

Lived Experiences of Public-School Administrators in Implementing the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) in Eastern Visayas: A Phenomenological Inquiry Toward a Professional Enhancement Program

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of public-school administrators in Eastern Visayas regarding the implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) in secondary schools. Recognizing reading proficiency as a critical predictor of academic success and lifelong learning, the study aimed to understand how administrators plan, lead, monitor, and sustain reading assessment programs, as well as the challenges and enablers that influence program effectiveness. Employing a transcendental phenomenological design, the study purposively selected 20 administrators from Tacloban City, Leyte, Southern Leyte, and

Samar. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in Waray-Waray or Filipino and analyzed thematically to capture the essence of participants' experiences. Findings revealed that administrators perceive Phil-IRI implementation as complex and demanding, citing workload burdens, insufficient training, limited resources, and inconsistent procedures as significant challenges. Leadership and management practices emerged as pivotal factors affecting assessment fidelity, with effective administrators enhancing teacher support, resource allocation, and systematic monitoring, while gaps in guidance and organization undermined implementation. Participants also highlighted the need for reassessment of tools, materials, and intervention processes, emphasizing targeted capability building for both administrators and teachers. The study concludes that professional enhancement programs focusing on leadership, instructional supervision, resource management, and technical competencies are essential to improving the sustainability and effectiveness of Phil-IRI. By strengthening administrators' capacities, such interventions can enhance reading outcomes, promote equitable access to quality education, and support the achievement of national and global literacy goals. These insights provide a foundational basis for policy, practice, and future research in literacy assessment and educational leadership in resource-constrained and diverse school contexts.

Keywords: Phil-IRI, reading proficiency, public-school administrators, phenomenology, leadership, instructional management, Eastern Visayas

INTRODUCTION

Reading proficiency had long been recognized as a key predictor of learners' academic success and lifelong learning potential. Across education systems worldwide, reading served as the foundation for developing higher-order thinking skills, accessing disciplinary knowledge, and engaging in independent learning (UNESCO, 2023). In the Philippine context, however, persistent gaps in reading comprehension had been consistently documented. For example, the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) placed the Philippines last among 79 participating countries in reading literacy, revealing learners' difficulties in interpreting, evaluating, and reflecting on texts (OECD, 2019). More recent studies indicated that a large majority of Filipino children were unable to read and understand age-appropriate texts, signaling a pressing literacy challenge that demanded sustained educational interventions (World Bank, 2022).

In response, the Department of Education institutionalized the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as a school-based assessment tool to measure learners' reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension (DepEd, 2018). The Phil-IRI classified learners into independent, instructional, or frustration reading levels, thus providing a foundation for designing targeted interventions and remediation programs. Its importance grew further after the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused widespread learning losses and decreased reading engagement, particularly among secondary school students (Castillo & Madrigal, 2021; Bernardo et al., 2022).

Despite its nationwide adoption, Phil-IRI implementation remained uneven, especially in geographically isolated and socioeconomically challenged regions such as Eastern Visayas. Regional literacy statistics showed that the area consistently recorded one of the lowest functional literacy rates in the country, reflecting the combined effects of poverty, disaster vulnerability, and limited educational resources (PSA, 2025; DepEd, 2024). Even with large-scale literacy recovery initiatives, many secondary learners continued to demonstrate reading levels far below grade expectations (DepEd, 2025).

Prior research underscored the pivotal role of school administrators in the success of reading programs. Administrators' decisions regarding teacher deployment, resource allocation, monitoring, and professional development significantly influenced the fidelity and outcomes of literacy interventions (Morales & Avila, 2020; Mendoza & Dizon, 2022). Nonetheless, many administrators faced challenges, including limited training on Phil-IRI procedures, inconsistent monitoring mechanisms, and inadequate institutional support, which constrained their capacity to implement the tool effectively (Garcia & Reyes, 2021; de la Cruz & Velasco, 2020). Consequently, even when Phil-IRI was used, learners often continued to struggle in comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency, highlighting that the quality of leadership and management was critical to the assessment's impact (Cahaya, 2022; Castillo & Madrigal, 2021).

