Gabay-Turo Project on Literacy and Numeracy: Process and Progress Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Foundational skills in literacy and numeracy are the essential cornerstone of every learner's educational journey. However, recent reports, such as the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II), highlighted that learners failed and struggled to engage with concepts at their level, which raised serious concerns about the state of foundational learning in the Philippines. As a response to these problems, the Gabay-Turo project, a local and school-based project aimed at enhancing learners' literacy and numeracy, was implemented in the district of Clarin, Bohol, Philippines. With this, the study aimed to determine the process and progress of the Gabay-Turo Project. Specifically, it sought to assess its progress, determine the pressing issues, problems, and challenges, and provide intervention schemes and programs based on the identified problems. Employing a phenomenological methodology, a qualitative design was used in this study. Participants included 8 teachers and 59 students of Bonbon Elementary School who had direct experience with the program. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and observations, complemented by focus group discussions with the teachers and students. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, strategies such as triangulation were implemented. Results revealed that there is a substantial improvement in the learners' literacy and numeracy skills, with good practices such as conducting pre- and post-assessments, regular monitoring and evaluation sessions, as well as a year-end culmination to keep track of the ongoing project. Thus, the project remained adaptable. However, beneficiaries faced problems related to a lack of continuity in tutorial classes, an inadequate tutor-tutee ratio, discrepancies between school calendars, and insufficient instructional materials for effective tutoring. To address these issues, the project implementers may enforce continuous tutorial sessions across all grades, establish a 1:1 tutor-tutee ratio, coordinate school calendars, and ensure the provision of instructional materials. Addressing the recommendations could enhance the overall impact of the Gabay-Turo Project on student learning outcomes.

Keywords: literacy and numeracy challenges, extension project, tutorial, Department of Education, EDCOM II

INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in numeracy and literacy is crucial for academic success and lifelong learning. These foundational skills are essential for students to navigate everyday challenges and seize opportunities in both their personal and professional lives. However, many students continue to face significant barriers that hinder their ability to develop these skills, resulting in a widening achievement gap. In response to this urgent need, various educational initiatives have been implemented to support at-risk students, one of which is the GabayTuro Project.

The Gabay-Turo Project was designed as an intervention program aimed at enhancing the numeracy and literacy skills of students. By providing targeted tutoring and personalized support, the project seeks to equip learners with the essential skills required for academic achievement and future success. Despite the program's potential, its effectiveness remains largely unexamined, necessitating a comprehensive evaluation to assess both its implementation processes and the progress made by participating students. The Gabay-Turo Project was

launched in the year 2022 and started in the Academic Year 2023-2024. This is a five-year project plan of the BISU- Clarin College of Teacher Education, specifically the Bachelor of Elementary Education program.

This study is anchored on the provision of Section 2 of Republic Act No. 9155, Philippines, which hereby declares the policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality basic education and to make such education accessible to all by providing all Filipino children a free and compulsory education in the elementary level and free education in the high school level. Likewise, it is hereby declared the policy of the State that every graduate of basic education shall be an empowered individual who has learned, through a program that is rooted in sound educational principles and geared towards excellence.

Globally, the development of pupils' basic skills as contained in national curricula has not been achieved, since 40 percent of primary school learners cannot comprehend English words well (Provost, 2014). According to UNESCO (2014), an estimated 250 million students are unable to understand simple arithmetic calculations and read simple words in their grade-level English.

In the international assessment, such as the PISA 2022, results revealed that only 24% of Filipino students who took the PISA exam reached basic reading proficiency. This means that just 24% of students in the Philippines can, at the very least, "identify the main idea in a text of moderate length" and reflect on the purpose and meaning of what they are reading. Furthermore, it reveals that more boys also scored lower than girls in reading, with 82% of male students scoring below level 2 proficiency in reading compared to 71% of girls. In addition, over 52% of Grades 1-3 learners assessed via the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) are not yet grade-level ready. Moreover, grade 3 learners are estimated by 1-2 years behind in literacy and numeracy, as reported by EDCOM II.

With this, the Gabay-Turo Project was carried out to alleviate persistent challenges in literacy and numeracy, centering on tutorial classes, evaluating their implementation, monitoring learners' progress, and exploring the interventions' impact on student learning. Through monitoring and evaluation, as well as process and progress evaluation, critical decisions are made out of information generated in concluding to have an updated program in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability (Anicet and Approdis, 2017), to reveal that learners' performance in the levels of literacy and numeracy (Ouko, 2015). Furthermore, an intervention program must be implemented in a cohesive and integrated, and synergistic manner, focusing on interventions identified (Crouch and Destefano, 2017), as cited by (Atuhurra & Kaffenberger, 2022), improving classroom teaching, assessments of learners' activities, and addressing critical elements in literacy and numeracy skills (Kim et al., 2016).

