

Teachers' Competence, Utilization, and Difficulties in Marungko Approach for Beginning Readers in Filipino: Basis for an Enhancement Plan

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Abstract:

This study evaluates teachers' competence, utilization, and difficulties in implementing the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino. Utilizing a survey-based research design, data were collected to assess teachers' application of the approach, their instructional practices, and the difficulties they encountered. Findings reveal that teachers, predominantly older and with lower educational attainment, demonstrated high competence and strong utilization of the Marungko Approach. They effectively implemented practices such as resource creation, engaging teaching strategies, and student assessment, ensuring impactful literacy instruction. However, teachers experienced notable difficulties, including addressing diverse classroom needs, pacing for mixed-ability learners, designing assessments, and fostering parent involvement. These challenges were consistently observed across demographic groups, underscoring the need for broad-based support to overcome implementation barriers. The study proposes to intensify professional growth and development of teachers to enhance competence and utilization, such as workshops on differentiated instruction, small-group facilitation, and informal assessment techniques. Additional recommendations include integrating technology for resource development, employing multisensory strategies, and establishing recognition programs to celebrate student achievements. Strengthening parent-teacher collaboration through workshops and improved communication channels is also emphasized to address identified difficulties effectively. By evaluating competence, utilization, and difficulties, this research highlights actionable strategies to optimize the implementation of the Marungko Approach, ultimately supporting beginning readers in literacy development in Filipino.

Keywords: Marungko Approach Teachers' Competence school-based practices, Literacy in Filipino

Introduction:

Teachers' core skills in managing diversity, achievements, accountability, and classroom management have shown high significance in pupils' school readiness (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2022). Teachers' competence should be one of the key features in addressing learners' needs inside the classroom. Teacher competence has its own effect on pupil reading achievement (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018). Moreover, showing the mastery of teachers' lessons can be well manifested in ways that are authentic and sometimes involve creativity in how a teacher attacks a particular lesson in reading that is driven by mastery, enough motivation, and technological perspective.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has faced a persistent challenge on the number of non-readers among early-graders. Here are some of the difficulties teachers encounter when teaching young Filipino readers inside the classroom. First, beginning readers in Filipino have limited vocabulary exposure due to language variations at home; second, understanding the syllabic structure of which teachers must impose an effective strategy for decoding longer words; and last is the pronunciation, which leads to confusion for beginning readers in Filipino language. In reality ground, most of the teachers elaborate on the gap between the potentiality of the approach that they consistently utilize. These gaps include the availability of quality learning resources, commitment to applying the approach within diverse classroom contexts, including educational landscapes such as large class sizes, varying levels of parental support, and the diverse linguistic backgrounds among learners.

At the heart of addressing this challenge lies the effectiveness of the pedagogical approaches employed by teachers inside the classroom. The widely recognized the Marungko Approach was locally developed to emphasize the method of sequential and explicit teaching of letter-sound correspondence for Filipino readers. It holds considerable promise in equipping Filipino beginning readers with essential decoding skills and building a strong phonetic foundation that aligns with the best practices in literacy instruction.

In light of this major encounter, the researcher, being a Marungko Approach advocate user in the field, was prompted to conduct a study on teachers' competence, utilization, and challenges encountered in the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino in districts of medium-sized division in Central Philippines.

Current State of Knowledge

Reading proficiency is a cornerstone of educational success, especially for beginning learners. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) continually seeks to enhance early literacy intervention skills, recognizing its profound impact on a child's overall academic development. One significant intervention adopted to address the foundational stages of reading in Filipino is the Marungko Approach. This phonics-based methodology is designed for emergent readers in Filipino.

Teachers' Competence in Marungko Approach. One important aspect to be considered in teaching is teacher quality. In the study of Darling-Hammond (2000;2017), extensive work on teacher quality postulates that a highly effective teacher possesses deep subject matter knowledge, strong pedagogical skills, and benefits from rigorous preparation and continuous professional development. This framework asserts that these attributes are the primary drivers of student achievement. In the context of the present study, teacher competence in the Marungko Approach can be conceptualized through this lens, requiring not only general teaching expertise but also specialized knowledge of Filipino phonology and the specific instructional strategies integral to the Marungko Approach. A teacher demonstrating high competence in delivering phonics-based instruction in Filipino signifies that they are refining their practice through relevant professional learning. Conversely, identified difficulties in utilizing the Marungko Approach might be conceptually linked to gaps in these very aspects of teacher competence, highlighting areas where professional development and support may be necessary.

The Marungko Approach, being a phonics-based methodology, aligns with the widely accepted findings of Snow et al. (1998), who emphasized that systematic phonics instruction is an indispensable component of effective early reading programs for beginning readers. Furthermore, the foundational significance of decoding in early literacy is underscored by Gough and Tunmer's (1986) "Simple View of Reading" which advanced the idea that reading comprehension is the product of decoding ability and linguistic comprehension. This is relative to the present study on the Marungko approach because beginning readers should master the decoding process. The approach's systematic emphasis on phonics and letter-sound correspondence in Filipino directly addresses and aims to strengthen the initial stages of reading development. Given that Marungko is a fundamental phonics-based program, Blevins's (2016) framework of "7 Ingredients for Successful Phonics Programs" can be related to this study. Blevins's "7 Ingredients for Success" directly outlines key areas of teacher competence for effective phonics instructions. For teachers using the Marungko Approach, competence would mean not just knowing the steps of Marungko but mastering how to implement them according to how they are being utilized inside the classroom.

To provide us with a psychological theoretical underpinning for the aspects of teacher competence related to behavior and motivation in the classroom, let us look into B.F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning. It is important to note that the use of positive reinforcement, like offering immediate and specific praise when a child correctly blends the sounds or decodes a word, can strengthen the desired reading outcome and build confidence. Their competence would also involve strategic classroom management to ensure sustained engagement and create an optimal environment to cater to diverse learners inside the classroom.