Despite these documented challenges, a critical gap remained: little research had explored the lived experiences of administrators in implementing Phil-IRI, particularly in secondary public schools in Eastern Visayas. How administrators planned, led, monitored, and supported reading assessments amid contextual constraints—and how these practices shaped student outcomes—remained underexamined. To address this, the study employed a phenomenological approach to capture the administrators' perspectives, lived realities, and professional insights.

The study was conceptually anchored on four complementary theories. Transformational Leadership Theory illuminated how administrators inspired teachers, cultivated shared commitment to literacy goals, and fostered a culture of accountability and continuous improvement (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood et al., 2004). Instructional Management Theory provided a framework to understand how administrators organized, supervised, and coordinated assessment and intervention processes, ensuring that instruction aligned with learners' reading needs (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Formative Assessment Theory

highlighted the importance of using Phil-IRI data as a feedback mechanism to guide instruction, rather than merely fulfilling compliance requirements (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Finally, Path–Goal Theory explained how administrators adapted their leadership styles—directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented—to overcome barriers, support teachers, and sustain reading initiatives under diverse school conditions (House, 1971; Northouse, 2022). Together, these theories provided a comprehensive lens to understand how leadership, management, and assessment practices converged in administrators’ lived experiences.

Guided by these perspectives, the study generated rich insights into how school administrators navigated the challenges of Phil-IRI implementation. These findings informed the design of a Professional Enhancement Program aimed at strengthening administrators’ competencies, improving reading assessment practices, and ultimately enhancing learners’ literacy outcomes. By centering administrators’ experiences, the study contributed not only to school-level improvement but also to broader efforts to address reading disparities and educational inequities in Eastern Visayas.

Finally, the study contributed to SDG 4: Quality Education, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. By documenting how administrators implemented Phil-IRI, the study highlighted leadership practices, contextual challenges, and systemic realities that shaped reading assessment and interventions. These insights informed the professional enhancement program, which aimed to strengthen administrative capacity and improve literacy outcomes, thereby supporting equitable access to quality education (UNESCO, 2023).

Similarly, the study aligned with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities by uncovering systemic barriers and enabling conditions that affected access to literacy support among marginalized learners. Through the enhancement program, administrators were equipped to implement Phil-IRI more inclusively and responsively, ensuring that struggling readers received targeted support and resources. In this way, the study promoted fairness in learning opportunities and contributed to reducing educational disparities across schools in Eastern Visayas (World Bank, 2022; DepEd, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the lived experiences of public-school administrators in Eastern Visayas, focusing on their implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) within secondary schools. It aimed to uncover administrators’ firsthand perspectives, practices, and challenges in planning, leading, monitoring, and supporting reading assessment programs. In doing so, the study sought to provide a deeper understanding of how administrative leadership influenced the fidelity, effectiveness, and sustainability of Phil-IRI implementation, directly addressing the literacy gaps and contextual challenges highlighted in the introduction.

DESIGN

This study employed a transcendental phenomenological research design within a descriptive paradigm to explore and understand the lived experiences of public-school administrators in Eastern Visayas regarding the implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). Transcendental phenomenology, as articulated by Moustakas (1994), focuses on capturing participants’ experiences as they perceive them, emphasizing the essence of the phenomenon while setting aside the researcher’s biases through *epoche* or bracketing. This approach allowed the study to delve deeply into the administrators’ perspectives, uncovering their practices, challenges, and reflections in managing and sustaining reading assessment processes.

Anchored in the descriptive paradigm, the study aimed to provide a rich, detailed account of the phenomenon as lived by the participants. The transcendental phenomenological approach emphasized “what” was experienced and “how” it was experienced, facilitating the identification of recurring themes and patterns across administrators’ narratives. Through this design, the research captured the essence of school administrators’ roles in implementing Phil-IRI, providing insights into how leadership, organizational structures, and contextual factors influenced the effectiveness of reading assessment and interventions.

By integrating transcendental phenomenology with descriptive methods, the study ensured that participants’ experiences were presented authentically and comprehensively. The findings thus offered a meaningful foundation for developing a Professional Enhancement Program, aimed at improving administrators’ competencies in managing Phil-IRI and addressing persistent reading challenges in secondary schools across Eastern Visayas.

LOCALE

This study was conducted across four school divisions in Eastern Visayas (Region VIII), specifically Tacloban City, Leyte, Southern Leyte, and Samar. These divisions were selected because they represent key geographic and administrative contexts within the region, encompassing both urban and rural settings, as well as diverse socio-economic conditions that influence the implementation of reading programs.

