

## **STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC LEARNING TASKS AS INPUTS TO SCHOOL-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS**

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### **Abstract**

Geographic location and proximity of schools influence the academic performance of every single learner. Based on the gathered data of the district performance in the last three years, Science, English and Mathematics have become the least performed learning areas. Thorough analysis on the situation is deeply rooted to reading foundation and more so on comprehension aspects. Consistent with the Department of education thrusts in improving the learning output, strengthening the academic tasks has to be institutionalized. This research intends to **S**trengthen the basics of learning, reading, writing and arithmetic in creative approaches. **A**dopt extended learning time on academic tasks. **L**iberate teachers to ascertain desirable learning outcomes in every classroom instruction. **T**rack the learning approaches which define the need of diverse learners. The *Pretest-Posttest* methodology is utilized to measure the efficacy of the initiated school-based instructional program. This investigation follows the INPUT-PROCESS-OUTPUT conceptual model of continuous improvement and limited to the application of basics learning activities like daily spelling drill, involving basic sight and commonly encountered words in the curriculum, drill on four fundamental operations, on-the-spot test, vocabulary development and ladderized reading in grade one to six learners for the period of six months. (July-December). The increase of **102%** of independent readers over pretest-posttest of school years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 clearly indicates the efficacy of the school-based instructional program.

**Keywords:** Continuous improvement, Focused learning, Teaching-Learning process.

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### **1. Introduction**

The mission of public schooling is to offer and provide every child full and equal educational opportunities regardless of the background, education and income of the child's parents. The most fundamental and important issue facing schools are to teach reading and writing, particularly in the grades. Learners who struggle in vain with reading in the first grade soon decide that they neither like nor want to read (Juel, 1988). Even if they do not fall into any of the recognized at-risk categories, these children soon are at risk of poor literacy outcomes.

In less than two decades, in 1997, when the researcher joined the public school teaching, it has been the recurrent school activity to conduct the Philippine Reading Inventory known as (PHIL-IRI). This Informal Reading Inventory is an individually administered survey designed to determine the learner's reading instructional needs.

The geographic location of the schools and community is bagged as a certain factor to recognize at-risk readers. The major prevention strategy for these learners is excellent and directed instruction with the aid of school learning leaders.

This investigation is limited to strengthening the academic learning tasks vis-à-vis reading activities and vocabulary development as school-based instructional program.

## 2. Research Question:

What academic learning tasks can be initiated to improve the reading levels of public school elementary graders?

## 3. Review of Relevant Literature

Some literature and previous researches that have implications and relevance to this particular investigation are deemed relevant. In an online article of Jorin (2015) wrote many primary grade children in low income countries cannot read at grade level. The leading international assessment, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, indicates that low-income countries perform, on average, at the bottom 20 percent in the world. Since early grade reading competency is essential to success in later grades, children who do not learn to read at an early age will likely make limited educational progress throughout their lives. As a result, they will have limited economic and developmental opportunities. Similar ideas on how to produce meaningful, measurable improvement in elementary readers, programs suggested were; improve teaching techniques and learning materials; support regular assessment in partner countries to measure reading skills; maximize instruction time spent on basic skills in the classroom, especially reading; support instruction in native languages in early grades and promote parental and community involvement in early reading. Similarly, reading is regarded as a complex process and the prime objective of reading is comprehension. Dozens of studies have proved that reading strategies are effective in promoting comprehension (Paris, Lipson & Wixson, 1983; Carell et al., 1989; Anderson, 1991). Besides considerable research documents that good readers are strategic readers who use more strategies than poor readers as they read (O'Malley et al., 1985; Irwin & Bake, 1989; Dole et al., 1991). Therefore, teaching readers how to use specific reading strategies should be a prime consideration in the reading classroom (Okford, 1990; Anderson, 1999). In addition, reading teachers should be aware of the need for students to become effective strategy users through explicit teacher modeling in reading instruction (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Additionally, in support to measure a student's performance, the Individual Reading Inventory (IRI) will help determine the instructional level and the amount and kind of support the student is likely to need in *Invitations to Literacy*. The IRI will help the teacher assess a student's strengths and needs in these areas: word recognition, word meaning, reading strategies and comprehension. These are the very basic foundation of learning. Furthermore, Torgesen et al. (2007) emphasized the critical elements of an effective reading program in elementary school (a) consistently implemented, high quality initial classroom instruction and a follow-up small-group instruction that is well-differentiated according to student's needs (b) use of student performance data to guide instruction and allocate instructional resources (c) resources to provide interventions for struggling readers.

