Profiling, Implementation, and Literacy Impact of the National Reading Program in Public Elementary Schools of Buguey South District

MAGDALENA C. ANTONIO

Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus Aparri, Cagayan

*Corresponding author: MAGDALENA C. ANTONIO

Cagayan State University-Aparri Campus Aparri, Cagayan

Abstract

This study assessed the implementation, challenges, and impact of the National Reading Program (NRP) on literacy advancement in Buguey South District public elementary schools for SY 2024–2025. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data from 106 teachers were analyzed through descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson's r. The NRP was rated "Implemented" (M = 4.09), with resource availability rated highest. Literacy advancement was "Evident" (M = 4.05), especially in vocabulary. Challenges were "Encountered" (M = 4.06), notably in material distribution and learner readiness. Significant differences existed across several teacher profile variables. Strong positive correlations were found between implementation and literacy outcomes; negative correlations emerged between challenges and literacy status. Strengthened resources and teacher support are recommended for improved NRP sustainability.

Keywords: National Reading Program, literacy advancement, reading comprehension, vocabulary, implementation, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Reading has long been recognized as a vital skill for personal growth and societal advancement. Globally, education systems prioritize literacy as the foundation for learning and critical thinking. However, literacy disparities persist due to socioeconomic inequalities, limited access to resources, and inconsistent implementation of effective reading programs. In response, educators worldwide continue to develop innovative strategies to improve reading outcomes.

In the Philippines, reading literacy remains a critical issue. International assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), have revealed declining reading comprehension levels among Filipino students. These findings have raised concerns among educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders. To address these challenges, the Department of Education (DepEd) launched various literacy-focused initiatives.

One major initiative is DepEd Memorandum No. 001, s. 2024, which introduced the "Catch-up Fridays" program. Beginning January 2024, all Fridays are dedicated to the National Reading Program (NRP) during the first half of the school day. The NRP includes two key components: Reading Intervention for struggling readers and Reading Enhancement for more advanced learners. It employs structured pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities aimed at improving reading comprehension, vocabulary, and overall literacy.

As a cornerstone effort of DepEd, the NRP under "Catch-up Fridays" seeks to address literacy gaps and cater to the varied reading needs of students. By emphasizing targeted instruction and engagement, the program aims to raise literacy levels and foster long-term educational improvement across Philippine schools.

The National Reading Program (NRP), implemented through DepEd's Catch-up Fridays, aimed to foster foundational literacy as a key to lifelong learning. It featured structured activities—pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading tasks—as well as engaging strategies like DEAR, teacher read-alouds, and reading partnerships. Aligned with the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP), the NRP emphasized regular and sustained reading instruction, supported by collaboration among teachers, parents, and communities.

However, in Buguey South District, several challenges emerged during its early implementation. Teachers reported limited access to quality reading materials such as storybooks, flashcards, and multimedia tools. Classrooms struggled to meet the varying literacy levels of learners, especially those with special needs, due to a lack of differentiated resources and support. Time constraints and scheduling conflicts hindered the full integration of NRP activities, while other academic demands reduced the effectiveness of Catch-up Fridays. Additionally, low parental involvement limited support at home, affecting learners' engagement and progress.

The implementation of the National Reading Program (NRP) in Buguey South District faced additional challenges due to frequent class disruptions caused by typhoons and adverse weather, affecting the continuity and consistency of learning sessions. These interruptions hindered the regular conduct of NRP activities, limiting students' sustained engagement with the program. Another major concern was the limited training and preparedness of teachers. Many educators expressed a need for more targeted professional development on NRP implementation and strategies to cater to diverse literacy levels. There was also insufficient support in using innovative methods and integrating technology into reading instruction.

Given that the NRP was still in its early stages, it was vital to evaluate its implementation to assess its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Understanding how the program impacted literacy outcomes, the challenges encountered, and the readiness of stakeholders was crucial for enhancing its design and delivery. The urgency of this study lay in addressing these literacy concerns promptly and systematically. As part of DepEd's broader learning recovery efforts, the study's findings offered valuable insights for refining the program and served as a reference for other districts aiming to implement similar literacy initiatives.

