

Assessment of the Reading Curriculum in Basic Education in the Philippines Context

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the reading curriculum in Philippine basic education. It specifically focused on determining the reading competencies, the approaches in reading instruction and assessments before and during COVID-19, and the alignment of the written and intended to the implemented and assessed curriculum. This qualitative research employed the following data gathering techniques: document analysis, online focus group discussion, and constructive alignment checklist. Findings reveal that the basic education curriculum includes reading competencies categorized into text processing and task management competencies. In terms of the reading levels, it was found that there are more instructional readers than independent readers in basic education. Further, a number of students from different year levels, including in the secondary level, were also found to be non-readers. Regarding the approaches to reading instruction and assessment, the approaches were more extensive, varied, and teacher-directed before the COVID-19 pandemic involving class and group dynamics, while in the new normal, teachers employed self-paced/independent reading using printed modules and a few digital reading resources. Finally, the curriculum assessment reveals that there is generally a low alignment between the written, assessed, and delivered curriculum in reading. This implies that there are learning outcomes specified in the K-12 curriculum guide that have not been processed and assessed by teachers.

Keywords: reading curriculum; constructive alignment; reading competencies; basic education; COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

Education (DepED). It is a key component in the Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum of the K to 12 Enhanced Basic Education. The curriculum ensures that processes and products of learning foster and contribute actively to the achievement of the basic education program goals; competencies are spiraled across the curriculum and year levels; and content includes print and electronic texts that are age, context, and culture appropriate (K to 12 English Curriculum Guide, 2013).

In a reading curriculum, the teaching/learning activities are designed to ensure the students' ability to engage in an active, purposeful, and functional application of reading knowledge, skills, and strategies in a range of situations for various purposes. Relative to this requirement, DepEd has been persistent in introducing various reading programs in all levels of basic education to ensure that every Filipino child learns how to read. However, the reading competence and literacy rate continues to plunge as evidenced by the reading assessment results like the Program for International Students Assessment (PISA, 2019), National Achievement Test (NAT), and Phil-IRI. The OECD (2018) findings indicate that only 1 out of 5 Filipino students (19.4%) achieved at least the minimum proficiency level (Level 2) in Overall Reading Literacy.

Given this pressing issue, the study assessed the reading curriculum in basic education to determine whether there is a constructive alignment in terms of written (learning outcomes in the curriculum guide), implemented (teaching/learning activities) and assessed (tests) curricula.

Literature review

Most of the studies conducted on reading education focused on the reading deficiencies of learners, practices of teachers in teaching reading, and effectiveness of reading interventions. Still, there is a paucity of holistically assessing the reading curriculum.

Mudzielwana (2017) explored how teachers teach reading comprehension to Grade 3 learners who speak Tshivenda. The study aimed to develop a theoretical framework for teaching reading comprehension from the body of literature. He was able to identify and develop a five-phase framework, which includes creating awareness of the reading comprehension challenge, strategic planning, teaching of reading comprehension strategies, self-monitoring and feedback, and self-efficacy. He found out that these phases are all interdependent in each other and that they create a continuous cycle. The researcher recommended, therefore that parents, principals, heads of departments, and teachers need to be actively involved in the education of the learners. The teachers were identified to have the most crucial role in motivating, creating an atmosphere conducive to reading, and developing skills, knowledge, and self-regulatory strategies to support learners until they can independently read.

Another study was conducted by Potacio (2013) to describe the reading practices in public and high-achieving Grade 6 English Classes in the Philippines. The study utilized a four-resource model in describing the different roles that students assume in a reading class. The findings reveal that students are mainly code breakers and text users and have limited opportunities to assume other roles that are expected from them in reading classes. This case study found out that the culture of reading in the classroom gives more emphasis to oral reading performance rather than comprehension. Although this cannot be generalized given the limitations of the number of cases, this study opens the doors for investigations of this kind to affirm or refute the reading culture in the Philippines, putting more emphasis on oral reading rather than on reading comprehension.

In 2017, Balinas, Rodriguez, Santillan, and Valencia all from the Angeles University Foundation College of Education (AUF-CED) Angeles City, Pampanga Philippines, used a

qualitative reading inventory (QRI-5) by Leslie and Cladwell (2011) to assess their remedial reading program implemented in their partner community as a form of an extension program. The QRI-5 was administered to 267 pupil-respondents' categorized under the frustration level as indicated by difficulty in decoding, word recognition, miscues, slow reading speed, and poor comprehension. The finding revealed that their reading intervention program has a favorable impact as evident in the pre-test and post-test significant difference in scores of the pupils. However, lack of significant differences in two areas such as miscues committed by the pupils and the reading speed were revealed in the findings. These can be attributed to the short-lived characteristic of the remedial program and the pupil's absenteeism. The researchers, therefore, recommended that the project has to be sustained and improved. Also, well-planned and implemented trainings will be provided to have a greater impact on the clientele in the community.

Framework of the study

The main theoretical underpinning of this study is the model constructed by Biggs (2003) called the Curriculum Constructive Alignment, which he defines as coherence between assessment, teaching strategies, and intended learning outcomes in an educational program. The model requires alignment between the three key areas of the curriculum, namely, the intended learning outcomes, what the student does to learn, and how the student is assessed. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

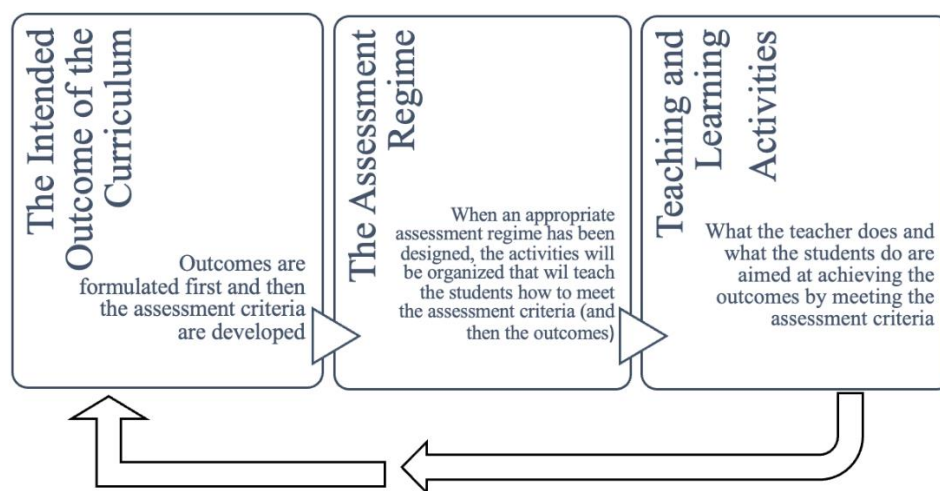


Figure 1. Basic model of an aligned curriculum

Constructive alignment starts with the notion that learners construct their learning through relevant learning activities. The teacher's job is to create an environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. The key is that all components in the teaching system - the curriculum and its intended outcomes, the teaching methods used, the assessment tasks - are aligned. All are tuned to learning activities addressed in the desired learning outcomes (Biggs, 2003).

