



***** **ENHANCING READING PROFICIENCY AMONG STRUGGLING READERS THROUGH A QR CODE-BASED READING INTERVENTION PROGRAM** *****

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ABSTRACT

This action research aimed to enhance the reading proficiency of struggling Grade 5 learners at Padre Garcia Central School through the implementation of a QR Code-Based Reading Intervention Program that integrates technology-driven and differentiated reading activities. The School Year 2025–2026 Pre-Oral Reading Assessment, results revealed that out of 169 learners, 85 or 50.29% were identified as struggling readers. Among these learners, 53 or 31.36% were classified as slow readers, while 32 or 18.93% were identified as very slow readers or non-readers. These findings underscored the urgent need for an effective and learner-centered reading intervention.

To address the varied reading levels, differentiated instructional materials were developed. Average-level reading materials were designed for slow readers, while novice-level materials were prepared for very slow readers and non-readers to ensure appropriate scaffolding and gradual skill development. The study evaluated the effectiveness of the QR Code-Based Reading Intervention Program in improving reading fluency, comprehension, and motivation. Data were collected through pre- and post-oral reading assessments, learner reading logs, and systematic teacher observations to provide reliable evidence of progress.

The use of accessible QR-linked reading materials promoted independent reading practice, sustained learner engagement, and positive reading habits. Technology integration also enabled flexible access to learning resources, allowing learners to practice reading both

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in school and at home. In conclusion, the QR Code-Based Reading Intervention Program proved to be an effective, technology-enhanced approach that fosters literacy development, motivates learners, and supports improved reading outcomes, contributing to the Department of Education's Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) and national literacy goals.

Keywords: *Proficiency, Struggling Reader, Academic Achievement, QR-Code, Novice*

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The recent 2018 research conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tested around 600,000 students aged 15-year-old over 79 participating countries. The study found out that the Philippines ranked the lowest in terms of Reading Comprehension with 340, which is the lowest score in all countries surveyed.

The 2018 PISA results were disappointing, the Department of Education (DepEd) views them as an opportunity to enhance and assess the current performance of Filipino learners. Despite the implementation of numerous reading programs in public schools, reading difficulties remain a persistent concern among students. Furthermore, limited research has been conducted on the utilization and evaluation of learners' reading fluency and comprehension skills.

Then the perspectives, as mentioned earlier, are also linked to the initiative of making up a reading intervention that will help alleviate the reading status of these struggling readers. Padre Garcia Central School grade five learners were given the pre oral reading assessment last June 2025 at the beginning of the school year 2025-2026, Mid-oral reading assessment in October 2025, and post oral reading assessment in March 2026. Further, the baseline of this problem is rooted in the result of the Pre-Oral Reading Assessment at the beginning of SY 2025-2026.

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Reading is the foundation of learning and a gateway to academic achievement. However, recent Oral Reading Assessment results for the beginning of School Year 2025–2026 at Padre Garcia Central School revealed a significant number of struggling readers among Grade 5 pupils. Out of 169 learners, 85 (50%) were classified as struggling readers, including 53 slow readers and 32 very slow or non-readers. This indicates a need for an intensified reading intervention tailored to their specific levels and learning needs.

To address this challenge, the researcher designed a QR Code-Based Reading Intervention Program, which anchored to the school's reading intervention program which is QR: CODE stands for Quality Reinforcement: Comprehensive Outstanding Development Experience. The program integrates technology-enhanced reading materials accessible through QR Codes, enabling pupils to engage with interactive reading content at their own pace. By scanning QR Codes, learners receive supplementary reading materials, access comprehension questions, and it is also available in printed materials to cater learners without gadgets.

Differentiation of materials ensures that average-level short selections cater to slow readers while novice-level passages support very slow and non-readers. Through guided reading sessions, parent initiative, peer mentoring, availability of printed reading materials, and interactive digital access, the program aims to foster consistent reading habits, improve fluency, and build confidence among struggling readers.

This initiative aligns with the Department of Education's Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) and supports the broader literacy objectives of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan. It reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that no learner is left behind in literacy development.