Hence, this study aimed to evaluate the extent of implementation, identify the challenges, and assess the impact of the National Reading Program (NRP) on literacy advancement in public elementary schools within the Buguey South District for the school year 2024–2025.

The study sought to address the following questions:

1. What was the profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of the following variables?

1.1. Socio-demographic

1.1.1 Age

1.1.2 Sex

1.1.3 Civil Status

1.1.4 Highest Educational Attainment

1.1.5 Specialization

1.2. Employment

1.2.1. Plantilla Position

1.2.2. Eligibility

1.2.3. Years of Experience in Service

1.2.4. Number of Trainings on NRP Attended

2. To what extent was the NRP implemented in the public elementary schools in Buguey South District along the following dimensions?

2.1. Adherence to the guidelines and protocols outlined in DepEd Memo No. 001, s. 2024

2.2. Integration of reading intervention and enhancement activities in the school curriculum

2.3. Preparation and readiness of teachers to conduct NRP activities

2.4. Availability and access to resources, such as storybooks, multimedia, and teaching aids

2.5. Student participation and engagement in the NRP activities

2.6. Monitoring and evaluation practices related to the NRP

3. Was there a significant difference in the assessments of teacher-respondents on the implementation, of the NRP on literacy advancement when grouped according to their profile variables?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
The study employed a descriptive-correlational-comparative research design to evaluate the implementation, challenges, and impact of the National Reading Program (NRP) in Buguey South District. Descriptive methods provided an overview of the current NRP status, correlational analysis identified relationships among variables such as program implementation and literacy outcomes, and comparative analysis explored differences in responses based on teacher profiles. This multifaceted design ensured a comprehensive understanding of how various factors influenced the effectiveness of the NRP.

Locale of the Study
The research was conducted in the Buguey South District of Cagayan, consisting of 18 public elementary schools. Known for its strong performance in School-Based Management, the district

was an ideal site due to its committed educators, diverse student population, and active community involvement. The setting's educational reputation and accessibility to resources made it suitable for studying NRP implementation and drawing insights relevant to similar contexts.

Respondents and Sampling Techniques
The study involved 84 out of 106 public elementary school teachers from the district, selected through random sampling to ensure unbiased representation. The sample size was determined using the Lynch formula at a 95% confidence level. This approach enabled the study to capture perspectives across different schools and teacher profiles, ensuring a reliable assessment of the NRP's impact and challenges.

Research Instruments
A validated, self-constructed survey questionnaire was the main research instrument, comprising four sections: teacher profiles, extent of NRP implementation, impact on literacy, and challenges encountered. Items were aligned with DepEd guidelines and used Likert scales to quantify responses. Expert review and pilot testing ensured the instrument's clarity, reliability, and appropriateness for data collection.

Data Gathering Procedures
The data collection process followed strict protocols, beginning with securing approvals from education authorities and school administrators. After validation and pilot testing of the questionnaire, the researcher distributed it personally to respondents, providing guidance and addressing concerns. Ethical practices such as informed consent and voluntary participation were observed throughout the process.

Data Analysis Plan
Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Descriptive methods summarized demographic and response data using frequencies, means, and standard deviations, while inferential techniques like t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis identified significant differences and relationships. These methods allowed for robust interpretation of the study findings.

Ethical Considerations
Ethical standards were upheld through informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. No identifying information was collected, and data were securely stored. The study followed the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines and maintained objectivity, transparency, and respect for participants' rights throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-demographic profile
Table 1a presents the socio-demographic distribution of the 106 public elementary school teacher-respondents involved in the study on the National Reading Program (NRP) in Buguey South District. The age profile reveals that the majority of respondents (37.7%) are 30 years old or below, followed by 22.6% who fall within the 41 to 50 age brackets. The mean age is 38.54 years with a standard deviation of 11.6, indicating a relatively young teaching population with a broad age range. In terms of sex, a significant majority of respondents are female (88.7%), while only 11.3% are male.

