

Exploring The Implementation of Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) In Palapag I: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Experiences And Perspectives

MARK JUPITER A. CAPATE
JOSE C. TENEDERO
JAYA MAE C. CAPANGPANGAN
ADELINA R. MEJOS
Northwest Samar State University
Calbayog City, Philippines
markjupiter.capate@deped.gov.ph

Abstract — This phenomenological study explored the experiences and perspectives of English teachers implementing the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) in Palapag I District, Northern Samar, Philippines. Using Colaizzi's phenomenological thematic analysis, ten purposively selected teachers with at least three years of teaching experience were interviewed to understand their implementation practices, lived experiences, challenges, and perceptions of program effectiveness. The study revealed five key implementation strategies: regular integration into instruction, remediation and support activities, reading assessment and monitoring, engagement strategies, and resource availability. Teachers experienced emotional and relational growth, adaptation to learner needs, challenges with workload, perceived positive impacts, and mixed feelings of productivity and frustration. Major challenges included teaching difficulties, resource limitations, student engagement issues, time constraints, and classroom management problems. Despite challenges, teachers perceived ECARP as effective in improving student reading performance, confidence, and engagement, though they emphasized the need for enhanced training and resources. The findings contribute to understanding literacy program implementation in developing contexts and inform the development of targeted professional development initiatives.

Keywords — *reading program, lived experience, challenges encounter, perceived impact, ECARP*

I. Introduction

The Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) represents a critical initiative in the Philippines' educational landscape, aimed at addressing persistent literacy challenges among elementary students. Reading proficiency serves as a foundational skill essential for academic success and lifelong learning, yet many Filipino students continue to struggle with basic reading competencies (Panela, 2025c). The implementation of structured reading interventions like ECARP has become increasingly important as educators seek effective strategies to improve literacy outcomes in diverse learning environments.

Reading is a multifaceted cognitive process involving understanding, interpreting, and relating text to context, significantly impacting academic achievement across all subject areas. Research consistently demonstrates a strong connection between reading ability and academic success, with proficient readers tending to perform better academically (Agustina & Anum, 2021; Erlina, 2019). The complexity of reading comprehension highlights the need for holistic approaches to reading instruction and support in educational settings, particularly for students facing socio-economic and linguistic challenges.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has recognized the critical importance of literacy development through various initiatives, including ECARP, which focuses on developing strong literacy and numeracy skills in Filipino children from Kindergarten to Grade 3. This program emphasizes a balanced approach to reading instruction, incorporating both word recognition and comprehension strategies while providing ongoing support for struggling readers and English language learners (Hiebert et al., 2014).

The significance of teacher experiences in program implementation cannot be overstated, as teachers serve as the primary agents of educational change. Panela (2025d) emphasizes the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives and challenges in implementing educational programs, particularly during times of systemic change. The success of literacy interventions depends heavily on teachers' ability to adapt their instructional practices, manage diverse learning needs, and maintain student engagement despite resource constraints and administrative pressures.

In the context of Palapag I District, Northern Samar, teachers face unique challenges in implementing ECARP, including limited resources, diverse student populations, and varying levels of institutional support. Understanding these challenges and the strategies teachers employ to overcome them is essential for improving program effectiveness and student outcomes. This study seeks to provide valuable insights into the real-world implementation of ECARP from the perspectives of those directly responsible for its delivery.

Literature Review

Educational programs aimed at improving literacy outcomes have gained significant attention in recent years, with researchers emphasizing the importance of evidence-based approaches to reading instruction. The implementation of structured reading programs requires comprehensive understanding of both pedagogical principles and practical considerations that influence program success.

Recent studies indicate that teaching and learning methods connecting reading to real-world contexts can significantly improve student engagement and reading comprehension skills (Baddane & Ennam, 2023). Second Language Learners encounter reading challenges influenced by cognitive, environmental, and emotional factors, requiring educators to implement targeted teaching strategies. The complexity of reading comprehension highlights the need for holistic approaches to reading instruction and support in educational settings (Sparks & Alamer, 2023).

