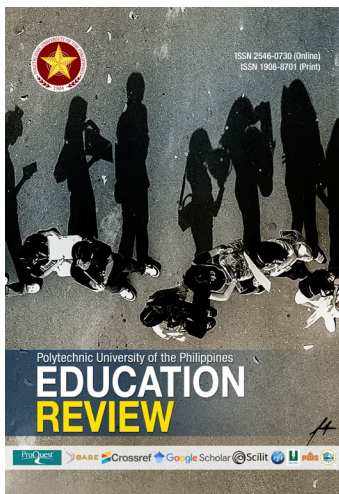




Contextualized Learning Assessment Tool: Its Acceptability and Its Effect on the Reading Competencies of Grade 6 Learners in an Inclusive School

Ken-Bee B. Dacusin 

Polytechnic University of the Philippines

Department of Education, Schools Division Office of Manila

kenbee.bangca@deped.gov.ph

DOI: <https://doi.org/>

[Submit to this journal](#) 

[Other related articles](#) 

[Announcements](#)

[Other PUP Journals](#) 

Other citation formats:

Article History:

Date Submitted: August 17, 2025

Date Revised: July 29, 2026

Date Accepted: August 19, 2026

How to Cite this paper:

Dacusin, K. B. (2026). Contextualized Learning Assessment Tool: Its Acceptability and Its Effect on the Reading Competencies of Grade 6 Learners in an Inclusive School. *Education Review*, 15(1), 83–104. <https://doi.org/>

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at edrev@pup.edu.ph.

Contextualized Learning Assessment Tool: Its Acceptability and Its Effect on the Reading Competencies of Grade 6 Learners in an Inclusive School

Ken-Bee B. Dacusin 

Polytechnic University of the Philippines

Department of Education, Schools Division Office of Manila

kenbee.bangca@deped.gov.ph

Abstract

This study aims to determine the acceptability of a contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool and its effect on enhancing the reading competencies of Grade 6 learners at Valeriano E. Fugoso Memorial Elementary School (VEFMES). The researcher employed quantitative research through the use of different tools, such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI), in determining the initial reading competencies of 142 Grade 6 pupils. Using the scores and background of the learners, the researcher developed a contextualized learning assessment tool. To determine the level of acceptability of this tool, the researcher collected descriptive assessments from 34 teacher-respondents using the Adopted LRMDs Educational Soundness General Evaluation Checklist. A reading assessment was also administered to the learners using the contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool. Based on the findings, the level of acceptability of the researcher-made contextualized assessment tool was Moderately Acceptable with a weighted mean of 4.17. This means that the tool is considered effective for assessing the reading competencies of grade 6 pupils, although there is still potential for enhancement. The level of reading competencies of the pupils, as measured using the Phil-IRI, indicated that the majority, with 96 or 67.61% of the pupils, were at the instructional level. Instead, it is noticeable that the majority of the pupils' reading competencies were independent, with 129 or 90.85% of the population. The difference between the means is -9.69, indicating that the contextualized assessment yielded higher learner scores on average. Lastly, it is recommended to use a contextualized learning assessment tool for reading assessments.

Keywords: contextualized learning assessment tool, inclusive school, Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Diagnostic Assessment Tool, reading competence, MAELT

INTRODUCTION

Reading competence is a foundational skill that enables learners to access knowledge, communicate effectively, and participate meaningfully in society. It involves not only decoding written text but also constructing meaning and applying understanding across contexts. In the context of inclusive education, reading becomes even more critical because learners come from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Therefore, assessment tools must reflect these differences rather than rely solely on standardized measures.

In the Philippines, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is widely used to assess reading proficiency at the beginning of the school year. While this tool provides valuable baseline data, it may not always capture the contextual realities of learners, particularly those enrolled in inclusive schools. For Grade 6 learners, the passages are largely expository and science-based, which may disadvantage students whose lived experiences differ significantly from the text content.

