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**TEACHERS' READINESS AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE ACADEMIC RECOVERY ACCESSIBLE LEARNING (ARAL)  
PROGRAM: BASES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

**MADELYN E. AGUILLON**

**Teacher III**

Nabitasan Integrated School

madelyn.aguillon@deped.gov.ph

**ABSTRACT**

This mixed-method study found that the overall level of teachers' readiness was classified as High Readiness. There was no significant difference in readiness when teachers were categorized by sex, age, and highest educational attainment, while length of service showed a significant difference. High readiness was observed in tutor identification, selection based on prescribed criteria, and deployment planning. Moderate readiness was noted in the completion of ARAL training modules, workload integration, and structured implementation, while low readiness was identified in the provision of incentives and sharing of teaching practices. The challenges encountered by teachers included time constraints, limited preparation and resources, student diversity and learning needs, workload and administrative tasks, and tutor-to-tutee ratio imbalance. Teachers managed these challenges through adaptive and flexible implementation, strategic time management and planning, differentiated instruction and instructional innovation, collaboration and stakeholder engagement, resourcefulness, passion, and implementation readiness.

**Keywords:** *Teachers' Readiness, ARAL Program, Challenges, Enhancement Program*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education (DepEd) has continuously introduced programs that aim to address learning losses and academic gaps, especially heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of these interventions is the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, which focuses on providing targeted learning support for learners who are at risk of not meeting the expected academic standards. The program intends to enhance foundational skills, improve learning outcomes, and foster equitable access to quality education.

The Department of Education (DepEd) reaffirms its dedication to enhancing the academic performance of students in basic education and addressing learning loss, in alignment with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s Eight-Point Socio-economic Agenda, as outlined in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028, and DepEd's 5-Point Reform Agenda. National and international large-scale assessments have highlighted low proficiency in reading and mathematics among Filipino students (DepEd, 2019, 2023; UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2019). In 2022, the World Bank reported that 91% of Filipino children are affected by learning poverty, meaning they cannot read and comprehend simple texts. Additionally, a significant number of learners are performing below grade level.

To address this, the Department of Education (DepEd) crafted comprehensive learning recovery frameworks. DepEd Order No. 013, s. 2023 established the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP), while DepEd Order No. 014, s. 2023 launched the National Learning Camp (NLC) as a structured approach to remediation and enrichment (DepEd,

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2023a; DepEd, 2023b). Similarly, DepEd Memorandum No. 001, s. 2024 introduced Catch-Up Fridays to strengthen foundational skills in literacy and numeracy. Most recently, DepEd institutionalized the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program through DepEd Order No. 018, s. 2025 and reinforced its mandate under Republic Act No. 12028, the ARAL Program Act (DepEd, 2025a; DepEd, 2025b). These policies demonstrate the government’s strong commitment to recovering lost learning opportunities through structured, school-based, and data-driven interventions.

While these initiatives offer great promise, their success largely depends on teachers, who serve as the primary implementers of learning recovery programs. Research indicates that teacher readiness—encompassing pedagogical competence, access to instructional materials, and willingness to adapt to new strategies—is essential for successful program delivery (Bautista & Tan, 2023). However, implementation is often constrained by challenges such as large class sizes, insufficient training, heavy workloads, and limited resources (Castroverde & Acala, 2021). For instance, studies on the NLC revealed that while teachers observed improvements in learner engagement, they also struggled with time management and lack of program-aligned materials (RCTQ, 2023).

In District III, La Paz, Iloilo City Schools, the successful implementation of ARAL heavily depends on the readiness of teachers and the challenges they encounter in carrying out the program. Teachers’ preparedness—encompassing pedagogical knowledge, skills, attitudes, and resource availability — plays a critical role in translating program objectives into tangible

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learning gains. However, teachers often face constraints such as lack of resources, insufficient training, and heavy workloads, which may affect their capacity to fully implement ARAL.

Investigating the readiness of teachers and the challenges they encounter may provide valuable insights into how national policies translate into practice at the grassroots level. Findings from this study are expected to inform policymakers, school administrators, and education stakeholders on the support needed to strengthen the ARAL Program and ensure its successful implementation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methods, design, participants, data collection procedures, research instruments, and the data analysis and statistical tools used for analyzing and interpreting the data in the study.