Teachers understanding and application of relevant visual presentations are integral to their competence. The effectiveness of teaching strategies, especially in foundational literacy, can be significantly enhanced by the principles of multimedia learning by Richard E. Mayer (2019). His work on Cognitive Theory Multimedia Learning outlines principles for designing instruction that optimizes learning from words and visuals.

We can connect this concept to the use of the Marungko Approach as well as in addressing the diversity of the classroom needs.

Teachers' Utilization in Marungko Approach. In the Philippine context, initial training on the Marungko Approach may have been insufficient, too brief, or lacked practical application. Ongoing professional development might be inconsistent or not tailored to specific implementation challenges. According to the study of Dusenbury et al. (2003), inadequate or generic training can significantly impede a teacher's ability to use the Marungko Approach's prescribed lessons and to deliver them with intended quality. If systematic professional development opportunities do not provide sufficient depth, practical application, or follow-up coaching, especially on Marungko's phonics and methodologies, teachers may struggle to translate theoretical knowledge into effective classroom utilization. On the other hand, teachers might lack access to the Marungko-specific Big Books, flashcards, charts, and other supplementary materials. Existing materials might be old, insufficient for large class sizes, or not culturally relevant

in some local contexts within the Philippines. The dimension of adherence, as outlined by Dusenbury et al. (2003), presupposes the availability of necessary program materials in the Philippine Educational system. It is true that resource disparities across schools, particularly in rural areas, can present a significant systematic barrier to the consistent implementation and utilization of the Marungko Approach. Furthermore, consistent utilization of an intervention including the Marungko Approach, is not solely dependent on individual teacher effort but is also a function of systematic support structures. Where these support system is weak, teachers may struggle to maintain consistency of the approach.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three (3) theories: Schema Theory in Reading, Theory on Challenges and Support, and the Theory and Practice of Scaffolding. Schema Theory is crucial for understanding teacher competence and utilizing the Marungko Approach. A theory that originates from cognitive psychology (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980) postulates how readers comprehend using the prior knowledge as reflected in the text or the schemata. This theory further explains that schemata are organized networks of information about concepts, events, actions, and situations stored in long-term memory. As we elaborate more on Teacher Competence as based on the theory, it covers their existing schemata about literacy development, effective reading instruction, the basic components of the Filipino language, phonological awareness, phonics, and the sequential nature of reading acquisition integrated into the Marungko Approach. For instance, a teacher would find it easier to introduce, elaborate, and teach if he has a strong foundational schema about the importance of systematic phonics instruction and the explicit sound-letter correspondence that covers the Marungko Approach in teaching beginning readers for Filipino.

The extent of teacher utilization of the Marungko Approach can be effectively linked to their schemata. This involves their well-developed, rich, and flexible resource adaptation in a comprehensive and creative manner. If a teacher's schema for reading instruction is limited to more traditional, whole-word approaches, they might struggle to embrace the code-based nature of the approach fully. Furthermore, teacher difficulties cover their application of knowledge to each of the learners' linguistic backgrounds, word familiarity, including learners' prior knowledge of Filipino vocabulary concepts, and potential learning difficulties in introducing Filipino literacy inside the classroom.

The Theory on Challenges and Support and its Relevance to Difficulties draws from various fields, including educational psychology, organizational behavior, and stress and coping theories (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This theory suggests that teachers operate within an environment characterized by both challenges and sources of support. The teacher's level of difficulty can be viewed within the following means, but not limited to its specific scope. Pedagogy is difficult in differentiated instruction within the Marungko Framework, managing large-scale classes during reading activities, or addressing specified learning needs. Resource-related constraints include Marungko-aligned materials or inadequate training on resource production. We also have learner-related factors to consider, which include their diversity, which varies to a certain level. Moreover, the support system emphasizes the ways to navigate teachers' difficulty in the application of the Marungko Approach from various sources. These resources can be identified as Professional development, administrative support, Peer collaboration, Availability of Learning Resources, and Community and Parental Involvement. According to this theory, the level of difficulties that the teachers experience can influence the level of implementation of the Marungko Approach. It has to be significantly influenced by the balanced support mechanism because it can adequately mitigate the impact and enhance both the competence and their abilities.

The Theory of Practice and Scaffolding, which is primarily associated with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978), emphasizes the role of temporary support before accomplishing the task independently. This theory is highly relevant in the way we understand how teachers utilize the Marungko Approach and address the difficulties faced by the beginning readers in Filipino. This theory supports Teacher competence because a teacher with the knowledge and skills to implement the Marungko Approach effectively can help identify and assess learners' current reading levels, which means the appropriate intervention can be provided. On the other hand, the teacher can provide appropriate support while gradually releasing the learner's potential and responsibility, leading to a greater gain of independence in literacy formation. Scaffolding also enables the concept of Teacher Utilization of the Marungko Approach because the degree to which teachers are knowledgeable in delivering effective instruction and various strategies can directly impact the learners. On the other hand, scaffolding also has a greater response to difficulties encountered by teachers when using the Marungko Approach. For example, when a learner struggles to decode a particular sound or blend the letters, a teacher utilizing scaffolding effectively can provide targeted support addressing a specific challenge or using a different sensory modality.

To give a profound summary, Schema Theory helps explain the foundational knowledge teachers bring to the implementation of the Marungko Approach and how their existing mental frameworks influence their competence and utilization. On the other hand, the Theory on Challenges and Support speculates a framework for understanding the external factors that can hinder or facilitate the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in its implementation, which has a due impact on teachers' difficulties and experiences. Lastly, the Theory and Practice of Scaffolding offers insights into the crucial instructional strategies that teachers can employ within the framework of the Marungko Approach to support beginning readers in Filipino.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the level of teachers' competence, extent of utilization, and level of difficulties in the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino in a district of a medium-sized schools division in Central Philippines for the School Year 2022-2023.

Methodology:

This section presents the research methodology employed in the study, which includes the research design, population and sampling, research instrument, data gathering procedure, and data analysis. The methodology was carefully selected to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, aligning with the objectives of the study.