The Department of Education already acknowledges the pressing concerns of teachers with regard to reading literacy of the learners, which resulted in the issuance of DepEd Order No. 173, s. 2019. It was shared that the national assessments reveal that there are numerous early-grade learners who are struggling to meet the needed learning standards in language, literacy, and numeracy. The memorandum also mentioned that the low scores of the pupils in English, Math, and Science are a result of gaps in learners' reading comprehension. Many students cannot comprehend mathematical and science-related problems because these are written in the English language. This is similar to the results of an international large-scale assessment framework, which includes a contextual questionnaire. This means that the context is anchored in the real-world context of students.

Large-scale assessment results have consistently shown that Filipino learners struggle in reading proficiency. However, beyond reporting low scores, it is necessary to examine whether the format, language, and contextual relevance of assessment tools contribute to these outcomes. Learners who are unfamiliar with the structure or context of standardized assessments may underperform—not necessarily due to lack of skill, but due to lack of contextual alignment.

Furthermore, test development is considered one of the many roles of the teacher. It is one of the indicators in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. Taking into consideration the various factors affecting students' low reading competencies, the researcher recognized the importance of the appropriateness of the assessment tool to evaluate students. Recognizing this gap, DepEd has intensified its literacy initiatives, focusing on early childhood and integrating comprehension into curricula from kindergarten through Grade 3. Under DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016, there was a directive to contextualize both instructional and assessment materials to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of learners.

With this, the researcher was prompted to conduct a study that involves the development and evaluation of a contextualized, researcher-made learning assessment tool designed for Grade 6 pupils in Valeriano E. Fugoso Memorial Elementary School (VEFMES), Philippines. The researcher chose this public elementary school as the research

locale since this institution is an inclusive school for learners living at Manila Boystown Complex, catering to various types of students, including special learners. Looking at this corner, the researcher developed a test that includes real-life context significant to these learners. By embedding the evaluation instrument in the cultural and educational context of learners, it aims to move beyond rote testing into meaningful comprehension assessment.

To support the ideas and variables existing in this study, the researcher considered two theories that laid the foundation for the conduct of this research. Since this study aimed to assess the level of acceptability of the proposed contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool and determine the effect of using this learning assessment tool in improving the reading competencies of the grade 6 pupils, the researcher employed the (1) Transactional Reading Theory and (2) Situated Learning Theory.

Transactional Reading Theory was proposed by Louise Rosenblatt in 1970. As cited by Margaret (2017), this theory emphasizes that reading comprehension is not solely derived from the text itself but emerges from the transaction between the reader and the text. Meaning is constructed as readers bring their prior knowledge, experiences, emotions, and cultural background into the reading process. Thus, comprehension varies depending on the reader's lived experiences. Rosenblatt identified two primary reading stances: the efferent stance, which focuses on extracting factual information, and the aesthetic stance, which emphasizes personal and emotional engagement. Importantly, this theory underscores that readers make meaning through connections such as text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world.

In the context of this study, Transactional Reading Theory provides the theoretical justification for contextualized assessment. If comprehension is influenced by learners' background and experiences, then assessment tools must allow students to activate those experiences rather than restrict them to unfamiliar or culturally distant content. Therefore, the contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool was designed to reflect learners' lived realities, enabling a more authentic demonstration of reading competence.

Situated Learning Theory. Situated Learning Theory, developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), asserts that learning occurs through participation in meaningful social and cultural contexts. Knowledge is not abstract and detached; rather, it is embedded in authentic activities, social interaction, and community practices. Learners construct understanding when tasks mirror real-life situations and when knowledge is applied within a recognizable environment. This theory introduces the concept of **community of practice**, where individuals develop skills and understanding through shared experiences and common goals. Learning, therefore, becomes more meaningful when it is situated within familiar cultural and social contexts.

In this study, Situated Learning Theory supports the premise that assessment should not be isolated from learners' real-world experiences. By embedding reading tasks within familiar community contexts, the proposed assessment tool situates comprehension within meaningful scenarios. This reduces contextual barriers and allows learners—particularly those in inclusive settings—to demonstrate competence without being disadvantaged by unfamiliar content.

