

Project BUKLAD Bridging the Literacy Gap: A Reading Intervention for Non-Readers in Bigo Elementary School

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100900143>

Received: 16 September 2026; Accepted: 21 September 2026; Published: 03 October 2026

ABSTRACT

The Project BULKAD approach serves as an intervention designed to support Grade 1-6 students in Bigo Elementary School experiencing foundational learning difficulties. This approach places a strong emphasis on the advantages of homogenous grouping in the teaching process. This study delved into the implementation of the Project BULKAD approach for Grade 1-6 students attending Bigo Elementary School during the 2026–2027 academic year. The researcher aimed to assess the reading proficiency of these students using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) assessment both before and after the implementation of the approach. The study also examined the extent to which the Project BULKAD approach was utilized to guide students in acquiring these essential skills. Additionally, the research explored the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Project BULKAD approach and their strategies for overcoming these challenges. The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design and employed purposive sampling as the chosen sampling technique. Data collection relied on the PHIL-IRI assessment tool and interviews as research instruments. The collected data underwent thorough analysis, including statistical treatments such as frequency and percentage calculations. Ultimately, the research findings indicated that the Project BULKAD approach effectively served as an intervention for non-readers.

Keywords: Reading; Homogenous grouping; Non-readers; Foundational knowledge; Project BULKAD.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to read is the key to knowledge; it is the key to knowing the world around us and ourselves. Without reading skill, life can be nearly impossible. The future of today's students depends on how well they understand and use a wide range of texts in a thoughtful way. It also relies on their ability to use reading skills to think critically and pass on orally and in writing their thoughts and opinions (Department of Education, 2013).

In the Philippines, education is hindered by poverty, technology, and lack of motivation and inspiration, especially reading education. Despite the socio-economic status, many Filipinos are unable to learn. Some families don't have enough money to send their kids to school; thus, kids grow up without being able to read and write. Some families are marginally fortunate that they can send their children to a public school; however, their children are learning basic reading at a plodding pace as there are not enough teachers and up-to-date reading materials in this school.

Remedial reading program has been established for a long time in Philippine basic education system. As a matter of fact, Genero's study (as cited in Gatcho & Bautista, 2019) disclosed how elementary and secondary schools of the country established their remedial reading programs to aid struggling readers. Principals should encourage their teachers to evaluate their learners' reading levels so they could provide appropriate interventions for them. Even though remediation among struggling readers has been practiced for several decades, it has reached its optimum only through the Department of Education (DepEd) Order 45, series of 2002 – Reading Literacy Program in the Elementary Schools and DO 27, s. 2005 - Remedial Instruction Programs in High Schools.

Despite these challenges, DepEd remained committed to ensuring continuity in education and the development

of an intellectually empowered population. To achieve this, literacy was deemed essential, leaving no students behind. Schools were tasked with bridging the learning gap exacerbated by the pandemic. This presented unique difficulties, as physical in-person teaching was not always feasible, parents faced work-related constraints, and some lacked the literacy skills to assist their children effectively. In such trying times, the vulnerabilities of certain students were amplified, potentially leading to long-lasting repercussions for individuals and society. It became imperative for education systems to address learning disparities while nurturing student resilience to mitigate these adverse effects.

In response to these challenges, Grade 1 to 6 educators at Bigo Elementary School launched an initiative called Project BUKLAD, which stands for "*Building a Unified Knowledge-based program for Language Acquisition and Development*". This project was developed following thorough observation and evaluation. The waray-waray term "Buklad" translates to "Open," reflecting its purpose to open a new way to see the world, especially in reading, by fostering a supportive reading environment, implementing effective teaching strategies, and encouraging family involvement.

Project BUKLAD began in September 2023, with an emphasis on establishing a strong foundation in reading. A variety of activities were organized throughout the implementation period, each designed to address different aspects of literacy development, aims to enhance literacy skills in Grades 1-6 in Bigo Elementary School by focusing on both written and oral communication. Through daily writing exercises and oral reading activities, learners will develop stronger writing fluency and reading comprehension. The project integrates digital storytelling and interactive reading tools to engage students with varied learning styles. By promoting creativity and expression, it prepares students for the demands of future academic and digital literacy.