The commentary of Juan Miguel Luz, a former education undersecretary, poor school performance was traced to a dearth of student-friendly instructional materials in most schools; inadequate skills and formal mechanisms for teachers to handle children with learning difficulties (chief among these, poor reading); and the minimal participation of the local community (i.e. parents) in local school matters. Since Filipino schoolchildren have shown low levels of reading, science and math proficiency are similarly poor because much of what is learned is not self-driven or internalized; rather, it is passed from teacher to student in the old-school rote learning fashion.

The aforementioned literatures were deemed very useful as bases for this investigation since its purpose was explicit. The recommendations stated by Jorin obviously cited that the objective of initiated instructional program on the basics literacy learning-reading and writing was promptly dealt on. The thoughts of Luz, former Education Secretary further supports that "with poor

reading comes poor learning". From this "life-long learning" or "survival" skill, one can develop the ability to "learn for life." These are important elements for building individual competence and achievement that can be translated in the future into a competitive workforce. The action research is anchored in the cyclical process of action research of Stephen Kemmis.

#### 4. Methodology

The research utilized the cyclical process of action research by Stephen Kemmis. Individual reading inventory assessment conducted. Results collected, analyzed, reported and evaluated. The process also employed interview then conceptualized the action implemented.

Five (5) words from the Basic Sight words/commonly encountered words in English medium subjects were prepared weekly in chronological order.

Day 1 – Introduce the word through spelling test. Record the MPS

Day 2 – Let the pupils write each word five times. (This may be given as homework and check on Tuesday)

Day 3 – Let the pupils use the words in a sentence. Teachers may provide scrambled word for the sentence to be written by the pupils correctly. Check on Wednesday.

Day 4 - ask the pupils to give at least 3 words that rhyme to the given word. This may be given also as homework and check on Thursday.

Day 5 – Hold mastery test. Record the MPS. Compare the result. Use the formatted **Word Item Analysis Sheet**

In Science terms, word or spelling drill will be done 5-10 minutes before science class begins. Same strategy of MPS recording and Word Item analysis shall be used. Emphasis shall be done this way:

Day 1- Introduce 5 words or more per week depending on the concept `presented through spelling dictation test. Record the MPS.

Day 2-4- Give the meaning and examples through concept-map and other graphic organizers as applicable.

Day 5- Hold the mastery test. Use matching type or identification type of test with emphasis on writing, following direction and test taking preparation. Record MPS then compare.

The Phil-IRI (Philippine-Informal Reading Inventory) test is an oral test given to a pupil to measure reading ability. Five test questions are administered constituting the entire test.

**Independent reading level** – Pupils can read with ease and without the help or guidance of a teacher. In the Phil-IRI test, they can answer four or five correct answers (out of five test questions) and can read with rhythm, with a conversational tone, and can interpret punctuation correctly.

**Instructional reading level** – Pupils can profit from instruction. In the Phil-IRI test, they answer three out of five test questions correctly.

Frustrated reading level – Pupil gets two or below in the Phil-IRI test (out of five test questions). They show symptoms or behavior of withdrawing from reading situations and commit multiple types of errors in oral reading.

### 5. Data Analysis and Conclusion

Table 1: Baseline Data of Oral Reading Assessment and Inventory School Year 2013-2014

Reading Level	Pupil Tested		P	%	P	%	C	P
	P	P						
Frustrated reading level	2405	2393	1049	44%	373	16%	+676	64.4%
Instructed	2405	2393	890	37%	1156	48%	+266	29.8%

t i o n a l									
I n d e p e n d e n t	2 4 0 5	2 3 9 3	4 4 6	1 9 %	8 6 1	3 6 %	+ 4 1 5	9 3 . 0 4 %	
N o n - R e a d e r	2 4 0 5	2 3 9 3	2 0	. 8 0 %	3	. 1 3 %	+ 1 7	8 5 %	

Table 1 depicts the baseline data of elementary graders oral reading inventory in four levels. The data shows that 64% of the elementary graders have to be given attention to escalate to instructional levels.