Since the primary aim of the study was to assess the level of acceptability of the contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool and to determine the effect of using this learning assessment in improving the reading competencies of the grade 6 pupils, the theory was applied to the idea that learning is promoted through context. The proposed contextualized learning assessment tool used community practices in presenting stems of questions. Teachers went beyond the construction of traditional assessment by focusing on an assessment that covers real-life situations and the application of knowledge in an authentic way. In the context of this study, since the researcher intended to gather information from an inclusive school, teachers may craft an assessment tool where their learners can relate to and share their personal experiences.

The researcher used these contextualized learning assessments to determine the reading competencies of the Grade 6 pupils. This means developing real, relevant, and relatable contextualized learning assessments so students can activate their prior knowledge and ideas when answering assessments.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on assessing the level of acceptability of a contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool. To achieve this, the researcher collected data from responses from the two groups of respondents. The first group, consisting of one-hundred forty-two (142) Grade 6 pupils, enrolled in the school year 2024-2025. These pupils were randomly selected from the total population of the learners from six sections. These learners took both reading assessments, Phil-IRI and a contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool.

The second group of respondents was considered the assessor/validator of the researcher-made tool. The researcher included thirty-four (34) English teachers in Valeriano E. Fugoso Memorial Elementary School (VEFMES), Philippines, during the School Year 2024–2025. The researcher also consulted one (1) Assessment Development Supervisor. This respondent holds a position where she leads the creation and implementation of assessments for various purposes.

Since the study focused on developing a contextualized learning assessment tool, the researcher limited the research locale to an inclusive public elementary school only. This

means that the school caters to learners with an identified significant profile. The school is located in Marikina; however, it is owned by the government of Manila. Manila Boystown Complex caters to learners who are indigent boys, girls, and elders. These profiles of the pupil-respondents served as the basis for the researcher in developing the test items that are contextualized based on their experiences, surroundings, and real-life context. The development of the test item also supports the inclusive advocacy of the school.

Despite research rigor, limitations exist. First, the study was conducted in a single inclusive public elementary school. While this setting was intentionally selected to align with the contextualized nature of the assessment tool, the findings may have limited generalizability to other schools with different demographic, linguistic, or socio-cultural profiles. Thus, external validity may be constrained. Second, although random sampling was applied to select pupil-participants, the sample was drawn from one academic year only. Variations in cohort characteristics across school years may produce different outcomes, which limits broader generalization. Third, the contextualized researcher-made assessment tool, despite undergoing expert validation and reliability testing, may still be subject to measurement error. Because the test items were developed based on the learners' specific context, performance gains may partly reflect contextual familiarity rather than purely improved reading ability. Fourth, the absence of a control group limits the ability to establish strong causal inference. Although a significant difference was found between assessment tools, external variables—such as concurrent classroom instruction or supplementary reading activities—may have influenced learner performance. Lastly, the study covered only one academic year; therefore, long-term effects of contextualized assessment on sustained reading development were not measured.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter describes all the methods that the researcher used in processing the research. The parts described research designs, description of the respondents and sampling method used, the tool for gathering data, the procedures followed for data collection, and the appropriate statistical tool employed in the data analysis.

This study aimed to assess the level of acceptability of the proposed contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool and determine the reading competencies of the grade 6 pupils in using this tool. To do this, a quantitative research approach was used to treat the data gathered. Sreekumar (2023) defined this approach as studying a sample of the population by gathering numerical responses from the individuals. The data gathered were treated with the appropriate statistical tool depending on the purpose of the study; it could be comparing, determining relationships, or simply describing the data. Since the research assessed the level of reading competencies of the learners, a quantitative research approach is appropriate. To be specific, different quantitative research designs

were used to treat the data gathered from each research question. For statements of problem numbers 1 and 2, a descriptive research design was utilized. Aggarwal and Ranganathan (2019) mentioned that this design aims to provide descriptions of the variables without any use of causal statistical tools. Since the researcher only aimed to describe the level of acceptability of the assessment tool as described by the respondents, as well as the reading competencies of the pupils based on the two assessment tools, a descriptive design was used.