The role of teachers in literacy program implementation has been extensively studied, with research consistently showing that teacher quality and instructional practices significantly impact student learning outcomes. Effective reading instruction requires teachers to possess deep understanding of reading development, including phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Teachers must also be equipped to address the diverse needs of students, particularly those struggling with reading difficulties. The Department of Education has implemented various initiatives to address literacy challenges, including the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP), which aims to ensure that every child can read and write at their grade level. ECARP focuses on designing, implementing, and monitoring early reading interventions while developing and administering reading assessments (DepEd Order No. 50, s. 2012). The program emphasizes balanced reading instruction and provides comprehensive training for teachers to enhance their literacy instruction capabilities.

Research on reading program implementation has identified several factors that influence program success. Telmo et al. (2020) found that while reading intervention programs yielded positive results in improving reading performance, challenges including lack of professional training for teachers, insufficient reading materials, limited community involvement, and inadequate time allocation hindered program effectiveness. These findings underscore the importance of addressing systemic barriers to successful program implementation. Studies examining teacher experiences with reading programs have highlighted both positive outcomes and significant challenges. Baldevarona and Writes (2020) identified three key themes in teachers' experiences: the importance of patience, time management, and parental involvement; the need for varied instructional approaches; and the effectiveness of these strategies in improving students' reading skills. These findings suggest that successful program implementation requires not only pedagogical knowledge but also emotional resilience and adaptive capacity.

The impact of resource availability on program implementation has been consistently documented in the literature. Panela (2025c) emphasizes the critical role of adequate resources and institutional support in enabling teachers to effectively implement educational programs. Limited access to appropriate reading materials, technology, and professional development opportunities can significantly hinder program effectiveness and teacher satisfaction. Recent research has also highlighted the importance of understanding teacher perspectives and experiences in program evaluation. Panela (2025d) notes that teachers' lived experiences provide valuable insights into program strengths and weaknesses, informing the development of more effective implementation strategies. This phenomenological approach to understanding program implementation allows for deeper exploration of the complex factors that influence teacher practice and student outcomes.

II. Methodology

This study employed a phenomenological research design, specifically utilizing Colaizzi's phenomenological approach, to explore the lived experiences of English teachers implementing ECARP in Palapag I District. Phenomenological research focuses on understanding participants' lived experiences by identifying essential themes from their perspectives, making it particularly suitable for capturing the nuanced experiences of teachers in educational settings.

Participants

The study was conducted in Palapag I District, Division of Northern Samar, with ten teachers purposively selected based on specific criteria. Participants were required to have at least three years of teaching experience and direct involvement in ECARP implementation. This selection criterion ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to the program and could provide informed perspectives based on substantial classroom experience.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews using an interview guide containing open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about teachers' experiences, challenges, and perceptions of ECARP. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted in a comfortable environment to encourage candid discussions. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

The interview guide focused on four main areas: (1) implementation of ECARP in daily classroom activities, (2) lived experiences of teachers implementing the program, (3) challenges encountered during implementation, and (4) teachers' perceptions of program effectiveness on student reading performance.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Colaizzi's phenomenological approach, involving systematic steps to identify themes and meanings from participants' responses. The process began with careful reading and re-reading of interview transcripts to ensure thorough understanding of the content. Significant statements related to the research questions were extracted from participants' responses and clustered into themes reflecting common patterns and insights. The analysis involved identifying formulated meanings from significant statements, organizing these into theme clusters, and synthesizing findings to provide comprehensive descriptions of teachers' lived experiences. The final step involved capturing the essence of teachers' perspectives while providing recommendations for improving program implementation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations included ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and protection of participants' rights. Prior to participation, teachers were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks, allowing them to make informed decisions about their involvement. Consent was obtained in writing, ensuring participants understood their voluntary participation and right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing data, and participants' identities were protected throughout the study.

III. Results and Discussion

Implementation of ECARP

The analysis revealed five primary strategies through which teachers implement ECARP: regular integration into instruction, remediation and support activities, reading assessment and monitoring, engagement strategies, and resource availability and support.

Regular Integration into Instruction. Teachers emphasized integrating ECARP into daily classroom activities as fundamental to enhancing students' reading skills. This integration occurred across various subjects, with teachers incorporating reading activities into science lessons through drills, flashcards, and oral reading of concepts. Teachers established consistent daily reading routines, including reading aloud, workshops, and independent reading opportunities. As one participant noted, "I integrate ECARP in my daily classroom activities through letting my learners read every detail of our class activity not only for activity completion purposes but for reading enhancement."