Tacloban City served as a highly urbanized setting where schools faced both opportunities and challenges related to dense populations, access to educational resources, and post-disaster recovery initiatives. In contrast, Leyte, Southern Leyte, and Samar included more geographically dispersed and rural schools, where administrators often managed logistical constraints, limited instructional materials, and communities with varied literacy needs. The inclusion of these divisions provided a comprehensive view of how Phil-IRI was implemented across different school contexts in Eastern Visayas.

By exploring administrators’ experiences across these four divisions, the study captured a diverse range of perspectives on leadership practices, management strategies, and challenges in sustaining the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory. This multi-locale approach ensured that the findings reflected the regional realities of reading assessment implementation, thereby enhancing the applicability of insights for the development of a Professional Enhancement Program tailored to the needs of school administrators in Eastern Visayas.

RESPONDENTS AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The respondents of this study consisted of 20 public-school administrators from the four school divisions in Eastern Visayas—Tacloban City, Leyte, Southern Leyte, and Samar—with five administrators purposively selected from each division. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants possessed relevant experience and knowledge regarding the implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) in their schools.

The inclusion criteria for selecting respondents were as follows: (1) administrators of the five largest secondary schools in their respective division, (2) those who had implemented Phil-IRI in their schools, (3) administrators with at least five years of experience in school leadership, and (4) those who were willing to share their lived experiences regarding Phil-IRI implementation.

By adhering to these criteria, the study ensured that the participants could provide rich, insightful, and contextually grounded perspectives on the leadership practices, management strategies, and challenges involved in sustaining reading assessment programs. This purposeful selection allowed for a comprehensive understanding of administrators' lived experiences across diverse educational and socio-economic contexts within Eastern Visayas.

The main instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide, composed of demographic questions aligned with the inclusion-exclusion criteria and core questions derived from the research questions. This format ensured consistency across interviews while allowing the flexibility to pursue relevant follow-up questions, thereby maintaining depth and authenticity in participant responses (Kallio et al., 2016). Interviews were conducted in Waray-Waray or Filipino, depending on participant preference, to ensure comfort, clarity, and richness of responses.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical standards were rigorously upheld throughout the conduct of this study. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants after the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the research were clearly explained. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalties.

To safeguard privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, all respondents were assigned codes instead of using real names, and all data were securely stored. The study also emphasized respect for participants' emotional and professional well-being, especially given the sensitive nature of sharing experiences related to the implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). Interviews were conducted with care, empathy, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring that participants felt comfortable and supported while recounting their lived experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How do public-school administrators in Eastern Visayas experience the implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) in their secondary schools?

The experiences of public-school administrators in Eastern Visayas regarding the implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) reveal a complex interplay of challenges, resource constraints, and opportunities for improvement. From the data, three main themes emerged: **(1) Implementation Challenges and Workload Burden, (2) Insufficient Training, Support, and Resources, and (3) Need for Reassessment and Process Improvement**. These themes collectively illustrate the multifaceted nature of implementing Phil-IRI in secondary schools and provide critical insights for enhancing assessment practices and designing professional development programs for administrators.

Theme 1: Implementation Challenges and Workload Burden. The first theme highlights the difficulty administrators face in implementing Phil-IRI alongside their regular responsibilities. Participants consistently described the inventory as "very tasky" and difficult to manage, emphasizing that the assessment required substantial time and effort. The workload associated with administering Phil-IRI often competed with regular teaching and administrative duties, creating additional stress and limiting the capacity to sustain the assessment effectively across secondary schools. This theme underscores the practical challenges in balancing assessment demands with existing responsibilities.

Participants vividly articulated the workload challenges associated with implementing Phil-IRI. One administrator noted, “Nakaon gud ini hin dako nga oras” (This consumes a lot of time) – P2, while another described it as “Very tasky na gud hiya” (It is really very task-heavy) – P6. A third participant emphasized the strain caused by large class sizes, stating, “Since marami ang mga bata, ang mga enrollees, sobrang tasky sa teacher” (Since there are many students, the workload on teachers is very heavy) – P20. These statements collectively reflect the administrators’ perception of Phil-IRI as demanding and taxing, highlighting the challenges they face in balancing both instructional and administrative responsibilities.