'Constructive alignment' has two aspects. The 'constructive' aspect refers to the idea that students construct meaning through relevant learning activities. Meaning is not something imparted or transmitted from teacher to learner but is something learners have to create for themselves. The 'alignment' aspect refers to what the teacher does to set up a learning environment

that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. The key is that the components in the teaching system, especially the teaching methods used and the assessment tasks, are aligned with the learning activities assumed in the intended outcomes.

Moreover, this study is also based on Gaith's (2018) reading comprehension instructional framework, which consists of the following components: emergent literacy, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical complexities, background knowledge, metacognitive awareness and strategies, and critical reading. This model underscores that emergent literacy, fluency, and vocabulary acquisition are essential in preparing meaning-centered and proficient readers. These foundations of literacy are the prerequisites of effective and efficient comprehension of the literal meaning of written discourse, reading between the lines to get implied meaning, evaluating what is read, solving problems, and creating new products based on what is read.

Additionally, the reading model of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development or OECD (2019) also served as anchorage of this study. It acknowledges the goal-driven, critical and intertextual nature of reading. This model has two broad categories of reading processes, namely text processing and task management. Text processing comprises reading competencies classified into reading fluently, locating information, understanding, and evaluating and reflecting. On the other hand, task management includes metacognitive competencies of setting goals for reading and monitoring and regulating reading. The same categories were used in the 2018 cycle of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in which reading is one of the major domains of assessment.

Research objectives

1. Identify the target reading competencies across levels in basic education.
2. Determine the reading levels of basic education students based on assessment results.
3. Ascertain the approaches in reading instruction and assessments utilized by teachers in basic education before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Assess the constructive alignment in reading comprehension instruction between:
 - 4.1. Written and implemented curriculum; and
 - 4.2. Implemented and assessed curriculum

Research method

This study utilized the qualitative research design in assessing the alignment of the reading curriculum in all levels of basic education. This study focused on determining the reading competencies, the approaches in reading instruction and assessments before and during COVID-19, and the alignment of the written and intended to the implemented and assessed curriculum. This study was conducted among the randomly selected schools in the City Divisions of Malaybalay and Valencia in the province of Bukidnon, Philippines. The documents which were analyzed were taken from the schools included in this study. Table 1 shows the list of schools from the two city divisions in Bukidnon.

Table 1. List of elementary and secondary schools in the city divisions of Malaybalay and Valencia as research locale

City Division of Malaybalay		City Division of Valencia	
Secondary Schools	Elementary Schools	Secondary Schools	Elementary Schools
Silae NHS	Kibalabag ES	Lilingayon NHS	Lilingayon ES
San Martin Agro-Industrial NHS	San Martin ES	Tongantongan NHS	Tongtongan ES

Managok NHS		Catumbalon NHS	Catumbalon ES
Lalawan NHS	Lalawan ES	Concepcion NHS	Concepcion ES
Miglamín NHS	Miglamín ES	Banlag Integrated School	Banlag Integrated School
Malaybalay City National Science HS	Aglayan CS	Dagatkidavao IS	Dagatkidavao IS
Bangcud National High School	Bangcud CS	Lourdes IS	Lourdes IS
Casisang NHS	Airport Village ES		
Bukidnon NHS	Sumpong CS		
Dalwangan NHS	Dalwangan ES		
Can-ayan IS	Can-ayan IS		
Kalasungay NHS	Kalasungay CS		
St. Peter NHS	St. PES		

This study employed the following data gathering techniques: document analysis, online focus group discussion, and constructive alignment checklist. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing documents-both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) material (Bowenn, 2009). This type of analysis requires that the data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this study, the researchers analyzed the following documents: The K to 12 Curriculum Guide, PHILIRI and EGRA results, Lesson Guides, and records of Class Observations utilized and reported by DepEd teachers in 2017 and in 2018.

Additionally, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also employed in this study to determine the reading approaches of language teachers in the field. The FGD is an interactive discussion between six to eight pre-selected participants (Hennink, 2014), which in this study are the language teachers teaching reading at basic education level from elementary to the senior high school level. The researchers developed FGD questions focusing mainly on practices of basic education teachers in teaching reading before and during Covid 19. The researchers invited via virtual FGD the randomly selected English teachers from the different schools selected in this study. The researchers selected one teacher of English per grade and year level in the basic education, namely kindergarten, pre-primary, primary, junior high school, and senior high school.

Moreover, a researcher-made constructive alignment checklist for reading comprehension instruction was developed to generate the data that assessed the constructive alignment in reading comprehension instruction between the written and implemented curriculum and the implemented and assessed curriculum.

Statement of ethical consideration

To ensure that proper ethical consideration was followed, the researchers asked permission and approval from the Schools Division Superintendents of Malaybalay and Valencia to conduct the study. After the approval, the researchers sought informed consent from the participants who were invited to join the online FGD. The informed consent specified the statement of assurance for the participants' voluntary participation in the study and their withdrawal from participation when they feel a breach of their privacy. Also, the participants were assured of the anonymity of their identity and that their responses were solely used for this study.

Results and discussion

Reading competencies in the K to 12 curriculum

Table 1 shows the reading competencies in the K to 12 curriculum across grade levels as categorized following Ghaith (2018) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development or OECD's (2018) models. Findings reveal 392 reading competencies categorized into text processing and task management skills.