Table 2: Comparative Analyses of Overall Reading Assessment Pretest-Posttest

R e a d i n g  L e v e l	SY 2013- 2014		SY 2014- 2015		Difference			
	P u p i l  T e s t e d	2 4 0 5	2 3 9 3	2 4 1 1	2 3 5 5			
F r u s t r a t i o n	1 0 4 9	3 7 3	1 2 7 4	4 9 4	- 6 7 6	6 4 %	- 7 8 0	6 1 %

<b>I n s t r u c t i o n a l</b>	<b>8 9 0</b>	<b>1 1 5 6</b>	<b>7 6 0</b>	<b>1 0 5 5</b>	<b>2 6 6</b>	<b>3 0 %</b>	<b>2 9 5</b>	<b>3 9 %</b>
<b>I n d e p e n d e n t</b>	<b>4 4 6</b>	<b>8 6 1</b>	<b>2 7 8</b>	<b>7 9 7</b>	<b>4 1 5</b>	<b>9 3 %</b>	<b>5 1 9</b>	<b>1 8 7 %</b>
<b>N o n  R e a d e r</b>	<b>2 0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9 9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>- 1 7</b>	<b>8 5 %</b>	<b>- 9 0</b>	<b>9 1 %</b>

The comparative analyses of the pretest and posttest oral reading assessment reveals the significant improvement in the overall reading levels among elementary graders as attested by the recorded decrease number in the frustration and great increase in the number of independent readers.

The recorded increase is extremely attributed to the initiated school-based instructional program consist modified spelling scheme, vocabulary development with creative reading activities. Dealing on the most complex issues in the classroom teaching, the passion of providing initial yet significant experience to gain meaningful and to progress in life, strengthening the academic learning tasks specifically –reading should be the collective concern of all.





## References

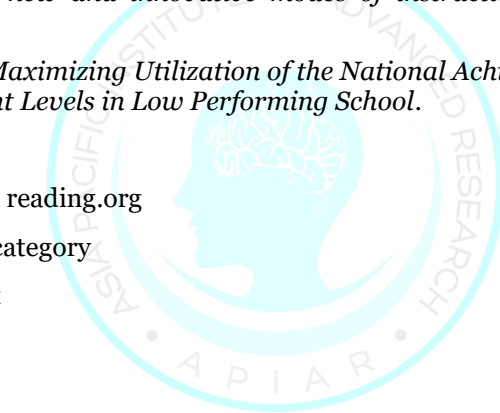
- i. Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F. & Osborn, J., 2001. *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read: National Institute for Literacy*.
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- iii. Torgesen, J., Houston, D. et al., 2007. *Teaching All Students to Read in Elementary School: A Guide for Principals*. Florida Center for Reading Research. Florida State University Unpublished
- iv. Anderson, 1991.
- v. Carell et al., 1989.
- vi. Paris, Lipson and Wixson, 1983.

### Other Resources:

- vii. DepEd Order #90, s.2009. *Revised Classroom Program that Reduces Teaching and Learning Time in the Elementary Level*.
- viii. R.A 9155- Section 7. *Authority, Accountability and Responsibility of School Heads. Letter E-No. 6 – Introducing new and innovative modes of instruction to achieve higher learning outcomes*.
- ix. DM No.160 s. 2012. *Maximizing Utilization of the National Achievement Test (NAT) Results To Raise the Achievement Levels in Low Performing School*.

### Online Resources:

- x. [www.childrenlearningreading.org](http://www.childrenlearningreading.org)
- xi. [www.k12reader.com/category](http://www.k12reader.com/category)
- xii. [www.thebottletree.net](http://www.thebottletree.net)



