---

**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Assessment of the Implementation of Every Child a Reader Program in the Division of Ilocos Norte: Basis for a Reading Development Plan

**ELY G. PASCUA**

*Doctor of Education, Educational Management, Northern Christian College, Philippines*

**Corresponding Author**: ELY G. PASCUA, **E-mail**: ely.pascua001@deped.gov.ph

**| ABSTRACT**

This study assessed the implementation of the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) in the Division of Ilocos Norte as basis for a reading development plan. Utilizing Stufflebeam's context-input-process-product (CIPP) evaluation model, it described the different elements of the program and qualitatively determined how each one influences the other to arrive at a holistic picture of the implementation of the program in the Division of Ilocos Norte. The assessment involved the critical description of the context, inputs, process, and outputs of the ECARP. All the activities in the four components of ECARP were very highly implemented. The outputs of the program were very satisfactory. All the goals and objectives of ECARP were perceived by the respondents to be highly implemented. Based on the results of the study, a reading development plan was formulated which integrates other reading programs to help ensure a more successful attainment of reading goals. The plan is composed of various activities at every quarter of the school year. When the reading development plan is successfully implemented, it can be assured that pupils are able to read words and sentences fluently, read aloud passages with ease, comprehend reading selections which they read orally and silently, and read independently for academic success and for pleasure. It can be concluded that ECARP is being satisfactorily implemented in the Division of Ilocos Norte. The continued implementation of the program could lead to the improvement in the literacy level of citizens of the country. Nevertheless, there is a need to coordinate the objectives and activities of all existing reading programs in the DepEd and to improve the availability and adequacy of instructional materials. The implementation of the proposed reading development plan would help realize all these aspirations.

**| KEYWORDS**

Reader Program, Ilocos Norte, Reading Development Plan , Philippines

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading opens wide the door of the mind; thus without the ability to read, learning is very limited.

Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. It is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them (www.englishclub.com/reading/what.htm).It is making meaning from print. It involves weaving together word recognition and comprehension in a fluent manner.

Reading is an active process of constructing meaning. It is the motivated and fluent coordination of word recognition and comprehension (wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading), thus it is the responsibility of the school to develop and maintain in learners the motivation to read.

Reading is a survival skill. If one cannot read, one cannot learn; if one cannot learn much, one has difficulty surviving in the social world. It is the most important subject to be learned by a child. A child who knows how to read will be able to learn all other subject matter in school. Better reading means better schoolwork, better preparation for the future and greater personal and social accomplishments (www.elementary.ph/what-we-do). Persons who know how to read can educate themselves in any area of life they are interested in. We live in an age where we overflow with information, and reading is the main way to take advantage of it.

Reading is fundamental in developing a good self-image. Nonreaders or poor readers often have low opinions of themselves and their abilities. They may feel isolated and behavior problems can surface. They can perform poorly in other subjects because they cannot read and understand the material and so tend to give up (www.learn-to-read-prince-george.com/why-is-reading).

Educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success. Good reading skills improve spelling and helps to expand the vocabulary. Good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments, and detect implications. They can also determine the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from context (www.learn-to-read-prince-george.com/why-is-reading).

In other words, a student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass exams than a student who is a weak reader. It may also be safe to say that a good reader has better chances of developing work skills, finding a good-paying job, and succeeding in life.

For this reason, the national government is making a very huge investment in the future of the Filipino pupil, the teacher, and Philippine public school education through the development of good readers. The Department of Education (DepEd) has launched many programs to achieve universal primary education. One of these is the "Every Child A Reader Program" (ECARP).

The ECARP, contained in DepEd Order No. 45, s.2002, has as its main objective "To make every Filipino child a reader at his own level by the third year of primary schooling." It is designed to equip primary grade pupils with the necessary skills to enable them to communicate and access a variety of information in written or oral forms through effective reading instruction. (www.reddit.com/user/ecarp) and seeks to enhance teachers' competence in the teaching of reading in the primary grades so that they can effectively develop reading skills in pupils, as well as equip school heads with necessary competence to promote ECARP through strategic planning, implementation and evaluation, specifically along the program's three components: staff development, instructional materials development, and monitoring/evaluation (www.elementary.ph/what-we-do).

The development of reading skills among learners was included in the Ten-Point Education Agenda of the present President Benigno Simeon Aquino III, (www.gov.ph/.../make-every-child-a-reader-program-gets-p21-million-funding-support/). To emphasize the importance of reading, DepEd Memorandum No. 244, s. 2011 was issued declaring November as "National Reading Month" of every year and November 25 as the nationwide *Araw ng Pagbasa*.

However, recent interactions with several primary school teachers in Ilocos Norte reveal that they have the impression that ECARP is no longer in effect because it has been superseded by Mother Language Education (MLE) which is a part of the recently implemented K to 12 Basic Education Program (BEC). This is confirmed by the observation that many first grade teachers do not spend a definite time for developing reading skills. Reading activities have become merely incidental. And this has resulted to many Grades II and III pupils being non-readers, which is alarming.

Bothered by this observation, this researcher verified from the education program supervisors and 19 public schools district supervisors of the Division of Ilocos Norte whether or not ECARP is still an existing program of the DepEd. The supervisors answered that ECARP will always be an important program, whatever language the pupils learning because reading is a basic learning tool. Every pupil should know how to read regardless of the language of instruction, and the basic reading skills are applicable to any language. Hence, the ECARP is very much in effect, and the teachers should continue to implement it.

This situation, seen against the background of K to 12 Basic Education Program (BEP), motivated the researcher to undertake the study.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The research utilized the evaluative research design using the CIPP evaluation model. Evaluation was undertaken through an in-depth description of the different components of the ECARP. Description included quantitative and qualitative data about the context, inputs, processes and products of ECARP in the Division of Ilocos Norte. The formulated reading development plan is also an output of the study.

### Population and Sample

The population of the study was composed of school heads, Grades I, II and III teachers and Grade III pupils of randomly selected elementary schools in the Division of Ilocos Norte.

Two-stage sampling was used to determine the sample schools. First-stage sampling was at the district level in which 50% of the districts comprising the four athletic zones of the Division of Ilocos Norte were randomly chosen through fishbowl technique. Three districts each from the East zone, Central zone, and South zone, while two districts were chosen from the North zone, or a total of 11 districts from the 22 districts were taken as samples.

The second-stage sampling was at the school level. Only one non-central and one central school in every district were randomly chosen as respondent schools also through fishbowl technique. If there was only one central school in the district, it automatically became a sample school. If there were more than one central schools in the district, the sample central school was chosen using the same sampling technique. The non-central school was also chosen using the same random technique. The

principal of the sample school and the teachers of Grades I, II, and III were taken as samples. There were 22 respondent administrators and 66 teachers.

The Grade III pupils of the sample schools were taken as samples for program output.  If there were two or more Grade III classes in a sample school, only one was chosen using the fishbowl technique. If there was only one section, it automatically became a sample class.

The teaching competence of the sample Grade III teachers was assessed by the principal or head of the selected schools who were requested to actually observe the teachers as they teach reading and rated them using the observation guide. Competency ratings of teachers in Grades I and II in the previous two school years were secured from the principals' files or from the teachers themselves.  The same was done if the past teachers have been transferred or have resigned.

**Data Gathering Instruments**

There were varied sources of data in this study, hence different instruments were used.

1.  The Questionnaire on the Implementation of ECARP (Appendix H) was responded to by the administrators and Grades I-III teachers who have been teaching in these grades from SY 2011 – 2012 to the present and was used to determine the characteristics of the context, inputs, processes and outputs of the ECARP.  It is composed of five parts.  Part I determined the degree of awareness of the teachers about the ECARP, Part II secured the respondents' perceptions about the reading needs of pupils and Part III, the extent to which the ECARP can meet these needs.  Part IV determined the perceived extent of implementation of the program along its components:  Staff Development, Instructional Materials Development, and Monitoring and Evaluation wherein items were lifted from the standards of the program. Part V described the perceived adequacy of instructional materials.

a.  Degree of Awareness on ECARP.  Items in this part were taken from DepEd Memo No. 45 s.2002 on the ECARP.  This part sought the extent to which the teachers and school administrators   indicated the extent to which they are aware of ECARP goals and activities by making their responses on a 5-point Likert scale from Very *much aware (5)* to Not *at all aware (1).*

b.   Reading Needs of Primary Grades Pupils is a list of the required reading competencies of pupils taken from the Elementary Learning Competencies (ELC). Administrators and teachers indicated on a 5-point Likert scale the extent to which they perceive the needs to exist in their pupils.  Responses ranged from *a very highly pronounced need (5) to Not a need at all (1)*

c.  Perceived Extent to Which Reading Needs Can Be Met by ECARP.  This is the extent to which the administrators and teachers believe the needs can be met or satisfied by the ECARP.  Responses were indicated on a 5-point scale from *Very high extent (5)* to *Cannot be attained at all (1).*

d. Extent of implementation of the ECARP along Staff Development, Instructional Materials Development, and Monitoring and Evaluation. Items in this part are the ECARP activities listed in DepEd Memo No. 45 s. 2002 on the implementation of ECARP. This was responded by both school administrators and teachers using a 5-point Likert scale from *Very highly implemented (5)* to *Not at all (1).*

e.  Adequacy of Books, Instructional Materials and Funds for ECARP.  Items listed in this part were drawn from the DepEd Memo No. 45 s. 2002which is on the implementation of the ECARP. This is the extent to which materials and funds are adequate as perceived by the respondents who indicated their answers on a 5-point Likert scale from *Very highly adequate (5)* to *Very inadequate (1).*

2.  A documentary analysis guide (Appendix I) was used in gathering the results of the PHIL-IRI pre-test and post-test, and SRA.