Table 1. Reading competencies in the K to 12 curriculum

Categories of Reading Competencies	Frequency	%	Rank
TEXT PROCESSING			
Emergent Literacy	59	15.08	3
Reading Fluency	65	16.62	2
Vocabulary Learning	33	8.44	6
Locating information		7.14	
Accessing and retrieving information	28		7
Searching for and selecting relevant text.	14	3.58	9
Understanding		2.81	
Acquiring a representation of the literal meaning of a text	11		10
Constructing an integrated text representation	71	18.16	1
Evaluating and Reflecting			
Assessing quality and credibility.	22	5.63	8
Reflecting on content and form.	38	9.72	5
Detecting and handling conflict.	3	0.77	12
TASK MANAGEMENT			
Setting up goals and plans	6	1.53	11
Monitoring progress and self-regulating goals and strategies throughout the activity	41	10.49	4
Total	392	100	

Further, among the 12 categories, constructing an integrated text representation obtained the highest frequency. This competency requires learners to understand texts by making inferences from individual sentences to the entire passage. This means that the highest percentage of the reading competencies in the basic education curriculum requires learners to make inferences from the level of individual sentences to the entire passage. Below are the examples of competencies under this category:

EN2RCIVd-2.8: Infer/predict outcomes

EN4RC-IId-29 : Infer traits and feelings of characters based on what they say or do in a story read

EN9RC-Ic-13.2: Take note of sequence signals or connectors to determine patterns of idea development given in a text

EN11/12RWS-IIIa-1: Describe a written text as connected discourse

Frame 1

The competency coded as EN2RCIVd-2.8 is from the primary level, specifically Grade 2, while the second example with the code EN4RC-IId-29 comes from the intermediate level, particularly Grade 4. The other two examples, EN9RC-Ic-13.2 and EN11/12RWS-IIIa-1, are from junior high school and senior high school, respectively. These competencies require the readers

to make various types of inferences to understand anaphoric constructions of sentences and more complex coherence relationships. According to van den Broek, Ridsen, and Husebye-Hartmann (1995), inferences entail determining the connection of the different portions of the text or linking the text to the question statement. They added that making inference requires identifying implicit main idea the production of inferences is also needed in tasks where the reader must identify the implicit main idea of a given passage to produce a summary or a title for the passage.

Then, reading fluency follows as the second in rank. According to Grabe (2010), fluency development is an essential component of a well-developed reading curriculum. There is a positive link between fluency and reading comprehension ability (Shiotsu, 2009). However, Block and Pressley (2002) contend that while fluent reading is an essential component of skilled reading, this is not an end in itself. The reading curriculum has to emphasize decoding meaning. For Smith (2006), an overemphasis on words, letters, and sounds mislead the development of comprehension, which is the ultimate primary goal of reading. This implies that an effective reading curriculum is an integration of foundational competencies such as emergent literacy, fluency, and vocabulary learning. The reading curriculum should also incorporate critical reading competencies that enable learners to make sound and intelligent decisions based on what is read. Additionally, metacognitive reading competencies, which involve monitoring of comprehension as well as assessing the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, and bias, are also essential components of an ideal reading curriculum (Ghaith, 2018). These components of the reading curriculum have to be in the right proportion.

The finding further discloses that detecting and handling conflict is one of the least emphasized reading competencies in the K to 12 curriculum. This competency under evaluating and reflecting category is only present in grades 7, 8, and 10. This result implies a reading instruction that provides limited attention on developing the learners' abilities to detect contradictory views and to deal with conflicting ideas. This finding is contrary to the assertion of Ghaith (2018) that the reading curriculum has to promote, at all levels of schooling, critical reading competence by encouraging learners to adopt a critical stance while reading.

Reading levels of students in basic education

The tables and figures that follow present the reading levels of students in the basic education in the City Division of Malaybalay and Valencia in the Province of Bukidnon based on the 2017 and 2018 Philippine Individual Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) report from the selected schools in the two divisions. Phil-IRI is an initiative of the Bureau of Learning Delivery, Department of Education (DepEd) that directly addresses its thrust to make every Filipino child a reader. It was created to provide classroom teachers a tool for measuring and describing the learners' reading performance (DepEd, 2018).

Table 2 shows the reading levels of the students from Grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 in the City Division of Valencia, Bukidnon, based on the 2017-2018 results of the Phil-IRI and Division-initiated reading assessment post-test. The results show that majority of the students from the four grade levels in the basic education in the City Division of Valencia are instructional readers. The instructional level is described by Flippo (2014) in Phil-IRI Manual (2018) as the level which readers profit the most from teacher-directed instruction in reading. Generally, direct instruction refers to the structured, sequenced, and teacher-led instructional approach (Lombardi, 2013) in reading.

Table 2. Reading levels of students in the basic education by schools in the city division of Valencia.

School	Grade Level	Independent		Instructional		Frustration		Non-Reader		TOTAL student population by Grade Level
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
Elementary School A	Grade 4	34	40.48	28	33.33	22	26.19	0	0.00	84
	Grade 6	33	37.08	45	50.56	11	12.4	0	0.00	89
Secondary School A	Grade 8	12	7.69	102	65.38	42	26.92	0	0.00	156
	Grade 10	43	31.62	37	27.21	56	41.18	0	0.00	136
Elementary School B	Grade 4	4	8.70	33	71.74	8	17.39	1	2.17	46
	Grade 6	17	28.33	28	46.67	15	25.0	0	0.00	60
Secondary School B	Grade 8	6	12.24	18	36.73	25	51.02	0	0.00	49
	Grade 10	4	13.33	8	26.67	18	60.00	0	0.00	30
Elementary School C	Grade 4	20	27.78	27	37.50	25	34.72	0	0.00	72
	Grade 6	3	5.17	9	15.52	46	79.3	0	0.00	58
Secondary School C	Grade 8	13	13.54	31	32.29	52	54.17	0	0.00	96
	Grade 10	16	34.04	28	59.57	3	6.38	0	0.00	47
Elementary School D	Grade 4	59	72.84	15	18.52	7	8.64	0	0.00	81
	Grade 6	58	60.42	32	33.33	6	6.3	0	0.00	96
Secondary School D	Grade 8	4	1.62	85	34.41	158	63.97	0	0.00	247
	Grade 10	46	18.04	95	37.25	114	44.71	0	0.00	255
Elementary School E	Grade 4	34	37.36	33	36.26	24	26.37	0	0.00	91
	Grade 6	27	34.18	41	51.90	11	13.9	0	0.00	79
Secondary School E	Grade 8	9	7.26	19	15.32	96	77.42	0	0.00	124
	Grade 10	17	17.00	27	27.00	56	56.00	0	0.00	100
Elementary School F	Grade 4	8	14.04	25	43.86	23	40.35	1	1.75	57
	Grade 6	15	26.79	30	53.57	11	19.6	0	0.00	56
Secondary School F	Grade 8	20	26.32	44	57.89	12	15.79	0	0.00	76
	Grade 10	15	35.71	27	64.29	0	0.00	0	0.00	42
Elementary School G	Grade 4	20	21.51	43	46.24	30	32.26	0	0.00	93
	Grade 6	17	14.05	63	52.07	41	33.9	0	0.00	121
Secondary School G	Grade 8	20	13.70	98	67.12	27	18.49	1	0.68	146
	Grade 10	17	18.48	61	66.30	14	15.22	0	0.00	92

