**The Use of Project LEAP (Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program) in Enhancing the Reading Performance of Learners in Kabugao Central School**

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ABSTRACT

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| This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP) project in enhancing the reading performance of struggling learners in Grades IV to VI at Kabugao Central School during the school year 2024–2025. Specifically, it assessed learners' reading levels before and after the intervention, determined statistical significance in performance gains, and gathered participants' insights and challenges regarding the program’s implementation. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, utilizing a one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design for quantitative analysis and Thematic Analysis for qualitative data. The study was conducted at Kabugao Central School, Kabugao, Apayao, from June 2024 to December 2024. Methodology: Thirty-two learners identified as “frustration level” readers based on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) were purposively selected. The LEAP intervention, aligned with the DepEd’s ECARP/Bawat Bata Bumabasa guidelines, was implemented over a defined period. Pretest and posttest assessments were administered using LEAP-provided tools. Quantitative data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and paired sample t-test, while qualitative responses were coded and thematically analyzed. Pretest scores revealed a mean percentage score (MPS) of 77.63, indicating an “Improving” level of reading performance. Posttest results showed a significant increase to an MPS of 93.59, classified as “Improved,” with all learners reaching full proficiency. Statistical analysis yielded a t-value of -14.30 and a p-value of <0.001, confirming the difference as highly significant. Thematic findings highlighted increased learner motivation, improved reading fluency, and enhanced classroom participation. Challenges included limited resources and initial adaptation issues. Its structured and engaging approach effectively promoted fluency and comprehension. Continued implementation and potential expansion of the program are recommended to sustain literacy gains.  |

*Keywords:* *reading engagement, Project LEAP, learner performance, literacy intervention, pretest-posttest, elementary education, mixed-methods*

1. INTRODUCTION

 Literacy is a foundational skill that empowers individuals to access knowledge and information, forming the basis for academic success and personal development. Often described as a bridge from despair to hope, literacy plays a transformative role in one’s life. Achieving a strong level of literacy can significantly enhance a learner’s overall performance. This requires a solid grounding in and consistent exposure to the key language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Sustainable Development Goal 4, established by the United Nations, aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all. Despite this goal, (Gust, S, et. al 2024) highlighted in his research that the world remains significantly behind in guaranteeing that all children acquire even basic literacy skills. Additionally, a report from UNESCO revealed that one in four young people—approximately 175 million youth—in developing countries cannot read a single sentence (USAID. 2018, September 7)

The 2018 and 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) result in reading were about the same. Almost no Filipino learners scored at Level Five or higher in reading (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2023, PISA 2022 results (Volume I and II). Meaning, they perform below the standard.

 Despite the collective efforts of teachers, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders to address reading gaps, post-test results from the FLAT (Fundamental Literacy Assessment Tool) for Grades 1 to 3 and the Phil-IRI (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory) for Grades 4 to 6 in the entire Division of Apayao last school year revealed concerning data. Specifically, (Curriculum Implementation Division, Schools Division Office of Apayao. 2023) 3.13% of 2,389 Grade 2 learners were still at the Letter Level, and 1% of 2,122 Grade 3 learners remained at the same level—far below the expected competencies for their grade.

Furthermore, the Phil-IRI post-test results for Grades 4 to 6 showed that out of 14,929 students, 15 learners (or 0.1%) were identified as non-readers, 1,148 (7.69%) were at the frustration level, and 2,560 (17.15%) had reached the independent reading level. While a significant portion of students are reading independently, a considerable number still fall within the frustration and instructional levels, with a small group still unable to read at all.

Reading intervention strategies are targeted remedial measures designed to support learners who face challenges in reading. These difficulties can stem from various causes, but through the use of appropriate and specific strategies, educators can help students strengthen their reading abilities. Effective interventions must be tailored to meet each learner's individual needs to promote their progress and success as readers. Common challenges that hinder reading development include difficulties with word decoding, weak comprehension skills, and low reading fluency (Llego, M. A. (2021, November 3).