3.Rating scale on teaching competence (Appendix J) was used to assess teaching competence in reading. It is based on the Revised Form 178 (Observation and Suggestion Book) prescribed to be used by the school head in observing the teaching competencies of a classroom teacher.

4.  An interview guide (Appendix K) was used to  support data gathered in teaching competence.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

In order to generate the data needed for this study, the researcher followed the standard operating procedure for seeking permission to conduct the study from the different levels of the authority in the DepEd Division of Ilocos Norte. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire-checklist to the respondents and  asked the assistance of the public school district supervisors and school heads in distributing them. The researcher personally retrieved the questionnaires from the respondents. During the retrieval of the questionnaires, the researcher interviewed the teachers and school heads using the interview guide.

The data gathered were tallied, analyzed and interpreted by the researcher with the guidance of the statistician. The data for the documentary analysis was culled out from the files of reports from the field and from the records in the Division Office.

**Statistical Tools**

Data that gathered in the study were analyzed through the use of the following statistical tools.

The mean was used to determine the a) perceived reading needs of pupils, b) perceived extent to which ECARP can meet these needs, c) level of awareness of school heads and teachers of the gals and activities of the ECARP, d) adequacy of instructional

materials, and e) level of attainment of the objectives of the ECARP along staff development, instructional materials development and monitoring and evaluation. Mean scores were interpreted accordingly. Responses of school heads and teachers were averaged to determine over-all perceptions.

The mean and standard deviation were also used to determine the a) reading readiness levels of the pupils when they were in Grade I, b) their oral reading levels from Grade I through Grade III, and c) the competence of the teachers in teaching reading.

Relationships among variables were determined through in-depth qualitative analysis and discussions.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
### The Context of ECARP

The context within which ECARP is being implemented in the Division is described through the description of the level of awareness of school principals and primary grade teachers in the ECARP, identification of the reading needs of primary school children, and the extent to which these needs can be met by ECARP as perceived by the respondent.

### Level of Awareness of School Administrators and Teachers about the ECARP

The researcher felt it necessary to determine the extent to which the respondents know the different goals and activities of the program. This was prompted by the comments of some of his co-students at the Graduate School that ECARP is no longer being implemented because it has been superseded by other reading programs. Inquiries with the Division Office proved otherwise. ECARP is a continuing program and a certification to prove that was issued to this researcher by the schools division superintendent of the Division of Ilocos Norte (Appendix E). This led the researcher to desire to know the level of awareness of the respondents about the program. The responses to the questionnaire are presented in Table 2.

The overall mean of 4.99 indicates that the administrators and teachers are *very much aware* of the program, its goals and objectives and activities. The composite means of both groups ranging 4.56 to 5.00 likewise indicate that they know much about the program's goals and objectives, staff development and instructional activities, and the strategies that could be used for the different reading ability levels. The school administrators are completely aware of the program, more than the teachers because "an administrator should be very much knowledgeable on the programs and thrusts of the department so that when his/her teachers will ask about these, he/she has ready answers," explained one administrator in an interview by the researcher. A second administrator added, "As a leader of the school, you must be well versed of the concerns of the department so you can lead your subordinates well, and they will believe and trust in you."

On the other hand, some teacher-respondents expressed their sentiments regarding the numerous programs introduced and imposed for implementation in almost all the subject areas which often leaves them confused. In the area of reading alone, there are more than 12 programs like Read-A-Thon, *Kaklase Ko Sagot Ko*, Drop Everything to name a few. This causes them to interchange names or terms, descriptions and activities of these programs. But in spite of this, they claimed they do their best to implement a program as far as they know and understand it. They know that ECARP is an existing program being implemented in the primary grades. Thus the teachers, whose previously mentioned perception that ECARP is no longer in effect, are clearly a minority.

It can be seen in Table 2 that the teachers are only much aware of teaching strategies that could be used with pupils who belong to the frustration and instructional reading levels. Some respondents explained, "with the presence of many teaching strategies, methods and practices being introduced, we have some difficulty selecting the best one to be used, especially since our classes are heterogeneous." Others admitted the big sizes of their classes make it difficult for them to use varied strategies at the same time. Nevertheless, they assured the researcher that they are very much aware of most of these strategies.

`These findings are parallel to the respondents' perceptions on the extent to which ECARP can meet the pupils' reading needs (Table 4). Being very much aware of the different components and activities of the program, they are confident that it can develop the reading competencies that the pupils need to succeed in their elementary and higher schooling. These findings dispute the impression of some teachers who do not teach in the primary grades that ECARP is no longer in effect. The primary school teachers and their administrators know the program very well, and that it is still being implemented.

In principle, awareness of a program could lead the teachers to successful implementation as found out by Rigunay (2008) that the administrators and teachers' awareness of the programs of the DepEd leads to the realization of the goals and objectives of the project. Villamar (2004) likewise stressed in his study that having sufficient knowledge of a project results in a better accomplishment thus yielding a good result.

However, it may not be true in actual practice, thus the extent to which the teachers undertake the activities to attain the goals of the program was also determined and is discussed in a later section on Process

### Reading Needs of Primary School Children

The reading needs of the primary grade pupils were identified by the teachers, and also by the school administrators or principals. The Grade I teachers described during interviews that they identify the reading needs of their pupils by giving them reading materials and taking note of what they can and cannot accurately read using standards of the curriculum.

A Grade I teacher said, *"It's not that hard to determine the reading needs of your pupils; what you need is patience and creativity in making and providing them with reading materials."* With regard to readiness to read, another teacher said. *"If the child shows interest in holding and scanning books, and if he knows the letter of the alphabet, he is already ready to read."*

The perceptions of the school administrators and teachers in Grades 1 to III about these needs are presented in  Table 3.

The overall mean of 3.25 shows that there is a moderate need to develop the competencies in reading, both in English and Filipino, among Grade I to III pupils as perceived by both respondent groups.  This means that the pupils have acquired some but not all of the reading competencies in both languages. It is also revealed in Table 2 that the principals perceive the lack of these competencies to be generally moderate as indicated by the composite means of 3.00 for both languages. The teachers differentiate the extent of lack of these skills among the three grades.  For both languages, it is very highly pronounced among Grade Ipupils with composite means of 5.00, a *moderate need* among Grade  II pupils with composite means of 2.78 for Filipino and 2.75 for English, and *not so much of a need* among those in Grade III pupils as indicated by composite means of 2.22 and 2.23 for Filipino and English, respectively.  The decreasing need for reading competencies is due to the fact that as the pupils go higher in educational level, they improve their reading skills.  The need is more pronounced among Grade I pupils because they have not yet acquired the different reading competencies in Filipino and Englishsince these are foreign languages to them, Iloco, the native dialect, being their first language.

It is often assumed that early reading occurs only in the first grade because of the perception that pre--elementary schooling is primarily for socialization or to prepare the child for formal schooling.  This is no longer true, however, because kindergarten and preschool develop reading readiness or the basic literacy skills.  Many of the pupils entering Grade I may have undergone pre-elementary schooling, but the teachers perceive their basic literacy skills  in English and Filipino to be largely undeveloped.

In the K to 12 Basic Education Program which, at the time this study was undertaken, was still in its second year of implementation, pre-elementary education is institutionalized and has become a part of the elementary education.  Entrants to Grade I are thus expected to have better literacy skills.  However, considering the variety of personal and environmental characteristics the pupils bring with them, and the fact that medium of instruction in the lower primary grades is in the first language of the pupils, a variety of reading competency needs can still be expected, especially in English and Filipino.  Thus, the continuing implementation of reading programs, like ECARP would still be in order.