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive method of research in determining the level of teachers' competence, extent of utilization, and level of difficulties in the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino in 3 districts of a medium-sized school division in Central Philippines for the School Year 2022-2023.

According to Villanueva (2015), descriptive design seeks "what is" and emphasizes the discovery of ideas and insights that may affect the development of generalizations, principles, or theories. It focuses on present conditions, which aims to unveil new truths that could help one make an adequate and accurate interpretation of the data collected. A descriptive research design is valuable to this present study in providing facts and scientific judgment based on assessing this study. Also, this design is appropriate for the study to know the present situation and to determine the prevailing issues, making adequate and accurate interpretation of the data.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were the ninety Grades 1, 2, and 3 teachers in the districts of a medium-sized division in the province Negros Oriental. Since the number of respondents is manageable, purposive sampling was considered. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher deliberately selects participants based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the study's objectives. This method ensures that the chosen individuals possess the qualities necessary to provide in-depth information about the phenomenon being investigated (Etikan, 2016).

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents:

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents

District	Population (N)	Percentage (%)
A	25	27.78
B	32	35.56
C	33	36.67
Total	90	100.00

Data Gathering Instrument

The researcher used a self-made questionnaire to gather the data needed for this study. It consists of three (4) parts.

The first part covers the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, highest educational attainment, and trainings attended.

The second part of the instrument focuses on the teachers' competence and consisted of items on the production of the learning resources, teaching strategy, and assessment and recognition. There are 5 items per area; hence, a total of 15 items were rated by the respondents as 5- Very High Level, 4- High Level, 3-Moderate Level, 2- Low Level, and 1- Very Low Level.

The third part was another 15 items on the extent of teachers' utilization covering the same area and were rated by the respondents as 5 very High Extent, 4-High Extent, 3-Moderate Extent, 2-Low Extent, and 1- Very Low Extent.

The fourth part was on the level of teachers' difficulties with the same area and were also rated by the respondents as 5- Very High Level, 4- High Level, 3-Moderate Level, 2- Low Level, and 1- Very Low Level.

Validity

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure (Drost, 2019). Content validity was applied where the domain of concept is made clear, and the analyst judges whether the measures fully represent

the domain. This is done by a panel of experts who will rate the suitability of each item and evaluate its fitness in the definition of the construct.

A panel of five (5) experts was requested to validate the research instrument. The first validator is a Doctor of Education graduate, holding the position of Education Program Supervisor in Filipino, which proves his capacity to check the validity of this instrument. The second validator also graduated with a Doctor of Education and was appointed as school principal; hence, she was an expert in checking the test materials of teachers under her supervision. The third validator is a graduate of the Doctor of Education, assigned as a Public School District Supervisor, who has been actively involved in developing and monitoring programs for uplifting learners' performance. The fourth validator graduated with a Doctor of Education, holding a Master Teacher I position, and is currently teaching Filipino subjects. One of the National qualifiers for SULKAS (Sulat at Bigkas), which proves her capacity to check on the level of teacher competence. The fifth validator graduated with a Doctor of Education, holding the Head Teacher 3 position, and a district subject specialist in Filipino.

The criteria set forth by Good and Scates was the tool used in validating the instrument. The interpretations were as follows: Excellent (4.21 – 5.00); Very Good (3.41 – 4.20); Good (2.61 – 3.40); Fair (1.81 – 2.60); Poor (1.00 – 1.80).

The validity index obtained by the research instrument was 4.60, which is interpreted as excellent.

Reliability

According to Drost, as cited by Edwin (2019), reliability is the extent to which measurements are repeatable when different people perform the measurement on different occasions, under different conditions, supposedly with alternative instruments that measure the construct or skill. This means it is the degree to which the measure of a construct is consistent or dependable. A dry run or pilot testing of the research instrument was conducted among thirty respondents from another district to ensure clarity and comprehension of the items. This process helped identify any ambiguities or difficulties in understanding the questions, ensuring that the final instrument was refined and reliable for the actual data collection. The results from the pilot testing were also used to calculate Cronbach's alpha, confirming the internal consistency and dependability of the instrument.

Internal consistency reliability was applied to establish the reliability of the research instrument. Internal consistency reliability is a measure of consistency between different items of the same construct (Edwin, 2019). It measures the consistency within the instrument and questions how well a set of items measures a particular characteristic of the test. This means that single items within a test are correlated to estimate the coefficient of reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine internal consistency between items. The ranges of Cronbach's alpha are $\alpha \geq 0.9$ (Excellent), $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$ (Good), $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ (Acceptable), $0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$ (Questionable), $0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$ (Poor), $0.5 > \alpha$ (Unacceptable). The reliability index for the Level of Teacher's Competence in the Utilization of the Marungko Approach was .912, and for the Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Utilization of the Marungko Approach was .958, both interpreted as excellent.

Data Gathering Procedure

After determining the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the researcher asked permission from the school division superintendent to conduct the study. Then, the administration of the research instrument to the identified respondents followed upon its approval. The questionnaires were given to the Grades 1-3 teachers. The data was collected through the district's respective supervisors and the respondents' immediate school heads. All data gathered were organized and analyzed with the aid of the SPSS.

Research Ethics Protocol

Participants were informed that their participation in this study is voluntary, and their decision to participate or not will not affect their relationship with the researcher or any other individual. All information collected from participants were kept confidential, and no identifying information was disclosed or published in any form of dissemination. Participants were assigned a pseudonym or a unique identifier to protect their identity.

The researcher acknowledges that research participation can cause discomfort, stress, or psychological distress. Participants were informed of the potential risks and benefits of the research. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or consequences. The researcher is aware of any adverse events or harm caused by the research, appropriate measures were taken to address the situation. Participants were provided with a consent form that outlines the purpose of the research, the procedures, the potential risks and benefits, the anonymity and confidentiality measures, and the right to withdraw from the study. The researcher obtained written informed consent from all participants before their participation in the research. This research ethics protocol ensures the protection of participants' rights and minimizes the risk of harm. The researcher complied with all ethical guidelines and regulations throughout the research process.

