

# ASSESSMENT OF THE BASIC EDUCATION READING CURRICULUM IN NORTHERN MINDANAO

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**ABSTRACT-** *This study assessed the target reading competencies across levels in basic education. The reading levels of the randomly chosen respondents from the elementary and high schools in the Divisions of Northern Mindanao were determined; with the approaches in reading instruction and assessments utilized by teachers before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The constructive alignment in the reading curriculum was also assessed. The paper employed a Qualitative Research Design using the Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA), Focused Group Discussion (FGD), and Constructive Alignment (CA). Research results manifested that the reading competencies required learners to make inferences. There were more instructional than independent readers in the region. The percentage of students in the frustration level was high; with pupils showing reading withdrawal. A substantial number of students were non-readers too. The teaching approaches in reading instruction were more extensive, varied, and teacher-directed prior to the pandemic. In the new normal, limited to self-paced independent reading strategies were employed. The curriculum assessment revealed a low alignment between the written, assessed, and delivered curriculum. The paper, therefore, recommends strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of the assessment tools and teaching-learning activities vis-à-vis the K to 12 curriculum guide.*

**Keywords** – reading curriculum, constructive alignment, assessment

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippine educational system considers reading fundamental to all forms of academic learning and growth. In today's global society, a literate population is essential for the country's social and economic development. Hence, to improve the quality of life of Filipinos, the importance of developing the students' reading comprehension skills is highly regarded. As [1] posits, reading comprehension instruction is particularly important as students encounter informational text in their content area classes.

Among Philippine schools, reading education is regarded as a priority area in basic education particularly in public schools under the Department of Education. Various reading programs have been implemented in all levels to ensure that every Filipino child learns how to read. Teachers are urged to introduce context-appropriate reading interventions to produce readers as early as K2. However, the reading competence and literacy rate of these children continue to drop as evidenced by reading assessment results like the Program for International Students Achievement [2]. The results indicated that Filipino learners are at risk in other learning areas because of their poor reading literacy.

Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of the reading curriculum was considered timely and relevant to examine the constructive alignment between the written, implemented, and assessed curriculum. Additionally, this study also assessed the target reading comprehension as prescribed by the K to 12 curricula and identified the reading levels of basic education students as shown in the reading assessment results.

Moreover, this study placed extreme importance to reading comprehension for its success completes the process of meaning construction. This becomes attainable when readers use linguistics and background knowledge to apply cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies to interact with the text. In a study conducted by [3], it was found that comprehension strategy instruction improves comprehension. Similarly, [4] cite that strengthened reading strategies facilitate more significant progress in text comprehension.

Considering the critical role of reading instruction in the development of reading comprehension skills, this research was conducted. It identified the target reading competencies across levels in basic education and determined the reading levels of basic education learners based on assessment results. Further, the paper ascertains the approaches in reading instruction and assessments utilized by teachers before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design and Instruments

This paper is mainly qualitative in nature and used a qualitative research design. Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA), Focused Group Discussion (FGD), and Constructive Alignment (CA) with simple Statistics; were employed.

### 2.2 The Instruments

This research used the prepared focus group discussion prompts. It analyzed the curriculum guide, modules, and textbooks with the aid of the constructive alignment checklist. Validation of the results of the PHILIRI and EGRA was through the focus group discussion and qualitative documentary analysis.

### 2.3 The Respondents

The respondents of this study were the randomly sampled elementary and high school teachers, and reading coordinators under the Department of Education Region X from the Divisions of Cagayan De Oro, El Salvador, Misamis Oriental, and Gingoog. Due to the existing pandemic that the country is facing, these respondents were contacted via google meet, text messages, cellular phone calls, and electronic mails.

### 2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

A letter addressed to the Department of Education Superintendent through the curriculum and learning management Division was sent in an email. This secured permission from the Department heads for the conduct of the study. The researchers then gathered data from the teacher-respondents by means of focus group discussion with teaching reading strategies and assessment practices as core topics. The proponents similarly requested copies of the Curriculum Guide, PHILIRI and EGRA test results, Daily

Lesson Guide, and Learner's Guide. The constructive alignment checklist of [5] for Reading Comprehension Instruction was modified and used.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Reading Competencies in the K to 12 Curriculum