One of the Grade I teacher respondents recalled that in her class in SY 2011-2012, only six out of 34 passed the reading readiness test, while another teacher said that not a single pupil in her class passed the said test.  Other teachers related similar experiences during interviews with them.  These revelations only prove that Grade I entrants are not really fully equipped with the basic reading skills.

The Grades II and III teacher respondents also revealed in interviews that the reading competencies developed in Grade I are followed up in the next grades. That is why   the teachers perceived the development of reading competencies in English and Filipino among the Grade II pupils is just a *moderate need,* and *not so much of a need* among those in Grade III.

In interviews, the teacher respondents admitted that *"When Grade I pupils go to the next grade level, they are not fully equipped with the all the reading competencies; some still have less because of individual differences."* This statement was strongly agreed to by the administrators in conversations with them.  That is why the teachers in the next higher grades endeavour to continue to develop the competencies in the pupils.

Thus it is necessary, according to Escalona (2011), for kindergarten and first grade teachers to utilize many strategies for drawing children's attention to important concepts about text which lead to the development of reading skills for it is their responsibility to shape the mind of the pupils and prepare them to become independent readers.

The teachers' role and responsibility of developing and improving the reading competencies of pupils in the primary grades is very important.  However, teachers in high school have observed these competencies to be lacking in many of their students.  That is why former Education Secretary Edilberto De Jesus (2004) was prompted to design and implement the controversial bridging program for entrants to the secondary level because "public elementary schools have been producing half-baked graduates who are weak in basic literacy skills."

This was affirmed by the finding of Favila (1987), as cited by Peredo (1988) that the general comprehension ability of the Grade IV pupils  in selected schools of Sta. Cruz District, Ilocos Sur was very low and the root cause was the lack of teachers' skills, methods and techniques in teaching. She highly recommended that teachers should attend more in-service trainings along reading.  Cancino (2007) had the same findings and recommendations on reading comprehension and vocabulary skills on the enhancement of reading skills of intermediate pupils through appropriate teaching strategies.

The development of the ability to read with understanding has always been a challenging task for both teacher and learner. Due to increasing demands on readers on account of the explosion of knowledge, greater responsibility has been placed on the teacher in this regard. Thus Castillo (2002) recommended that primary –level teachers should provide many appropriate experiences for developing word recognition and comprehension in order for children to become the readers that our society needs.

The responsibility of the teacher is to develop each pupil to the limits of his/her capacity, to the best that he can become. One area in which this responsibility is carried out is in the development of pupils as readers. Reading abilities and habits have social, as well as individual, significance. If a child fails in beginning to read, he/she loses self-esteem needed for comfort and progress. Hence, reading should be emphasized (Guiab, 2001).

In another study, Umbias (2001) identified the teachers' inability to realize the pupils' potentials, interests and needs as one of the causes of poor reading ability among pupils. Some teachers make their pupils read even before they are not ready to do so. The period of readiness for formal beginning reading instruction should not be disregarded. On the other hand, even though readiness period is provided, it may not be sufficient to provide reading readiness through appropriate beginning reading activities. The pupils thus find difficulty in reading because they are not yet sufficiently primed to tackle formal reading instruction.

## Extent to Which Reading Needs Can
## Be Met by ECARP

ECARP is a reading program designed to make "every child a reader" in the primary grades. After identifying the reading needs of the pupils, the perceptions of school administrators and Grades I – III teachers regarding the extent to which ECARP is perceived to meet these needs was also sought.  The perceptions of these two groups of respondents is presented in Table 4.

It is highly evident from the overall mean of 4,99, and the composite means of the administrators and teachers which are 5.00 and 4.98, respectively, all of which have the descriptive interpretation of *very high extent,* that ECARP, as conceived, is perceived to be

capable of developing the reading competencies of pupils both in English and Filipino.  Both school administrators and Grades I – III teachers believe that the goals and activities of the program address the identified reading competency needs of pupils.  This of course implies proper implementation and teacher dedication because it takes a lot of effort to make pupils discriminate between sounds and letters, to identify words and understand their meanings, especially in two languages that are not their mother tongue.  The fact that Ilocano learners have to learn to read in three languages makes the development of reading competencies difficult.

In spite of this difficulty, the mean responses of the respondents reflect their high hopes that with ECARP, the need to develop the very highly pronounced reading needs of the Grades I pupils will be met.  Likewise, the moderately pronounced and not so pronounced reading competency needs of Grades II and III pupils, respectively, can also be addressed.  Similarly, the administrators unanimously perceive that the ECARP can develop not only the beginning reading skills of Grade II pupils, but also the ability to comprehend meanings, to look for ideals in simple texts, and to express these ideas in their own words, among other higher competencies.

With the high perceptions of the respondents, there's a high hope that ECARP's aim to make every pupil a reader at his own level by the third year of primary schooling, as contained in DepEd Order No. 45, s. 2002, be realized.  This is similar to the conclusion of Miranda (2008) in her study that the objectives of ECARP in the public elementary schools of San Fabian District 1 was generally attained.

In the study conducted locally by Flora (2005) on the effectiveness of "Every Child A Reader Program", it was found out that ECARP contributed much on the following: (1) reduced the number of frustration readers in Grade III, (2) improved the number of instructional and independent readers in Grade IV, and (3) improved the general reading performance of the school along developmental reading aspect of ECARP based on the result of the reading inventory and posttest.

In the same vein, Layugan (2006) conducted a survey on ECARP effectiveness, he disclosed the finding that  in the objectives of "Every Child A Reader Program", the respondent teachers and school, administrators  claimed that these objectives were "attained" by them.

## Summary of Context Characteristics

The reading competencies of the primary pupils are merely moderate and these need to be developed.  ECARP is perceived by the respondents, who are very much aware of the program, to be able to develop these competencies.

## Inputs of the ECARP

The inputs of a program determine to a large extent how well the activities are undertaken and how fully the goals are attained.  The inputs of ECARP considered in this study were the reading readiness of pupils, the teaching competence of teachers, and the adequacy of instructional materials.

## Reading Readiness of Pupils

The reading readiness of pupils was determined from the results of their reading readiness profile as determined by School Readiness Assessment Test (Appendix N).  The SRA is an examination given to entering Grade I pupils in June. This determines the level of progress of Grade One entrants across different developmental domains that are critical in tracking Grade One learning competencies.  It follows a similar developmental assessment of children in their early childhood years, using the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Checklist. It is consisting of items that measure the development of basic competencies on

the following domains:  Gross and Fine Motor, Receptive/Expressive Language, and Cognitive Domain which has five (5) sub-domains, namely:  Sensory Discrimination and Seriation/Classification, Concept Formation, Numeracy, Reading Readiness and Construction and Visual Integration. The result is used to guide Grade I teachers in providing appropriate instruction and assistance to address specific needs of the pupils through the utilization of the 8-week ECD curriculum.  Based on the results, the pupils are labeled either as ready for Grade I or not ready.   Those who will get 75 % of the total number of items will be labeled ready and will undergo the regular class for the grade, while those who are not ready (those who will get 74% and below) will undergo the 8-week ECD curriculum for they need additional development support in the different domains and that after that period they will be reassessed if they are now ready. Thus the results of this test was used as a measure of the reading readiness or entry characteristics of the subjects of this study.  The reading readiness of the Grade III pupils when they were in Grade I in SY 2011-2012 are shown in Table 5.

Of the 738 Grade I pupils in the sample schools, only 71 (10%) were able to pass the Reading Readiness Domain of the said test. Only they were ready to undergo the regular lessons intended for Grade I while 667 pupils (90%) were not ready.  The mean of 3.25 of pupils who are ready shows that only three pupils in each of the 22 classes surveyed with an average of 34 pupils per class were ready for reading lessons. On the other hand, the mean 30.32 of not ready pupils indicate that that 30 in each class of 34 were not ready for reading. The standard deviations of 2.25 and 3.72 in the ready and not ready groups, respectively, indicate that the pupils' scores were closely clustered

The 667 pupils who were not ready because they did not gain a total point of 75% in all the domains including the reading readiness domain. So they had to undergo the 8-week ECD Curriculum.  After this, they took their readiness assessment test again, and only after passing it were they ready to undergo the regular Grade I lessons.  All the pupils in this particular group passed the second administration of the reading readiness test.

Nevertheless, the reading readiness of the Grade I pupils in June confirms the perceptions of the teacher-respondents regarding the very pronounced reading competency needs of Grade I pupils.  When they enter Grade I they have minimal visual and auditory discrimination, word recognition and comprehension skills which implies their great need for assistance from teachers.

## Teaching Competence of Teachers

An educational program is as good only as its implementation, and this depends to a large extent on the teaching competence of the teachers who implement the program.

Teaching competence is one of the input variables of the ECARP based because the success of the implementation of the program depends upon the teachers' skill in arousing and maintaining pupil interest, in providing for the different cognitive and experiential levels of learners, and in eliciting meaningful reactions from them.  The teaching competence of the Grades I – III teachers was assessed by their own school heads or principals.  Results are shown in Table 6.