This cross-disciplinary approach aligns with research emphasizing the positive impact of rich literacy environments on student engagement and achievement (Duke & Cartwright, 2017). The integration of reading across various subjects fosters holistic learning experiences, making reading a valuable tool for understanding and exploring all subjects.

Remediation and Support Activities. Teachers conducted regular remediation classes featuring storytelling and comprehension activities to reinforce students' understanding and engagement. These sessions were carefully tailored to match individual student competencies and reading levels, ensuring personalized support for struggling readers. Teachers employed various approaches, including the Guided-Reading Method, phonics instruction, and the Marungko technique to address diverse learning needs.

The focus on individualized support demonstrates teachers' commitment to differentiated instruction and targeted interventions for struggling readers, aligning with research emphasizing the importance of personalized approaches to reading instruction (Tompkins, 2017). This finding reflects Panela's (2025c) emphasis on the importance of adaptive teaching strategies in addressing diverse student needs.

Reading Assessment and Monitoring. Teachers conducted regular assessments and observations of student reading performance as vital components of ECARP implementation. These activities were specifically designed to address challenges in reading comprehension, ensuring that reading difficulties were identified and managed effectively. Continuous monitoring allowed teachers to provide targeted support and track student progress over time.

This systematic approach to assessment aligns with research highlighting the importance of formative assessment in guiding instruction and providing targeted support for struggling readers (Wiliam, 2014). The emphasis on continuous monitoring reflects best practices in literacy instruction and demonstrates teachers' commitment to data-driven decision-making.

Engagement Strategies. Teachers implemented various engagement strategies, including questioning and connection-making activities, lecture-discussion formats with student participation, and adaptation of lessons to match individual reading levels. Read-aloud sessions during classroom discussions were used to motivate student participation and maintain active involvement in learning activities.

The use of interactive strategies demonstrates teachers' understanding of the importance of student engagement in literacy development. This approach aligns with research emphasizing the significance of learner-centered approaches and interactive strategies for improving reading comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Resource Availability and Support. Teachers utilized approved reading materials provided by school PHIL-IRI coordinators while supplementing with personal resources to address gaps in available materials. The combination of school-provided materials and personal resources enabled effective ECARP implementation, though teachers noted the need for more comprehensive resource provision.

This finding highlights the critical role of resource availability in program implementation success, reflecting broader challenges in educational resource allocation documented in recent research (Panela, 2025c).

Teachers' Lived Experiences

The analysis identified five significant themes in teachers' lived experiences: emotional and relational growth, adaptation and support for learners, challenges and workload, perceived impact and outcomes, and productivity and frustration.

Emotional and Relational Growth. Teachers reported significant improvements in patience and deeper connections with students through ECARP implementation. Witnessing student progress from struggling to proficient readers brought immense satisfaction and reinforced teachers' commitment to supporting student development. As one participant shared, "I became more patient" and "I became close to them." This emotional growth aligns with research on

emotional intelligence in education, emphasizing the importance of teacher-student relationships in creating positive learning environments (Cai et al., 2022). The development of stronger bonds between teachers and students contributes to more supportive and nurturing educational contexts.

Adaptation and Support for Learners. Teachers demonstrated commitment to meeting unique student needs by adapting teaching practices and providing personalized support. This included adjusting lesson content, modifying instructional approaches, and offering step-by-step reading instruction tailored to individual student capabilities. Teachers reported adopting more interactive, reading-explaining teaching styles to enhance instruction effectiveness. This adaptive capacity reflects the importance of flexible teaching strategies in supporting diverse learners, consistent with research emphasizing differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2014). The willingness to modify practices demonstrates teachers' professional growth and commitment to student success.

Challenges and Workload. Teachers acknowledged that ECARP implementation was both challenging and satisfying, with additional responsibilities from PHIL-IRI creating increased workload burdens. The pandemic exacerbated circumstances by increasing numbers of struggling readers, making implementation more demanding. Despite these challenges, witnessing student success remained the most rewarding aspect of their work. These findings reflect broader challenges in educational program implementation, particularly regarding teacher workload and administrative demands documented in recent research (Panella, 2025d). The tension between program requirements and existing responsibilities represents a significant implementation challenge requiring systemic attention.