Reading intervention is essential for supporting the academic success of struggling learners. The DepEd Philippines launched an initiative titled "Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumasa" through DepEd Order No. 173, Series of 2019. This program aims to enhance literacy among

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Filipino learners, specifically targeting learners in Grades 1 to 3 to help them become independent readers. The initiative seeks to address the need for more effective reading programs to improve literacy rates in the country (DepEd, 2019). Moreover, DepEd Order No. 45, Series of 2002, mandates a school-based reading program for elementary schools, focusing on early assessment, diagnosis of reading difficulties, and providing targeted intervention to improve reading comprehension. The Department issues the Supplemental Guidelines on the Implementation of the Literacy Remediation Program (LRP).

Reading Comprehension is one of the most complex cognitive activities in which humans engage, making it difficult to teach, measure and research. Thus, it is the mount or peak of the reading skills and the basis for all reading methods which affect or has impact on the academic performance of the learners (Delos Santos 2022).

The pupils improve their fluency through repeated reading and oral practice. By improving automatic word recognition and prosody, repeated reading and oral practice have been found to dramatically raise reading fluency. Aldhanhani and Abu Ayyash (2020) underlined that consistent text exposure increases decoding efficiency, thereby enhancing fluency and understanding. Oral reading practice with instantaneous feedback, according to Rupley et al. (2020), helps struggling readers create more expressive and smoother reading patterns. Particularly for those with learning difficulties, Mize and Bryant (2020) have discovered that assistive technology mixed with frequent Reading greatly increases pupils' spoken reading fluency. These results highlight how important, controlled reading practice is to fluency development.

Also, in the introduction of their research (Caraig and Quimbo, 2022) stated that reading comprehension is also one of the pillars of reading. It is the ability to define word by word and create a profound idea from the talks given or read. Moreover, reading comprehension also includes the ability of a person to translate the essence of the sentences using his own words. This also consists of applying the text read in one's life. One aspect of reading comprehension is when a person articulates some of his life experiences and relates

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them to the text written. It is a sign that a person truly comprehends because some personal emotions are attached to it.

Action Research Questions

This action research is guided by the following questions, which aim to assess the effectiveness of the proposed reading intervention using QR Code and its impact on the learners' reading performance and engagement. Specifically, it seeks to determine the initial reading proficiency of the pupils, evaluate the outcomes of the implemented program, and identify areas for further improvement and sustainability.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the reading proficiency level of Grade 5 pupils at the beginning of SY 2025–2026 based on the Padre Garcia Central School Oral Reading Results?
2. How effective is the QR Code-Based Reading Intervention Program in improving the fluency and comprehension of struggling readers?
3. What changes in motivation and reading engagement are observed among struggling readers after implementing the program?
4. What recommendations can be derived to enhance and sustain the QR: CODE-Based Reading Intervention at Padre Garcia Central School?

Proposed Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy

The proposed intervention, QR Code-based reading program, is an innovative literacy initiative designed to enhance the reading performance of struggling learners through the integration of digital access, differentiated materials, and guided reading techniques. This program features QR-linked reading materials, where each reading level is equipped with a unique QR code that connects learners to supplementary digital texts and comprehension exercises suited to their individual needs. The materials are differentiated according to

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learners' reading proficiency—*average-level* materials target slow readers by focusing on fluency and comprehension development, while *novice-level* materials are intended for very slow and non-readers, emphasizing simple and stimulating reading passages.

To ensure continuous improvement, the program incorporates guided reading sessions facilitated by teachers during learners' break times, complemented by parent-guided reading activities at home and supported reading practices at the School Reading Hub. Learners' progress is systematically monitored across key reading domains such as print awareness, word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and motivation towards reading, categorized under four proficiency levels: Beginning, Developing, Proficient, and Advanced. Furthermore, motivational tools such as the use of digital and printed supplementary reading materials, along with social motivation through reading buddies, are integrated to sustain learner engagement.

Overall, this approach promotes a balanced combination of independent practice and guided instruction, blending traditional reading strategies with accessible digital tools to strengthen comprehension, fluency, and a positive attitude towards reading through consistent reinforcement and active engagement.