The overall mean of 4.13 indicates that the teachers have very satisfactory skills in teaching beginning reading.  They are very adept at establishing rapport with pupils, in motivating them, and in using a variety of teaching approaches and strategies. They demonstrate proficiency in using the skill in integrating previous knowledge and experiences of pupils with new lessons is considered by the school heads as outstanding.  Thus the pupils' enthusiasm toward the lessons and attitude toward the teacher are likewise outstanding.  The high competence of the teachers can also be observed in the very satisfactory quality of classroom interaction in which the pupils respond readily to questions that require higher order thinking skills, avoid code switching, and successfully exhibit reading skills according to their level.  The data thus show that the teachers are very capable in developing reading skills among the pupils, as assessed by their school principals.

This finding affirms what Villamar (2004) stressed in his study that the kind of teachers who work at instructing the learner is a potent factor in the quality of education that results. Quality teachers help bring about quality education. Mediocre teachers produce learners who cannot make full use of their potentials, who cannot contribute the whole of what can be expected of them. Thus teachers who are competent and proficient are desired in the system for they cultivate every learner's faculty yielding better accomplishments.

## Adequacy of Instructional Materials

Reading competencies cannot be well developed without the use of instructional materials.  That is why the adequacy of such materials is considered as an important input in assessing the implementation of ECARP.  The perceptions of school administrators and teachers in the Division of Ilocos Norte with regard to the materials necessary in teaching beginning reading is presented in Table 7.

Both respondent groups have similar perceptions that instructional materials for teaching reading are *moderately adequate* as shown by the overall mean of 3.15 and the composite means of 3.08 and 2.73 of the perceptions of administrators and teachers, respectively.

For classroom instruction, pocket charts and flashcards are *very highly adequate* as manifested by the mean rating of 5.00 both. Other charts, such as reading readiness chart, Fuller lesson charts, Dolch Basic Word chart, picture cards, oral reading program charts, posters and organizers are highly adequate with means ranging from 3.57 to 4.07. This is commendable because charts are necessary in instructing a class.

However, modules, newspapers and magazines are *slightly inadequate* with mean ratings ranging from 2.05 to 2.38. According to several teachers, their schools cannot afford to subscribe to daily newspapers and weekly magazines. There are no modules provided for their use, that is why they are the ones who write modules for their pupils to use but they lack funds to reproduce these, especially in the non-central schools. The administrators confirmed the claim of the teachers with regard to the inadequacy of newspapers, magazines and modules for classroom use. They said that the teachers subscribe to magazines like The Modern Teacher but these are for them and not for the pupils. Some stakeholders give newspapers and magazines to the schools but these are old issues. However, these are used still by the teachers in some of their lessons.

Materials found in the library or Learning Resource Center, such as newspapers, magazines and computers are *slightly inadequate* for the same reason stated above. Computers, are likewise inadequate. There is usually only unit in a school but it is not for instructional purposes. It is in the office of the school head and not in the library or resource center.

Some respondents said that they asked their PTA to collect newspapers, even old copies, for the school library and classroom libraries but most of the newspapers given were tabloids like *Tiktik* and *Bulgar* which contain stories and pictures not suited for children.

## Qualitative Relationship of Inputs
## To Context Variables

The Grade I teacher respondents perceived that there is a very pronounced need for the development of reading competencies of the Grade I pupils and this is supported by the results of the SRA that majority or almost all the Grade I entrants are not ready for the regular work of a Grade I pupil.

The teachers, however, are very much aware of the program and are very competent in teaching reading, in spite of barely adequate instructional materials. In spite of the very low reading readiness level of Grade I pupils, the respondents believe that ECARP can develop their reading competencies. They are confident that, using their initiative and creativity, and with their dedication, these deficiencies would not be barriers to their desire to gradually help the pupils acquire the different reading competencies and make them independent readers, not only in Iloco but also in English and Filipino.

## The Implementation (Process) of ECARP
## And Its Best Practices

This study focused on the implementation of the different components of ECARP in its analysis of its process. The different components are Staff Development, Instructional Materials Development, Instructional Activities, and Monitoring and Evaluation, the extent to which these are implemented was perceived by both school administrators and teachers. The best practices in each of these components, drawn from the analysis of the findings, are also pointed out.

Staff Development

Staff development refers to the training and preparation of teachers for teaching reading, specifically for developing the different reading competencies in their pupils. Perceptions of the two respondent groups about the implementation of this component are presented in Table 8.

Staff development is perceived by the respondents as highly implemented evidenced by the overall mean of 4.36. Taking the groups separately, however, the teachers believe the component to be very highly implemented with a mean of 4.71, while the administrators think it is just highly implemented with a composite mean of 4.00.

The administrators perceive all the goals to be highly implemented, where as the teachers consider the goals relating to them to be very *highly implemented*. This may suggest a different set of expectations between the two groups. The principals may expect more, while the teachers' expectations have been satisfied.

Interviews with the school head respondents revealed that not all school heads attended trainings and workshops related to reading instruction, although these were intended for them. This is because only one or two school heads per district were usually allowed to attend. Sometimes, those named to attend had other concerns to attend to. Suggestions to higher DepEd officials for the attendance of all school heads in trainings related to instruction were ignored because of logistic problems. The school administrators expressed, in one national conference, that would want to be trained together with their teachers when new programs are introduced so that they would know how to supervise them, but one DepEd official reportedly responded: "There are other important school concerns that the school heads have to attend to."

The same is true with regard to trainings for teachers. Only one, two or three per district are requested to attend because funds or situations do not warrant. Emphasis of the DepEd on time on task (TOT) requires teachers to prioritize instruction over other activities, such as attendance in seminars. Because of this, seminar participants are required to re-echo what they learned in trainings to other teachers in their stations. But the teacher-respondents said "There's nothing like first hand information".

In spite of these constraints, the teachers still feel that trainings with regard to improving reading skills and using non-traditional methods of assessment are very highly implemented.  The teachers are also highly involved in activities related to the reading program. These are indicated by mean scores ranging from 4.58 to 4.97.    Participation of pupils in reading activities is very high because the teachers revealed during interviews their eagerness to prepare and bring their pupils to participate in reading-related program/activities, like *Read-A-Thon*, for it is here where they can prove the results of their trainings on assessment in reading and improving reading skills.  The teachers are also very happy with the trainings they have undergone, particularly o*n* the use of non-traditional assessment and in improving reading skills.

Best practices on staff development.  The best practices of the program relative to staff development are the conduct of and attendance in trainings and participation in reading program activities. However, more teachers should undergo these trainings.

These results confirm the findings of Boado (2005) that exposure to trainings and meaningful interactions with subordinates could make teachers grow in competence in their functions.  Similarly, Brillantes' (2005) study revealed that nine trainings in other school-related programs were found contributory to the improvement of the quality of education, eight were participated in by the teachers and seven by both the administrators and teachers which led them to collaboratively strive to provide the quality education which the school children deserve.

These findings are in consonance with Dao-ayan's (2005) observation that faculty development is fast emerging as a priority in all levels of education. Demands from students and society are becoming increasingly directed toward an educational program that is geared to their needs. Faculty development cannot be achieved simply through preachment or administrative decree. The teacher himself must become concerned about improvement. In short, faculty development is intended to help faculty members function more comfortably and effectively in the field of teaching.

Bautista (2012) affirmed this when she said that the teacher is considered the director of learning in the modern school and the most important qualification a teacher can have to do justice to this vital role is preparation and trainings.

### Instructional Materials Development

Since reading competencies cannot be developed without proper and adequate instructional materials, the development of such materials is an important component of ECARP.  The extent to which the activities in this component are implemented as perceived by both school administrators and teachers is presented in Table 9.

The development of instructional materials for reading instruction is *highly implemented* as shown by the overall mean of 4.11 and the composite means of 3.89 for administrators and 4.32 for teachers. The development of materials for classroom use, particularly of reading materials, is assessed by teachers as very highly implemented, while the production of materials for the library and development of facilities and equipment is highly implemented.

The administrators, on the other hand, assessed all indicators as highly implemented probably because they are not very much aware of the instructional materials teachers write and make for their own classes.  For truly, the researcher who is also a school head has observed that teachers always use colourful and varied materials whenever they teach primary classes, These may be charts, big/mini books, picture cards modules, dioramas, etc. DepEd has good programs on the development of instructional materials for classroom use, for the library, for reading, as well as development of facilities/equipment. Numerous trainings are conducted especially on the area of classroom instruction and  reading.