Table 3 shows the overall results of the students' reading levels from the seven sampled elementary and secondary schools in the City Division of Valencia, Bukidnon, during the SY 2017-2018. The results show that an average of 40% of students in all levels are instructional readers. In comparison, a negligible percentage of non-readers can be noted with 0.38% and 0.11% in Grades 4 and 8, respectively. Significantly, Grade 8 students have the lowest number of independent readers, which is only around 9% of the total population sampled from the seven secondary schools. This means that only very few Grade 8 students are at the level where they could function independently with almost perfect reading and excellent comprehension (Flipppo, 2014 in Phil-IRI Manual 2018).

Table 3. Summary table of reading levels of students in the basic education in the city division of Valencia

Grade Level	Independent		Instructional		Frustration		Non-Reader		Total
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
Grade 4	179	34.16	204	38.93	139	26.53	2	0.38	524
Grade 6	170	30.41	248	44.36	141	25.2	0	0.00	559
Grade 8	84	9.40	397	44.41	412	46.09	1	0.11	894
Grade 10	158	22.51	283	40.31	261	37.18	0	0.00	702
TOTAL	591	22.06	1132	42.25	953	35.57	3	0.11	2679

Figure 1 shows the graphical representation of the reading levels of the students from the Division of Valencia City, Bukidnon across the four grade levels from the seven sampled schools.

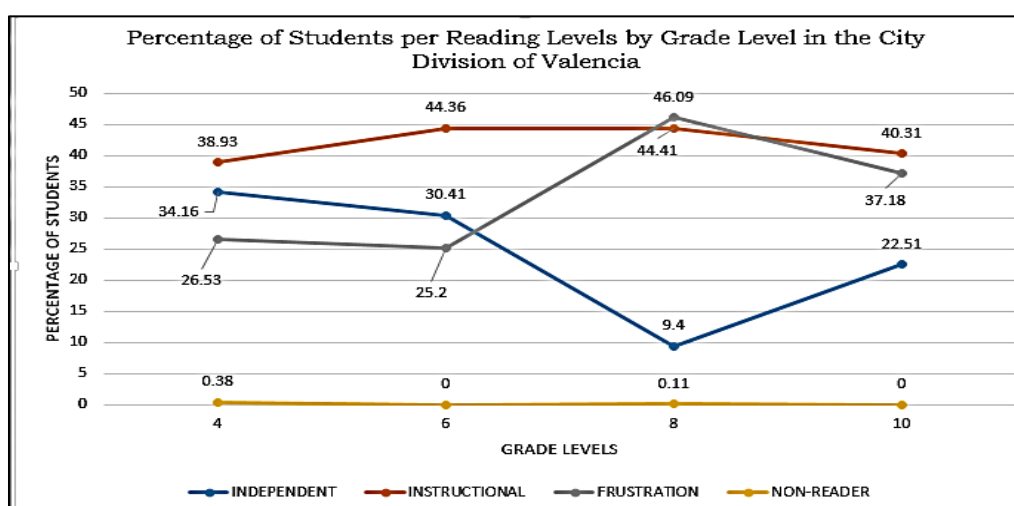


Figure 1. Percentage of students per reading levels by grade level in the city divisions of Valencia

Looking at the trend of the reading levels of students across the four grade levels in basic education, the instructional readers in the red line are more consistent in terms of the percentage of students in the four grade levels as compared to other types of readers. This means that almost 50% percent of the student population in Grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 are readers who could read but with the close supervision and assistance of their teacher. The independent readers are on the average of 32% in Grades 4 and 6, while these types of readers are significantly lower in Grades 8 and 10. This shows that there are only a few students with outstanding excellent comprehension in the secondary level, more so in Grade 8. This implies that most of the Grade 8 students still need teacher assistance in the areas of reading.

Moreover, the frustration readers, as shown in the gray line, are as much as the independent readers. This means that many of the students in basic education find reading materials so difficult that they could not successfully respond to them (Flippo, 2014). These types of readers would be crucial at the secondary level because, at this stage in education, the students are expected to read independently to be successful in the more complex content ahead of them. After all, reading literacy is a foundation for achievement in other subject areas within the educational system (OECD, 2018).

Table 4 shows the reading levels of Grades 4, 6, 8 and 10 from the fourteen sampled schools in the City Division of Malaybalay, Bukidnon, as a result of the 2018 Phil-IRI. It can be seen in the table that there are secondary schools from the City Division of Malaybalay with missing values. This is because Phil-IRI is not compulsory in the secondary level in the previous years; hence, the administration of this reading assessment is only up to the schools in the division. Nevertheless, the results show that there is a significantly higher number of independent readers in the division compared to other types of readers. Moreover, a substantial number of independent readers are noted in the secondary levels with a trend of over 50% of the student population both in Grades 8 and 10.

Table 4. Reading Levels of Students in the Basic Education by Schools in the City Division of Malaybalay