The findings align with studies that identify workload and time constraints as significant barriers to effective educational assessment (Fullan, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2020). From a theoretical standpoint, Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1978) emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and guided support, suggesting that administrators’ heavy workload may limit their ability to provide necessary guidance to teachers. Additionally, research on instructional leadership underscores that managing multiple responsibilities without adequate support can reduce program fidelity and effectiveness (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Therefore, the workload burden experienced by administrators directly affects the quality and consistency of Phil-IRI implementation.

Theme 2: Insufficient Training, Support, and Resources. The second theme focuses on the lack of proper training, guidance, and technical support during Phil-IRI implementation. Administrators reported difficulties navigating the implementation phase due to inconsistent instructions, limited interventions, inadequate access to materials, and technical constraints such as unreliable internet connections. These limitations hindered administrators’ ability to oversee the assessment effectively and ensured uniformity across different classrooms, contributing to inconsistent outcomes and frustration among staff.

Participants described significant challenges related to the lack of support and resources during the implementation of Phil-IRI. One administrator stated, “Waray proper training an administrators and teachers who are the frontliners of this” (There is no proper training for administrators and teachers who are frontliners in this) – P3, while another noted, “No support. Technical support is not so evident” – P4. Technical limitations were also highlighted, with a participant reporting, “No internet connection” – P12, and inconsistencies in procedures were expressed as, “Iba-iba an instructions and implementation” (Instructions and implementation vary) – P11. These statements collectively illustrate the administrators’ struggles in implementing Phil-IRI effectively due to insufficient preparation, guidance, and support structures.

These results support literature emphasizing that professional development and technical support are critical to successful program implementation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Fullan, 2014). In line with Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1978), administrators act as mediators who guide teachers’ learning; inadequate training and support compromise this scaffolding process. Similarly, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) argue that instructional leadership requires clear guidance and resource allocation, without which program execution becomes inconsistent. These insights suggest that professional enhancement programs targeting skills in training, technical support, and instructional guidance are essential to improving Phil-IRI implementation.

Theme 3: Need for Reassessment and Process Improvement. The third theme emphasizes administrators’ perception of the need to reassess Phil-IRI tools, materials, and intervention strategies. While the inventory is conceptually valuable, participants noted challenges in practical execution, suggesting the need for structured guidance, better planning, and improvement of implementation procedures. Addressing these areas could make the assessment more practical, consistent, and sustainable in the secondary school context.

Administrators highlighted the necessity for process improvement in the implementation of Phil-IRI. One participant stated, “We need to reassess the intervention, the tool and the materials as well” – P8, while another remarked, “Though the idea is good, but the implementation phase is problematic” – P13. The workload associated with sustaining the assessment was also emphasized, with a participant noting, “Makuri hiya ig sustain. Kay pag assess mo pa la han level han kabataan, very tasky na gud hiya” (It is difficult to sustain because even assessing the students’ level is already very task-heavy) – P16. These statements collectively underscore the administrators’ view that, although Phil-IRI is beneficial in theory, its current implementation requires refinement and structured improvement to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability.

The need for reassessment and process improvement aligns with literature emphasizing continuous program evaluation and iterative refinement to enhance educational assessments (Guskey, 2000; Fullan, 2014). From a theoretical perspective, Transformational Leadership encourages administrators to identify areas for improvement and implement innovative strategies to enhance program effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2008). Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1978) also supports iterative scaffolding, suggesting that improvements in tools, materials, and procedures enable administrators to better guide teachers and students. Therefore, process improvement is essential to ensuring Phil-IRI’s practical applicability and long-term sustainability.

In conclusion, public-school administrators in Eastern Visayas experience Phil-IRI implementation as a complex process influenced by workload burdens, insufficient training and resources, and the need for reassessment and process improvement. Addressing these challenges through professional enhancement programs can strengthen administrators’ capacity in instructional leadership, resource management, and systematic assessment practices. Such interventions are crucial for improving the effectiveness, consistency, and sustainability of Phil-IRI in secondary schools, ultimately supporting better reading outcomes for students.

What challenges and enabling factors do administrators encounter in managing and sustaining Phil-IRI implementation?

The implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) in secondary public schools presents both challenges and enabling factors that shape its effectiveness. From the administrators’ lived experiences, four main themes emerged: **(1) Resource Constraints and Material Limitations, (2) Time Pressure and Workload Challenges, (3) Limited Knowledge, Training, and Technical Support, and (4) Implementation and Sustainability Difficulties.** These themes illuminate the complex realities administrators face in managing and sustaining Phil-IRI, providing insights that can guide the development of professional enhancement programs to strengthen leadership and assessment practices.

Theme 1: Resource Constraints and Material Limitations. The first theme emphasizes the struggles administrators encounter due to insufficient instructional materials, inadequate assessment tools, and limited interventions. These resource constraints hinder the consistent and efficient administration of Phil-IRI and affect the administrators’ ability to support teachers in delivering effective reading assessments. The scarcity of materials and tools not only complicates planning and monitoring but also restricts the potential for targeted interventions, highlighting the critical role of resources in successful literacy assessment implementation.

Participants reflected on these material limitations, noting, “No materials, nakukurian an kamaestahan” (There are no materials, which makes it difficult for teachers) – P1, “Lack of material and time constraints” – P2, and “We need to reassess the intervention, the tool and the materials as well” – P8.

These statements illustrate the administrators' perception that inadequate resources directly impede their ability to manage and sustain Phil-IRI effectively.

The findings align with prior studies emphasizing the centrality of resource availability in literacy program success (DepEd, 2018; Castillo & Madrigal, 2021). Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) suggests that administrators who proactively allocate resources and support teachers can enhance program outcomes by fostering shared commitment and accountability. Instructional Management Theory further underscores that organizing and supervising assessment processes requires adequate tools and interventions to maintain fidelity and effectiveness (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Thus, resource constraints remain a key barrier to Phil-IRI's successful implementation and sustainability.

Theme 2: Time Pressure and Workload Challenges. The second theme highlights the impact of time pressures and competing responsibilities on administrators' capacity to implement Phil-IRI. Participants consistently noted that the assessment process is labor-intensive and consumes significant portions of instructional and administrative time. High student-to-teacher ratios and the demands of routine administrative duties further exacerbate workload challenges, making it difficult to maintain consistent and effective assessment practices.

Administrators articulated these challenges, stating, "Nakaon gud ini hin dako nga oras" (This consumes a lot of time) – P2, "Less time na an instruction kay siges nala kita hini hin inventory" (Instruction time is reduced because we are continuously busy with this inventory) – P6, and "Since marami ang mga bata, ang mga enrollees, sobrang tasky sa teacher" (Since there are many students, the workload on teachers is very heavy) – P20. These statements demonstrate how time constraints and workload burdens affect the administrators' ability to sustain Phil-IRI while managing other responsibilities.

Time and workload pressures are recognized as significant factors influencing the fidelity of literacy assessments (UNESCO, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Formative Assessment Theory (Black & Wiliam, 1998) emphasizes that effective assessment requires sufficient time for preparation, administration, and feedback. Administrators facing competing demands may be unable to support teachers adequately or monitor student progress consistently, thereby undermining program effectiveness. Transformational and Instructional Leadership theories further suggest that leaders must manage workloads strategically to ensure both teacher and student engagement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Theme 3: Limited Knowledge, Training, and Technical Support. The third theme centers on administrators' limited knowledge, insufficient training, and lack of technical support, which contribute to inconsistent implementation of Phil-IRI. Participants reported challenges in understanding assessment procedures, navigating instructions, and guiding teachers effectively, which were compounded by the absence of structured training programs and technical assistance. These gaps in capacity and knowledge hinder administrators' ability to implement the tool with fidelity and support teacher performance.

Participants described these limitations, stating, "Waray proper training an administrators and teachers who are the frontliners of this" (There is no proper training for administrators and teachers who are frontliners in this) – P3, "Lack of knowledge han implementation phase" (There is a lack of knowledge regarding the implementation phase) – P10, and "No support. Technical support is not so evident" – P4. These statements highlight the administrators' struggle to navigate Phil-IRI implementation due to insufficient training and guidance.

The literature emphasizes that professional development is critical to the success of school-based literacy interventions (Garcia & Reyes, 2021; Morales & Avila, 2020). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) underscores the role of guidance and scaffolding, suggesting that administrators must be knowledgeable to provide adequate support to teachers. Transformational Leadership Theory also posits

that leaders who cultivate knowledge-sharing and mentoring among staff enhance program fidelity (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Therefore, limited training and technical support impede effective implementation and highlight the need for capacity-building interventions.