While many studies have examined tutorial programs, few have explored their impact on literacy and numeracy in early-grade learners as part of a project-based intervention. These gaps in literacy and numeracy skills have not been fully explored by other researchers in grades 1-3, hence the need for the study.

Thus, this study primarily aimed to conduct a thorough process and progress evaluation of the GabayTuro Project, focusing on key elements such as the project's progress, issues, and problems faced by the learners and teachers in the project. Additionally, this evaluation examined the academic outcomes of the students involved, identifying the project's strengths and areas for improvement. Ultimately, this evaluation not only aims to improve the Gabay-Turo Project but also to advance the collective efforts to address the literacy and numeracy crisis faced by students in today's educational landscape. By exploring these dimensions, the study sought to provide actionable insights that can enhance the program's design and effectiveness.

This study aimed to determine the progress and process of the Gabay-Turo Project, an intervention program focused on enhancing numeracy and literacy skills among students of Bonbon Elementary School S.Y 2023-2024. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the progress of the Gabay-Turo Project?
2. What are the learners' and teachers' issues, problems, and challenges encountered during the conduct of the Gabay-Turo Project?
3. What intervention scheme may be applied based on the revealed challenges?

METHODOLOGY

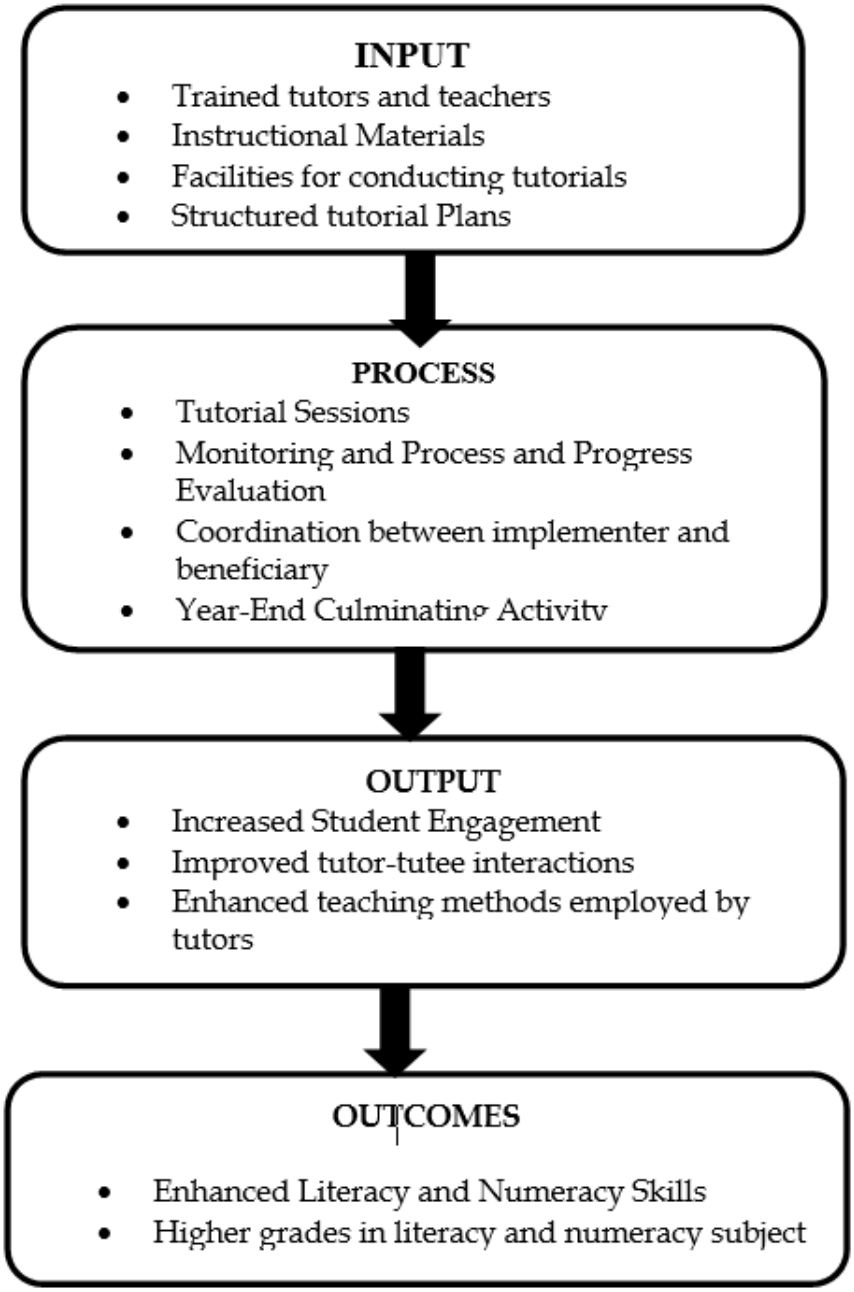

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Design

This study was originally designed as a mixed-methods inquiry. Quantitative data on learners' reading and numeracy performance were collected through standardized pre- and post-assessments; however, this paper focuses exclusively on the qualitative findings derived from interviews with teachers and non-reader learners. Employing a phenomenological methodology, this study sought to understand the lived experiences of teachers and students involved in the project. This study adopts a purely qualitative design aimed at understanding learners' and tutors' experiences of reading and numeracy development rather than measuring performance gains through quantitative assessments or score comparisons.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Participants were the eight (8) teachers and fifty-nine (59) learners, from grades 1 until grade 6, of Bonbon Elementary School who had direct experience with the program. The only inclusion criteria for the selection of the participants of this study are that they were identified as non-readers, emergent readers, and struggling learners in Mathematics as a result of the standardized assessments namely, ELLNA (Early Language, Literacy

and Numeracy Assessment), EGMA (Early Grade Mathematics Assessment), EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment), and Phil-IRI (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory). For the 8 teachers, they were selected for the sole reason that they have daily direct contact with the participants from the start and during the entire duration of the project.

Research Instrument

The researchers made use of researcher-made questionnaires derived from the objectives of this study. These questions were used during the interview and focus-group discussions.