On the other hand, the researcher employed a comparative research design for determining the significant difference between the levels of reading competencies as measured by the two assessment tools. Since the researcher determined whether the pupils' scores in reading assessments lead to significant changes based on the two different tools, this design is appropriate to be used.

Research Locale

The researcher collected responses from two groups of the population to reveal the necessary data for the study. The population of the study included all Grade 6 pupils and their reading teachers at Public Elementary School under the Division of Manila, Philippines during the 2024–2025 school year. The total number of Grade 6 pupils is approximately $N = 217$, while the teacher population comprises $T = 34$ reading instructors responsible for the targeted grade level and one (1) assessment supervisor.

In assessing the level of acceptability of the proposed contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool, the researcher sought assessments from teacher-respondents and an Assessment Development Supervisor. The teacher-respondents were English teachers from a public elementary school. Thirty-four (34) teachers participated in this study. These teachers are handling elementary pupils and teaching in an inclusive school. Furthermore, the researcher also consulted one (1) Assessment Development Supervisor. This respondent holds a position where she leads the creation and implementation of assessments for various purposes.

On the other hand, the researcher also gathered data from Grade 6 learners, who were the subject of the study. These pupils were enrolled in an Inclusive Public Elementary School in Marikina City located at the eastern border of Metro Manila, Philippines. This school provides inclusivity since it features the following initiatives: originally established as Manila Boys Home in 1947 to provide education and shelter for homeless, neglected, and impoverished boys in Manila. In July 1949, the facility was moved to a larger 23-hectare site in Parang, Marikina, now known as the Manila Boys Town Complex (MBTC), to accommodate the growing number of beneficiaries. Over time, the institution began to also cater to orphaned and abandoned girls, broadening its scope of support and inclusivity.

This foundational mission underscores a long-standing commitment to inclusivity and support for marginalized groups.

Manila Boystown is a residential care center for indigent boys, girls, and the elderly. It is located in Marikina but is being operated by the Manila local Government. It provides shelter, care, and even rehabilitation centers for abandoned and neglected children, children in conflict with the law, the elderly, homeless individuals, and mentally and physically challenged individuals. Since VEFMES is located inside the Boystown, children who are the beneficiaries of this facility are currently enrolled in school. The school established special education classes on July 6, 1993, to assist street children who struggled to keep up with regular academic tasks due to their challenging backgrounds.

Following Creswell & Creswell (2018) and using educational sampling guidelines (e.g., Krejcie & Morgan), the researcher determined: (1) For teachers: with a small total population ($T = 5$), the entire population was sampled, yielding $n = 34$ teacher-respondents. (2) For pupils: using Slovin's formula in a confidence level of 95% and a 5% margin of error for $N = 217$, the calculated sample size was approximately $n = 142$ pupils. Total Population Sampling for teacher-respondents: all Grade 6 reading teachers in the district participated, reflecting the intentional choice given the small, bounded population and one assessment supervisor. Simple Random Sampling for pupil-participants: the learners have an equal chance of being selected in the study.

Using total population sampling for teachers ensures that every instructor involved in the intervention provides valuable feedback, thereby strengthening the acceptability data. For pupils, stratified random sampling ensures diversity across proficiency levels, aligning with the study's goal of assessing tool effectiveness across a range of learners. Drawing from standardized formulas (e.g., Krejcie & Morgan) and adjusting for real-world constraints (attendance, ethics), the researcher achieved a sample balance between statistical validity and practical feasibility.