School	Grade Level	Independent		Instructional		Frustration		Non-Reader		TOTAL student population by Grade Level
		<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
Elementary School A	Grade 4	47	51.65	30	32.97	14	15.38	0	0.00	91
	Grade 6	28	29.79	61	64.89	5	5.32	0	0.00	94
Secondary School A	Grade 8	10	32.26	19	61.29	2	6.45	0	0.00	31
	Grade 10									
Elementary School B	Grade 4	55	36.91	67	44.97	27	18.12	0	0.00	149
	Grade 6	97	71.85	36	26.67	2	1.48	0	0.00	135
Secondary School B	Grade 8	22	18.49	77	64.71	20	16.81	0	0.00	119
	Grade 10	46	46.94	30	30.61	22	22.45	0	0.00	98
Elementary School C	Grade 4	14	46.67	11	36.67	5	16.67	0	0.00	30
	Grade 6	17	36.96	23	50.00	6	13.04	0	0.00	46
Secondary School C	Grade 8	174	92.55	7	3.72	7	3.72	0	0.00	188
	Grade 10	118	91.47	5	3.876	6	4.651	0	0.00	129
Elementary School D	Grade 4	0	0.00	36	67.92	17	32.08	0	0.00	53
	Grade 6	17	32.08	25	47.17	11	20.75	0	0.00	53
Secondary School D	Grade 8									
	Grade 10									
Elementary School E	Grade 4	86	53.42	62	38.51	13	8.07	0	0.00	161
	Grade 6	74	42.05	68	38.64	34	19.32	0	0.00	176
Secondary School E	Grade 8	30	51.72	20	34.48	8	13.79	0	0.00	58
	Grade 10									
Elementary School F	Grade 4	70	35.71	97	49.49	29	14.80	0	0.00	196
	Grade 6	100	42.92	94	40.34	39	16.74	0	0.00	233
Secondary School F	Grade 8									
	Grade 10									
Elementary School G	Grade 4	48	32.21	85	57.05	16	10.74	0	0.00	149
	Grade 6	21	12.07	68	39.08	85	48.85	0	0.00	174
Secondary School G	Grade 8									
	Grade 10									
	Grade 4	75	48.08	64	41.03	17	10.90	0	0.00	156

School	Grade Level	Independent		Instructional		Frustration		Non-Reader		TOTAL student population by Grade Level
		<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
Elementary School H	Grade 6	81	38.94	85	40.87	42	20.19	0	0.00	208
Secondary School H	Grade 8	415	87.92	44	9.32	13	2.75	0	0.00	472
	Grade 10	355	99.72	1	0.281	0	0	0	0.00	356
Elementary School I	Grade 4	2	3.03	23	34.85	41	62.12	0	0.00	66
	Grade 6	32	24.81	33	25.58	64	49.61	0	0.00	129
Secondary School I	Grade 8									
	Grade 10									
Elementary School J	Grade 4	29	36.25	19	23.75	32	40.00	0	0.00	80
	Grade 6	36	54.55	18	27.27	12	18.18	0	0.00	66
Secondary School J	Grade 8	740	55.56	497	37.31	95	7.13	0	0.00	1332
	Grade 10	590	53.73	359	32.7	149	13.57	0	0.00	1098
Elementary School K	Grade 4	24	18.46	72	55.38	34	26.15	0	0.00	130
	Grade 6	24	18.46	72	55.38	34	26.15	0	0.00	130
Secondary School K	Grade 8									
	Grade 10									
Elementary School L	Grade 4	2	5.71	18	51.43	15	42.86	0	0.00	35
	Grade 6	3	7.50	8	20.00	29	72.50	0	0.00	40
Secondary School L	Grade 8									
	Grade 10									
Elementary School M	Grade 4	22	53.66	16	39.02	3	7.32	0	0.00	41
	Grade 6	49	90.74	5	9.26	0	0.00	0	0.00	54
Secondary School M	Grade 8									
	Grade 10									
Elementary School N	Grade 4	15	42.86	9	25.71	11	31.43	0	0.00	35
	Grade 6	9	52.94	6	35.29	2	11.76	0	0.00	17
Secondary School N	Grade 8									
	Grade 10									

The summary table of the reading levels of students in the basic education in the Division of Malaybalay is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary table of reading levels of students in the basic education in the city division of Malaybalay

Grade Level	Independent		Instructional		Frustration		Non-Reader		Total
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	
Grade 4	489	35.64	606	44.17	274	19.97	0	0.00	1372
Grade 6	588	37.81	602	38.71	365	23.47	0	0.00	1555
Grade 8	1391	63.23	664	30.18	145	6.59	0	0.00	2200
Grade 10	1109	65.97	395	23.5	177	10.53	0	0.00	1681
TOTAL	6887	64.05	4219	39.24	1834	17.06	0	0.00	10752

The summary table clearly illustrates that there are more independent readers in the Division of Malaybalay as compared to instructional and frustration with no record of non-readers, respectively. Although a small difference in the percentage of students in the independent and instructional levels can be observed in Grade 6, this difference is negligible. This indicates a rather effective reading instruction and interventions in the sampled schools in the division. This result is clearly illustrated in the line graph in Figure 2 below.

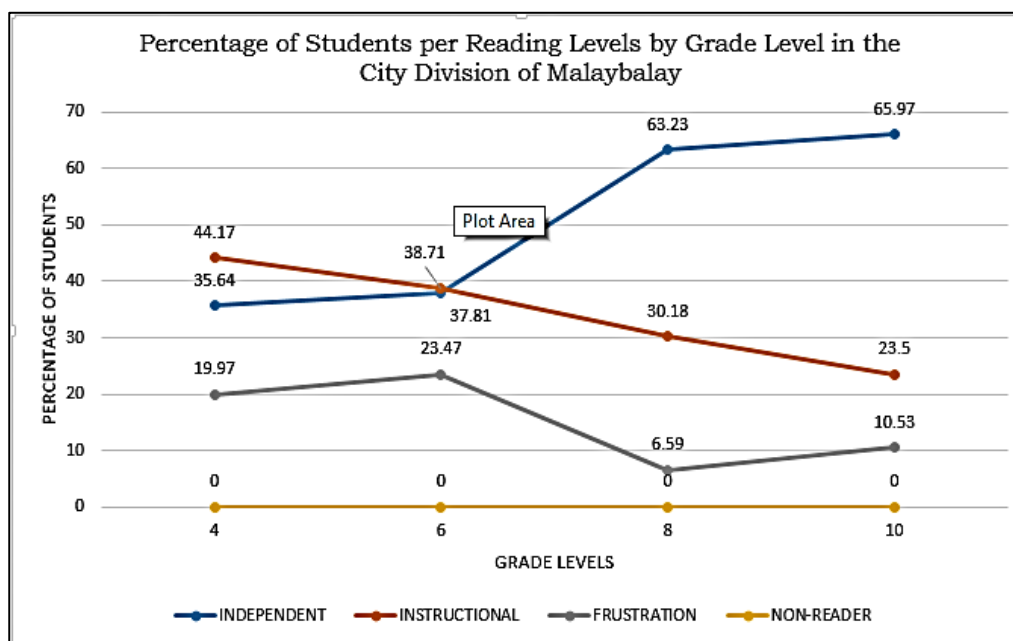


Figure 2. Percentage of students per reading levels by grade level in the city division of Malaybalay

The trend of reading levels of students in the four grade levels from the sampled schools in the City Division of Malaybalay shows that the higher the grade levels, the higher is the number of students in the desirable reading levels such as independent and instructional. It can be gleaned further in Figure 2 that the frustration level is significantly lower in Grade 8, which is barely 7% of the students. This means that only very few Grade 8 students find the reading materials difficult and cannot successfully respond to the materials (Flippo, 2014). Additionally, a fairly low percentage of students in the frustration level can be observed too in other grade levels.