Categories of Reading Competencies	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
<b>TEXT PROCESSING</b>			
Emergent Literacy	2335	4.80888047	12
Reading Fluency	3048	6.27728808	11
Vocabulary Learning	3079	6.34113189	10
<b>Locating information</b>			
Accessing and retrieving information	3264	6.72213527	9
Searching for and selecting relevant text	4901	10.0935003	1
<b>Understanding</b>			
Acquiring a representation of the literal meaning of a text	4881	10.0523107	2
Constructing an integrated text representation	4400	9.06170195	7
<b>Evaluating and Reflecting</b>			
Assessing quality and credibility	4610	9.49419227	4
Reflecting on content and form	4767	9.81753027	3
Detecting and handling conflict	4567	9.40563473	5
<b>TASK MANAGEMENT</b>			
Setting up goals and plans	4150	8.54683252	8
Monitoring progress and self-regulating goals and strategies throughout the activity	4554	9.37886152	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>48556</b>		

Table 1 shows the reading competencies of the respondents according to the twelve categories. *Searching for and selecting relevant text* has the highest frequency. This competency requires learners' understanding of the wide variety of reading materials that they will encounter. This means that the highest percentage of the reading competencies in the basic education curriculum requires students to make inferences and check their understanding as they read.

*Acquiring a representation of the literal meaning of a text* follows as the second in rank among the categories of reading competencies. According to [6], word knowledge plays a very important part in reading comprehension. This manifests the connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension. Indeed, there are various relationships between word knowledge and text understanding as cited by [7], and [8]. Separating the two processes is difficult, if not impossible. Vocabulary knowledge affects reading comprehension directly. As [9], noted, the evidence of a causal link between vocabulary and comprehension is historically long but empirically soft.

Furthermore, table 1 displays that *emergent literacy* which is under *text processing* is one of the least emphasized reading competencies in the K to 12 curricula. This is only present in grades 7, 8, and 10. This implies limited reading instruction which focuses on developing the learners' abilities to establish predictable routines to encourage learners to anticipate reading events.

Table 2. Reading Levels of Students in Basic Education in Region X

Elementary Grades Grades 3, 4 and 6	Independent		Instructional		Frustration		Non-Reader		Total Population
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
	145	14.27165	408	40.15748	398	39.17323	65	6.397638	1016
Junior High Grades 8 and 10	108	12.96519	380	45.61825	345	41.41657	0	0	833

This data reveals that in five grade levels in elementary and secondary education, there are more instructional readers than independent readers in the region. The gap is not that high but implies that more is to be done in the reading instructions in all grade levels.

Further, a substantial number of students from the elementary grades were found to be non-readers. They are those who are unable to recognize and sound out letter-sound connections for single consonant, consonant blend, and others. This implicates that the Department of Education's every Filipino child a reader program needs reassessment in terms of its effectiveness through extensive regular monitoring of programs and activities.