Analytical Schemes

This study was guided by the following analytical schemes: descriptive and comparative.

Objective No. 1, which aimed to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of age, highest educational attainment, and average family monthly income, used a descriptive-analytical scheme.

Objective No. 2, which aimed to determine the level of teachers' competence in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino in terms of production of learning resources, teaching strategy, assessment, and recognition, applied a descriptive-analytical scheme.

Objective No. 3, which aimed to determine the extent of teachers' utilization in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino in terms of the production of learning resources, teaching strategy, assessment, and recognition, applied a descriptive-analytical scheme.

Objective No. 4, which aimed to determine the difficulties teachers encountered in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino, applied a descriptive-analytical scheme.

Objective No. 5, which aimed to determine the level of teachers' competence in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino when the respondents were grouped according to age, highest educational attainment, and average family monthly income, employed a descriptive-analytical scheme.

Objective No. 6, which aimed to determine the extent of teachers' utilization in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino when grouped according to age, highest educational attainment, and average family monthly income, applied a descriptive-analytical scheme.

Objective No. 7, which aimed to determine the level of difficulties teachers have in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino when grouped according to age, highest educational attainment, and average family monthly income, applied a descriptive-analytical scheme.

Objective No. 8, which aimed to determine if there was a significant difference in the level of teachers' competence in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, and average family monthly income, employed a comparative analytical scheme.

Objective No. 9, which aimed to determine if there was a significant difference in the extent of teachers' utilization in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, and average family monthly income, employed a comparative analytical scheme.

Objective No. 10, which aimed to determine if there was a significant difference in the level of difficulties of teachers in using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino when grouped and compared according to age, highest educational attainment, and average family monthly income, employed a comparative analytical scheme.

Results and Discussion:

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered from the respondents to provide insights into their demographic profile and its implications for the study. The presentation of data is structured to align with the research objectives, ensuring clarity and coherence in the analysis. Each variable is discussed in detail to highlight its significance in relation to the topic under investigation.

Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Variables Age, Highest Educational Attainment, and Average Family Monthly Income

Table 2
Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Younger (below 43 years old)	43	47.80
	Older (43 years old and above)	47	52.20

Highest Educational Attainment	Lower (Bachelor's Degree)	51	56.70
	Higher (Masteral/Doctorate Degree)	39	43.30
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower (below 29 000 pesos)	23	25.60
	Higher (29 000 pesos and above)	67	74.40
Total		90	100.00

The demographic profile of the 90 teachers surveyed indicates that the majority are older (52.2% aged 43 and above), possess a bachelor's degree (56.7%), and have a family monthly income of 29,000 pesos or more (74.4%). The predominance of older teachers suggests a wealth of experience within the teaching force, which can be advantageous in implementing instructional methods like the Marungko Approach. The Marungko Approach is a widely used reading intervention strategy that focuses on phonemic awareness and phonics, which are crucial for early literacy. Experienced teachers often have refined teaching strategies and a deeper understanding of student needs, facilitating the adoption of this innovative reading intervention. Research indicates that teaching experience positively correlates with student achievement, as seasoned teachers can effectively navigate diverse classroom challenges (Kini & Podolsky, 2016).

The fact that 56.7% of teachers hold a bachelor's degree highlights a substantial foundation of formal education among the respondents. While advanced degrees can enhance pedagogical skills, a solid undergraduate education provides essential teaching competencies. Continuous professional development remains crucial for these teachers to stay abreast of effective teaching methodologies, such as the Marungko Approach, which has been shown to improve reading skills among early learners (Harani & Villcino, 2024). Most teachers earning 29,000 pesos or more monthly reflect a relatively stable economic status. This financial stability can enable teachers to access additional resources and professional development opportunities, further enhancing their teaching effectiveness. Studies have shown that teachers' socioeconomic status can influence their access to educational materials and training, impacting their ability to implement innovative teaching strategies.

In summary, the dominant groups among the respondents—older, bachelor's degree holders with higher income levels—are well-positioned to implement the Marungko Approach effectively. Their experience, foundational education, and financial stability provide a solid platform for adopting innovative teaching methods to enhance learners' reading competencies.

Level of Teachers' Competence in the Utilization of the Marungko Approach According to the Production of Learning Resources, Teaching Strategy, Assessment, and Recognition

This section explores the level of teachers' competence in using the Marungko Approach, focusing on four critical areas: production of learning resources, teaching strategy, assessment, and recognition. These components are essential in evaluating how effectively teachers implement this method to enhance reading skills among learners. The data provides insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in each dimension, emphasizing the relationship between teacher competence and the successful application of the Marungko Approach in classroom settings. The findings serve as a basis for developing targeted interventions to support teachers in maximizing the benefits of this reading strategy.

Table 3

Level of Teachers' Competence in the Utilization of Marungko Approach According to the Production of Learning Resources

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am competent in...</i>		
creating visually engaging and age-appropriate phonetic materials.	4.52	Very High Level
designing sequential and scaffolded worksheets to reinforce letter sounds.	4.48	High Level
incorporating interactive multimedia elements to enhance learning.	4.50	Very High Level
adapting resources to suit the individual learner's needs and paces.	4.47	High Level
utilizing available technology for digital resource creation.	4.48	High Level
Overall Mean	4.49	High Level

Table 3 evaluates teachers' self-assessed competence in producing learning resources for the Marungko Approach. The overall mean is 4.49, interpreted as a high level of competence. The findings in Table 3, indicating a very high level of teachers' competence in the production and adaptation of the Marungko Approach, show an alignment of results based on the empirical evidence showed by the study of Sirait, J. (2016), which focuses on professional and

pedagogical competence, and student academic achievement. The results of the study emphasize "teacher quality" rather than specific reading instruction resource creation. It conceptually supports the notion that highly competent teachers, as observed in the current study result, are foundational to effective learning processes and, by extension, student literacy development.