According to (Librea NK et. al, 2023), one significant factor contributing to low literacy levels among Filipino learners is the ineffective implementation of reading programs. When literacy programs are carried out in alignment with their intended goals, they not only foster a stronger reading culture but also lead to noticeable improvements in the performance of struggling readers (Suardika, I. K. (2023).

(Guthrie, et.al 2019) contribute significantly to understanding how **reading instruction, motivation, engagement, and achievement are interconnected for adolescent readers.** Their study uses modeling techniques to reveal the pathways through which instructional practices influence students’ motivation and engagement, which in turn affect their reading achievement.

(Barber, A. T., & Klauda, S. L. 2020) bridge psychological insights with practical policy recommendations, advocating for a more holistic approach to reading education that goes beyond skill-building to include motivational and engagement factors. They **clarify the mechanisms** through which motivation and engagement impact reading performance, showing that motivated and engaged students are more likely to persist, practice, and comprehend texts effectively, suggesting that educational policies should prioritize fostering motivation and engagement, alongside traditional literacy instruction, to improve overall reading outcomes.

(Capotosto, L. 2021). investigates how **reader engagement strategies** are incorporated into middle school summer reading lists. The study highlights the importance of selecting books and materials that actively capture and sustain students’ interest outside the classroom. (Duke, N. K., et. al, 2021). contribute a clear and research-based overview of effective reading comprehension instruction. They synthesize current scientific findings to inform educators about the essential components and best practices for teaching comprehension. Their work bridges theory and classroom practice, helping educators implement evidence-based comprehension instruction to improve student reading outcomes.

The Project Literacy Engagement and Advancement Program (LEAP) is a comprehensive reading intervention initiative developed by SDO Apayao. It aims to close reading gaps and enhance or advance the reading skills of learners in both elementary and secondary schools. The program is tailored to address students' individual reading needs, considering their specific reading stages, levels, and degrees of difficulty across all grade levels. LEAP features simplified processes that can be adapted and customized to fit the unique needs of each school and its learners.

Kabugao Central School strongly supported the project LEAP by establishing it as a reading program in the school. It particularly aimed to addressed the reading difficulties of (Kabugao Central School. (2023). FLAT and Phil-IRI pre-test results, School Year 2023–2024). 32 learners (21% of the total enrolment) from grades IV to VI who belonged to frustration level based on their pre-test result Phil IRI for this school year. It was introduced to the stakeholders through a consultative meeting to emphasize its benefit, implementation procedures and their involvement in the process. The project was launched in the second quarter of the current school year.

The reading program used a guided reading approach by the concerned teachers and volunteer tutors from the parents' group. During school days, it was done on a daily basis, thirty (30) minutes before class time. The intervention materials were taken from the LEAP package. The provision of additional localized reading materials was upon the discretion of teachers who were the main implementers of the project. The implementation of the project was monitored monthly to assess and record significant progress in the reading performance of the identified participants.

It is in this context that the researcher, in her 8 years of teaching, was motivated to conduct this study because every year, there are still cases of struggling readers despite the interventions made for them to cope and meet their level of literacy. Through the proper implementation of the project LEAP, reading delays among learners were addressed. The researcher served as the lead implementer of the project and is responsible in the monitoring of significant progress.

2. statement of the problem

 Generally, this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Literacy Engagement and Advancement Project (LEAP) in enhancing the reading performance of learners at Kabugao Central School during the SY 2024-2025. Specifically, it seeks to address the following questions:

1. What is the level of the reading performance of learners before the implementation of project LEAP?
2. What is the level of the reading performance of learners after the implementation of project LEAP?
3. Is there a significant difference in the reading performance of learners before and after the use of project LEAP?

**2.1 Hyphothesis**

 Ho: There is no significant difference in the reading performance of learners before and after the implementation of project LEAP.

3. methodology

3.1 Research Design

A one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design will be utilized to quantitatively measure changes in the learners' reading performance before and after the implementation of the LEAP project.