Data Gathering Procedure

In order to effectively evaluate the progress of the Gabay-Turo Project focused on enhancing literacy and numeracy, a multifaceted approach was employed.

For the quantitative part, this begins with pre- and post-assessments that utilize standardized tests and tailored evaluations to measure improvements in students' reading, writing, and mathematical skills. The data used for determining and selecting the study participants were obtained from national assessment results, which included the ELLNA (Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment), EGMA (Early Grade Mathematics Assessment), EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment), and Phil-IRI (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory). These assessments were conducted by the Bonbon Elementary School teachers. For the post-assessment, learners' performance data in English (literacy) and Mathematics (numeracy) were used to determine changes in their reading and numeracy skills following the intervention implemented by the project tutors. Regular monitoring of attendance and participation in tutorial sessions and individualized progress reports from tutors.

For the qualitative part, which is the focus of this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of teachers and the learner participants. Interviews focused on the progress of the project, learners' and teachers' issues, problems, and challenges met during the conduct of Gabay-Turo Project. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable and familiar setting, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. The data were then organized and analyzed thematically to identify patterns, insights, and shared meanings regarding participants' experiences.

Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data, allowing for the identification of key themes related to learners' and teachers' experiences, which can provide rich and detailed data (Cernasev & Axon, 2023). The raw responses were recorded by the researchers through an audio device and field notes. Data were then manually transcribed. Then, the coding phase was done, and key themes were determined and generated. Manual analysis, from transcription to theme generation, was utilized due to the fact that one of the researchers is a language expert.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, strategies such as triangulation using multiple data sources and member checking, sharing the findings with participants for verification were implemented. This comprehensive research design facilitated a rich understanding of the factors influencing the perceived effectiveness of the Gabay-Turo Project, ultimately contributing valuable insights to enhance educational interventions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations with informed consent obtained from all participants and confidentiality maintained throughout the study to protect their privacy. No monetary compensation was also involved in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interview, observation, and focus group discussion. The triangulation of data from teacher interviews, student focus groups, and observational assessments provides a comprehensive overview of the persistent problems within the Gabay-Turo Project.