The findings of this study conform to Sirait's idea about teacher quality because teachers' high level of competence can even be postulated, particularly in areas like differentiation. The lowest mean score of 4.47, focusing on adapting resources to suit individual learner paces, can still be strengthened with teachers' reinforcement through activities that focus on beginning readers within the context of the Filipino subject. This elaborately concludes that Sirait's study serves as a strong supporting piece reinforcing that high teacher quality is paramount for student learning.

Table 4

Level of Teachers' Competence in the Utilization of Marungko Approach According to the Teaching Strategy

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am competent in...</i>		
implementing differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learning styles.	4.53	Very High Level
engaging students through hands-on and multisensory activities.	4.46	High Level
facilitating small group or individual sessions for personalized learning.	4.43	High Level
encouraging student participation and feedback during lessons.	4.50	Very High Level
utilizing phonetic games and storytelling to reinforce concepts	4.44	High Level
Overall Mean	4.47	High Level

Table 4 assesses teachers' competence in employing teaching strategies within the Marungko Approach, with an overall mean of 4.47, indicating a high level of competence. The highest-rated item is "implementing differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learning styles," scoring 4.53, reflecting a very high level of competence. This demonstrates teachers' strong ability to modify instruction to accommodate various student learning preferences.

This finding is strongly supported by the local evidence from the study of Aranda and Zamora (2016) on the use of differentiated instruction in teaching the Filipino language. It was concluded that differentiated instruction was effective in improving student's performance. However, it is imperative to note these strengths against the common pedagogical difficulties faced by Filipino teachers. These include, but are not limited to, overcrowded classrooms, time constraints, and a general lack of resources or adequate support for teachers. This is in consonance with the study result about facilitating small group or individual sessions for personalized learning with a mean score of 4.43. Therefore, the result of this study was confirmed, with notable exceptions to these typical barriers to implementing instructional strategies of the Marungko Approach for teaching beginning readers in Filipino.

Table 5

Level of Teachers' Competence in the Utilization of Marungko Approach According to the Assessment

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am competent in...</i>		
conducting formative assessments to gauge understanding of letter sounds.	4.58	Very High Level
developing phonetic checklists to track student progress.	4.48	High Level
providing constructive feedback based on assessment outcomes.	4.49	High Level
using informal assessments such as observation and peer assessments.	4.41	High Level
analyzing student performance data to inform instruction	4.53	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.50	Very High Level

Table 5 examines teachers' competence in assessment practices related to the Marungko Approach. The overall mean is 4.50, interpreted as a very high level of competence. This is well-supported by the result of the study emphasizing the importance of diverse assessment types. Specifically, teachers demonstrated very high competence in conducting formative assessments with a mean score of 4.48; however, using informal assessments such as observation and peer assessments obtained a mean rating of 4.41, which shows the lowest among the represented mean scores but is still interpreted as high-level. These findings resonate with the verified observation of Nurhayati et al. (2020) in Indonesia, who found that primary school teachers help positive perceptions of both formal and informal assessments, viewing them as crucial tools for gauging student understanding and guiding instruction. This congruence suggests that the teachers in the current study not only possess the necessary skills but also likely hold a strong belief in the value of comprehensive assessment to effectively monitor and support literacy development using the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino. The existing results of this study about teachers' high level of competence on informal assessments contradict the study of Blevins (2016) because it elaborates on the common obstacles that teachers face in maximizing student learning, especially with phonics instruction that is relative to the Marungko Approach.

Table 6

Level of Teachers' Competence in the Utilization of Marungko Approach According to the Recognition

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am competent in...</i>		
acknowledging student achievements through verbal praise and rewards.	4.70	Very High Level
facilitating peer recognition and sharing of successes.	4.72	Very High Level
incorporating parent and community involvement in recognizing student progress.	4.72	Very High Level
highlighting outstanding efforts and improvements in class.	4.69	Very High Level
celebrating milestones and achievements with the class and school community.	4.50	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.67	Very High Level

Table 6 assesses teachers' competence in recognizing student achievements within the Marungko Approach, with an overall mean of 4.67, indicating a very high level of competence. The highest-rated items are "facilitating peer recognition and sharing of successes" and "incorporating parent and community involvement in recognizing student progress," scoring 4.72, reflecting very high levels of competence. This suggests that teachers excel in promoting a supportive environment that acknowledges student accomplishments through peer and community engagement.

The demonstration of these results established psychological and educational theories emphasizing motivation, self-efficacy, and holistic development. The result of this present study abides by the principle from B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning. This competence also implies the importance of reinforced behaviors, which proves the detailed theoretical structure of Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory.

Furthermore, the strong emphasis on involving parents and the community in recognizing student progress is underscored by local literature reviews by Bartolome et al. (2017). It proves that parental involvement is key to improving student outcomes in the Philippine educational context, thereby validating the teachers' holistic approach to celebrating student milestones.

Extent of Teachers' Utilization of the Marungko Approach According to Production of Learning Resources, Teaching Strategy, Assessment, and Recognition

This section examines the extent to which teachers utilize the Marungko Approach across four critical domains: production of learning resources, teaching strategy, assessment, and recognition. Each domain represents a key aspect of instructional delivery and its impact on enhancing students' reading proficiency. The data provides insights into how effectively teachers incorporate the approach into their practices, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Understanding these dimensions is crucial in identifying actionable steps to optimize the utilization of the Marungko Approach and support teachers in its effective implementation.