Table 6 contains the summary of the combined reading levels of students in Grades 4, 6, 8, and 10 in the City Divisions of Malaybalay and Valencia. The overall results are progressive with almost half of the total population of students from the four grade levels in basic education in independent level, over a quarter in the instructional level, one-third in frustration level, and a negligible number of students in non-reader. The table further reveals that the Grade 8 level seems to have the most problematic in the Division of Valencia, with about half of its population in frustration level and almost the same figure in instructional level.

Table 6. Summary table of reading levels of students from the city divisions of Malaybalay and Valencia

Grade Level	School Division	Independent		Instructional		Frustration		Non-Reader		Total
		<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	
Grade 4	Division of Valencia	179	34.16	204	38.93	139	26.53	2	0.38	524
	Division of Malaybalay	489	35.64	606	44.17	274	19.97	0	0	1369
Grade 6	Division of Valencia	170	30.41	248	44.36	141	25.2	0	0	559
	Division of Malaybalay	588	37.81	602	38.71	365	23.47	0	0	1555
Grade 8	Division of Valencia	84	9.4	397	44.41	412	46.09	1	0.11	894
	Division of Malaybalay	1391	63.23	664	30.18	145	6.59	0	0	2200
Grade 10	Division of Valencia	158	22.51	283	40.31	261	37.18	0	0	702
	Division of Malaybalay	1109	65.97	395	23.5	177	10.53	0	0	1681
Total		4168	43.95	3399	35.84	1914	20.18	3	0.03	9,484

Non-readers are recorded in grades Grades 4 and 8, albeit negligible, is crucial. In the K to 12 Curriculum, Grade 4 is the transition level from mother-tongue instruction to English as a medium of instruction. It is in this grade level that the students have to adjust from MTB-MLE to English as a medium of instruction in core subject areas; hence, the students at this time of transition may have difficulties adjusting to English. In an experimental study of Namanya (2017) on the effect of MTB-MLE on the English literacy of elementary learners, it was found out that MTB-MLE may adversely affect children's English literacy. This was confirmed through the results of the post-test administered to two groups of students (one group taught in MTB-MLE, the other in English) after two weeks of treatment. The average scores of the group taught in the mother tongue went significantly low, while the average scores of the group taught in English went significantly high.

The number of non-readers recorded in Grade 4 concurs with the findings of the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) in 2017. The results of the EDC (2017) study suggest that the Filipino learners were unable to read with proficiency in English by the end of Grade 3; hence, they are likely not prepared for instruction in English when they go to Grade 4. They recommended that continuing instruction in MT of the learners may benefit them rather than transitioning to English by Grade 4. There are also aspects of English that need to be strengthened before students can successfully learn this language. Strategies for bridging learners' L1 vocabulary and comprehension skills to additional languages, as well as other second language learning strategies, may need to be more deliberately incorporated into Filipino and English language instruction so that the students' stronger proficiency in their L1 can be better used as a springboard for gaining L2 and L3 proficiency (EDC, 2017).

Reading approaches utilized by basic education teachers

Frame 2 shows the result of the approaches in reading instructions utilized by basic education teachers. The data were gathered through the conduct of virtual focus group discussions.

Primary Grades	Intermediate Grades	Junior High School	Senior High School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) • Buddy System • Marungko approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marungko • ReVoE (Reading and Vocabulary Enhancement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Tutoring/Peer Coaching • Pair Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Drill • Meaning Emphasis • Multisensory • Group Reading

Primary Grades	Intermediate Grades	Junior High School	Senior High School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVC approach • Fuller Approach • Phonics Approach • Word of the day • Word Definition • Sight words • One-on-One tutoring • Daily Alphabet Letters and Sounds Routine • Video-Showing/Viewing for Beginning Readers • Use of Picture Words • D-Star Approach • Interactive Story Telling • Viewing of Interactive Videos • Individual Oral Reading • Four-Pronged Approach • Storytelling • Group Reading Activity • 10-Minute Daily Reading (Facilitated by Teachers) • Feed to Read • Bridging Approach Repetition Technique • Echo Reading • Reading Aloud • Peer-Reading/Peer Tutoring • Project DTEC (Daily Translation to Enhance Comprehension) • Word Bank • Reading Power • Agpabasahon Nay Dini Aan Lagtus (ANDAL) Reading Program (Sagay District in collaboration with the Local Executive Unit) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decoding Sight words • Bring Home Reading Materials (BHRM) • Makabasa Na, May Reward Pa • KARAOKE Strategy • Repeated Reading • Word of the day • Picture Clues • Individual Oral Reading • Choral Reading • Shared Reading • Singing • Story Reading • Basa ni Elsa • Reading Hub • Audio-lingual • Popcorn Reading • Using the SRA Kit • Paired Reading • Project LEARN (division initiated) • Individual/Cooperative Learning Project • Bridging Approach • Fuller Approach • Language Experience Approach • Group Reading Activity • Repetition Technique • OGSL Approach (Oral Graphic Symbolic Language Approach) • Project DTEC (Daily Translation to Enhance Comprehension) • Adopt a Friend to Read • Word Bank 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Oral Reading • Tutorial Reading Remediation • Comprehension and Vocabulary Check • Free Reading Time • Think-Pair-Share, Fuller Approach • Remedial Reading at Home • BLIRT-P (Be Learned in Remedial Teaching Program) • CNR Program (Care for NorMin Readers) • Literature-based Approach in Reading (Literary Exhibits, Stage Performances, Read Aloud, Jingles, Storytelling) • Culture-based Approach (using local/indigenous stories) • CLOSE Reading Program (focusing on sounds, words/vocabulary, paragraph and extended texts reading) • Pictionary • Reading Games • SRA • Text Adaptation • Task-based Approach in Reading • Drop Everything & Read (READ) • Speech Choir, Reader's Theatre • Jazz Chants • Poem Reading • Phonics Approach • Linguistic Method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Comprehension Support • Analogy • Storylandia • Developing Reading Power Book • URL and Website Reference • Basa ni Felipe • Reading Nooks • LEARN Approach • Reading Empowerment Program (REP) for Non-Readers (Out-class) • Content-based Instruction (CBI) Approach in Academic Reading • Literature-based Approach in Reading (Literary Exhibits, Stage Performances, Read Aloud, Jingles, Storytelling) • Integrated Teaching Approach (Reading through Writing Approach) • Read using SRA Materials • Peer Reading Coaches • Teacher-Assisted Reading Approach • Group Reading • Differentiated Approach in Reading Instruction • Early Reading Instruction, • Phonics Approach • Linguistic Instruction • Language Experience Approach,

