with parents and stakeholders had been necessary to improve program implementation. In line with DepEd policies, schools had been encouraged to provide continuous professional development, strengthen stakeholder involvement, and implement support mechanisms to ensure effective training programs. Moreover, the general weighted mean of 4.70 had indicated that teacher related challenges had been evident in the program's implementation. This had suggested that stronger support, additional training opportunities, and collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, and school administrators had been needed to ensure successful reading instruction. Additionally, the findings had revealed that monitoring and technical assistance from school heads and supervisors had obtained the lowest mean of 4.17, indicating that this area had been very challenged. Consequently, administrative support and resources had played a significant role in the success of reading programs, and challenges related to instructional materials, technology, digital resources, and learning facilities had persisted.

In light of these findings, strengthening resource allocation, improving access to digital tools, and enhancing administrative support could have enhanced the implementation of reading interventions and supported learners'

literacy development. Finally, addressing these challenges would have required a concerted effort from teachers, administrators, parents, and policymakers to ensure that literacy programs were effective and sustainable.

4.3. Administrative Strategies in Enhancing Literacy Programs

Administrative strategies had played a pivotal role in shaping the literacy landscape of elementary education, particularly in the realm of reading intervention and coaching. School administrators had implemented various strategies to enhance literacy programs, aiming to equip elementary pupils with the reading skills necessary for academic success (Smith, 2015; Garcia, 2020). These strategies had been multifaceted, encompassing reading intervention, coaching, and mentoring, all of which had been crucial in addressing the diverse needs of young learners. Furthermore, effective administrative strategies had been linked to improved reading outcomes, with administrators serving as catalysts for teacher professional development, resource allocation, and community engagement (Johnson, 2018; Lee, 2022).

Consequently, the administrative strategies employed in schools had been essential in identifying best practices that could be scaled up to support literacy initiatives nationwide. The DepEd had emphasized the importance of literacy programs, with administrators taking the lead in implementing reading interventions that catered to the needs of elementary pupils (DepEd, 2020; Reyes, 2025). In addition to these efforts, the reading interventions implemented in schools had been examined, revealing the weighted mean (WM) and verbal interpretation (VI) based on the responses of the participants, and providing an overview of how schools had planned, supported, and allocated resources for literacy programs.

The data had shown that allocating resources for literacy materials had received the highest rating (WM 4.76), while providing continuous professional development and instructional support for teachers had received the lowest rating (WM 4.71, VE), though all indicators had been rated as Very Evident, with a General Weighted Mean of 4.73 (VE). These results had suggested that reading interventions had been widely implemented and had been clearly visible in schools, with resource allocation being the strongest aspect, reflecting schools' priority in providing books and learning materials for students. Moreover, continuous professional development, although slightly lower, had remained important, indicating that schools had recognized the need to support and train teachers, even if improvements or more frequent sessions had been needed. Furthermore, the coaching and mentoring indicators had highlighted the efforts made to support teachers in improving reading instruction. The overall Grand Weighted Mean (GWM) of 4.72 had indicated that coaching and mentoring practices had been Very Evident (VE) in the implementation of the reading program. Notably, "Build trust through open, non-judgmental communication" had received the highest weighted mean of 4.78, which had been interpreted as Very Evident. This had suggested that school administrators and coaches had effectively established a supportive and trusting environment, allowing teachers to openly discuss challenges and receive guidance.

Finally, the results had shown that reading interventions had been strongly evident in schools, with planning and resources being most emphasized, while teacher support had continued to be an area for improvement, suggesting that schools had been committed to enhancing literacy and had actively implemented strategies to strengthen students' reading skills. Consequently, the coaching and mentoring efforts had likely contributed to improved teacher capacity and, ultimately, enhanced reading instruction. Overall, the Very Evident rating across all indicators had highlighted the overall effectiveness of the coaching and mentoring strategies in supporting teachers and promoting reading instruction.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were deduced:

- Reading interventions were effectively implemented in schools, prioritizing resource allocation for literacy materials.
- Coaching and mentoring practices supported teachers, fostering collaboration and improving reading instruction.
- Administrative strategies drove literacy programs, focusing on teacher development, resources, and community engagement, ultimately enhancing reading outcomes.
- The collaborative efforts of administrators, teachers, and the community played a significant role in promoting literacy and improving reading skills among elementary pupils.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were offered:

- Schools should continue to prioritize resource allocation for literacy materials, ensuring that students have access to diverse and engaging reading resources.
- Coaching and mentoring programs should be sustained and expanded to support teachers in developing effective reading instruction strategies.
- Administrators should maintain a focus on teacher development, providing opportunities for professional growth and collaboration to enhance reading instruction.
- Community engagement and partnerships should be strengthened to promote literacy and provide additional support for reading initiatives in schools

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