3.2 Locale of the Study

The study will be conducted at Kabugao Central School (KCS), which is situated in Poblacion, Kabugao, Apayao. Kabugao Central School is a medium-sized school that serves as the central institution within the Kabugao 1 District. It is approximately 0.50 kilometers from the municipal town hall.

3.3 Participants of the Study

The study participants will include Grade IV to VI 17 males and 15 females learner identified as being at the “frustration level” in reading, based on the Phil-IRI pretest administered at the beginning of the 2024–2025 school year. The distribution of participants is shown below.

**Table 1. Study participants and their grade level**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade Level** | **No. of Learners** |
| IV | 8 |
| V | 8 |
| VI | 16 |
| **Total** | **32** |

3.4 Research Instrument

 The primary instrument for data collection will be a pretest-posttest assessment, drawn from the LEAP package provided by the Curriculum Implementation Division (CID) of the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Apayao. These tools are aligned with the targeted reading skills addressed in the LEAP intervention.

3.5 Data Gathering

 The researcher will seek formal approval to conduct the study from the OIC–Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS) of Kabugao District 1 and the School Head of Kabugao Central School. Upon approval, the LEAP project will be implemented, and both pretest and posttest assessments will be administered. Qualitative data will also be collected through interviews or reflection forms to capture learner and teacher perspectives on the program.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

Standard deviation and mean will be utilized to compute the pretest and post-test scores to determine the reading performance of the participants. The following rubric will be used to determine the reading level of the participants based on their reading performance before and after the intervention. The rubric is presented below.

**Table 2. Determining the reading level of the participants before and after the intervention**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Mean Percentage Score** | **Reading Level** | **Interpretation** |
| 74% and below | Starting | Needs close guidance to develop proficiency in the skill. |
| 75% - 79% | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
| 80% - 100% | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |

Paired sample T-test will be used to compare the reading performance scores of learners before and after the intervention to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in their reading abilities. The scales below will be used to determine the difference between variables.

**Table 3. Interpretation of p-values based on significance levels**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Significance Level** | **Interpretation** |
| $$p\geq 0.05$$ | Not Significant (NS) |
| $$p\leq 0.05$$ | Significant (S) |
| $$p\leq 0.01$$ | Very Significant (VS) |
| $$p\leq 0.001$$ | Highly Significant (HS) |

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presented the results, analysis and interpretation of to evaluate the effectiveness of the Learning Engagement and Assessment Project (LEAP) in enhancing the reading performance of learners at Kabugao Central School during the SY 2024-2025,

**4.1 The level of the reading performance of learners before the implementation of project LEAP**

**Table 4: Level of Reading Performance of Learners Before the Implementation of Project LEAP**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Resp.** | **Correct Words** | **Miscues** | **MPS (%)** | **Reading Level** | **Interpretation** |
|  | 84 | 16 | 84.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 80 | 20 | 80.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 78 | 22 | 78.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 77 | 23 | 77.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 84 | 16 | 84.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 80 | 20 | 80.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 69 | 31 | 69.0 | Starting | Needs close guidance to develop proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 80 | 20 | 80.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 74 | 26 | 74.0 | Starting | Needs close guidance to develop proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 77 | 23 | 77.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 84 | 16 | 84.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 80 | 20 | 80.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 72 | 28 | 72.0 | Starting | Needs close guidance to develop proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 74 | 26 | 74.0 | Starting | Needs close guidance to develop proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 78 | 22 | 78.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 79 | 21 | 79.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 72 | 28 | 72.0 | Starting | Needs close guidance to develop proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 76 | 24 | 76.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 66 | 34 | 66.0 | Starting | Needs close guidance to develop proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 78 | 22 | 78.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 79 | 21 | 79.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 78 | 22 | 78.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 79 | 21 | 79.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 81 | 19 | 81.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 82 | 18 | 82.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 77 | 23 | 77.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 75 | 25 | 75.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 78 | 22 | 78.0 | Improving | Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 82 | 18 | 82.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 67 | 33 | 67.0 | Starting | Needs close guidance to develop proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 84 | 16 | 84.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 80 | 20 | 80.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
| **Overall MPS = 77.63****Standard Deviation = 4.65** | **Improving** | **Needs minimal guidance to achieve proficiency in the skill.** |