Theme 4: Implementation and Sustainability Difficulties. The fourth theme focuses on the challenges administrators face in sustaining Phil-IRI over time. Even when the inventory is conceptually sound, practical execution proves difficult due to the combined effects of workload, resource limitations, and inconsistent procedures. These implementation difficulties threaten the long-term sustainability of the assessment, limiting its ability to inform remediation programs and improve student reading outcomes.

Administrators noted, “Makuri hiya ig sustain. Kay pag assess mo pa la han level han kabataan, very tasky na gud hiya” (It is difficult to sustain because even assessing the students’ level is already very task-heavy) – P16, “I found it very difficult. I cannot demand from my teachers because they have to deliver instruction as well” – P6, and “We find it very unhelpful, though the idea is good, but the implementation phase is problematic” – P13. These statements reflect the challenges in maintaining Phil-IRI as a consistent and effective assessment tool.

Sustainability challenges are consistent with studies highlighting the difficulties of scaling literacy programs in resource-constrained contexts (OECD, 2019; Castillo & Madrigal, 2021). Path–Goal Theory (House, 1971; Northouse, 2022) explains that administrators must adapt their leadership styles to overcome barriers and sustain programs. Instructional Management Theory further emphasizes systematic monitoring, planning, and follow-up as essential for long-term success (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Addressing these challenges through professional enhancement programs can equip administrators with strategies to ensure consistent implementation, support teachers, and improve student reading outcomes.

In conclusion, administrators encounter a complex set of challenges in managing and sustaining Phil-IRI implementation, including resource constraints, time pressures, limited training, and implementation difficulties. Addressing these challenges requires targeted professional development to enhance leadership, management, and technical capacities. By strengthening administrators’ competencies in resource allocation, workload management, and instructional support, professional enhancement programs can improve the fidelity, effectiveness, and sustainability of Phil-IRI, ultimately contributing to better reading outcomes and advancing educational equity in Eastern Visayas.

How do administrators’ leadership and management practices affect the effectiveness of Phil-IRI, and how can these insights inform a professional enhancement program?

The effectiveness of Phil-IRI in secondary schools is heavily influenced by administrators’ leadership and management practices. From the data, three key themes emerged regarding how these practices shape implementation outcomes: **(1) Leadership Influence on Resource Allocation and Teacher Support, (2) Management Practices and Sustainability of Implementation, and (3) Needs for Capability Training for Teachers and Administrators for Phil-IRI Implementation.** These themes illuminate the ways in which administrators’ decisions, organizational strategies, and professional competencies impact both the fidelity and sustainability of reading assessments, offering insights for the design of targeted professional enhancement programs.

Theme 1: Leadership Influence on Resource Allocation and Teacher Support. The first theme highlights how administrators’ leadership directly affects the success of Phil-IRI implementation. Leaders’ decision-making, prioritization, and support strategies determine whether teachers have access to the materials, guidance, and time necessary for effective reading assessments. Effective leadership ensures that

teachers are adequately prepared and supported, whereas gaps in leadership exacerbate challenges related to resources and workload, leading to inconsistencies and inefficiencies in assessment execution.

Participants described how leadership affected implementation, stating, “No support. Technical support is not so evident” – P4, and “Waray proper training an administrators and teachers who are the frontliners of this” (There is no proper training for administrators and teachers who are frontliners in this) – P3. Others noted the difficulty teachers faced when resources were not prioritized: “We need to reassess the intervention, the tool and the materials as well” – P8. These statements indicate that administrators’ leadership practices directly influence teacher readiness, resource availability, and the overall quality of Phil-IRI implementation.

These findings are consistent with Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that administrators who inspire, support, and provide resources enhance program fidelity and staff engagement (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood et al., 2004). Instructional Management Theory also emphasizes that effective leaders strategically allocate resources, supervise instruction, and monitor teacher performance to ensure program success (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). When administrators fail to provide adequate training or guidance, teachers struggle to manage time and material constraints, resulting in inconsistent implementation (Garcia & Reyes, 2021; Morales & Avila, 2020).