Perceived Impact and Outcomes. Teachers observed notable improvements in student outcomes, teaching strategies, and their own confidence as educators. Parents appreciated the program's positive impact on children's motivation to read, though teachers noted mixed impacts with some students benefiting more than others. The general impact remained positive, with teachers reporting improved teaching strategies and enhanced student comprehension. These positive outcomes align with research demonstrating the effectiveness of structured reading interventions in promoting literacy development (National Reading Panel, 2000). The recognition of varied impacts underscores the importance of individualized approaches to reading instruction.

Productivity and Frustration. Teachers experienced both productivity and frustration in ECARP implementation. Student progress in reading comprehension generated feelings of accomplishment, while student disinterest created frustration and disappointment. Some struggling students felt embarrassed and discontinued participation, emphasizing the importance of creating supportive and motivating learning environments. This mixed experience reflects the complex emotional landscape of teaching, particularly when working with struggling learners. The challenge of maintaining student motivation while addressing academic difficulties represents a significant aspect of literacy instruction requiring ongoing attention and support.

Challenges Encountered

Five major challenge categories emerged from the analysis: teaching and instructional challenges, resource and material limitations, student engagement and attendance issues, time and organizational constraints, and classroom management and transition issues.

Teaching and Instructional Challenges. Teachers faced difficulties handling special sections and balancing needs of proficient readers with those requiring additional support. Motivating students with limited reading interest presented particular challenges, while brief timeframes made it difficult to create differentiated activities suited to various reading levels. These challenges highlight the complexity of implementing literacy programs in diverse educational contexts, reflecting broader issues in educational equity and access documented in recent research (Panela, 2025c). The need for specialized training and support for teachers working with diverse populations remains critical.

Resource and Material Limitations. Teachers struggled with insufficient resources and materials, affecting their ability to teach effectively. Inaccurate or misaligned materials hindered effective learning, while unstable internet connectivity complicated preparation of appropriate reading materials. The scarcity of resources, combined with student unwillingness to engage, further complicated reading skill development.

Resource limitations represent persistent challenges in educational program implementation, particularly in under-resourced contexts. These findings align with research emphasizing the importance of adequate resource provision for effective program implementation (Allington, 2002).

Student Engagement and Attendance Issues. Teachers reported concerns about student attendance in remedial classes, with many students feeling afraid and embarrassed about being identified as struggling readers. The stigma associated with special reading classes resulted in some students dropping out entirely, while others hesitated to participate due to fear of peer judgment. These engagement challenges reflect broader issues of educational equity and student motivation documented in research on literacy instruction. The emotional aspects of reading difficulties require careful attention to create supportive learning environments that encourage rather than discourage participation.

Time and Organizational Constraints. Teachers lacked sufficient time to complete planned activities, with ECARP implementation disrupting regular class schedules. Excessive paperwork and reporting requirements added to workloads, leaving limited time for developing innovative reading techniques and methods for struggling learners. Time constraints represent significant barriers to effective program implementation, reflecting systemic issues in educational administration and resource allocation. These findings align with research emphasizing the importance of adequate time allocation for effective teaching practices (Panela, 2025d).

Classroom Management and Transition Issues. Teachers faced challenges managing classroom transitions and dealing with disruptions, particularly on Fridays. Limited materials, time constraints, and varying student attention spans added complexity to maintaining smooth and effective learning environments. These management challenges highlight the need for comprehensive teacher preparation and ongoing support in classroom organization and student engagement strategies.

Teachers' Perceptions of Program Effectiveness

Four themes emerged regarding teachers' perceptions of ECARP effectiveness: need for training and resources, effectiveness and improvement in student performance, boost in student confidence and engagement, and challenges and mixed perceptions.

Need for Training and Resources. Teachers expressed satisfaction with ECARP while emphasizing the need for enhanced training and resources to maximize program effectiveness. They believed additional training would improve implementation and lead to better outcomes, while dissatisfaction stemmed from inadequate materials and insufficient professional development opportunities. This finding underscores the critical importance of ongoing teacher preparation and support in program implementation. The emphasis on training needs reflects broader challenges in educational professional development documented in recent research (Markaki et al., 2021).