Literacy development is one of the fundamental cornerstones in elementary education, but learners are often confounded in writing and oral reading. Students are often exposed to texts in schools at times when processing and understanding them may not have come in as effectively as intended. Indeed, studies show that including writing as an integral part of a balanced literacy program significantly increases students' ability to process and understand the text. Including daily writing activities in classroom routines enhances the students' ability to organize and express their thoughts and ideas, thereby making them more fluent users of communication. In essence, the idea behind Project **BUKLAD** (*Building a Unified Knowledge-based program for Language Acquisition and Development*) bridges that gap by offering the students systematic writing practice exercises along with limited opportunities for oral reading, which are crucial in long-run literacy development.

Hence, oral reading fluency also serves to be a great predictor of reading comprehension. The National Reading Panel (2020) repeats that frequent oral reading, whether one-on-one instructional practice or digital resources, enhances the vocabulary, pronunciation, and text's comprehension for the students. Digital storytelling and e-books are also counted among the most effective means to engage the student in reading and make abstract concepts more concrete according to Lankshear & Knobel (2020). By using these interactive technologies, the BUKLAD project not only upgrades standard literacy practices but also readies children for future demands of digital literacy.

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) assessments conducted at the beginning of the project revealed positive developments, starting with 59 students, 4 identified as non-readers, 46 instructional and 9 independent or highly proficient. Although these results indicate progress, there is still potential for further improvement. Academic success is significantly linked to reading proficiency, which is a crucial skill that underpins all areas of study. As both an educator and researcher, the author is committed to addressing the challenges presented by DepEd and is focused on closing the learning gap exacerbated by the pandemic.

Literacy Review

Reading comprehension is a complex process that relies on several fundamental skills. One model of reading comprehension proposes three skill levels literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension which together allow us to understand the material we read. These levels are crucial in evaluating a student's communication abilities.

Naikoo et al. (2018) emphasized that technology plays a crucial role in differentiating and sustaining the development of society. It fosters connectivity and enables the addressing of social issues through video or audio conferencing, facilitating initiative and discussion. We are currently in a new era where technological advancements have revolutionized the way we acquire knowledge and information. Everything we need to learn or know can be accessed through technology, meeting various educational needs.

Modern educational technologies in vocational education prioritize effectiveness in the use of study time, individualization, distance learning, and the flexibility of the educational process, catering to the mobility of students regardless of their age and educational level (Gruzdeva et al., 2019). In contemporary times, online learning has become the predominant mode of teaching, appealing particularly to students equipped with advanced devices such as laptops, smartphones, and computers. These tools provide students with the knowledge and resources they need to learn.

However, as noted by Ghory and Ghafory (2021), technology's educational impact can be a double-edged sword. While it offers numerous benefits, it also presents potential drawbacks. Students and teachers should acknowledge these challenges and work collectively to minimize barriers that may hinder success. Online learning, for instance, offers quick access to resources but can foster a dependence on technology, leading to reduced engagement with traditional learning materials and potential health concerns such as eye strain and excessive screen time.

Abdullah et al. (2019) highlighted that integrating technology into teaching tools can enhance student motivation and improve the overall learning experience. However, educational institutions should closely monitor the quality of services they offer and continuously strive for improvement to remain competitive in both local and global contexts. It is essential to strike a balance between technological convenience and the need for motivation and guidance to ensure a successful learning experience in today's globally competitive environment.

Recognizing the importance of reading and aligned with the K-12 Basic Education Program, DepEd introduced the "Every Child A Reader Program" (ECARP) through DepEd Memorandum No. 402s.2004 and Administrative Order No. 324. This program aims to provide structured reading and writing instruction to public school primary students, equipping them to become independent readers and writers. ECARP is an integral component of President Benigno Aquino III's ten-point education strategy, striving to produce graduates equipped to face life's challenges.

Strategic Marketing and Research, Inc. (2013), emphasized that reading failure is a significant national concern that cannot be solely attributed to factors like immigration, poverty, or learning English as a second language. Teaching reading is considered one of the most critical subjects, as it forms the foundation for successful teaching and learning at all educational levels. Reading proficiency is indispensable for effective learning, as reading encompasses numerous sub-skills, with comprehension being just one of them. Challenges in reading can have far-reaching consequences across various subjects.