However, there is incongruence between the high extent of implementation of activities along instructional materials development with the findings on adequacy of these materials. It was revealed in Table 7 that instructional materials for classroom use are just enough, and so with materials found in the library. If trainings on instructional materials development are very well implemented, then why are instructional materials barely adequate?

Several teacher respondents revealed in interviews that the few teachers who attend trainings do not always conduct re-echo seminars, thus the new knowledge they acquired is not disseminated.  Another reason given was, training participants were asked to make only one output or new instructional materials during the training which was critiqued, thus it was not in its best form.  In other words, the outputs of the participants were usually not worthy to be shown to others as models.

In addition, the time allotted during seminars for constructing instructional materials was insufficient, so that the participants could not make really good ones.  Good outputs could not be reproduced for distribution to every participant as models.  The respondents also admitted that the material they would construct at the seminar would usually be the first and last one of the kind that they would make for one reason or another.  Added to these are the overlapping activities teachers have to attend to and the unavailability of funds to finance the reproduction of the said materials.  Thus, instructional materials are barely adequate in spite of the high implementation of training programs.

Instructional materials coming from the department are not even enough for a certain district.  For example, only seven of sets of reading materials are available for 20 schools. Distributing these to some would cause envy and problems, thus, to avoid conflict, these were sometimes not distributed anymore to avoid suspicions of favoritism.

When feedback on this matter reached the authorities, they suggested that school heads should tap stakeholders to sponsor the purchase and/or production of materials, but the administrator respondents said they are hesitant to do this because

their stakeholders are tapped primarily for   school building maintenance and improvement.  However, they also try to solicit some funds for the reproduction of modules, but they do not want to over do it.

Best practices on instructional materials development. The best practices on instructional materials development relative to reading are the conduct of training/seminars related to construction, production and development of instructional materials for classroom use as well as for library use.

The extent of implementation of the instructional materials development component of ECARP is in consonance with what Dao-ayan (2005) disclosed that effective reading comprehension abilities are developed through the use of instructional materials. In selecting and adapting a variety of materials, the teacher must decide first which material to use in the classroom. Secondly, the teacher must decide how to use the materials suitable to the type of reading comprehension framework and the adequacy of that material. The teacher should find a way on how to use a very good material but inadequate for the class.  Like what one teacher respondent revealed to the researcher, he uses cooperative teaching when materials are not enough.

Isla (2003) also found out that materials are essential to the success in teaching reading. Materials to be developed are two types: Reading readiness materials that provide early and beginning readers opportunities to develop their readiness for reading, and developmental exercises that include Fuller lessons. Lap/big books, speed and comprehension exercise.

As revealed by Fillon (1990) in the study of Baes regarding the problems met by teachers teaching remedial classes, the most common problems of pupils in reading abilities were faulty identification and recognition and deficiencies in comprehension abilities which can be attributed to the greatest problems of teachers which is lack of textbooks in reading, lack of teaching guides, and inadequate supplementary reading materials.  In the same vein, De Leon (1982), found out that one of the causes of the alarming deterioration in the quality of students' English performance was the lack of basic instructional materials, especially textbooks in English.

## Instructional Activities

Instructional activities under ECARP include not only the actual teaching-learning undertakings in the classroom, but also special activities intended for pupils with different kinds of reading abilities and problems.  The implementation of these activities, as presented in Table 10, is to a very high extent as evidenced by the overall mean of 4.56.  The teachers and administrators believe this is so as shown by the composite means of 4.60 and 4.51, respectively.

Two of the instructional activities that are *very highly implemented* are the conduct of enrichment activities and of remedial reading programs, both with a mean rating of 4.63, while doing practice exercises in reading, with a mean of 4.43, is *highly implemented,* along with the conduct of teaching activities designed for different reading levels: frustration, instructional and independent levels.

For pupils in the frustration reading level, teaching techniques, such as word supply, sentence repeat and repeated reading are very highly implemented, while one-on-one tutoring, echo reading, assisted reading practice, listening passage review, paired reading and skill-base reading instruction are highly implemented with means ranging from 3.93 to 4.44. These findings imply that teacher-guided activities are used more extensively than fluency activities with frustration readers.  This is because frustration level is the lowest reading level.  The pupils have difficulty identifying letters (in Grade I) or words and phrases (in higher grades) thus they need the close guidance of the teacher.

For the instructional level, very *highly implemented* teaching techniques are graphics and semantic organizers, question-answer strategy, skill-based reading instruction. This finding implies that for pupils with some word recognition skills, reading activities in the classroom should prepare them to engage in independent reading.  This finding agrees with the recommendation of Rodrigo (2006) that teachers should embark on more reading strategies, such as the use of graphics and semantic organizers, question and answer strategy, using mental imagery and skill-based reading instruction.  It also concurs with that of Villanueva et. al. (2008) which emphasized that during the period of rapid or expanding growth, the teacher guides the students in the mastery of reading techniques.

For the independent level readers, teaching techniques *highly implemented* are interpreting graphs, charts and tables, readers' theatre, literacy-rich classroom environment, computer based reading activities and sustained silent reading (SSR), while summarizing, choral reading, storytelling activities, library visit and reading modules are very highly implemented.  This finding implies that teachers make use of teaching practices and techniques for independent readers which reinforce independent and sustained silent reading (SSR) and prepare the reader for more challenging reading situations. It supports the recommendation of Villanueva et. al. (2008) to encourage independent reading and the use of library materials such as reference books. The authors strongly emphasized the use of research work as would be useful in problem solving in science, social studies, mathematics, etc.

Best instructional practices. The identified best instructional practices in developing reading competencies are conducting enrichment and remedial reading programs and utilization of varied teaching practices suited to the reading levels of the pupils.

As a whole, the teachers make use of the different strategies suited to all pupils in a class regardless of reading levels. In the public schools, classes consist of heterogeneous groups. Pupils in different reading levels have different needs which have to be catered to successfully in order to progress or improve in reading. If their needs are not provided for, frustration readers will lag behind and the independent readers will not be able to acquire advance reading skills. Appropriate intervention can raise the reading levels of pupils and become better and more efficient readers.

The present study's finding contradicts that of Haager, et.al. (2007) that most teachers do not allocate instructional time to activities aimed at building fluency because they assume that students will acquire fluency naturally as they begin to read independently. Opportunity to practice by reading independently is important in fluency development but is not sufficient, particularly true for struggling readers. Thru guided practice and modelling, students hold a string of words in memory while processing the meaning of the connected words.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation refers to the duty of the principal, as well as the supervisors and superintendents, in seeing to it that activities designed to develop the reading competencies of the pupils are well-planned and carefully undertaken, as well as making sure that there is a regular or periodic assessment of the reading competencies of the pupils by the teachers to determine their rate of development.  Perceptions on the extent of implementation of this component of ECARP are presented in Table 11.

Monitoring and evaluation activities are *very highly implemented* in the Division of Ilocos Norte as evidenced by the overall mean rating of 4.98, and the composite means of 5.00 and 4.97 of the administrators and teachers, respectively.  The finding implies that the administrators and teachers are keen implementers of DepEd's thrusts and programs regarding the development of reading competencies among pupils.

As perceived by the two groups of respondents, there is an intensive and pervasive monitoring and evaluation activities of the program. This means that the department through the school administrators is bent on making the program achieve results or its planned objectives.

Best practices in evaluating and monitoring. The best practices in evaluating and monitoring the program include the regular administration of the School Readiness Assessment (SRA) and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil IRI) to monitor the entry and subsequent reading levels and reading progress of the pupils. Written reports on the implementation and follow up, supported by documents, are submitted regularly to the Division office.

This is in consonance with the point stressed by Villamar (2004) that the appraisal/ evaluation of performance and outputs is a powerful process.  It tries to identify and remedy the misfits in any undertaking. Evaluation is truly important for it brings many changes after a pedagogical process has been implemented.  In the entire educational system, the teacher's important role is to properly evaluate the results of instruction, along with his instructional competence, in order to picture out the learning outcomes in his clientele which becomes the basis for some academic reforms in the future.

## Qualitative Relationship of Process to
## Context and Input Variables

The ECARP activities (process) along Staff Development and Instructional Materials Development are highly implemented which contradicts the previously discussed moderate adequacy of instructional materials (input).  This points to the fact that it is not just the number of seminars conducted or of teachers and administrators who attend that indicates high implementation.  As explained in an earlier section, although there are many seminars and trainings conducted on the development of instructional materials for reading, only a few teachers and administrators attend due to logistic concerns, and not all those who attends conduct re-echo seminars. The output is a better indicator of success.  It could also be said that were it not for the ingenuity and competence of the teachers, availability of instructional materials would be lower.