Table 3. Approaches in Reading Instruction

Respondents	Approaches Utilized in Reading Instruction		Approaches Utilized in Reading Assessment	
	Before COVID 19	Current/During COVID 19	Before COVID 19	Current/During COVID 19
<b>Primary Grade</b> CDO, El Salvador, Gingoog City and Misamis Oriental Divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DEAR/Drop Everything and Read</li> <li>Buddy System</li> <li>Motivation approach</li> <li>Consonant - Vowel Consonant/CVC approach</li> <li>Fuller Approach</li> <li>Phonics Approach</li> <li>Word of the day</li> <li>Word definition</li> <li>Sight words</li> <li>One on one tutoring</li> <li>Daily alphabet letters and sounds routine</li> <li>Videos for Beginning Readers</li> <li>More picture words and stories giving of reading materials</li> <li>One on one and follow up</li> <li>D-Star Approach</li> <li>Fuller Approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Giving of reading materials so students can still read at home</li> <li>Differentiated reading</li> <li>Recorded pre-shoot videos which will serve as the parents' basis in teaching/assisting reading</li> <li>Constant communication with parents to monitor pupils reading progress</li> <li>Printed worksheets and video call for those who have messenger</li> <li>Use of TPR/Total Physical Response during online classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily routine of basic sight words</li> <li>Start from letters and sounds</li> <li>Checklist and Anecdotal records in tracking the pupils' reading performance</li> <li>Using rubric for reading performance</li> <li>Individual reading activity approach</li> <li>Making use of passages and ask questions about what students have read</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phone Calls made for oral reading sessions</li> <li>Home visitation</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate</b> CDO, El Salvador, Gingoog City and Misamis Oriental Divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lunch Remediation</li> <li>Peer Tutoring</li> <li>Marungko</li> <li>ReVoE (Reading and Vocabulary Enhancement)</li> <li>Decoding Sight words</li> <li>Bring Home Reading Materials (BHRM)</li> <li>Malakbas Ng May Reward Pa</li> <li>KARAOKE Strategy</li> <li>Repeated Reading</li> <li>Word of the day</li> <li>Picture clues</li> <li>Oral reading</li> <li>Choral Reading</li> <li>Sustained Silent</li> <li>Shared Reading</li> <li>Singing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give them short passage to read at home and visit them to monitor progress</li> <li>Instead of giving SLM/Self Learning Modules, let pupils bring Story Materials at Home</li> <li>One on One Approach following the Health Safety Protocols</li> <li>Word of the day and picture clues</li> <li>Marungko</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At this time of pandemic I only give short passage to pupils who needs help in reading</li> <li>Let them read in a week time and follow up on Fridays, if they can already read, give another reading material</li> <li>From the material given, be it a story or a passage, questions are asked to them whether they understand what they read</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Phil-IRI Tools</li> <li>Virtual one on one reading</li> </ul>
<b>Junior High School</b> CDO, El Salvador, Gingoog City and Misamis Oriental Divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Story Reading</li> <li>Vocabulary</li> <li>Offline recorded audio clips</li> <li>Class Recitation</li> <li>Listening</li> <li>Silent Reading</li> <li>Basa ni Eisa</li> <li>Reading Hub</li> <li>Audiolingual</li> <li>Modular</li> <li>Individual Oral reading</li> <li>Popcorn reading</li> <li>Using the SRA Kit</li> <li>Paired reading</li> <li>Project LEARN (division initiated)</li> <li>Individual/Cooperative Learning Project</li> <li>CNR (region initiated)</li> <li>Tutorial Reading Remediation</li> <li>Comprehension and Vocabulary Check</li> <li>Free Reading Time</li> <li>Think-Pair-Share</li> <li>Fuller</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Comprehension Approach wherein learners are given selection to read and schedule them for virtual reading and follow up for comprehension</li> <li>Letting them read a short selection and answer questions</li> <li>Comprehension check questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One on one reading every month</li> <li>Use the check-up test having 3-5 items after giving them activities</li> <li>Reading comprehension check</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of Phil-IRI method of evaluating the reading level of learners</li> <li>Reading comprehension check</li> </ul>

The approaches in reading instruction were more extensive,

varied, and teacher-directed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic involving class and group dynamics. The new normal approaches 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, with attempts on mobile and video-based assessment providing reading materials.

**Table 4. Constructive Alignment in Reading Curriculum in Northern Mindanao**

Grade Level	CDO, MisOr, El Salvador, Gingoog	QD
Primary	2.30	LA
Intermediate	2.30	LA
Junior	2.34	LA
Senior	2.34	LA

Range	Qualitative Description
2.35-3.00	High Alignment (HA)
1.68-2.34	Low Alignment (LA)
1.00-1.67	No Alignment (NA)

The curriculum assessment reveals that there is low alignment between the written, assessed, and delivered curriculum in reading. There are learning outcomes specified in the K-12 curriculum guide that has not been processed and assessed by teachers. This is contrary to the model of CCA espoused by [10] which requires that these three key areas must be coherent.

Not all of the reading competencies stipulated in the written curriculum guide are assessed as evidenced by the examined tests; the delivered curriculum has also instances of misalignment as reflected in some teaching and learning activities that are not consistent with those reading being assessed.

**4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Critical reading competencies and metacognitive reading competencies that are not observed across levels need attention. Hence, varied reading activities which motivate the attention span of the learners should be provided.

DepEd’s every Filipino child a reader program needs to be reassessed. The majority of the respondents still belong to the frustration reading level category. A substantial number fall under the non-reader category.

The delivered curriculum showed instances of misalignment with that of the reading activities. Moreover, not all of the reading competencies in the written curriculum are assessed.

The study recommends that simplified and programmed home-based reading activities and strategies may be designed to ensure that students develop the reading competencies needed in the new normal. Alternative performance-based reading assessment may also be fully implemented aside from multiple-choice tests. DepEd Region X may strengthen its monitoring and evaluation of the assessment tools and teaching/learning activities in reading vis-à-vis the K to 12 curriculum guide. This is to ensure coherence between the three key areas of the curriculum, namely the intended learning outcomes, what the student does in order to learn and how the student is assessed.

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