Table 7

Extent of Teachers' Utilization of Marungko Approach According to Production of Learning Resources

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am utilizing Marungko by...</i>		
creating phonetic materials that are visually engaging and suitable for different age groups.	4.58	Very Great Extent
designing worksheets that are sequential and scaffolded to help reinforce letter sounds.	4.56	Very Great Extent
incorporating interactive multimedia elements to enhance the learning experience.	4.53	Very Great Extent
adapting resources to cater to the unique needs and learning pace of each individual learner.	4.59	Very Great Extent
making use of available technology to create digital resources.	4.50	Very Great Extent
Overall Mean	4.55	Very Great Extent

Table 7 evaluates how extensively teachers employ the Marungko Approach in creating learning resources. The overall mean is 4.55, indicating a "Very Great Extent." The highest-rated item is "adapting resources to cater to each learner's unique needs and learning pace," scoring 4.59, reflecting a "Very Great Extent." This suggests that teachers are highly committed to customizing educational materials to meet diverse student needs, enhancing personalized learning experiences.

Concerning the item with the comparatively lowest mean of 4.50, "making use of available technology to create digital resources," it connotes significant strength. However, this finding is in notable contrast to documented challenges Filipino teachers face in integrating and utilizing technology for pedagogical purposes. Studies, such as that by Acosta (2018), highlight the pervasive barriers in Philippine public schools, including insufficient equipment, lack of reliable internet access, limited technical support, and inadequate training in digital literacy skills. Furthermore, while teachers may possess a foundational ICT competency, deeper engagement in advanced digital resource creation can be constrained by these practical realities, as implied by a broader discussion on teachers' digital literacy in the Philippines (Mendoza & Balagtas, 2020).

Therefore, the very high extent of utilization demonstrated by teachers in the current study in creating digital resources suggests a remarkable level of adaptability, resourcefulness, and a strong commitment to integrating modern tools into their Marungko instruction to promote the literacy contexts among Filipino beginning readers.

Table 8

Extent of Teachers' Utilization of the Marungko Approach According to Teaching Strategy

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am utilizing Marungko by...</i>		
introducing one letter sound at a time, starting with the most common and phonetically consistent sounds.	4.58	Very Great Extent
engaging students in a multisensory experience by having them trace the letter on sandpaper or in a tray of sand while saying the letter sound aloud.	4.51	Very Great Extent
conducting activities that emphasize the phonemic sound of the letter.	4.54	Very Great Extent
using stories that focus on the featured letter sound. Encourage students to listen for and identify words that contain the sound.	4.52	Very Great Extent
incorporating games like bingo or memory matching, where students have to match sounds to letters or words.	4.51	Very Great Extent
Overall Mean	4.53	Very Great Extent

Table 8 assesses how teachers apply the Marungko Approach in their teaching strategies. The overall mean is 4.53, interpreted as a "Very Great Extent." The highest-rated item is "introducing one letter sound at a time, starting with the most common and phonetically consistent sounds," with a mean of 4.58, indicating a "Very Great Extent." This reflects teachers' systematic approach to building foundational phonetic skills among learners.

Philippine local studies corroborated empirical evidence relative to the approaches' effectiveness for beginning readers. The core Marungko principle of introducing one letter sound at a time with a mean score of 4.58 is validated by research from Boltron and Ramos (2021) and Casilac and Gonzales (2023), which consistently report significant improvements in letter-sound identification and overall reading skills among learners after Marungko implementation. Furthermore, the teachers' extensive use of multisensory experiences, stories, and games, with a mean score of 4.51, supports local findings on the effectiveness of multisensory approaches Lumor (2024). These studies collectively affirm that the teaching strategies highly utilized by teachers in this study are effective and well-aligned with successful foundational reading instruction in the Philippine educational landscape. On the other hand, the high extent of teachers' utilization of phonetic games, such as bingo or memory matching, with a mean score of 4.51, Very Great Extent has been proven by the recent local research on game-based instructional learning Pacturan et al. (2024). This evidence directly supports the pedagogical value of incorporating games into the curriculum, underscoring that the teachers in the current study are effectively employing a research-based backed- strategy to enhance foundational literacy skills within the Marungko Approach. The high utilization of game-based activities, therefore, aligns with contemporary local efforts to address learning challenges and improve academic performance through engaging and interactive methodologies.

Table 9

Extent of Teachers' Utilization of the Marungko Approach According to Assessment

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am utilizing Marungko by...</i>		
conducting formative assessments to assess students' understanding of letter sounds.	4.57	Very Great Extent
developing phonetic checklists to monitor student progress.	4.50	Very Great Extent
providing constructive feedback based on the results of the assessments.	4.56	Very Great Extent
utilizing informal assessments, such as observation and peer assessments.	4.59	Very Great Extent
analyzing student performance data to guide instruction.	4.64	Very Great Extent
Overall Mean	4.57	Very Great Extent

Table 9 examines how extensively teachers utilize the Marungko Approach in assessment practices. The overall mean is 4.57, indicating a "Very Great Extent." The highest-rated item is "analyzing student performance data to guide instruction," with a mean of 4.64, reflecting a "Very Great Extent." This suggests teachers use assessment data to inform and tailor their instructional methods.

Despite the clear benefits and official mandates, achieving consistently "Very Great Extent" in assessment utilization, especially in data analysis and informal monitoring, is a recognized challenge in many Philippines educational settings. Studies on assessment and teacher practices in the Philippines often reveal various obstacles that impede comprehensive and data-driven assessment. For instance, research on teachers' assessment and practices during online learning has highlighted difficulties in ensuring the quality of student participation, integrating authentic assessment, and utilizing online assessment applications, Agtarap et al. (2024). More broadly, issues such as heavy teacher workload, time constraints, lack of specialized training in specific assessment tools, and insufficient resources like limited materials or technological facilities for systematic data collection and analysis have been identified as

barriers to ensuring effective assessment implementation in Philippine public schools. Therefore, the great extent of teachers' utilization of diverse assessment methods and strategies demonstrated by the teachers in this study suggests that they possess remarkable dedication, receive adequate support, or demonstrate a high level of intrinsic motivation to perform their duties and responsibilities. Yet, there are practical limitations that often lead to a dominant reliance on traditional paper-pencil tests to make consistent data analysis.