Table 1: Pre- Oral Assessment Result of Grade 5 learners at PGCS

Total population of grade five learners: 169 (A.Y. 2025-2026)			
Oral Reading Assessment	Male	Female	Total
Fast Reader	10	20	30
Average Reader	20	34	54
<i>Slow Reader</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Very Slow Reader</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Non-Reader</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>8</i>
TOTAL			169

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ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Participants and/or Other Sources of Data and Information

Padre Garcia Central School has a reading participant of 85 struggling readers from Grade five learners. Among them, 53 learners (23 males and 30 females) were identified as slow readers, while 32 learners (21 males and 11 females) were classified as very slow or non-readers. The involvement of learners in general during the reading activity was generally active and enthusiastic. Most pupils showed interest and willingness to participate, especially during guided reading sessions and oral practice. Although some of the very slow readers initially needed more motivation and support, they gradually became more engaged through repeated reading and close teacher guidance. In general, the reading progress monitoring activities encouraged consistent participation and helped build the learners' confidence in reading.

Other sources of data include reading teachers, reading coordinator, and results from the Padre Garcia Central School's Oral Reading Assessment at the beginning and end of the intervention period.

Research participants solely are the Grade five struggling readers of Padre Garcia Central School. A purposive sampling method was used in choosing the research participants. Results from the Pre-Oral Reading Assessment served as basis in selecting the research respondents.

The researcher informed the participants regarding the probing and how much they are involved in the study. With this consent, an interview was conducted based on the participants, availability and ease.

B. Data Gathering Methods

The study utilized various tools to gather data and monitor the implementation of the reading program. QR code usage logs were used to track the frequency and duration of

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learners' access to digital reading materials. (Interviews and feedback forms were collected from both learners and teachers to obtain qualitative insights into the program's effectiveness and overall impact. Documentation and progress journals were maintained by teachers to record notable progress, challenges, and observations throughout the intervention period. These combined data sources provided a comprehensive understanding of the learners' engagement and the effectiveness of the reading activities.

C. Data Analysis Plan

The data gathered from the Oral Reading Assessments, QR code usage logs, interviews, and teacher observations will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to determine the effectiveness of the QR Code-Based Reading Intervention Program. Quantitative data from pre- and post-assessment results will be compared to measure improvements in reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension using frequency counts and percentage analysis. These results will be visually represented through tables and graphs to highlight learners' progress across reading proficiency levels. Meanwhile, qualitative data from interviews, feedback forms, and teachers' journals will undergo thematic analysis to identify patterns related to learners' motivation, engagement, and attitudes toward reading. The integration of both data types will provide a comprehensive understanding of how the intervention influenced learners' reading performance and the overall impact of technology-supported literacy instruction.

Table 2. Oral Reading Assessment Results in Grade 5 English

	PRE (June 2025)			MID (October 2025)			POST (February 2026)		
Level of Reading	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
FAST	10	20	30	20	36	56			
AVERAGE	20	34	54	25	36	61			

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SLOW	23	30	53	16	15	31			
VERY SLOW	16	8	24	10	7	17			
NON-READER	5	3	8	0	0	0			
TOTAL	74	95	169	71	94	165			

The pre-oral reading assessment revealed that 50.29% of the Grade 5 learners at Padre Garcia Central School were struggling readers—53 slow readers and 32 very slow or non-readers—indicating a substantial literacy gap that required immediate intervention. In the mid-oral reading assessment, the number of struggling readers decreased to 48, or 29.09%, out of 165 learners. The results showed notable improvements in reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. All non-readers became readers, and many slow and very slow readers progressed to higher proficiency levels after consistent participation in the QR Code-Based Reading Program.

The QR Code Reading Intervention Program serves as a motivating platform that encourages learners to develop their reading skills at their own pace and convenience. By scanning QR codes, students gain instant access to a variety of online supplementary reading materials and comprehension exercises aligned with their reading levels. This interactive and technology-driven approach sparks learners' curiosity and fosters a sense of independence, as they can explore and practice reading beyond classroom hours. The flexibility to read anytime motivates students to engage more frequently with the materials, promoting consistent reading habits and sustained literacy growth.

Moreover, the availability of printed supplementary reading materials at the Padre Garcia Central School Reading Hub ensures that all learners, including those with limited internet access, can benefit from the program. The Reading Hub provides a supportive and resource-rich environment where students can enjoy reading at their most convenient time. This setup cultivates a culture of reading within the school, encouraging learners to take ownership of their learning journey. The combination of online and printed resources not only

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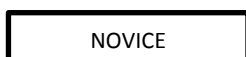
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enhances accessibility but also increases motivation by giving students the freedom to choose when and how they wish to read, fostering a positive and enjoyable reading experience.