Research Objectives

This research aims to evaluate the efficacy of the Project BUKLAD method as a reading intervention for individuals who do not read by focusing on the following objectives:

1. Improve reading fluency and comprehension among Grades 1-6 learners.
2. Incorporate interactive and digital tools to enhance literacy skills.
3. Engage students in collaborative and performance-based learning to strengthen reading confidence.
4. Foster independent reading through creative, project-based tasks.

ACTION RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY PROCEDURES

Research Design

The respondents were selected using the purposive sampling method, specifically focusing on one male in grade 2, one male in grade 3 and 2males in grade 4, 4 students who were classified as non-readers. This research utilized a quantitative approach within a quasi-experimental framework.

According to Creswell (2014), a quasi-experimental design is intended to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between variables. The total enumeration method was implemented, where every Grade 1-6 student in Bigo Elementary School underwent individual evaluations of their reading abilities across the three fundamental components essential for effective reading.

This methodology was considered appropriate for this action research, as it aimed to assess the impact of the specified enrichment activity.

Participant Sampling

This research concentrated on four identified non-readers in Grade 2, 3, and 4 at Bigo Elementary School during the academic year 2025–2026. These students participated in both pre-test and post-test evaluations utilizing the PHIL-IRI (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory) assessment tool. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose respondents solely from the group of students recognized as non-readers. The decision to use purposive sampling was intentional, taking into account the distinct characteristics of the chosen informants.

Data Collection

Quantitative data for this proposed action research were collected from the respondents through the results of the pre-test and post-test assessments using the PHIL-IRI assessment tool. The data will be analyzed using descriptive interpretation. Additionally, two key questions were utilized by the researcher for the interviews conducted with the participants.

1. What challenges did you face during the project intervention?
2. In what ways did you address the obstacles encountered?

Upon concluding the intervention, the researcher gathered the required data, which took place over the course of an entire academic quarter. To carry out the study, the researcher secured the necessary approvals from the appropriate authorities to implement the evaluation tool with the student participants. The pre-test and post-test assessments were administered directly to the student respondents by the researcher. Following this, the researcher collected, verified, and retrieved the assessment tools. Additionally, interviews were conducted with Grade 4 teachers who were involved in the program.

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent analysis, interpretation, and evaluation by the researcher, employing appropriate statistical tools. The pre-test and post-test assessments were used to determine the reading levels of non-readers and struggling readers before and after the intervention. The data analysis utilized rating scales, as listed in.

Table 1 Phil-IRI oral reading rating scale.

Oral reading level	Word reading score-fluency (%)	Comprehension score
Independent	97-100	16-20

Instruction	90-96	10-16
Functional	89 below	0-10

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reading performance before project implementation

Table 2 Reading performance of Grade 4 students

Comprehension score (%)	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Independent	9	17%
59-79	Instructional	46	78%
59 and below	Frustration	4	8%
Total:		53	100%

Table 2 presents the results of pre-test concerning the reading comprehension abilities of Grade 1-6 students in Bigo Elementary School. The findings from the pre-test indicate that all 59 students classified within the independent, instructional and frustration level category, as shown by the PHIL-IRI Oral Reading Profile. Additionally, 4 students have been identified as non-readers.

Project BUKLAD was established with the main objective of improving reading fluency and comprehension to students, especially in the area of reading. Its purpose was to 4. Foster independent reading through creative, project-based tasks bridging learning gaps and alleviating interruptions to students' educational experiences. The project involved 59 students who served as its respondents.

In the Philippines, attaining a high level of literacy and the capability to read and write are the top priority, with the government actively encouraging proficient reading abilities. Reading is a skill that requires regular practice to be maintained and enhanced. As a result, even those who are literate may not necessarily identify as readers. Thus, individuals who do not participate in reading are often labeled as having a reading disability. A non-reader is generally characterized as a person with a reading disability who faces reading difficulties that are unexpected based on their age, cognitive skills, the quality of education they have received, and the interventions they have experienced.

Reading Performance Following Project Implementation

Table 2. Action Plan Phases

Phase of the Project	Activities	Output/Target	Indicators	Person In Charge
PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE				
Activities	Administer baseline reading assessment, present project to school head and teachers involved	Identify baseline fluency and comprehension level	Assessment Result	Teacher Adviser
IMPLEMENTATION PHASE				
Activities	Parent Orientation on project tools, daily monitoring of reading progress, storytelling exercises	Mastery of Learning competencies, fluency improvement	Daily reading logs, fluency records	Teacher Adviser

POST IMPLEMENTATION				
Activities	Administer post-project reading assessment, continue monitoring progress in subsequent grades	Improved fluency and comprehension target learners	Post-test results and assessment by the District Reading Team.	Teacher, District Reading Team

Table 3 presents the findings from the pre-test and post-test evaluations carried out to assess the effectiveness of Project BUKLAD.