Theme 2. Management Practices and Sustainability of Implementation. The second theme focuses on the role of administrators’ management practices in sustaining Phil-IRI implementation. Effective management—including clear instructions, systematic monitoring, and structured intervention planning—enhances the consistency and longevity of reading assessments. Conversely, disorganized or overly task-heavy approaches reduce teacher engagement, create confusion, and contribute to implementation fatigue. Proper management practices are therefore crucial to ensure that the assessment tool achieves its intended outcomes and remains operational over time.

Participants shared, “Very tasky na gud hiya” (It is really very task-heavy) – P6, and “Since marami ang mga bata, ang mga enrollees, sobrang tasky sa teacher” (Since there are many students, the workload on teachers is very heavy) – P20. Another administrator noted, “Less time na an instruction kay siges nala kita hini hin inventory” (Instruction time is reduced because we are continuously busy with this inventory) – P2. These statements illustrate how management gaps in planning, organization, and monitoring create practical challenges for sustaining Phil-IRI.

The literature supports the importance of strong management practices in school-based assessments. Formative Assessment Theory emphasizes that structured and systematic use of assessment data guides effective instruction and intervention (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Instructional Management Theory also highlights the need for clear procedures and consistent monitoring to maintain program fidelity (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). When administrators’ management practices are inadequate, teachers may experience role overload, and student outcomes may suffer (Castillo & Madrigal, 2021; Mendoza & Dizon, 2022). These findings underscore the need for professional development programs focused on planning, monitoring, and leading assessment initiatives.

Theme 3: Needs for Capability Training for Teachers and Administrators for Phil-IRI Implementation. The third theme emphasizes the importance of capability training for both administrators and teachers. Participants highlighted that gaps in knowledge, skills, and technical support hindered the proper implementation of Phil-IRI. Providing training on assessment procedures, data interpretation, and intervention strategies equips school staff with the tools necessary to carry out reading assessments effectively and consistently, thereby enhancing program outcomes and sustainability.

Administrators noted, “Lack of knowledge han implementation phase” (“There is a lack of knowledge regarding the implementation phase”) – P10, and “No support. Technical support is not so evident” – P4. One participant further stated, “Waray proper training an administrators and teachers who are the frontliners of this” (There is no proper training for administrators and teachers who are frontliners in this) – P3. These statements emphasize the perceived need for structured training programs to build administrators’ and teachers’ capacity in managing Phil-IRI.

The findings align with previous research underscoring the value of professional development in literacy interventions (Garcia & Reyes, 2021; Morales & Avila, 2020). Transformational Leadership Theory supports the idea that well-trained administrators can motivate, guide, and mentor teachers, thereby improving assessment fidelity (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Formative Assessment Theory also stresses the importance of using assessment data effectively, which requires skillful training in interpretation and instructional application (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Capability training emerges as a critical enabler for ensuring that Phil-IRI implementation translates into meaningful literacy improvements.

In conclusion, administrators’ leadership and management practices play a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of Phil-IRI. Leadership influences resource allocation and teacher support, management practices shape the sustainability of implementation, and targeted capability training ensures that both administrators and teachers are prepared to execute the assessment with fidelity. Insights from these experiences inform the design of professional enhancement programs that strengthen leadership, organizational, and technical competencies, ultimately improving literacy outcomes for secondary learners and contributing to equitable access to quality education in Eastern Visayas.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study explored the lived experiences of public-school administrators in Eastern Visayas in implementing the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) in secondary schools. Reading proficiency is widely recognized as a key predictor of learners’ academic success and lifelong learning potential (UNESCO, 2023). In the Philippines, however, reading proficiency has consistently lagged, with national and international assessments, such as PISA 2018, indicating persistent difficulties in comprehension, interpretation, and reflection among learners (OECD, 2019; World Bank, 2022). The Phil-IRI was institutionalized by the Department of Education as a school-based tool to assess reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, providing critical data for targeted interventions (DepEd, 2018).

Despite its adoption, Phil-IRI implementation has been uneven, particularly in resource-constrained and disaster-affected regions such as Eastern Visayas. Administrators play a pivotal role in ensuring effective assessment implementation, as their decisions in resource allocation, monitoring, and teacher support directly impact program fidelity and student outcomes (Morales & Avila, 2020; Mendoza & Dizon, 2022). Yet, administrators often face limited training, inconsistent procedures, and insufficient institutional support (Garcia & Reyes, 2021; de la Cruz & Velasco, 2020), which constrains the assessment’s effectiveness.