The very high implementation of instructional activities (process) agrees with the very satisfactory teaching competence of the teachers (input).  Likewise, the very high level of implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities (process) is reflected in the administrators' very high awareness of the program (context) and their teachers' competence, and their desire to undergo trainings together with their teachers so that they would be knowledgeable of new trends of teaching and instructional materials to be used.  It also gibes with the respondents' high expectations of goal attainment (context) in ECARP.

## The Outputs of ECARP

The outputs of an educational program include the outcomes developed in the pupils, as well as the extent to which the goals are attained.  These variables were used in the present study to assess ECARP.

## Reading Performance of Grade III Pupils
## In English and Filipino

The reading profile of the pupils who are the subjects of this study, as measured by the Phil IRI through three years, was used as a measure of reading performance.   These competencies are described in terms of pre-test and post test scores from Grade I, through Grade II, to pre-test scores in Grade III. (Post test in this grade level have not yet been administered at the time the present study was conducted.)  The reading performance of the Grade III pupils in English and Filipino is presented in Tables 12.1 and 12.2, respectively.  An increase in number of pupils from Grades I to II is due to transferees from other schools.

Pre-test results in Grade I shows that majority the pupils (65.18% for English and 52.85% for Filipino) were non readers. A smaller percentage (17.89% for English and 25.20% for Filipino) belonged to the frustration level, while a still smaller portion (16.93% for English and 1.95% for |Filipino) were classified as belonging to the instructional level. There were no independent readers in both languages.  These results could be explained by the pupils' inability to identify sounds, recognize words, note details, along with the other reading competencies they lack. They had poor comprehension, which an independent reader should possess.

The post test results in the same year showed some improvement in the pupils' reading skills as none was classified as a non-reader and the percentages of those belonging to the frustration and instructional levels haven decreased.  In addition, many pupils (42.82% in English and 52.71% in Filipino) had become independent readers of Grade I reading materials.

These figures reflect the success of the teachers' strategies and efforts in developing the Grade I pupils' reading skills.

When the pupils were promoted to Grade II during the SY 2012-2013, pre-test results showed that no one among them could be considered a non-reader in either English or Filipino.  The percentages of those belonging to the frustration and instructional levels increased because those who were non-readers or frustration level readers in the previous grade moved on to the next levels. The teachers explained this saying:

*"During summer vacation, the pupils seldom read or others don't even read, for all they do is to play, watch TV, and relax that's why at the start of the next school year, they are performing low in the comprehension check-up resulting to increase in the number of pupils in the frustration level.".*

It is also worthwhile to note that in the second grade a few pupils (4.42% in English and 9.84% in Filipino) could be classified as independent readers of Grade II materials.

Post test results in the same school year reveal a remarkable decrease among the frustration level readers in both languages and an increase among those who belong to the instructional level also in both languages.  The increase in percentage of independent readers is likewise remarkable, as 49.08% and 66.05% could now read on their own Grade II materials in English and Filipino, respectively.  This again reflects the effectiveness of the strategies, activities and materials utilized by the teachers in developing the pupils' reading skills.  It is not surprising that more pupils can independently read in Filipino than in English because the former is phonetic, that is, the words are pronounced based on the sounds of the letters, unlike English which has silent letters and whose vowels are pronounced in different ways.  In addition, Filipino is closely related to the pupils' mother tongue, Iloco, thus the meanings of words are also closely related or the same.

In the third school year, 2013-2014 when this study was undertaken, pre-test results show that, just like in the previous year, no one was a non-reader in spite of the slight increase in enrolment.  The percentage of frustration level readers in both languages decreased from the previous years, while the percentages of instructional level and independent readers increased.

This shows that there is a steady improvement of the reading performance of the pupils from Grade I to Grade III, although the teacher- respondents admitted that there were still pupils who can recognize words, especially English words, but who cannot fully comprehend what these mean. This difficulty was identified from the results of comprehension check-up tests. The teachers, however, said, "It's good we have reading programs initiated by the Department that enable pupils to become good readers".

Related to the comments of the respondents is the result of the study of Brillantes (2006) that the main reasons for the low pupils' achievement is their poor reading ability or their inability to read and comprehend.  But when the ECARP was instituted, all schools were encouraged to put up their own reading program so that by time the pupil reaches Grade III, he can become an independent reader already.

Ragunjan (2006), likewise said that, based on the results of his own study, there is a need for everyone to read not only for enjoyment, relaxation and information but to be able to cope with life at present. Because of tremendous advances in science and technology, lifestyles of people have suddenly changed. There is a need for a more serious attitude towards reading.

That is why education authorities largely emphasized that reading be universally regarded as one of the most important activities in life, not only of  individuals, but of society as a whole. Without the ability to read, a person's world would be confined to what he can learn from broadcast media. The world of newspapers and books would be closed to him by the massive walls of ignorance. The ability to read well constitutes one the most valuable skills of man if he has to live an enriched life in this past and changing and ever-widening world.

## Perceived Level of Attainment of ECARP Goals

After looking into the reading performance profile of pupils, the level of attainment of ECARP goals as perceived by school administrators and teachers was also determined. These were compared with the same respondents' perceptions on the extent to which program can meet the pupils' reading competency needs.  The perceptions of the two groups of respondents regarding goal attainment in ECARP are presented in Table 10.

All the goals and objectives of ECARP are perceived by the respondents to be *highly implemented* as reflected by the overall mean score of 4.16. and the composite means of 4.17 and 4.14 for the administrators and teachers, respectively.  The respondents believe that ECARP can make every child a reader by the third grade, and this is proven by the improvement reading

performance of pupils discussed in the previous section. ECARP is also believed to have developed and implemented a training design for teachers to equip them to effectively teach
reading in the primary grades.  Likewise, an effective system for monitoring the program is in place.

This finding contradicts the impression of some teachers in the higher grades that ECARP is no longer being implemented or in effect.  It is the primary school teachers who are fully aware of its accomplishments because they are the ones who are implementing it.

The extent of attainment of ECARP goals and objectives is high as perceived by the respondents. When every Filipino child can read, then communication and gaining access to information that make him a well-informed and functional citizen is no problem.

Mangkarotai (1986), Peredo (1988), Libao and Tesoro (2004), who conducted a series of studies on beginning reading, revealed that the reading problem in the Philippines has been in existence for so long. Despite the efforts exerted to improve the reading instruction, still, many children were found to have inadequate or below average reading attainment.  However, this situation must have changed as a result of ECARP and other reading programs.

The perception that the development of instructional materials for reading is highly implemented is contradicted by the finding that such materials are barely adequate, although training programs for teachers were implemented, for these did not result in the construction or development of adequate instructional materials.  Some factors previously discussed have prevented the teachers from developing such materials.  Thus the respondents' perceptions regarding this goal do not gibe with other findings.

A system of monitoring the implementation of the program is in place as perceived by the respondents and as affirmed in interviews with them, but it is surprising why the school heads and supervisors could not see the bare adequacy of instructional materials and the reasons for this.

**Qualitative Relationship of Outputs to**
**Context, Input and Process Variables**

The Grade I teacher respondents perceived that there is a very pronounced need for the development of reading competencies of the Grade I pupils  and this is supported by the results of the SRA that majority or almost all the Grade I entrants are not ready for the regular work of  a Grade I pupil.

The teachers, however, are very much aware of the program and are very competent in teaching reading, in spite of barely adequate instructional materials.  In spite of the very low reading readiness level of Grade I pupils, the respondents believe that ECARP can develop their reading competencies.  They are confident that, using their initiative and creativity, and with their dedication, these deficiencies would not be barriers to their desire to gradually help the pupils acquire the different reading competencies and make them independent readers, not only in Iloco but also in English and Filipino.

The attitude and positive outlook of the teachers are supported by the findings that ECARP activities (process) along Staff Development and Instructional Materials Development are highly implemented in spite of the previously discussed moderate adequacy of instructional materials (input).   This points to the fact that it is not just the number of seminars conducted or of teachers and administrators who attend that indicates high implementation.  As explained in an earlier section, although there are many seminars and trainings conducted on the development of instructional materials for reading, only a few teachers and administrators attend due to logistic concerns, and not all those who attend conduct re-echo seminars. The output is a better indicator of success.  It could also be said that were it not for the ingenuity and competence of the teachers, availability of instructional materials would be lower.

The very high implementation of instructional activities (process) agrees with the very satisfactory teaching competence of the teachers (input).  Likewise, the very high level of implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities (process) is reflected in the administrators very high awareness of the program (context) and their teachers' competence, and their desire to undergo trainings together with their teachers so that they would be knowledgeable of new trends of teaching and instructional materials to be used.  It also gibes with the respondents' high expectations of goal attainment (context) in ECARP.