Progress of the Gabay-Turo Project

The Gabay-Turo Project focused on enhancing literacy and numeracy, wherein a multifaceted approach was employed. It was found that there is a substantial improvement in the literacy and numeracy of the learners and that the project remains adaptable based on the data gathered. In addition, the Gabay-Turo Project possesses good practices as generated from the responses of the participants, which include the conduct of pre- and postassessments, regular monitoring of attendance and participation in tutorial sessions, the conduct of annual assessments, and a substantial improvement in the learners' literacy and numeracy skills.

Theme 1: Substantial Improvements in Learners' Literacy and Numeracy Skills

The assessments conducted before and after the tutorial sessions revealed substantial improvements in students' reading, writing, and mathematical abilities, with students showing marked gains in standardized test scores and classroom performance. Of the 59 struggling learners that were identified in the pre-assessment, only 1 of them remained in the emergent level. The rest have substantially improved, yet monitoring is still needed. Feedback from tutors and teachers highlighted a positive shift in students' understanding of core concepts, fostering an encouraging learning environment. Though there is a problem of continuity when it comes to the tutorial classes, as discussed in the next section, high attendance rates are still evident during the actual sessions. This indicated strong student engagement, as learners report increased motivation and confidence in their academic skills.

Theme 2: Good Practices

The participants expressed satisfaction with the effective and successful implementation of the GabayTuro Project, recognizing the impact it brought to the beneficiaries.

Sub-theme 1: The Conduct of Pre- and Post-Assessments

The participants agreed that one of the good practices of the Gabay-Turo Project is the conduct of the pre- and post-assessments. This helps in the progress of the project.

This begins with pre- and post-assessments that utilize standardized tests and tailored evaluations to measure improvements in students' reading, writing, and mathematical skills. This was done by Bonbon Elementary School Teachers through ELLNA (Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment), EGMA (Early Grade Mathematics Assessment), EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment), and Phil-IRI (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory).

Sub-theme 2: Regular Monitoring of Attendance and Participation in Tutorial Sessions

A unanimous agreement from the teachers and learners noted that regular monitoring of attendance and participation in tutorial classes was beneficial to them.

Regular monitoring of attendance and participation in tutorial sessions provided insights into student engagement (Burke et al., 2013), while individualized progress reports from tutors offered detailed feedback on each learner's strengths and areas for growth (Young et al., 2021). Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions with students and interviews with tutors and teachers, which helped identify the perceived benefits and challenges of the program.

Sub-theme 3: The Conduct of Annual Assessment

Conducting a yearly assessment to compile and analyze all gathered data was done to inform necessary adaptations to the program, ensuring that it continues to meet the evolving needs of students and effectively enhances their literacy and numeracy skills. This annual assessment provides feedback and enhances the program's effectiveness (Bagherzadeh et al., 2024).

The project remained adaptable, using ongoing evaluations and feedback to refine its approaches, ultimately contributing to the successful enhancement of literacy and numeracy skills within the community.

Challenges, Issues, Problems Faced by the Learners and Teachers

The findings from the Gabay-Turo Project revealed several critical challenges that align with existing literature on educational interventions and tutoring programs. These challenges, specifically the lack of continuity in tutorial activities, inadequate tutor-tutee ratios, discrepancies in school calendars, and insufficient instructional materials, are well-documented factors that can significantly impact the effectiveness of educational programs aimed at enhancing literacy and numeracy skills.

Theme 1: Lack of Continuity in Tutorial Activities

A central theme emerging from the evaluation of the Gabay-Turo Project is the lack of continuity in tutorial activities across all grades. This issue is primarily attributed to the presence of other programs and activities that interfere with scheduled tutorial sessions. The inconsistency in tutoring leads to fragmented learning experiences for students, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the intervention. Continuous engagement is crucial for building and reinforcing literacy and numeracy skills; therefore, addressing this lack of continuity is essential for improving overall educational outcomes.

Data collected from both teachers and students consistently indicated a significant lack of continuity in tutorial activities across all grades. Teachers noted that conflicting school activities and other programs often led to missed tutorial sessions, which was corroborated by students who expressed frustration over irregularity in their tutoring. Observational data further supported these findings, showing gaps in attendance and participation during tutorial sessions. This triangulation suggests that the lack of continuity is a pervasive issue that needs to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of the program.

Theme 2: Inadequate Ratio of Tutors to Tutees

The issue of inadequate tutor-tutee ratios was highlighted by both teachers and students. Teachers reported challenges in providing adequate support due to the high number of students assigned to each tutor, impacting their ability to cater to individual learning needs. Student feedback echoed this concern, with many expressing a desire for more personalized attention during sessions. Observational data showed instances where tutors struggled to engage with multiple students simultaneously, confirming the inadequacy of the current ratio. This triangulation emphasizes the need for a revised tutor-tutee ratio to improve the quality of support provided.