### Research Method

Descriptive methods were used in this study. This aligns with LIS Academy (2024), which emphasized that descriptive research provides a factual representation of current trends and behaviors, serving as a basis for developing responsive educational interventions. In the context of the ARAL Program, this method enables researcher to capture authentic insights into teachers' readiness, training adequacy, and encountered challenges in implementing remediation and intervention activities.

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## Research Design

The study utilized a mixed-method explanatory sequential design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' readiness and challenges in implementing the ARAL Program. The quantitative part employs a descriptive research design, which, as explained by Nazeli et al. (2023), is used to portray the current conditions of a specific group or phenomenon without manipulating any variables or establishing relationships among them. This approach helps in presenting a clear picture of teachers' levels of readiness and the common difficulties they experience in carrying out the program.

The qualitative utilizes in-depth interviews to capture the voices of teachers and to explore in greater detail the specific challenges they encounter during the implementation of the ARAL Program, thereby providing context and depth to the quantitative findings.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), combining quantitative and qualitative data strengthens the credibility and richness of educational research by connecting measurable trends with authentic human insights. Through this mixed-method approach, the study seeks not only to describe patterns but also to understand the real challenges behind the numbers, ultimately reflecting teachers' genuine struggles and efforts in bringing the ARAL Program into effective classroom practice.

## Participants of the Study

The respondents of the study were the public elementary and secondary school teachers from District III, La Paz, Iloilo City during School Year 2025–2026. A purposive

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sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents for this study. This approach allows the researcher to deliberately choose participants who can best share meaningful insights related to the study's objectives. In this case, only teachers who were actively serving as ARAL tutors were included as respondents, as they have firsthand experience in implementing the ARAL Program.

There was a total of 35 teachers who participated in the quantitative survey, while 6 teachers were purposively selected for the qualitative phase based on their experience and involvement in ARAL implementation.

### Research Instrument

The questionnaire used in the study was the adapted survey questionnaire of (DepEd 2025) on the *Assessment of School Stakeholders' Readiness on the ARAL Program (ASSRA)* developed by the Department of Education. This instrument was specifically designed to measure teachers' readiness in implementing the ARAL Program across four core dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitude, and resources. For this study, selected items from the original Academic Skills Screening and Reading Assessment (ASSRA) tool were modified to suit the context and objectives of the research.

The research instrument has three (3) parts.

Part (1) includes information on the personal profile of the respondents. This includes the name of the respondent, which is optional, name of school, Age, Sex categorized into Male and Female, Length of Teaching Experience, and Highest Educational Attainment.

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Part (2) has 8 questions on the ASSRA questionnaire in determining the level of teachers' readiness which the objective. This questionnaire utilized a three-point Likert scale, in which respondents rated each indicator as Met (3 points), Partially Met (2 points), or Not Met (1 point), reflecting the degree to which each readiness criterion was achieved.

Part (3) is the interview schedule made by the researcher to collect the detailed qualitative information on teachers' challenges in implementing the ARAL Program. It includes two key open-ended questions: (1) What challenges do teachers encounter in implementing the ARAL Program? and (2) How do teachers manage these challenges in the implementation of the ARAL Program?

### Data Gathering Procedures

Prior to data collection, permission was sought from the Schools Division Office of Iloilo City and participating school principals. Upon approval, the researcher administered the survey questionnaires in person or online, depending on school conditions.

For the qualitative phase, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected teachers to explore deeper insights into their experiences with the ARAL Program. Data collection was guided by ethical principles, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

### Data Analyses

The research instrument was reproduced based on the number of respondents in the study. After the completed questionnaires were retrieved, the data was organized, computed, and tabulated for further analysis.

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The following rating scale and description were used in the interpretation of the results.

For teachers' level of readiness:

Scale	Description
2.34 – 3.00	High Readiness
1.67 – 2.33	Moderate Readiness
1.00 – 1.66	Low Readiness

Thematic Analysis. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes that explain teachers' challenges.

The integration of both quantitative and qualitative results provided a holistic interpretation of findings.

### Statistical Tools

The computations, analysis, and interpretations were conducted using a computer with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized in the study. Descriptive statistics included frequency count, percentage, and mean. The inferential statistic employed was the Mann-Whitney U test, set at a significance level of .05.