Based on the progressive improvement of reading skills of pupils from Grade I to III (product) and on the perceived level of attainment of the objectives of ECARP (product),  it can be said that the program is successful. This could be attributed to very high level of implementation of the different components of the program (process).   Although the pupils initially had low poor reading competencies and instructional materials are just enough (input), the very satisfactory competence of the teachers (inputs) could be said to have influenced the very high level of implementation of the program, which took place in line with the high expectations of the respondents that ECARP can meet the reading competency needs of pupils (context) in order to attain the goal of developing learners and citizens who are independent readers in the mother tongue, as well as in English and Filipino.

This supports the stand of Caburteja (1993), that the attainment of quality education especially in the elementary grades is the primary mission of DepEd, and one way of accomplishing this is by making every child a reader. The implementation of the policy "No Read No Move" also proves that the Department gives much emphasis on the development of the reading skills of the

pupils. And ECARP is a mechanism for implementing this policy.  The implementation of ECARP and the other reading programs indicates that the seriousness of the government in attaining this goal.

The reading problem exists not only in the Philippines but in other countries as well.  Joseph and Schisler (2008) of Ohio State University reviewed the effectiveness of teaching basic reading skills. Studies that were published in the past 20 years from 1986 to 2006 were reviewed on the basis of specific criteria for inclusion. Results revealed that various programs and methods designed to teach basic reading skills were implemented to determine their effectiveness on word identification, fluency and comprehension skills. An overall strong effect of teaching basic reading skills was found on the pupils' reading achievement performance, particularly on their fluency performance.

The researchers thus concluded that most reading programs are planned to cater to the needs of the pupils in each grade level because pupils are often not intellectually equipped with the equivalent reading skill corresponding to their level of learning. A carefully designed reading program can give the identified frustration level pupils an immediate remedy for their need to read so that they will not be left behind and will be able to advance into the level they should be in.

In the Philippines where several complementary reading programs with similar goals and activities are simultaneously being implemented, a system of integrating the features of all these programs would clarify goals, identify the most suitable strategies and activities, and minimize confusion.  Thus, based on the findings of this study, the researcher designed a school-based reading intervention program which aims to enhance the reading skills of the pupils of the Division of Ilocos Norte thru appropriate learning activities and dynamic teaching practices and techniques.

**A Proposed School-Based Reading Development Plan**

This reading development plan seeks to develop the expected reading competencies of pupils in Iloco, English and Filipino in the elementary grades.  It is based on the findings of the assessment of the implementation of ECARP utilizing the CIPP evaluation model.  It is designed to be conducted outside the regular classes. It can serve as a supplemental reading instruction to pupils by providing activities that will improve their reading skills.

The school-based reading development plan aims to raise the reading level of pupils from frustration to instructional or independent level; provide learning experiences that would develop reading skills within the learners' reading level; Make learners independent readers; and improve the academic performance and literacy appreciation of the pupils.

The plan involves various approaches and reading materials about topics related to the content of the different subjects in the curriculum. Itis divided into four quarters, one quarter for each grading period in the school year. The reading activities and strategies for each quarter are arranged in a sequential and logical manner for better mastery of the reading skills and to ensure progress in reading. It will be carried out thrice a week with 30 minutes per session after the regular class. In the said plan, activities, materials and assessment are identified and these are expected to be easier for the pupils to understand and help them cope with their academic requirements in school.

To implement the plan, before the start of the school year, classrooms should be equipped with reading materials and other facilities needed. Financial requirements may be charged against local funds, PTA funds, donations and MOOE upon approval of school authorities subject to the usual accounting and auditing procedures. All concerned or persons involved shall take part and cooperation; collaborative work is enjoined to ensure success. The reading intervention should be considered as additional load upon the approval of the school head.

To identify the reading level of the pupils, the Phil-IRI pre-tests are be administered as usual at the beginning of the school year.  Level-appropriate reading strategies and materials which are relevant to the pupils' academic needs are to be provided to motivate them to engage in meaningful activities. To assess the pupils' progress in reading, the Phil-IRI post test shall be conducted at the end of the school year.

At the end of the program, the pupils are expected to become more confident and competent readers. This will be highlighted by giving rewards to pupils who have successfully improved their reading levels like recommending grade incentives in English and Filipino and may graduate from the program. This is in accordance with the Reward Motivation Theory which states that a reward is to be obtained after the execution of a task, an action or a series of actions *(www.theory.reward.motivation)*. Those who will remain in the frustration level due to absences or lack of motivation shall be recommended to continue the intervention program for the next school year until such time the pupils will become independent readers. And when that happens, same incentives will be given to them also.

Reading is a vital tool for learning. The ability to read paves the way to vast opportunities to explore, learn and become productive. The school provides an avenue for success in reading thru meaningful learning activities and instruction. Appropriate reading instruction and good learning environment sharpen the minds of the learners to imbibe the reading routine, discover the pleasures of reading and the world of knowledge.

With the designed proposed school-based reading development plan, the needs of pupils are expected be catered thru appropriate learning activities and dynamic teaching practices and techniques. The intervention shall provide opportunities for learners to improve their reading skills from one level ascending to the next or highest level.

## 4. Summary

This study ventured to assess the implementation of the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) in the Division of Ilocos Norte as a basis for a reading development plan.

Specifically, it sought to: 1) determine the context of the ECARP with regard to the reading needs of primary school children in Ilocos Norte, the extent to which the reading needs are met by ECARP, and the level of awareness of school administrators and teachers about the program; 2) describe the characteristics of the inputs of the program, namely reading readiness of Grade I pupils, teaching competence of teachers, and adequacy of instructional materials; 3) determine how the four components of ECARP are being implemented; 4) Determine the extent of attainment of the outputs of the program, namely, the reading performance of pupils in Filipino and English, and the perceived level of goal attainment. The best practices in every component of the program were also identified, and based on the data gathered, a reading development plan was formulated.

This research utilized the evaluative research design guided by the CIPP evaluation model. Evaluation was undertaken through an in-depth description of the different components of the ECARP. Description included quantitative and qualitative data about the context, inputs, processes and products of ECARP in the Division of Ilocos Norte. A reading development plan was formulated based on the findings of the study.

The respondents of the study were the school heads, Grades I, II and III teachers and Grade III pupils of randomly selected elementary schools in the Division of Ilocos Norte. Data were gathered through the administration of a questionnaire, the conduct of interviews and the analysis of documents.

## 5. Findings

With regard to context, it was found out that there is a moderate need to develop the reading competencies of Grades I-III pupils in both English and Filipino (mean = 3.25), but these needs can be met to a high extent by ECARP as perceived by the school heads and teachers (mean = 4.99). The administrators and teachers are very much aware of the program, its goals and objectives (mean - 4.99).

As inputs of the program, 90% of the Grade I entrants were not ready for regular classes at the start of the school year. The teachers were perceived by their administrators are being very satisfactory in teaching reading (mean - 4.13). Instructional materials for classroom and library use are just enough (mean = 3.15).

The four components of ECARP were all assessed as highly implemented. These components and their means are staff development (mean = 4.36), instructional materials (mean = 4.11), instructional activities (mean = 4.56), and monitoring and evaluation (mean = 4.90). The best practices in these program components were identified.

With regard to outputs, although majority of the pupils were either non-readers or frustration level readers when they entered Grade I, many (63.20%) developed into instructional and independent readers (15.77 %) two years later when they entered Grade III. All the goals and objectives of ECARP were perceived by the respondents to be highly implemented (mean = 4.16).

The constraints to the advancement of reading levels from frustration to independent level of the pupils can be addressed by the proposed school-based reading development plan. It is a plan of varied reading activities which pupils undertake in addition to their regular class activities for every quarter of the school year .At the end of the school year, incentives are provided to pupils who advance from frustration level to the instructional or independent levels.

## 6. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions:

The overall assessment on the implementation of ECARP is high which is an indication that the program is successful in the Division of Ilocos Norte. This could be attributed to the high level of awareness of teachers and administrators of the program, the instructional competence of the faculty, and the faithful implementation of the different components of the program, in spite of some constraints in the development of instructional materials.

The reading competency needs of the Grades I to III pupils can be adequately met through a high level of awareness and a diligent implementation of the different components of the ECARP. This is proven by the progressive advancement of the pupils in reading level. Majority of the Grade I entrants were not ready for reading activities, but with the very satisfactory competence of the reading teachers and just enough adequacy of instructional materials, their reading competencies were enhanced.

The ECARP, utilizing the SRA and the Phil-IRI is an effective program for developing reading competencies among primary pupils. It can be effective in eradicating non-readers in the Division of Ilocos Norte. Its continued implementation could lead to the improvement in the literacy level of citizens of the country.

A careful and detailed description of the components of a program and an in-depth analysis of the relationship of these components, guided by the CIPP model, can bring out a clear qualitative assessment which could be a basis for policy formulation.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Since ECARP is effective, it is strongly recommended that  implementation in the Division of Ilocos Norte and the Department of Education  should continuously be implemented;.