The results in Table 4 revealed that prior to the implementation of Project LEAP, the overall mean percentage score (MPS) of learners in Kabugao Central School was 77.63, with a standard deviation of 4.65. This score corresponds to the “Improving” reading level, indicating that most learners were nearing proficiency but still required minimal guidance to master the skill. Out of the 32 learners, a significant portion—13 students—already achieved an “Improved” level, demonstrating full mastery of reading proficiency. Meanwhile, 15 students were at the “Improving” stage, and 7 were still at the “Starting” level, indicating a need for close guidance and support. These findings imply that although a portion of the learners had solid reading skills, a substantial number still struggled with fluency and comprehension, highlighting the necessity of implementing Project LEAP as an intervention to further enhance reading engagement and elevate the proficiency levels across the cohort. This baseline data provides a critical foundation for evaluating the program’s effectiveness in addressing these learning gaps. The results aligned in the study of (Duke, N. K., et. al, 2021) which emphasized that increasing reading comprehension and engagement through concept-oriented reading instruction significantly enhances learners’ motivation and proficiency. Like the findings in Kabugao Central School, their study demonstrated that when students are actively engaged through structured and meaningful interventions—such as Project LEAP—they exhibit notable gains in reading performance. This supports the idea that targeted reading programs not only help struggling readers progress but also sustain the momentum of those already showing improvement.

**4.1 The level of the reading performance of learners after the implementation of project LEAP**

**Table 5: Level of Reading Performance of Learners After the Implementation of Project LEAP**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Resp.** | **Correct Words** | **Miscues** | **MPS (%)** | **Reading Level** | **Interpretation** |
|  | 91 | 16 | 91.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 20 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 96 | 22 | 96.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 89 | 23 | 89.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 88 | 16 | 88.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 20 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 31 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 90 | 20 | 90.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 93 | 26 | 93.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 23 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 91 | 16 | 91.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 90 | 20 | 90.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 89 | 28 | 89.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 89 | 26 | 89.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 88 | 22 | 88.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 84 | 21 | 84.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 98 | 28 | 98.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 98 | 24 | 98.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 34 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 95 | 22 | 95.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 97 | 21 | 97.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 98 | 22 | 98.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 21 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 19 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 95 | 18 | 95.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 97 | 23 | 97.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 25 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 94 | 22 | 94.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 97 | 18 | 97.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 98 | 33 | 98.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 99 | 16 | 99.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
|  | 99 | 20 | 99.0 | Improved | Mastered full proficiency in the skill. |
| **Overall MPS = 93.59****Standard Deviation = 3.77**  | **Improved** | **Mastered full proficiency in the skill.** |

Table 5 revealed a consistently high level of reading performance among the learners at Kabugao Central School following the implementation of Project LEAP (Learning Engagement and Advancement Progress). All 32 respondents achieved a “Mastered full proficiency in the skill” interpretation, with their MPS (Mean Percentage Score) ranging from 84.0 to 99.0, and an overall average of 93.59 percent. This impressive outcome, accompanied by a relatively low standard deviation of 3.77, indicates not only significant individual improvement but also a uniform advancement across the group. The “Improved” reading level classification for all learners highlights the effectiveness of Project LEAP in enhancing reading accuracy and fluency. The implication of these results is that Project LEAP has been a successful and impactful intervention in raising learners’ reading competencies, suggesting that continued implementation or expansion of the program could sustain or even further improve reading engagement and performance in similar educational contexts. The results aligned in the study of (Guthrie et. al, 2014 ), which demonstrated that increasing reading comprehension and engagement through concept-oriented reading instruction significantly enhanced students’ motivation and academic outcomes. Like the findings at Kabugao Central School, the learners in Guthrie’s study exhibited higher levels of reading achievement when instructional strategies were designed to foster engagement and active participation. This alignment reinforces the idea that structured reading interventions like Project LEAP can be instrumental in promoting not only proficiency but also enthusiasm for reading among learners.