Primary Grades	Intermediate Grades	Junior High School	Senior High School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Reading Remediation • BLIRT-P (Be Learned in Remedial Teaching Program) • Spelling Day (Every Friday) • CNR Program (Care for NorMin Readers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-Reading Report (parent-teacher approach) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multisensory Approach • Vocabulary Approach • Singing • Story Reading • Offline Recorded Audio Clips • Silent Reading, • Language Experience Approach, • Integrated Language Arts Approach • Evidence-Based Reading Instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different Styles of Reading Academic Texts • Neurological Impress Technique, • Instructional Approach (Direct/Indirect) • Traditional Reading Instruction • Skill- Based Reading • Evidence-Based Reading Instruction • Back to Back reading • Switch Reading • Buddy Ko: Sagot Ko", • Paired Reading • Collaborative Strategic Reading • Word of the day

Frame 2

The results reveal that basic education teachers utilized several approaches in reading instruction. Apparently, across levels, there are similar and different approaches utilized. Teachers employ varied approaches in the reading instructions depending on the reading level of the learners. The approaches they utilized merely rely on the result of the Phil-IRI, EGRA, and other reading assessments that they employ in their respective schools at the beginning of the school year. Additionally, the different approaches employed in the reading instructions are based on the program initiated by the schools' division in general. Seemingly, some schools have certain reading programs based on the initiative undertaken by their respective district supervisors, school heads, and reading coordinators.

The results further show similar approaches utilized by teachers in primary, intermediate, and junior high school levels. It can be gleaned that Phonics, Marungko, Fuller, Peer-tutoring, Individual Reading, and Repetition Techniques are the most common approaches. As mentioned by some teachers who responded during the focus group discussion, they had to start from the most basic approaches in reading instructions to help those readers who belonged to the frustration level. They had to start from words or texts decoding and understanding rather than moving right away to comprehension development. That is why they had been utilizing these common approaches to make these readers move to a higher level.

In some cases, teachers took their initiative to think of their approaches in their respective classes to help those learners who are under their care. However, the activities they conduct are with the approval of the school reading coordinator and the principal or school head. Even if there are reading programs that are nationally initiated by DepEd in general, they still exert efforts in initiating different school reading activities they can provide to the learners.

This result conforms to the idea of Protacioa and Sarroubb (2013) in their case study conducted that provides a different view of reading, specifically a view of a culture of reading wherein the higher status is given to oral reading performance rather than comprehension. This is merely true to basic education in the Philippines. Specifically, those teachers handling elementary and early high school years gave much emphasis on oral reading. This may lead the learners to develop their comprehension skills in the long run.

This is further supported by the claim of Biggs (2003) that stated that a teacher's job is to create a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. Teachers have the crucial role of being the reading facilitator in the classroom. With the varied approaches they would employ, it may be gauged on the reading performance of their learners.

Nevertheless, the approaches utilized at the senior high school level are somewhat unconventional. The teachers utilized different approaches which focus already on meaning-making. In short, comprehension development is already emphasized. It can be further gleaned that it is more on learner-centered approaches that eventually make the high school learners become independent readers. This finding supports the idea of Atordido (2016), which suggested that students who struggle to meet the demands of reading expected at their age and grades have to be given a lot of opportunities and reading tasks to read authentic and relatable or context-based materials. The responses of the teachers show what has been happening in the real context.

Meanwhile, with the COVID-19 pandemic that hits the entire global arena, reading instruction has also been placed as one of the challenges to the basic education teachers. However, the teachers still exerted effort to give importance to the reading development of the learners. Based on the responses of the teachers interviewed, at the beginning of the school year, they strengthened their partnership with the parents. Aside from orienting the parents on how they would facilitate the learning through the module, they also emphasized how the reading materials be given to the learners.

Moreover, teachers prepared supplemental printed reading materials distributed to the learners, which are inclusions to the weekly module. Some made use of digitized reading materials, sharing of Youtube links, and recorded video reading materials. Yet, for those who do not have enough facilities and equipment to utilize those materials, learners could settle with the printed materials. All the reading materials are also self-paced. Teachers also do home visitation at times following safety protocol measures.

These approaches to reading instruction are school-level initiative. As one participant said, there was no mandate or guidelines from the national office on the specific approaches in reading instruction that have to be employed. These practices of basic education teachers affirm the statement of Gallagher (2020) that the world has been rapidly adapting existing work to ensure that children can continue their literacy journeys of discovery. A child's right to good quality, safe and inclusive education does not end if schools are closed. It has to be ensured that all children continue to learn to read while schools are closed through inclusive distance learning.

Assessment in reading instruction utilized by basic education teachers

Primary Grades	Intermediate Grades	Junior High School	Senior High School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EGRA • PHIL-IRI • Teacher-Made Reading Diagnostic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHIL-IRI • Teacher-Made Reading Diagnostic Test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Phil- IRI Tools • Teacher-made Test • One on one reading every month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phil-IRI • Vocabulary Quiz • Comprehension Checkup

Primary Grades	Intermediate Grades	Junior High School	Senior High School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test • Daily routine on reading of basic sight words • Start from letters and sounds • Checklist and Anecdotal Records in Tracking the Pupils' Reading Performance • Using rubric for learners' reading performance • Individual Reading Activity Approach • Reading Progress Monitoring Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress Monitoring Assessment • Random Oral Reading Every Friday Using Rubrics for Ratings • Vocabulary Quiz • Oral Reading and Silent Reading Test • Reading Checklist based on the PHIL IRI tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the check-up test having 3-5 items after giving them reading activities • Reading Comprehension Check • Diagnostic Test • Journal • School-based Reading Assessment Tests • Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment • Traditional Assessment • Formal Assessment • Rubrics on speech Choir, Jazz Chant Presentation • Vocabulary Test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One on one silent reading (with use of rubrics) • Thorough written and performance assessment • Diagnostic Test • Departmental Tests • Reading Assessment Packet (Supervisor-made Tool) • Formative Reading Assessment • Linguistic Assessment • Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment (ERDA) • Non-Verbal Assessment • Written Assessment • Traditional Assessment • Paired quiz • Reading Fluency Test