The inadequate ratio of tutors to tutees observed in the Gabay-Turo Project is consistent with findings from previous studies that highlight the significance of individualized attention in tutoring. Research indicates that lower tutor-tutee ratios are associated with improved academic outcomes, as they allow for more personalized instruction (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). When tutors are overwhelmed with too many tutees, the quality of support diminishes, leading to potential disengagement and frustration among students. This finding suggests a pressing need for the Gabay-Turo Project to reevaluate its staffing model to ensure that each student receives adequate attention and support. Teachers reported that this imbalance adversely affects the quality of support that students receive during tutoring sessions. When the number of tutees exceeds the capacity of available tutors, individual attention and personalized instruction diminish, making it challenging to meet the diverse needs of learners. This theme emphasizes the importance of ensuring sufficient staffing to provide effective tutoring, which is critical for fostering student success.

Theme 3: Discrepancies in School Calendars

Triangulated data revealed a significant discrepancy between the school calendars of the beneficiary and volunteer schools, disrupting the scheduling of tutorial sessions. Teachers highlighted this issue as a critical barrier to consistent tutoring, while students described how these disruptions affected their learning continuity. Observational notes indicated frequent cancellations or rescheduling of sessions due to calendar mismatches. The consistency of this issue across various data sources emphasizes the necessity for improved coordination between the involved schools.

The discrepancies between the school calendars of the beneficiary and volunteer schools present another significant challenge, which aligns with research on the logistical difficulties faced by collaborative educational

programs. According to previous studies, coordination between different educational institutions is essential for ensuring the smooth operation of intervention programs (Horn & Wilburn, 2019). The findings from the Gabay-Turo Project indicate that a lack of alignment can lead to missed opportunities for learning, ultimately affecting student outcomes.

This suggests the need for better communication and collaboration between schools to synchronize calendars and minimize disruptions to tutorial sessions. This misalignment disrupts the regularity of tutorial sessions, leading to missed opportunities for learning and progress assessment. The coordination of school calendars is vital for ensuring that tutoring sessions can be effectively scheduled and attended, thereby maximizing the impact of the program on students' literacy and numeracy development.

Theme 4: Lack of Instructional Materials

The lack of instructional materials was another issue consistently reported across data sources. Teachers articulated the difficulties in delivering effective lessons without appropriate resources, while students indicated that the absence of materials hindered their engagement and understanding of the content. Observational data confirmed the limited availability of instructional aids during sessions, further supporting this concern. This triangulation focuses the urgent need to address the material shortages to enhance the overall effectiveness of the project.

The lack of instructional materials is a well-established barrier to effective teaching and learning, as noted in various studies (Gordon et al., 2018). Research has consistently shown that access to appropriate instructional resources enhances student engagement and facilitates deeper understanding of content (Murray & Nussbaum, 2016). The findings from the Gabay-Turo Project reveal that insufficient materials hinder the tutors' ability to deliver effective lessons and engage students meaningfully. This focuses on the critical need for the project to invest in relevant instructional materials that align with curriculum goals and student learning needs.

Teachers noted that this shortage hinders effective teaching and learning, as appropriate resources are essential for delivering high-quality instruction. Instructional materials play a critical role in engaging students and facilitating their understanding of complex concepts in numeracy and literacy. Addressing this theme requires prioritizing the provision of relevant materials that align with the curriculum and support educators in their teaching efforts.

Literature suggests that regular and consistent tutoring is essential for effective learning (Bryk et al., 2015). Interruptions in tutoring sessions, often caused by conflicting activities and programs, can disrupt the learning process and hinder students' ability to build upon previously learned concepts. As noted by Topping (2015), continuity in tutoring is crucial for reinforcing skills and ensuring that students receive the support they need over time. The findings from the Gabay-Turo Project emphasized the importance of establishing a structured schedule that prioritizes tutorial sessions, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the program.

Intervention Scheme

The findings from the Gabay-Turo Project carry significant implications for practice and policy. To enhance continuity, program implementers must create a dedicated schedule for tutorial sessions that minimizes conflicts with other activities. This could involve working closely with school administrators to prioritize tutoring in the academic calendar.