Regarding civil status, 67.9% of the respondents are married, while 23.6% are single and 8.5% are widowed. As for educational attainment, 48.1% of the teachers are holders of master's degree

units, 25.5% have completed a master's degree, and 5.7% are pursuing doctoral degrees. Only 20.8% have no postgraduate units and hold only a bachelor's degree. In terms of specialization, more than half of the respondents (54.7%) are specialized in Elementary Education (BEED), while others are concentrated in English (22.6%), Science (8.5%), and Mathematics (5.7%).

These findings mean that the teaching workforce in the district is largely composed of young to mid-career female professionals who are either currently pursuing or have attained graduate-level education. A strong representation of BEED specializations suggests that most teachers are well-aligned with the generalist demands of elementary education, while the presence of English majors reinforces instructional competence relevant to the implementation of reading programs such as the NRP.

This implies a promising foundation for successful implementation of the National Reading Program, as younger teachers and those with ongoing graduate studies are often more adaptable to pedagogical innovations and professional development opportunities. The predominance of BEED-trained educators further supports the capacity of schools to handle diversified reading instruction needs across multiple grade levels.

This aligns with the findings of Santos (2022), who emphasized that teacher qualifications, particularly advanced education and specialization in elementary pedagogy, play a pivotal role in the effective delivery of literacy interventions. Similarly, Bernal and Reyes (2020) highlighted that female educators often exhibit high levels of engagement in literacy programs, particularly in nurturing reading habits among early-grade learners.

Table 1a. Distribution of the respondents in terms of their socio-demographic profile

Variables	Frequency (n=106)	Percentage
Age (in years)		
30 or below	40	37.7
31 to 40	21	19.8
41 to 50	24	22.6
51 to 60	18	17.0
61 or above	3	2.8
	Mean = 38.54 years old; SD = 11.6	
Sex		
Male	12	11.3
Female	94	88.7
Civil status		
Single	25	23.6
Married	72	67.9
Widowed	9	8.5
Educational attainment		
With units in a Doctorate program	6	5.7

Masteral graduate	27	25.5
With units in a Masteral program	51	48.1
Bachelor graduate	22	20.8
Specialization		
English	24	22.6
Mathematics	6	5.7
Science	9	8.5
Elementary Education	58	54.7
Others	9	8.5

Professional profile

Table 1b displays the professional profile of the 106 teacher-respondents participating in the study on the implementation of the National Reading Program (NRP) in Buguey South District. Regarding plantilla position, the majority of respondents hold the rank of Teacher III (53.8%), followed by Teacher I (34.9%), while a smaller percentage serve as Teacher II (8.5%) and Master Teacher I (2.8%). In terms of eligibility, 91.5% of the respondents obtained their qualification through the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), with only 2.8% holding Professional Board Examination for Teachers (PBET) and 5.7% classified under other categories.

The data also show that most teachers have been in the service between 1 to 5 years (37.7%), followed by 22.6% with 6 to 10 years of experience. Notably, only 11.3% have been in service for less than one year, while the rest are distributed fairly evenly across longer tenures. The mean length of service is 8.66 years with a standard deviation of 8.35, suggesting that the group includes both novice and seasoned educators. A critical finding in the table is that 94.3% of the respondents have not attended any NRP-related trainings or seminars, with only 5.7% reporting participation in such capacity-building activities.

These findings mean that while the teaching workforce in Buguey South District is generally experienced and well-ranked in the civil service ladder, most teachers have not undergone specialized training related to the National Reading Program. The predominance of Teacher III positions indicates a mature group of professionals, potentially with strong instructional backgrounds, yet the lack of training exposure signals a gap in program-specific preparedness.