Table 10

Extent of Teachers' Utilization of the Marungko Approach According to Recognition

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am utilizing Marungko by...</i>		
acknowledging student achievements through verbal praise and rewards.	4.71	Very Great Extent
facilitating peer recognition and sharing of successes.	4.60	Very Great Extent
incorporating parent and community involvement in recognizing student progress.	4.66	Very Great Extent
highlighting outstanding efforts and improvements in class.	4.61	Very Great Extent
celebrating milestones and achievements with the class and school community.	4.58	Very Great Extent
Overall Mean	4.63	Very Great Extent

Table 10 showcases teachers' successful implementation of the Marungko Approach in recognizing student achievements, with an impressive overall mean of 4.63, denoting a 'Very Great Extent.' The highest-rated item, 'acknowledging student achievements through verbal praise and rewards,' scored 4.71, which is the highest-scoring item. This further elucidates that teachers are most frequently utilizing direct, immediate, and positive reinforcement. Similar to the competence findings, all items show very high utilization, implying a comprehensive and varied approach to recognition that includes direct praise, peer involvement, parent/community engagement, and broader celebrations.

This table is virtually a mirror of Table 6 because the very high scores in both competence and utilization for recognition suggest a strong internal consistency, that teachers feel highly capable in recognition strategies, and they are extensively applying them in practice.

However, the study of Dungca et al. (2024) on qualitative inquiry into parental involvement suggests that conflicting work schedules or parents, geographical distance, and inadequate communication channels are not always achievable across all contexts. Therefore, it contradicts the recent study result on "incorporating parent and community involvement in recognizing student progress with a mean score of 4.66, interpreted as Very Great Extent.

The item with the lowest mean, 'celebrating milestones and achievements with the class and school community,' scored 4.58, still within the 'Very Great Extent' range. This slightly lower rating may suggest challenges such as logistical constraints, limited time, or lack of resources to organize class or school-wide celebrations. Broader school events and community engagement activities contribute to a positive school climate and a sense of belonging. Research on School- Family- Community Partnerships in the Philippines (Novelty Journals, 2025) consistently shows that when schools, families, and communities work together, it leads to enhanced student engagement, improved academic outcomes, and stronger social-emotional development. Thus, it affirms the concluding result of this recent study.

Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Utilization of Marungko Approach

This section examines the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Marungko Approach in their classrooms. Understanding these difficulties is a collaborative effort that involves educators, policymakers, and researchers. It provides valuable insights into the barriers that may hinder the effective utilization of the approach, particularly in areas such as material preparation, classroom management, assessment, and parent engagement. The analysis identifies areas where teachers experience moderate to high levels of difficulty, offering a basis for targeted interventions. By addressing these issues together, we can enhance the overall effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in improving students' reading skills, making everyone feel included and part of a team.

Table 11

Level of Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in the Utilization of Marungko Approach

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I encountered difficulty in utilizing the Marungko Approach in terms of the following:</i>		
Lacking access to suitable Marungko-specific materials and resources.	3.46	Moderate Level
Facing time constraints in developing and preparing engaging phonetic materials.	3.80	High Level
Managing diverse classroom needs while implementing Marungko strategies.	3.78	High Level

Maintaining an appropriate pace for all students in mixed-ability classrooms.	3.83	High Level
Engaging all students, particularly those who find phonetic focus challenging.	3.87	High Level
Designing assessments that accurately reflect students' understanding of phonetic skills.	3.82	High Level
Finding time to conduct frequent and thorough assessments without disrupting instruction.	3.87	High Level
Developing systems to effectively recognize and celebrate students' progress in Marungko skills.	3.78	High Level
Balancing recognition of students' efforts without causing competition or discouragement.	3.80	High Level
Engaging parents in recognizing and supporting their children's achievements.	3.92	High Level
Overall Mean	3.79	High Level

Table 11 presents teachers' difficulties when implementing the Marungko Approach for beginning readers in Filipino, a phonics-based reading program developed in the Philippines.

It critically reveals that teachers encountered a high level of difficulty in the utilization of the Marungko Approach, showing an overall mean score of 3.79 despite their reported high competence and extensive utilization of its various components. The most pronounced difficulty encountered was "engaging parents in recognizing and supporting their children's achievements," with the rated mean score of 3.92 interpreted as "High Level." This significant result of the recent study strongly implies teacher resiliency. Despite these difficulties, they still handled it with dedication and commitment. The high difficulty level points to areas where teachers require more targeted support, training, and resources. These difficulties reflect a real-world scene that showcases the complexities of implementing a specialized literacy approach in a diverse resource-constrained classroom environment in the Philippines.

In comparison with Table 10, teachers reported a "Very Great Extent" of utilization for "incorporating parent and community involvement in recognizing student progress, with a mean score of 4.66; in Table 6, they also reported a "Very High Level" of competence in this area with a mean score of 4.72. Despite high competence and utilization, the high level of difficulty in implementation signals a significant and practical barrier.

We can connect this difficulty to communication barriers and accessibility. While the Department of Education (DepEd) postulates policies like the school- Management (SBM) framework (DepEd, 2001), which encourages parent and community participation, actual communication channels and accessibility can be challenging. Geographic barriers, lack of digital literacy, post-pandemic factors, as highlighted by Agtarap et al. (2024), and insufficient formal communication strategies can hinder effective home-school partnerships. Even with teacher efforts, reaching consistently engaging parents can be difficult. The traditional Filipino family concept strongly emphasizes parents' primary role as providers of basic needs and education fees (Alampay and Garcia 2019). While parents deeply value education, their involvement might be seen more in terms of providing financial support, ensuring attendance, and instilling discipline at home rather than actively participating in school-based recognition events or consistently engaging in academic support activities beyond homework help. Teachers might find it difficult to shift this ingrained cultural perception towards a more collaborative, school-based partnership where parents are actively involved in celebration and academic support. Therefore, the result of the recent study affirms the aforementioned reasons.