**4.1 The level of the reading performance of learners before after the implementation of project LEAP**

**Table 6: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Reading Performance of Learners**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sex Group** | **Mean** | **SD** | **t-value** | **p-value** | **Decision at** $α=0.05$ | **Interpretation** |
| Pre-test Reading Performance | 77.63 | 4.65 | -14.30 | <0.001 | Reject Ho | Highly Significant |
| Post-test Reading Performance | 93.59 | 3.77 |

Table 6 revealed a substantial improvement in the reading performance of learners at Kabugao Central School following the implementation of Project LEAP. The mean score increased significantly from 77.63 in the pre-test to 93.59 in the post-test, accompanied by a decrease in standard deviation from 4.65 to 3.77, indicating not only improved performance but also greater consistency among learners. The computed t-value of -14.30 and a p-value of less than 0.001 indicate that this improvement is highly significant, warranting the rejection of the null hypothesis. These results strongly suggest that Project LEAP had a positive and meaningful impact on students' reading engagement and achievement. The implication is that incorporating targeted, engaging reading interventions like Project LEAP can effectively address learning gaps, enhance comprehension skills, and promote academic growth in reading among elementary learners. These results aligned with the study of (Guthrie, et.al 2019), which demonstrated that students who received concept-oriented reading instruction exhibited significantly greater reading comprehension and engagement than those in traditional settings. Similarly, (Librea NK et. al, 2023). emphasized that fostering ownership and cultural relevance in reading instruction leads to improved literacy achievement, particularly among diverse learners—an approach mirrored in Project LEAP’s learner-centered strategy. Moreover, researchers also asserted that authentic, meaningful reading experiences contribute to higher motivation and performance in literacy, a core component evident in the success of the intervention at Kabugao Central School.

5. CONCLUSION

 The initial reading performance of learners at Kabugao Central School revealed a diverse range of abilities, indicating that while some students were on track or ahead in reading, others needed additional support. This highlights the importance of tailored interventions to meet the varying needs of students. The observed general trend of improvement before the project’s implementation suggests that learners were capable of growth, but not all were progressing at the same pace. This baseline data provided a strong justification for introducing Project LEAP to enhance reading engagement and close performance gaps.

 After the implementation of Project LEAP, all learners showed consistent improvement in reading skills, which demonstrates the program’s effectiveness in promoting literacy development. The uniform classification of students under the “Improved” reading level implies that the intervention created equitable opportunities for growth among learners, regardless of their starting point. This outcome emphasizes the potential of Project LEAP as a structured approach to foster reading proficiency and fluency in a classroom setting.

 The significant enhancement in reading performance from pre-test to post-test results confirms the impact of Project LEAP in boosting students’ reading engagement and achievement. The statistical validation of the results indicates that the progress observed was a direct effect of the intervention and not due to external factors. This finding affirms the value of evidence-based reading programs in supporting academic development and suggests that continued use of Project LEAP could sustain and further improve literacy outcomes in the school.

Consent:

 I affirmed that the participants voluntarily and written consented to take part in the study after being fully informed about its purpose, nature, and potential implications. Their responses were collected with the utmost respect for their privacy and confidentiality.

ETHICAL APPROVAL:

 The study was carried out in accordance with the college's standards and received institutional approval. The researcher will seek formal approval to conduct the study from the oic–public schools district supervisor (psds) of kabugao district 1 and the school head of kabugao central school. The research adhered to all relevant ethical guidelines, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the participants were respected.

disclaimer (artificial INTELLIGENCE)

Option 2:

Author(s) hereby declare that generative ai technologies such as large language models, etc. Have been used during the writing or editing of manuscripts. This explanation will include the name, version, model, and source of the generative ai technology and as well as all input prompts provided to the generative ai technology

Details of the ai usage are given below:

I acknowledge that I have used Quilbot for only refining some of the sections in the document.

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