### Appendix

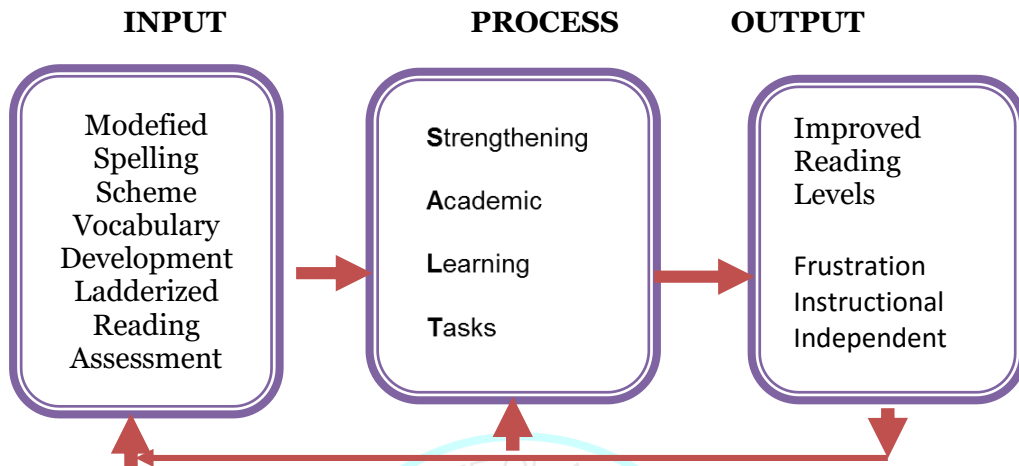


Fig 1: The Paradigm of the Study (IPO Model)

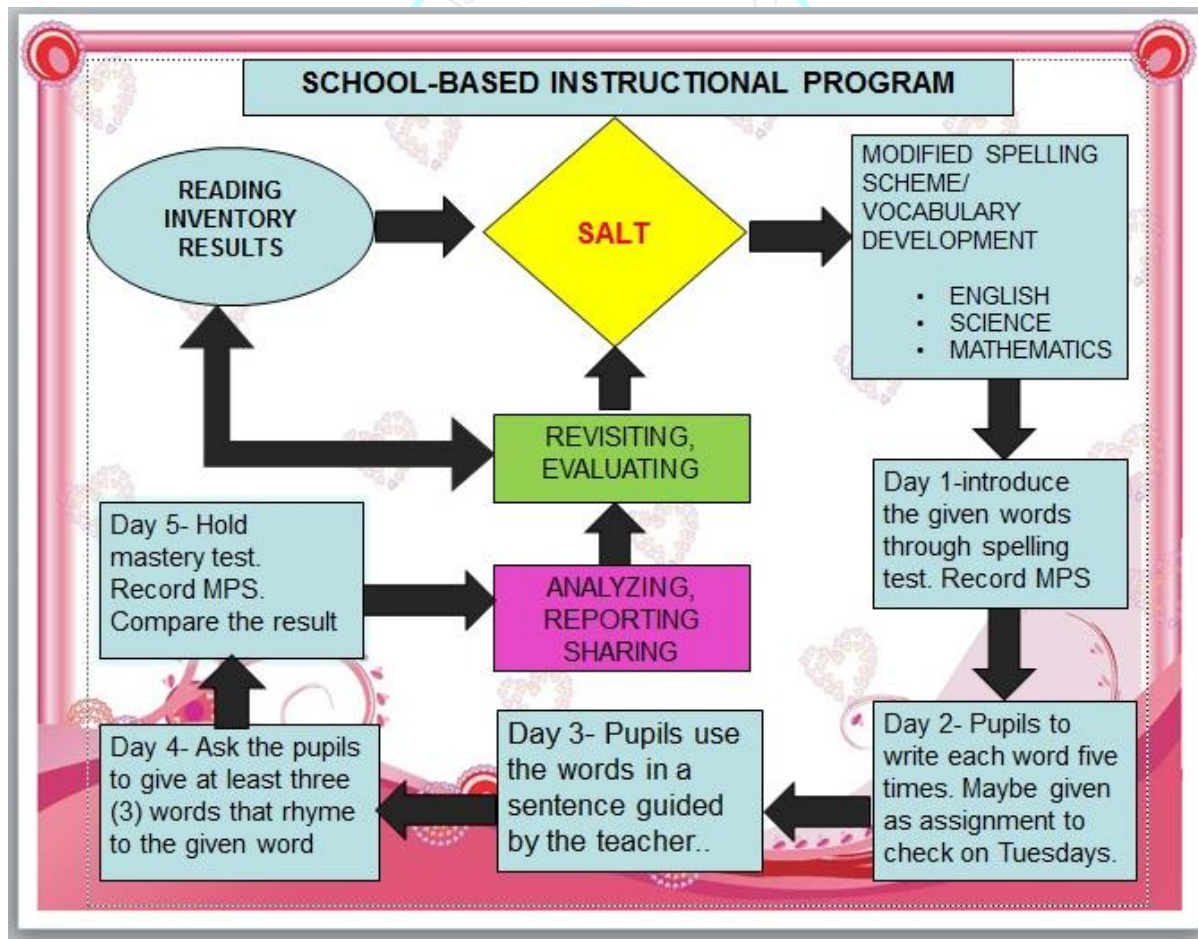


Fig 2: Instructional Program Cyclical Process