Level of Teachers' Competence in the Utilization of the Marungko Approach According to Production of Learning Resources, Teaching Strategy, Assessment, and Recognition When Grouped According to Age, Highest Educational Attainment, and Average Family Monthly Income

This section explores the variations in teachers' competence in utilizing the Marungko Approach based on demographic and professional factors, including age, highest educational attainment, and average family monthly income. The analysis focuses on how these factors influence competence levels in four key areas: production of learning resources, teaching strategy, assessment, and recognition. By identifying significant differences across these groups, the discussion aims to highlight the impact of professional development and socio-economic conditions on the practical implementation of the Marungko Approach. These findings provide valuable insights for developing targeted strategies to support teacher competence and enhance instructional effectiveness.

Table 12

Level of Teachers' Competence in the Utilization of Marungko Approach According to Production of Learning Resources When Grouped According to Age

Items	Younger		Older	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am competent in...</i> creating visually engaging and age-appropriate phonetic materials.	4.53	Very Level	4.51	Very Level

designing sequential and scaffolded worksheets to reinforce letter sounds.	4.53	Very Level	High	4.43	High Level
incorporating interactive multimedia elements to enhance learning.	4.51	Very Level	High	4.49	High Level
adapting resources to suit the individual learner's needs and paces.	4.47	High Level		4.47	High Level
utilizing available technology for digital resource creation.	4.49	High Level		4.47	High Level
Overall Mean	4.51	Very Level	High	4.47	High Level

Table 12 distinctly illustrates that younger and older teachers possess a high level of competence in producing learning resources for the Marungko Approach. The overall mean of 4.51 for younger teachers indicates a "Very High Level," while older teachers maintain a "High Level" with an overall mean of 4.47, signifying strong and reliable skills across all age groups in creating effective instructional materials.

The study results reveal that competence is high for both ages, with a delicate consistency of advantage observed among younger teachers in areas related to digital and interactive resources in particular. Despite these minor differences, both age groups are equally demonstrating strong competence in foundational aspects of resource creation, adaptation, and pedagogical skills integration that would formally suit the learners' needs and pace. This highlights that regardless of age, teachers maintain a high standard in developing Marungko materials and in differentiating instruction effectively.

Furthermore, we can link these study results to the overall competence in resource production, as presented in Table 3, showing that this high level is sustained across age demographics. This strong teacher capacity in material production directly facilitates the pedagogical flow and delivery of the approach. Consequently, this high level of teacher competence in resource creation indirectly supports and helps explain the positive outcomes observed by Boltron and Ramos (2021), where the Marungko Approach was found to be significant in improving the foundational reading skills of the learners, given that teachers are well- equipped to create and adapt the very tools needed for its effective execution.

Conclusion:

The majority of the respondents were older individuals with lower educational attainment. Yet, they demonstrated strong competence in essential teaching areas, particularly in producing learning resources, implementing teaching strategies, and conducting assessments. This suggests that effective teaching practices can be maintained regardless of variations in educational background, highlighting the teachers' ability to apply instructional strategies effectively. Furthermore, teachers exhibited a very great extent of utilization of the Marungko Approach across all assessed areas, including resource production, teaching strategies, assessment, and recognition. Their consistent application of best practices, such as creating engaging materials, using systematic teaching strategies, conducting assessments, and acknowledging student achievements, reflects a comprehensive understanding and application of the approach in literacy instruction.

Teachers faced significant challenges in implementing the Marungko Approach, including managing diverse learners, maintaining pacing, engaging students, designing assessments, balancing recognition, and involving parents. For example, mixed-ability classrooms make it difficult to keep advanced students engaged while supporting struggling learners, which can be addressed through flexible grouping and peer-assisted learning. Interactive strategies like storytelling and educational apps can boost student participation, while quick comprehension checks and oral reading exercises simplify assessment. Recognition should focus on personal progress rather than just high scores, and parental involvement can be strengthened through workshops and reading guides. Addressing these challenges through professional development and school-home collaboration can enhance the approach's effectiveness.

Despite their high competence and utilization, teachers encountered significant challenges in implementing the Marungko Approach, particularly in managing diverse learning needs, pacing instruction, conducting assessments, and involving parents. These difficulties suggest areas where additional support, training, or resources may be necessary to ensure effective and consistent instruction. When grouped by age, educational attainment, and family income, teachers consistently demonstrated high to very high competence across all areas of the Marungko Approach. While younger teachers slightly excelled in resource production and teaching strategies and older teachers in assessment and recognition, both groups maintained strong instructional competence, indicating consistent professional performance across demographics.

Teachers also demonstrated a great extent of utilization of the Marungko Approach across all instructional domains when grouped by age, educational attainment, and family income. Minor variations were observed, with older teachers excelling slightly in teaching strategies, assessment, and recognition, while younger teachers showed stronger utilization in resource production. Similarly, those with higher educational attainment and family income exhibited a very great extent of utilization across all areas. In comparison, those with lower educational attainment and income showed slightly lower ratings in teaching strategies and assessment, indicating balanced instructional practices across groups.

Across all demographic groups, teachers reported a high level of difficulty in utilizing the Marungko Approach, particularly with assessment design, time management, and balancing recognition practices. These findings indicate that the challenges faced during implementation are widespread and not significantly influenced by demographic factors. Consistent with this, no significant differences were found in teachers' competence levels when grouped and compared according to age, educational attainment, and family income, as reflected by non-significant p-values. This consistency suggests that demographic factors have minimal influence on competence in applying the Marungko Approach.

Likewise, no significant differences were observed in the extent of teachers' utilization of the Marungko Approach across the production of learning resources, teaching strategies, assessment, and recognition when grouped by the same demographic factors. The results consistently indicated similar utilization levels across all groups, with minor variations observed but none reaching statistical significance. Lastly, no significant differences were found in the level of difficulties encountered by teachers in implementing the Marungko Approach across all demographic groups. This uniformity suggests that the challenges reported are common across the teaching population, emphasizing the need for broad-based support and targeted interventions further to enhance the effective implementation of the Marungko Approach.

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