Addressing the tutor-tutee ratio by increasing the number of tutors or reducing the number of tutees per tutor can significantly improve the quality of support provided. This could involve recruiting additional volunteers or training more tutors to meet the needs of the students effectively. Furthermore, building stronger partnerships and communication channels between the beneficiary and volunteer school is vital for aligning calendars and ensuring that tutorial sessions can be conducted as planned. Regular meetings to coordinate schedules can mitigate disruptions. The project should prioritize the procurement of appropriate instructional materials that align with the curriculum and the needs of the students. This could include textbooks, workbooks, digital resources, and hands-on materials that promote active learning.

The following is a structured intervention scheme for the project that serves as a response to the challenges encountered during its implementation.

Structured Intervention Scheme for the Gabay-Turo Project

Intervention Area	Activities	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Resources Needed	Expected Outcomes
Tutorial Sessions	Establish continuous tutorial sessions across all grades	Ongoing; start within 1 month	Project Coordinator, Teachers, Tutors	Scheduling, classroom space	Increased student engagement and learning outcomes.
Frequency of Sessions	Conduct weekly tutorial	Weekly; review after 1 month	Teachers, Tutors	Class schedules, attendance tracking	Improved consistency in attendance and participation.
Tutor-Tutee Ratio	Implement a 1:1 tutor-tutee ratio	Immediately	Project Coordinator, Tutors	Tutor recruitment, training materials	Personalized learning experiences for each student.
School Calendar Coordination	Align school calendars between beneficiary and volunteer schools to minimize scheduling conflicts.	Before program starts	Project Coordinator, School Administrators	Calendars, communication tools	Seamless scheduling of tutorials and increased participation.
Instructional Materials	Ensure instructional materials align with those used in regular classes.	Ongoing; review quarterly	Teachers, Project Coordinator, Tutors	Approved materials list, supplementary materials	Effective instruction tailored to students' literacy levels.

Implications of the Gabay-Turo Project to Education

The Gabay-Turo Project strengthens the foundation of quality education by addressing the learning gaps, such as in literacy and numeracy, early and equitably. By focusing on improving these skills of the learners, this project directly supports the development of functionally and numerate individuals, which is essential for lifelong learning. This also implies that the Department of Education (DepED) must prioritize early detection and intervention, provide differentiated instruction, teach learners at the right level, and utilize data-driven approaches. This also suggests that for sustained teacher capacity building, community involvement, the use of localization and contextualization strategies that meet learners where they are developmentally. In this way, it can be ensured that no learner is left behind.

RECOMMENDATION

1. To ensure the effective implementation of the Gabay-Turo Project, continuous tutorial sessions across all grades may be established, with teachers recommending daily sessions or three times a week.
2. A 1:1 tutor-tutee ratio is essential to provide individualized support tailored to each learner's needs.
3. To further enhance coordination, the school calendars of both beneficiary and volunteer schools must be aligned.
4. It is recommended that the instructional materials correspond with those used in regular classes.
5. The project remained adaptable; the implementers may still use ongoing evaluations and feedback to refine its approaches, ultimately contributing to the successful enhancement of literacy and numeracy skills within the community.
6. The project implementers and school beneficiaries may apply the crafted intervention scheme to ensure successful project flow.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from the Gabay-Turo Project reflect challenges that are prevalent in many educational interventions aimed at improving literacy and numeracy skills. By addressing the issues of continuity, tutor-tutee ratios, scheduling discrepancies, and resource availability, the project can enhance its effectiveness and positively impact student learning outcomes. The insights gained from this evaluation not only inform improvements within the Gabay-Turo Project but also contribute to the broader discourse on effective practices in educational interventions. To ensure the effective implementation of the Gabay-Turo Project, it is recommended that continuous tutorial sessions across all grades be established, with teachers recommending daily sessions or three times a week. In addition, a 1:1 tutor-tutee ratio is essential to provide individualized support tailored to each learner's needs. To further enhance coordination, the school calendars of both beneficiary and volunteer schools must be aligned. Moreover, it is recommended that the instructional materials correspond with those used in regular classes. The project remained adaptable, the implementers may still use ongoing evaluations and feedback to refine its approaches, ultimately contributing to the successful enhancement of literacy and numeracy skills within the community. The project implementers and school beneficiaries may apply the crafted intervention scheme to ensure successful project flow. This study was limited to learners who participated in the tutoring intervention during the project period; therefore, findings may not be generalized beyond similar contexts.

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