Frequency count. This was used to describe the profile of the respondents. It was used to present their numerical distribution according to selected personal characteristics such as age, sex, years of teaching experience, and educational attainment. This method provides a clear and organized summary of the demographic information, allowing readers to understand the composition of the respondents in the study.

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As emphasized by Davis (2023) in his study on teachers' readiness and challenges in implementing Education 4.0, the use of frequency and percentage is an effective statistical tool for illustrating the demographic characteristics of participants. By applying this approach, the study ensures that the data on teachers' readiness in the implementation of the ARAL Program are presented systematically, serving as a basis for further analysis and interpretation.

Percentage. Percentage distribution was utilized to determine the proportion of respondents in each group who indicated specific responses related to their readiness in implementing the ARAL Program. Using percentage alongside frequency counts allows for a clearer understanding of trends and patterns within the data, particularly in identifying which aspects of readiness are most or least developed among ARAL tutors. Similar approaches were used by Agcaoili and Bascos-Ocampo (2022) in analyzing teachers' readiness and performance, where percentages effectively summarized the respondents' profiles and readiness levels.

Mean. The mean, commonly known as the average, is a measure of central tendency calculated by summing all the values in a dataset and dividing by the number of observations. It offers a representative value that summarizes the overall distribution of the data.

As the fundamental statistical measure representing the central point of a dataset, the mean is calculated by dividing the sum of all data points by the total number of points (Lee & Martinez, 2022). In this study, the mean was used to determine the average ratings that

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reflect the teachers' overall level of readiness in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and resources.

Mann-Whitney U Test. This non-parametric test, was applied to determine whether there are significant differences in teachers' readiness in implementing the ARAL Program when grouped according to their profile variables such as sex, age, and length of teaching experience.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study was conducted to determine teachers' readiness and challenges in the implementation of the ARAL Program in District III, La Paz.

The study employed a mixed-method explanatory sequential design. For the quantitative phase, a descriptive research design was used, while the qualitative phase utilized a phenomenological approach, with thematic analysis applied to the data.

There were thirty-five (35) respondents taken purposively, only teachers who were actively serving as ARAL tutors were selected as respondents both from elementary and Junior High schools in the District III (La Paz), Schools Division of Iloilo City.

The questionnaire used in the study was the adapted survey questionnaire of (DepEd 2025) on the *Assessment of School Stakeholders' Readiness on the ARAL Program (ASSRA)* developed by the Department of Education. This instrument was specifically designed to measure teachers' readiness in implementing the ARAL Program across four core dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitude, and resources.

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For this study, selected items from the original ASSRA tool were modified to suit the context and objectives of the research.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in the study. Descriptive statistics included frequency count, percentage, and mean. For inferential statistics, the Mann-Whitney U test was used, set at a .05 level of significance. Thematic analysis was employed for the open-ended questions to identify the emerging themes

Generally, the level of teachers' readiness in implementing the ARAL Program in District III, La Paz was found to be at a "High Readiness" level, indicating that teachers are prepared, willing, and capable of implementing the program effectively, though critical areas require improvement. When analyzed according to sex, both male and female teachers were found to be ready, with no significant difference between the two groups. Similarly, classification by age and highest educational attainment revealed no significant differences in readiness, with both younger and older teachers, as well as teachers holding Bachelor's and Master's degrees, demonstrating readiness to implement the program.

In contrast, length of service was a significant factor, as teachers with longer teaching experience exhibited higher readiness compared to those with shorter experience. Across specific indicators, high readiness was observed in tutor identification, selection based on prescribed criteria, and documented deployment planning. Moderate readiness was noted in completion of ARAL training modules, workload integration, and structured class program implementation, while low readiness appeared in the provision of incentives and sharing of teaching practices among tutors.

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These findings suggest that while the foundational structures for ARAL implementation are in place, attention to training completion, motivation mechanisms, and collaborative teaching practices is essential to strengthen program delivery.

The participants of the study identified several challenges encountered in implementing the ARAL Program. These included time constraints, limited preparation and resources, student diversity and learning needs, workload and administrative tasks, and tutor-to-tutee ratio imbalance. These challenges affected the consistency and ease of program implementation.

Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated various strategies in managing them. They practiced adaptive and flexible implementation, strategic time management and planning, differentiated instruction and instructional innovation, stakeholders' engagement, and resourcefulness passion, commitment, and implementation readiness.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers in District III, La Paz demonstrate a moderate level of readiness in implementing the ARAL Program, reflecting both their capability and willingness to support learners effectively. High readiness was observed in foundational areas such as tutor identification, adherence to selection criteria, and deployment planning, highlighting the presence of strong organizational structures within schools.

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Nevertheless, moderate and low readiness in critical areas—including completion of ARAL training modules, workload integration, structured program implementation, provision of incentives, and sharing of teaching practices—points to gaps that may limit the program’s sustainability and overall effectiveness. The analysis further revealed that teacher readiness is generally consistent across sex, age, and educational attainment, whereas length of service significantly influences preparedness, with more experienced teachers exhibiting higher readiness levels.

These findings underscore the importance of targeted capacity-building, institutional support, and professional development initiatives to strengthen teacher competence, motivation, and collaboration. In sum, while the foundations for successful ARAL Program implementation are in place, addressing areas of moderate and low readiness is essential to ensure fidelity, sustainability, and maximum impact on learner outcomes.

The study emphasizes that enhancing teacher readiness through strategic interventions is critical for the ARAL Program to achieve its intended goals of improving equity, learning, and instructional quality. Teachers encounter challenges related to time constraints, workload, insufficient resources, student diversity, and tutor-to-tutee ratio imbalance. These challenges may affect the consistency and quality of implementation if not properly addressed.

Despite these constraints, teachers show adaptability, collaboration, innovation, and strong professional commitment. Their dedication enables them to manage difficulties and sustain the objectives of the ARAL Program.

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Effective implementation of the ARAL Program depends not only on teacher readiness but also on institutional support, adequate resources, balanced workload, and proper scheduling.

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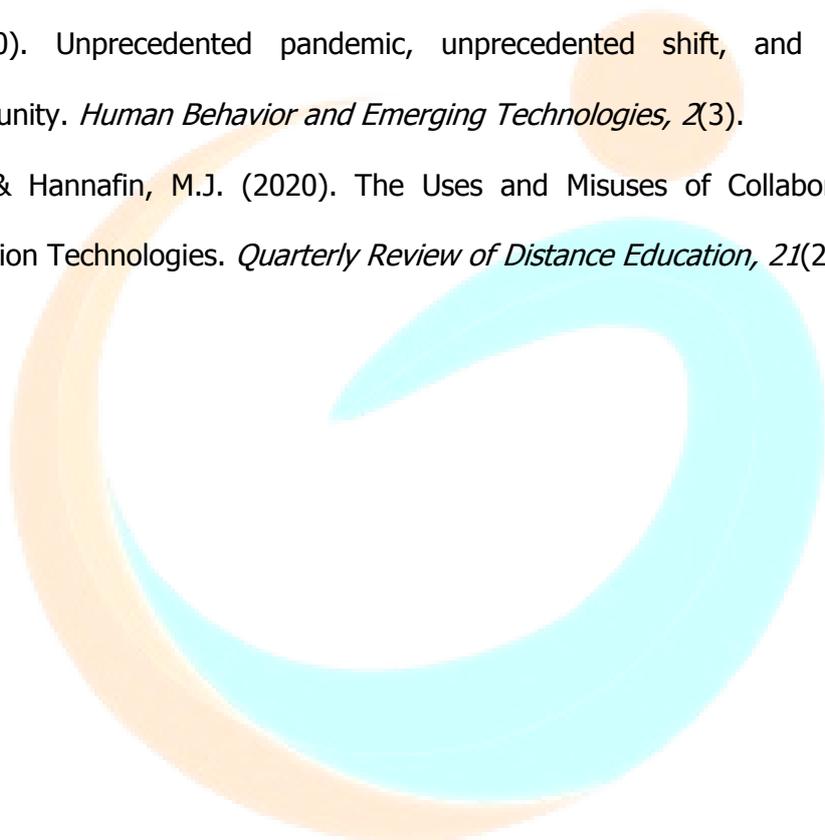
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