Effectiveness and Improvement in Student Performance. Teachers observed significant improvements in student reading and comprehension skills, with noticeable decreases in numbers of non-readers. The program helped non-readers recognize words and alphabet, providing solid foundations for reading development. Teachers witnessed clear improvements in students' reading capabilities, emphasizing ECARP's positive impact on literacy development. These positive outcomes align with research demonstrating the effectiveness of structured reading interventions (National Reading Panel, 2000). The documented improvements provide evidence of program success while highlighting areas for continued development.

Boost in Student Confidence and Engagement. Teachers noted significant impacts on student confidence and willingness to read, with improved self-esteem and motivation to learn. As students' reading abilities improved, their confidence increased, leading to greater enthusiasm for reading and more active participation in classroom discussions. This boost in confidence represents a critical outcome of literacy instruction, as student motivation and self-efficacy significantly influence learning outcomes. The positive cycle of improvement and confidence contributes to sustained engagement in reading activities.

Challenges and Mixed Perceptions. Some teachers expressed dissatisfaction with ECARP, noting that the program could hinder completion of other academic competencies. Negative impacts on social interactions and confidence, particularly for older students identified as non-readers, created additional concerns. Some teachers observed no significant changes in

student performance, highlighting the need for more personalized and engaging approaches. These mixed perceptions reflect the complexity of educational program implementation and the importance of considering diverse student needs and contexts. The varied outcomes underscore the need for flexible and adaptive approaches to literacy instruction.

IV. Conclusion

This study provides comprehensive insights into teachers' experiences implementing ECARP in Palapag I District, revealing both successes and challenges in literacy program implementation. The five implementation strategies identified demonstrate teachers' commitment to integrating reading instruction across curriculum areas while providing individualized support for struggling learners. Teachers' lived experiences highlight the emotional and professional growth that accompanies effective program implementation, while also revealing significant challenges related to workload, resources, and student engagement. The documented improvements in student reading performance, confidence, and engagement provide evidence of program effectiveness, though the need for enhanced training and resources remains critical.

The challenges identified, including teaching difficulties, resource limitations, student engagement issues, time constraints, and classroom management problems, reflect broader systemic issues in educational program implementation. These findings emphasize the importance of comprehensive support systems for teachers implementing literacy interventions. Teachers' perceptions of program effectiveness demonstrate both appreciation for positive outcomes and recognition of areas requiring improvement. The mixed perceptions highlight the complexity of literacy instruction and the need for flexible, adaptive approaches that address diverse student needs and learning contexts. The study contributes to understanding of literacy program implementation in developing educational contexts and provides valuable insights for improving teacher preparation and support systems. The findings inform the development of comprehensive professional development initiatives designed to enhance teacher capacity for effective literacy instruction.

Based on the study findings, several recommendations emerge for improving ECARP implementation and supporting teacher effectiveness. First, comprehensive professional development programs should be established to address teaching and instructional challenges, focusing on evidence-based reading strategies and differentiated instruction techniques. Second, addressing resource limitations requires multi-pronged approaches including seeking funding opportunities, creating cost-effective solutions, and ensuring adequate access to high-quality reading materials. Regular inventory and assessment of existing materials should guide future acquisitions and resource allocation.

Third, improving student engagement and attendance necessitates shifts toward more interactive and engaging reading instruction, addressing root causes of absenteeism through collaboration with families and providing appropriate support services. Fourth, overcoming time

and organizational constraints requires strategic review and adjustment of class schedules, streamlining organizational systems, and utilizing technology to improve efficiency and reduce administrative burdens.

Finally, effective classroom management strategies should be implemented through targeted teacher training, establishment of clear routines and procedures, and creation of supportive and inclusive classroom cultures that promote positive learning environments. The implementation of Reading Rockets: Fueling Student Success with ECARP, a comprehensive capability-building program for English teachers, is recommended to address identified challenges and enhance program effectiveness. This program should focus on enhancing teacher knowledge, providing resource access, fostering collaborative learning, and supporting ongoing evaluation and improvement.

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