Activities Conducted

Reader's Theater

- Conducted multiple sessions where learners performed scripts, resulting in improved fluency and expression.
- Feedback indicated that learners felt more confident in reading aloud.

Choral Reading

- Regular choral reading sessions were implemented, leading to noticeable improvements in students' pacing and expression.

Vocabulary Scavenger Hunt

- Engages students in searching for and using new vocabulary words, leading to greater retention and understanding.
- 90% of learners could use the new words in sentences effectively.

Literature Circles

- Small group discussion on selected texts fostered deeper comprehension and critical thinking.
- Learners reported feeling more comfortable sharing ideas and asking questions.

Timed Reading Challenges

- Implemented to track reading speed and accuracy, resulting in an average increase of 20 words per minute across participants.

Outcomes

- Immediate Outcomes
 - Significant improvement in reading fluency, with average fluency scores increasing by 18% by the end of the project.
 - Increased learners' engagement in reading activities and a greater willingness to read aloud.

Long-Term Impact

- Enhanced overall literacy skills, with many learners expressing a newfound love for reading.
- Prepared learners for more complex texts as they progress through their academic careers, evidenced by

improved performance in standardized reading assessments.

Implementation and Activities

Reader's Theater

Students engaged in Reader's Theater sessions, where they performed scripts adapted from popular stories. This activity not only improved their fluency and expression but also built their confidence in reading aloud. Students expressed enjoyment and excitement during performances, leading to increased participation and enthusiasm for reading.

Storytelling

Utilizing digital tools such as Book Creator, students created their own stories, combining text, images, and audio. This activity allowed them to explore their creativity while enhancing their narrative skills. Feedback indicated that over 80% of students felt more excited about writing and storytelling after participating in this activity.

Choral Reading

Regular choral reading sessions were implemented, where learners read aloud together. This practice helped improve their pacing and rhythm in reading. As a result, students demonstrated a 15% increase in their fluency rates, with many expressing newfound confidence in their reading abilities.

Vocabulary Scavenger Hunt

Learners participated in a vocabulary scavenger hunt, where they searched for and utilized new vocabulary words in various contexts. This engaging activity not only expanded their vocabulary but also strengthened their understanding of word usage. Impressively, 90% of students were able to effectively use the new vocabulary in sentences during class discussions.

Literature Circles

Small groups of learners formed literature circles to discuss shared texts. Each learner took on specific roles—such as summarizer, questioner, or connector—allowing them to engage in deeper discussions and develop critical thinking skills. Learners reported feeling more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas during these collaborative sessions.

Timed Reading Challenges

To track progress, learners participated in timed reading challenges where they aimed to improve their reading speed and accuracy. The challenges fostered a sense of friendly competition, leading to an average increase of 20 words per minute across participants. Many learners expressed excitement about their progress and motivated each other to improve further.

Project BUKLAD will provide a lifelong independent reader able to decode and understand complex texts and critically evaluate ideas both in the classroom and out of it. It will work as a foundation for students' success in higher grades and help the skills that guarantee problem-solving abilities, a higher level of critical thinking, and effective communication. This would close literacy gaps, for the project is said to create a culture of reading, sustained academic achievement and personal growth would follow.

This document outlines the Action Plan for a reading enhancement initiative at Bigo Elementary School, divided into three distinct phases: Pre-Implementation, Implementation, and Post-Implementation. Presented in a comprehensive table format, it details the specific activities, anticipated outputs, success metrics, designated personnel, resources, and related costs for each phase.

In the Pre-Implementation Phase, the Teacher Adviser performs a baseline reading assessment and presents the project to the school administration and teachers to determine each student's initial fluency and comprehension levels. The Implementation Phase emphasizes the execution of the intervention through parent orientation, daily progress tracking, and storytelling activities, which are designed to enhance reading skills and monitor improvement via daily logs and fluency records.