This implies that although the personnel structure is adequate to support program implementation, the absence of formal training opportunities on the NRP may hinder teachers' capacity to execute its strategies with fidelity and effectiveness. Without adequate orientation, even experienced teachers may face difficulties in aligning their instruction with the goals and protocols of the NRP, particularly under its revitalized form as directed by DepEd Memo No. 001, s. 2024.

This aligns with the findings of Santos (2022), who emphasized that the success of literacy programs relies heavily on the quality and frequency of teacher training. His study concluded that lack of targeted professional development remains a persistent barrier to the full realization of literacy reforms. Similarly, Garcia (2021) identified professional readiness and ongoing training as critical factors influencing the quality of literacy instruction in rural Philippine schools.

Table 1b. Distribution of the respondents in terms of their professional profile

Variables	Frequency (n=106)	Percentage
Plantilla position		
Teacher I	37	34.9
Teacher II	9	8.5
Teacher III	57	53.8
Master Teacher I	3	2.8
Eligibility		
Licensure Examination for Teachers	97	91.5
PBET	3	2.8
Others	6	5.7
Length of service (in years)		
Less than 1	12	11.3
1 to 5	40	37.7
6 to 10	24	22.6
11 to 15	12	11.3
16 to 20	6	5.7
21 or above	12	11.3
	Mean = 8.66 years; SD = 8.35	
NRP-related trainings/seminars		
None	100	94.3
Attended	6	5.7

Extent of Implementation of the National Reading Program in the Public Elementary Schools in Buguey South District as Assessed by the Respondents

Table 2 presents the summary of overall mean scores assessing the extent of implementation of the National Reading Program (NRP) in Buguey South District across six key dimensions. The findings reveal that all components were rated within the descriptive value of *Implemented*, with an overall mean of **4.09**. Among the dimensions, **availability and access to resources** received the highest mean of **4.27**, indicating sufficient provision of instructional materials and support tools. This was followed by **adherence to guidelines and protocols** (M = 4.18) and **student participation and engagement** (M = 4.17), suggesting that reading activities are generally aligned with DepEd standards and are positively received by learners.

This finding means that the implementation of the NRP is operationally sound in terms of resources, compliance, and learner involvement. However, the lowest mean of **3.91** for **integration of reading intervention and enhancement activities** suggests

potential gaps in differentiated reading strategies or in addressing the needs of struggling readers.

This implies that while the core mechanisms for NRP delivery are in place, schools must further refine instructional strategies and ensure systematic monitoring to maximize literacy gains. Strengthening reading interventions and building teacher capacity for adaptive literacy instruction could improve overall program impact.

This aligns with the findings of UNESCO (2023), which emphasized that successful reading programs in marginalized communities depend not only on policy alignment and resource availability but also on the quality of intervention strategies and sustained teacher support. Similarly, the Learning Policy Institute (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021) highlighted that well-resourced programs require strong pedagogical coherence and professional development to be fully effective in improving literacy outcomes.

Table 2. Summary of overall means and extent of the implementation of the NRP in Buguey South District as assessed by the respondents

Dimensions	Means	Descriptive Value
1. Adherence to the guidelines and protocols	4.18	Implemented
2. Integration of reading intervention and enhancement activities	3.91	Implemented
3. Preparation and readiness of teachers	4.01	Implemented
4. Availability and access to resources	4.27	Implemented
5. Student participation and engagement	4.17	Implemented
6. Monitoring and evaluation practices	4.00	Implemented
Overall Mean	4.09	Implemented

Differences in the Assessment of the Respondents on the Extent of Implementation of the National Reading Program when Grouped by Profile

Table 5a presents the results of the comparison tests on whether there are statistically significant differences in the respondents' assessment of the extent of implementation of the National Reading Program (NRP) when grouped according to their profile characteristics. The results reveal that there is a significant difference in the assessments when respondents are grouped according to sex (p = 0.007), educational attainment (p = 0.000), specialization (p = 0.011), eligibility (p = 0.000), length of service (p = 0.000), and participation in NRP-related trainings or seminars (p = 0.018). These findings mean that differences in professional background and exposure such as training, experience, and academic qualifications affect how teachers perceive and implement the NRP. For example, those with more advanced degrees or training specific to reading instruction may be more informed or engaged in program requirements and thus evaluate the implementation more positively or critically.