2.  In order to improve the academic performance of pupils in school, varied reading activities appropriate to their reading levels should be provided to;

3.   The involvement of all teachers in training and other activities meant to improve their teaching competencies should be ensured.  The constraints in the development of needed instructional materials should be minimized or eliminated by school administrators.

4. The identified best practices  for every component of the program such as conduct and attendance in trainings related to construction, production and development of instructional materials and participation in reading program activities should be continued;

5. The proposed school-based reading development plan proposed in this study should be carefully studied and implemented to minimize the number of poor readers in our schools; and

6. Closer supervision and follow-up should be done to sustain the effectiveness of the program.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note**: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

## References

[1]   Alcantara, R.D. et. al.(2003).*Teaching strategies i for the teaching of communication arts; listening, speaking, reading and writing*. Manila Katha Publishing  Co. Inc.

[2]   Bautista, M. T.M. (2012).*Reading Levels of High School Students*,  Unpublished Dissertation, Saint Louis College, San Fernando City, La Union,

[3]   Boado, J.C.(2005).*Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade IV Pupils*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, Agoo, La Union,

[4]   Brillantes, R. C. (2006).*Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) in the Division of Abra*, Unpublished  Master's Thesis, University of the Northern Philippines, Vigan City,

[5]   Caburteja, J.  M. (1993) *An analysis of the progress oral reading test results of the grade II pupils conducted in Villasis District II, Villasis, Pangasinan,*  The Modern Teacher.

[6]   Cancino, R . (2007). *Enhancement of Reading Skills among Intermediate Pupils through Appropriate Teaching Strategies,* Unpublished Master's Thesis, Saint Louis University, Baguio City,

[7]   Castillo, D. B. (2002).*Status of Reading Skills of Grade I pupils of Kayapa District, Division of          Nueva Viscaya.* Baguio  Central  University, Baguio City,

*[8]*   Compton's Encyclopedia, (1986) .*The World of Reading*, Compton's Learning Company Division of Encyclopedia Britanica, Inc.,

[9]   Cruz, L.  T. (2003*).Systems Analysis of the Ilocos Norte Cotton Research &Development Laboratory,*Unpublished Master's Thesis ,Mariano Marcos State University, Laoag    City,

[10]  Dao-ayan, A. B. (2005).*Reading Comprehension Ability of the Grade III Pupils of DWC of Bangued,* Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Northern  Philippines, Vigan City,

[11]  Definition of Reading, Reading, www.elementary.ph/whatwedo

[12]  Definition of Reading, Wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading...(process)

[13]  Definition of Reading ,www.englishclub.com/reading/what.htm

[14]  De Leon, F.  M. *Developing National Consciousness Through Traditional Art*, A Hand  Out,  1982*Department of Education, Manual of Implementation.:Every Child A Reader Program*, (2003). EDCOM*, Review & Assess Philippine Education*

[15]  Escalona, L.  A. (2011).*Implementation of the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) To Grade I pupils of Candon City Division, Candon, Ilocos Sur,*Unpublished Master's Thesis, Saint          Mary's College, Sta. Maria,      Ilocos Sur,

[16]  Every Child A Reader Program, www.gov.ph/.../make-every-child-a-reader-program-gets-p21-          million-funding-support

[17]  Every Child A Reader Program, www.reddit.com/user/ecarp

[18]  Favila, F. (1989)*A Study of Reading Comprehension of Grade IV Pupils in the Ten Complete Elementary Schools of Sta. Cruz District*, Unpublished Masters' Thesis, Oasis Educational Foundation, Balawan, La Union,

[19]  Felipe, A. C. et.al. , *Assessment of the Academic Programs of Mariano Marcos State          University, Laoag City*, 2005

[20]  Fillon, O. L. (1990).*The Effect of Intensive Reading on the Speed and Comprehension          Performance  of  Grade  V  Pupils  at  Cabusligan-Quinnarayan Elementary School,*     Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of  Northern Philippines,

[21]  Flora, T. R.  (2005).*Effectiveness of Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) in the Public Elementary Schools of the Second District of La Union,* Baguio Central University,          Unpublished Master's Thesis, Baguio City,

[22]  Guiab, M.  R. *A Study of the Quality of Reading Instruction in Paddad Elementary          School,*  The          Modern Teacher. Vol. XLV. No. 2

[23]  Haager, D. et al. (2007), *Interventions for Reading Success*, Baltimore Maryland, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.,

[24]  Hsu M. C. (2006). *A Proposed Transition Program for Prospective Grade I Pupils in Taiwan, Republic of China*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Mariano Marcos State University, Laoag City,

[25]  Importance of reading, www.huffingtonpost.com/theimportanceofreading

[26]   Importance of Reading, www.learntoreadprincegeorge.com/why-is-readingimpt.html

[27]   Isla, N. R. (2003)*A Handbook:Developing Reading and Writing readiness Bringing Success to "Every  Child A Reader Program.*

[28]   Layugan,  G. L. (2006).*A Survey on the Effectiveness of Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP),*Unpublished Master's Thesis, Cordillera University, Baguio City,

[29]   Lalunio, L. P. ,Tatlonghari Melchor A. Gutierrez, Merry Ruth M. *Philippine Informal Reading Inventory Manual,* 2007

[30]   Libao, S. D. (2004).*Reading Comprehension Ability of the Grade III Pupils in ViganDistrict, Division of Ilocos Sur*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Northern Philippines,Vigan City,

[31]   Mangkarotai, S. (1986).*Problems met by University of Northern Philippines PolytecnicHigh `        School      Freshmen     in    Learning Communication Arts English*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City,

[32]   Miranda, A. (2008*).Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP): Its Implementation in the Public Elementary Schools of San Fabian, Division of Pangasinan II,*Unpublished Master's Thesis, Polytechnic College of La Union,  San Fernando, La Union.

[33]   Pagaduan, M.  F. (2005).*The English Language Proficiency of the Third Year Students of the Secondary Schools of Sto. Domingo-San Ildefonso District Division of Ilocos Su*r, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City,

[34]   Pascua, E. G. (2009).*Mga Kagamitang Pampagtuturo sa Filipino mula sa mga Piling Kwentoni Dr. Onofrecia Ibarra*. Unpublished study, Pinili District, Pinili,IlocosNorte,

[35]   Peredo, T. (1988).*The Reading Comprehension Ability of the Grade VI Pupils in Bantay, Ilocos        Sur*,      Unpublished    Master's    Thesis, University of Northern Philippines.

[36]   Ragunjan, N. R. (2006). "The Performance of the College of Arts and Sciences of First Year College Students in the Study and Thinking Skills (English 101)." Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Northern Philippines,Vigan City,

[37]   Ramos, A. L. (2006).*Monitoring and Evaluation System of Every Child A Reader Program*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Baguio Central University, Baguio City.

[38]   Reading Program, www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/curriculum/summaryresearch.pdf

[39]   Reading Program, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading Recovery

[40]   Reading Program, newsinfo.inquirer.net.../bank-supports-production-of-learning-teaching-tools

[41]   Reading Program, www.dakbanwangsilay.com/content/read-thon-memo

[42]   Reading Program, www.mcdonalds.com.ph/content/page/bright-minds-read

[43]   Reading Program,swww.povertyactionlab.org/...readers...reading-program-Philippines).

[44]   Reading Program,En.wikipilipinas.org/...title=Reading Association of the Philippines

[45]   Rigunay, E. R. (2008*).Evaluation of the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) in the Division of Ilocos Sur*. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City,

[46]   Rodrigo,  L.  C. (2006).*Reading Abilities of First Year Students in the Public Secondary Schools in Manaoag and San Jacinto Pangasinan*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Baguio Central University, Baguio City.

[47]   Tesoro, P.  B. (2004).*Reading Ability and Comprehension of the Grade IV Pupils in Dolores District*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City,

[48]   Theory Rewards and Motivation, www.theory.reward.motivation

[49]   Umbias, I. N. *Causes of Poor Reading among Pupils*.The Modern Teacher. Vol. XLV,

[50]   Veracion, N. R. (2006). *Supervisory Behavior of Public Secondary School Administrators ofAbra*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Northern Philippines,Vigan City

[51]   Villamar, B.  A. (2004*) Performance of the Elementary Grade Teachers and Pupils in San Juan District,*Unpublished Master's Thesis,  Division of Ilocos Sur,

[52]   Villanueva, A. S., Rogelio L. Delos Santos.(2008).*Developmental Reading 1*. Quezon City, Lorimar Publishing Inc.

[53]   Way-as, L.  T. (2006).*The Status of Implementation of Every Child A Reader Program in La Union*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Baguio Central University, Baguio City..