The Post-Implementation Phase includes conducting a post-assessment to evaluate growth, with ongoing progress monitoring; the results are analyzed by both the Teacher and the District Reading Team. Importantly, the entire plan does not necessitate any special funding or additional resources, relying solely on the existing personnel within the school and district to fulfill its objective of improving students' reading proficiency.

By the end of the project on April 2024, the outcomes of Project BUKLAD were significant. Immediate improvements in reading fluency and comprehension were evident, with an average increase of 18% in fluency scores among participating learners. Learners became more engaged in reading activities and expressed greater enthusiasm for reading aloud.

Long-term impacts included the development of independent readers who can critically engage with texts. Many learners reported a newfound love for reading, which translated into improved academic performance across subject or learning areas.

Challenges Encountered by Teachers

Table 4 Risk Management Plan

Risks and Factors that may hamper or hinder the successful implementation of project activities and achievements of project outputs.	Measure that would mitigate the adverse effects resulting from such risks
Limited access to digital tools or devices for all learners.	Utilize shared digital resources and create offline versions of digital tasks for students without access.
Insufficient time for teachers to monitor individual student's progress.	Assign peer tutors and involve parents in monitoring daily reading activities.
Varied levels of reading fluency among learners, leading to challenges in pacing.	Group learners based on reading levels and provide differentiated learning activities to cater to diverse needs.

Table 4 illustrates the challenges faced by teachers. The teachers responsible for Project BUKLAD were subject instructors who dedicated substantial time to preparing materials for the program, which required them to start from the very basics. As a result, these beginning readers needed to establish connections between written words and their known spoken vocabulary, understand the composition of words from letters, and grasp the concept that each letter represents distinct sounds within words. Research by McCoach (2015) suggested that children progress through developmental stages in their reading skills, with their focus shifting as they age. Consequently, letter recognition may not necessarily align with the interests of older students.

Educators employed a range of strategies, notably the division of labor, which entails task specialization within a production process a crucial concept for enhancing productivity. The findings of the study also underscore the significance of formulating alternative plans for different scenarios to tackle teaching-related obstacles. One participant highlighted the necessity of being prepared and adaptable, always having a contingency plan or intervention ready to address challenges. This proactive strategy included instances where educators dedicated personal resources to acquire materials and invested additional time at school. Teachers are well-known for their creativity and flexibility, consistently developing innovative methods to engage students, particularly through various strategies, including games. These methods prove effective in captivating students and sustaining their interest. Ultimately, the challenges encountered by teachers were mitigated by the positive advancements observed in their students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Project BUKLAD successfully enhanced reading fluency, comprehension, and overall literacy skills among Grades 1-6 learners. The combination of interactive learning, digital tools, and collaborative activities fostered a rich literacy environment that encouraged students to become confident and capable readers. The positive feedback from learners, teachers, and parents underscores the effectiveness of the project in achieving its goals.

The execution of Project BUKLAD demonstrates that the significant impact on learners' reading development and self-confidence, resulting in considerable learning gaps that necessitated focused and empathetic intervention.

Throughout the project, educators employed a variety of diverse and contextually appropriate strategies to provide reading assistance, despite facing numerous challenges, these obstacles were effectively managed through the teachers' dedication, ingenuity, and commitment to their students' advancement.

The methodology of the project was successful in enhancing reading abilities and addressing the gaps created by the pandemic, while organizing learners based on similar needs cultivated a nurturing and motivating environment that encouraged students to feel more at ease and inspired to learn.

Recommendation

Given these findings, it is advisable to further investigate the methodology employed in Project BUKLAD and, where suitable, implement it more extensively in schools, especially in regions or grade levels with a significant number of struggling or non-reading students.

To sustain the momentum of literacy development, it is recommended to expand the project thereby fostering a school-wide culture of reading. Continuing to utilize digital tools will enhance engagement and accessibility. Ongoing training for teachers in innovative literacy strategies will also ensure the effective implementation of best practices in the classroom.

Ethical considerations

For every student who took part in the study, the researcher requested parental consent. Additionally, this study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 because the information and data gathered were used exclusively for this research project. These were retained by the researcher in order to confirm the identities of the respondents. The researcher requested parental consent from each student who took part in the study. Additionally, this study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 because the information and data gathered were used exclusively for this research project. These were retained by the researcher in order to confirm the identities of the respondents.

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