Program Design



NOVICE



AVERAGE



The QR Code Reading Intervention Program at Padre Garcia Central School is designed to meet the diverse needs of struggling readers through differentiated reading materials. Slow readers access the challenging texts, while very slow and for simplified stories that develop basic vocabulary and word recognition. This system provides appropriate support based on each learner's proficiency level.

Allowing students to access materials suited to their abilities, the program promotes independent and engaging reading practice. This approach fosters an inclusive and adaptive learning environment, helping every learner— regardless of reading level—develop confidence, motivation, and steady improvement in reading proficiency.

QR Code-Based Reading Intervention Program is highly recommended to apply across the intermediate level. Expand QR Code activities into more interactive reading exercises.

The program should be formally integrated into the school's annual reading development plan to ensure continuity and long-term literacy improvement. Broaden the implementation of QR-linked reading materials to intermediate grade levels to reinforce reading comprehension and fluency development in intermediate level. Incorporate more engaging digital content— such as comprehension quizzes, and vocabulary games—to further enrich reading experiences and support diverse learning styles. Conduct regular capacity- building sessions for teachers and awareness orientations for parents to sustain effective monitoring, motivation, and support for learners' reading growth.

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DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This research presents the level of reading skills or proficiency of Grade 5 struggling readers of Padre Garcia Central School before the intervention, as well as the difference between their levels of reading skills, slow readers and very slow readers with nonreaders.

Table 3. Quantitative Data of Pre-Oral Reading Assessment Results)

Total Population of Grade 5 learners: 169 (A.Y. 2025 – 2026)						
Total Number of STRUGGLING READERS: 85 (50.29%) (BOSY 2025-2026)						
Struggling Readers	Male	%	Female	%	TOTAL	%
Slow Readers	23	13.60 %	30	17.75%	53	31.36%
Very Slow / Non-Readers	21	12.42%	11	6.50%	32	18.93%
TOTAL	44	26.02%	41	24.25%	85	50.29%

The oral reading assessment results revealed that 85 or 50.29% of the Grade Five learners are struggling readers who fall under poor reading performance. This finding is consistent with DepEd's (2018) recognition that oral reading fluency serves as a key indicator of learners' literacy proficiency and readiness for higher-level comprehension tasks. Rasinski (2017) emphasized that fluency, encompassing accuracy, rate, and expression, is essential for achieving reading comprehension. Similarly, Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, and Jenkins (2001) affirmed that oral reading assessments are valid measures for identifying learners at risk of reading difficulties and predicting overall academic achievement. In the Philippine context, poor oral reading performance among learners has been linked to limited exposure to print, inadequate reading interventions, and challenges in decoding text in English and Filipino (Department of Education, 2018). Thus, the high percentage of struggling readers underscores the need for sustained and differentiated reading programs to enhance fluency, comprehension, and overall academic performance (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2017).

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Action Research Work Plan and Timeline

Table 3: QR Code Work Plan and Timeline Application

Activities	Persons Involved	Time Frame	Expected Output
Conduct Oral Reading Pre-Assessment	Reading Teachers	June 2025	Baseline reading data
Preparation of QR-linked reading materials	Teachers, Coordinator	August 2025	Differentiated digital reading materials
Implementation of QR: CODE Reading Sessions	Teachers, Pupils	September (2025)–February (2026)	Active learner participation and improved reading fluency
Mid-evaluation and feedback gathering	Reading Coordinator, Teachers, Pupils	October 2025	Interim progress report
Documentation and Action Research Report	Researcher	November 2025	Completed action research document
Post-Assessment and Data Analysis	Teachers, Researcher	February 2026	Comparative data on reading improvement

Cost Estimates

Table 4: Transparency Table

Item	Cost
Bond Paper	Php 400.00
Folder	Php 100.00

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Plans for Dissemination and Utilization

The research findings will be presented during School Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and District Reading Program meetings. Results will also be shared with teachers from lower grade levels to promote early intervention practices. DCBER will be a good avenue to present the findings of the study. The QR Code-Based Reading Intervention will be recommended for inclusion in the school's reading development plan for sustained literacy improvement. Future implementation may expand the use of QR-coded materials to other grade levels for cross-grade literacy enrichment.

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