Using a transcendental phenomenological design, this study captured the lived experiences of 20 purposively selected administrators from Tacloban City, Leyte, Southern Leyte, and Samar. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to uncover their challenges, practices, and insights in planning, leading, and sustaining Phil-IRI implementation. Data analysis revealed three major themes regarding administrators’ experiences:

1. **Implementation Challenges and Workload Burden:** Administrators perceived Phil-IRI as task-heavy and time-consuming, often conflicting with routine teaching and administrative duties, which affected the sustainability and consistency of assessment practices.
2. **Insufficient Training, Support, and Resources:** Gaps in professional preparation, technical guidance, and instructional materials hindered effective management of Phil-IRI, resulting in inconsistencies across classrooms and schools.
3. **Need for Reassessment and Process Improvement:** Administrators identified the necessity to refine tools, materials, and intervention procedures to ensure practical applicability, consistent execution, and long-term sustainability of Phil-IRI.

Further analysis highlighted the influence of leadership and management practices on assessment outcomes:

1. **Leadership Influence:** Effective administrators allocated resources, supported teachers, and prioritized assessment needs, whereas inadequate leadership compounded challenges related to workload and inconsistent implementation.
2. **Management Practices:** Structured planning, systematic monitoring, and clear instructions were key for sustaining Phil-IRI; disorganized practices undermined teacher engagement and program continuity.
3. **Capability Training:** Both administrators and teachers required targeted training in assessment procedures, data interpretation, and instructional intervention strategies to enhance fidelity and outcomes.

Overall, the study underscored the multifaceted nature of Phil-IRI implementation and provided foundational insights for developing a Professional Enhancement Program aimed at strengthening administrators' leadership, organizational, and technical competencies.

Conclusions

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

Phil-IRI implementation is complex and challenging. Administrators experience the assessment as time-intensive, task-heavy, and difficult to sustain alongside routine responsibilities. Workload burdens directly affect the consistency and quality of implementation.

Insufficient training and resources hinder effective execution. Administrators require structured professional development, technical support, and adequate instructional materials to manage Phil-IRI effectively. Lack of support compromises assessment fidelity and reduces the tool's impact on student learning.

Leadership and management practices are pivotal. Administrators' decisions in resource allocation, guidance, and planning shape the success and sustainability of Phil-IRI. Strong leadership and systematic management enhance teacher readiness and program fidelity.

Process improvement and capability building are essential. Refining assessment procedures, materials, and interventions, combined with targeted training for administrators and teachers, strengthens the effectiveness and sustainability of Phil-IRI.

Professional enhancement programs can address persistent literacy challenges. By equipping administrators with leadership, management, and technical competencies, such programs can improve Phil-

IRI implementation, contribute to better reading outcomes, and promote equitable access to quality education in Eastern Visayas.

Recommendations

For Policy and School Leadership:

1. Design and implement structured Professional Enhancement Programs for school administrators that focus on leadership skills, instructional supervision, workload management, and assessment strategies.
2. Ensure consistent allocation of resources and materials to support Phil-IRI implementation, including assessment tools, reading materials, and technical infrastructure.
3. Establish systematic monitoring and feedback mechanisms to track assessment fidelity, identify challenges, and guide continuous improvement.

For Teachers and School Staff:

1. Participate in targeted training on Phil-IRI procedures, data analysis, and instructional interventions to strengthen teacher capacity and improve reading outcomes.
2. Collaborate with administrators in planning and implementing interventions based on assessment results, ensuring that students' individual reading needs are addressed effectively.

For Future Research:

1. Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the impact of professional enhancement programs on Phil-IRI implementation and student reading proficiency over time.
2. Explore students' perspectives on Phil-IRI interventions to determine whether administrative and instructional improvements translate to measurable literacy gains.
3. Compare Phil-IRI implementation across other regions and school contexts to identify best practices, scalable strategies, and context-specific challenges.

By addressing these recommendations, schools in Eastern Visayas can enhance administrators' leadership and management capacity, improve the fidelity and sustainability of Phil-IRI, and support equitable learning opportunities, ultimately contributing to improved literacy outcomes and the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

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