This implies that differentiated experiences and competencies among teachers contribute to varied implementation practices and assessments of the program. Teachers with higher educational attainment, longer tenure, or specialized training may be better equipped to carry out NRP-aligned tasks, while those with less exposure may face difficulties or interpret implementation differently.

On the other hand, the assessment of NRP implementation did not significantly differ when respondents were grouped by age (p = 0.066), civil status (p = 0.414), or plantilla position (p = 0.145). This suggests that these personal attributes do not influence teachers' perception of the program's implementation and that the operational aspects of the NRP are generally experienced similarly across different age groups, marital statuses, and position levels.

This finding aligns with the study of Cabalquinto and Del Mundo (2021), which concluded that the success of reading program implementation in Philippine schools largely hinges on professional attributes such as teacher training, specialization, and experience rather than static demographic traits. They emphasized the value of capacity-building and sustained professional development in improving the quality of program delivery.

Table 5a. Comparison test results in the assessment of the respondents on the extent of implementation of NRP when grouped by profile

Grouping Variables	Statistics	Probability	Inference
Extent of Implementation of NRP			
Age	2.277	0.066	Not significant
Sex	-2.769	0.007	Significant
Civil status	0.889	0.414	Not significant
Educational attainment	7.026	0.000	Significant
Specialization	3.427	0.011	Significant
Position	1.837	0.145	Not significant
Eligibility	9.034	0.000	Significant
Length of service	4.928	0.000	Significant
NRP-related trainings/seminars	2.407	0.018	Significant

*tested at 0.05 level of significance

Therefore, strengthening teacher competencies through continuous training, targeted specialization, and experience-based capacity-building is essential to improving the quality and consistency of NRP implementation across schools. This reinforces the importance of investing in professional development to ensure that all educators—regardless of background—are equally equipped to advance literacy goals.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the implementation, challenges, and impact of the National Reading Program (NRP) in public elementary schools of Buguey South District. Results showed that while the NRP is generally implemented with adherence to program protocols and strong learner engagement, several challenges persist. These include shortages of instructional materials, limited technology access, and insufficient parental involvement. Teachers, especially those in senior or specialized roles, reported difficulties addressing diverse literacy levels, including non-readers and learners with special needs. The program positively influenced literacy, particularly in vocabulary, fluency, and motivation—effects that were more evident in schools with strong implementation. However, greater challenges reduced the program's overall impact, indicating that successful outcomes depend on addressing these barriers. In conclusion, while the NRP has established a solid foundation for literacy advancement in the district, its continued success requires strategic resource allocation, strengthened support systems, and collaborative efforts among educators, communities, and local government units.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings on the National Reading Program (NRP) in Buguey South District, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance its effectiveness. The Department of Education should ensure timely distribution of inclusive, age-appropriate reading materials and strengthen monitoring to address resource disparities. School leaders must support teacher development through targeted training, peer mentoring, and Learning Action Cells. Teachers should apply differentiated strategies, use assessment data to guide instruction, and partner with parents to reinforce reading at home. Increased community involvement through reading events, book drives, and NGO partnerships is also vital. Policymakers and local government units are encouraged to allocate funds for reading resources and digital infrastructure. Lastly, future researchers should examine the NRP's long-term effects on literacy using longitudinal or comparative studies to guide program sustainability and adaptation in diverse contexts. These efforts collectively support stronger literacy outcomes for Filipino learners.

Declaration of No Conflict of Interest

The author hereby states that this article is her original and sole work and that there were no conflicts of interest.

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