Frame 3

The results show that basic education teachers utilized varied assessment tools in reading instruction to determine and monitor the reading level of the learners. Nevertheless, the most common assessment utilized in basic education is EGRA for the grade one level and PHIL-IRI for grades two to six and high school learners. These certain measures are mandated by the DepED National office to determine the reading abilities of the learners. After the conduct of these reading assessments at the beginning part of the school year, the teachers can then classify the learners according to their reading level. The result would then be the basis of the teachers in the approaches they would utilize in the reading instruction.

However, as gleaned in the frame, EGRA and PHIL-IRI are not the only measures utilized by basic education teachers to determine the learners' reading abilities. There are other student learning assessment tools administered at the classroom-level. As mentioned by the teachers during the virtual focus group discussion, the assessments they are employing are school-level and teacher-initiated activities. They need to utilize different assessment tools so they can determine and monitor the reading progress of the learners, which eventually serves as feedback to the reading approaches they are employing in their respective classrooms.

These reading assessments utilized by teachers are considered to be formative reading assessments. There is no specific time when these assessments are utilized and conducted during

the school year. It is up to the teachers when to perform these in the classroom. This result conforms to the statements of Black and William (1998) and Heritage (2010), which confirm that formative assessment can be viewed as part of an instructional process, where teachers gather evidence of students' learning through assessment during instruction and adapt their instruction to address students' needs.

Furthermore, the teachers emphasized that they had to take the initiative in designing their assessment in reading in their classes to help those learners in frustration level be able to develop the reading competencies for them to move to the higher level. By doing such, they make use of rubric as one of the common tools. These are teacher-made rubrics. These had been developed and designed by the teachers for them and the learners to track their reading progress. This aligns with the statement in the article of the Access Center, which states that there are a variety of measures that can be used to gather data for each area of reading. Assessment is a central element for any teacher and should be implemented regularly. Through its implementation, teachers will help students access the skills and content they need from the general education curriculum. This will allow all students to achieve their highest potential.

Table 7. Constructive alignment in reading curriculum in the city divisions of Malaybalay and Valencia

Grade Level	Valencia & Malaybalay	QD
Primary	2.30	Low Alignment
Intermediate	1.92	Low Alignment
Junior	1.45	No Alignment
Senior	2.24	Low Alignment
	1.98	Low Alignment

Range	Qualitative Description
2.34-3.00	High Alignment (HA)
1.68- 2.34	Low Alignment (LA)
1.00- 1.67	No Alignment (NA)

The curriculum assessment reveals a low alignment between the written, assessed, and delivered curriculum in reading. There are learning outcomes specified in the K-12 curriculum guide that have not been processed and assessed by teachers. This is contrary to the model of CCA espoused by Biggs (2003), which requires that these three key areas must be coherent.

Conclusion and recommendation

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the basic education curriculum consists of reading competencies categorized into text processing and task management competencies. However, there are critical reading competencies and metacognitive reading competencies that are not observed across levels. In terms of the reading levels, there are more instructional readers than independent readers in basic education. Also, the percentage of combined population of student from the sampled schools in the two divisions with the frustration reading level is rather high. Further, a number of students from different year levels, including in the secondary level, were also found to be non-readers, who are unable to recognize and sound out letter-sound connections for single consonant, consonant blends, and others. Regarding the approaches to reading instruction and assessment, the approaches in reading instruction were more extensive, varied, and teacher-directed before the COVID-19 pandemic involving class and group dynamics, while the approaches in the new normal are limited to self-paced/independent reading using printed modules

and a few digital reading resources. Alternative performance-based reading assessment is the main approach used by teachers during COVID-19. They also attempt to use mobile and video-based assessment providing reading materials. Finally, the curriculum assessment reveals that there is generally a low alignment between the written, assessed, and delivered curriculum in reading in the city divisions of Valencia and Malaybalay. This implies that there are learning outcomes specified in the K-12 curriculum guide that have not been processed and assessed by teachers. This is contrary to the model of CCA espoused by Biggs (2003), which requires that these three key areas must be coherent.

Based on the results that emerged from the study, the following policies are hereby recommended. The Department of Education may formulate policies on the following:

- Equitable distribution of the different competencies across the levels in the basic education to ensure that the foundational competencies and the critical higher-order competencies are systematically proportioned. This is to ensure that the prerequisite reading skills such as emergent literacy, fluency, and vocabulary knowledge are not overemphasized and that the advanced reading competencies are also given priority.
- Reassessment of DepEd's Every Filipino Child a Reader Program to measure its effectiveness through an extensive regular monitoring of programs and activities. Designing simplified and programmed home-based reading activities and strategies ensures that students develop the reading competencies needed in the new normal.
- Full implementation of alternative performance-based reading assessment instead of the utilization of multiple-choice tests.
- Strengthening DepEd's monitoring and evaluation of the assessment tools and teaching/learning activities in reading vis-à-vis the K to 12 curriculum guide. This ensures coherence between the three key areas of the curriculum, namely, the intended learning outcomes, what the student does to learn, and how the student is assessed.

The Commission on Higher Education and SUCS may also craft policies on the following:

- A CAPDEV series on Reading Curriculum Constructive Alignment as an extension project to be undertaken by HEIs I Region X for DepEd Region X.
- Reinstatement of Teaching of Reading, Reading Assessment, and Reading Remediation subjects to the Teacher Education undergraduate curriculum across programs (ECE, BEE, BSE). For other undergraduate programs, a GE subject on Advanced Reading may also be offered.
- Recognizing Reading Education as a CHED-priority program.
- Offering of MA in Reading Education and PhD in Reading Education graduate programs in select HEIs in Region X crucial to the improvement of reading competencies.

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The authors hereby declare no conflict of interest. All authors have examined and agreed on the manuscript contents and they do not have any financial interest to report. They certify the submission of an original work which has not been under review at any other publication.

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