This study was conducted on two groups of respondents. First, for pupil-respondents, these children were the Grade 6 learners enrolled in an Inclusive Public Elementary School in Marikina City. The grade 6 pupils consist of regular pupils and the learners from the Manila Boystown Complex. Since the research locale, Inclusive Public Elementary School, is located inside the facility of Manila Boystown Complex, they mainstream set of learners by including the children. For school year 2024-2025, there were six (6) sections, namely Agwe, Apolaki, Bathalla, Habagat, Kabunyan, and Mapulon. Looking at the profile of the pupil-respondents, the majority of the pupils were at the exact age of a grade 6 pupil, from 11 to 12 years old. Some pupils were overage from 14 years old and above, with a great chance of these pupils coming from the Manila Boystown Complex. Most of the learners were female, with 77 or 54.23%, while 65 or 45.77% were males. Based on the survey,

115 grade 6 pupils speak Tagalog, while 15 learners speak Ilokano, and only 12 of them can speak Bisaya. The researcher also found out that 119 respondents were non-working, while there were 23 learners who were working students.

On the other hand, the researcher also included assessor respondents, particularly teachers and one Assessment Developer Supervisor, in assessing the level of acceptability. Teachers are handling English classes in a public elementary school. Based on the profile of the teachers, most of them are middle-aged adults, with an age range of 31-40. There were 8 or 22.86% of the total respondents who were males. While there were 27 or 77.14% were females. In terms of their positions, Teacher II comprised the largest group, with 13 respondents, representing 37.1% of the total. Secondly, those holding the position of Teacher I, comprising 11 respondents or 31.4% of the total number of respondents. Following this, Special Education Teacher I ranked 3rd with 7 respondents, accounting for 20.00% of the total population. Master Teacher I had 3 respondents, representing 8.57% of the total, placing them in rank 4. It is also noticeable that most teachers are continuing their professional development since they are currently enrolled in graduate studies.

The Assessment Developer Supervisor was sourced from a private company specializing in the creation, development, and quality assurance of various assessment tools. The researcher specifically sought an assessor with expertise in contextualization. The private company employs practices that emphasize the design of contextualized assessment tools. They create contextualized assessments and share these tools with private and public schools.

Instrumentation and Data Analysis

The researcher utilized two different research tools to collect data among the respondents, as follows: (1) **Adopted LRMDs Educational Soundness General Evaluation Checklist**. This survey questionnaire was used to determine the level of acceptability of a contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool. It is one of the evaluation tools of the DepEd-LRMDs for quality assurance of the teacher-made assessment. The researcher used this assessment tool as prescribed by the school LR Coordinator and the Division's supervisor. Moreover, based on the description of the assessment tool (section 10.1 Guidelines and Processes for LRMDs Assessment and Evaluation), soundness specification provides emphasis on the underlying emphasis that each person finds identity, meaning and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world and spiritual values such as compassion and peace, this tool is appropriate since the study's context is inclusivity, which require connectedness to learners' profile. The contextualization and culturally relevant principles of the checklist and study were aligned with the targeted goal of this research.

The level of acceptability of the proposed contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool will follow the indicators below:

Scale	Limits	Verbal Interpretation	
5	4.20 – 5.00	Highly Acceptable	(HA)
4	3.40 – 4.19	Moderately Acceptable	(MA)
3	2.60 – 3.40	Acceptable	(A)
2	1.80 – 2.59	Fairly Acceptable	(FA)
1	1.00 – 1.79	Not Acceptable	(NA)

(2) Test Questionnaire (Contextualized Researcher-Made Learning Assessment Tool). This instrument was used to test the reading competencies of Grade 6 pupils in English. In determining the reading profiles of the pupils, the researcher used the data from the Screening Test for Grade 6 for the yearly conducted reading assessments adopted through the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI). The reading profile of the students was categorized using the indicators below:

Test Scores	Verbal Interpretation
0	Non-reader
1-7	Frustration
8-13	Instructional
14 and above	Independent

Moreover, based on the identified least mastered reading skills of the learners, the researcher developed a contextualized learning assessment tool. The profile of the learners served as the basis of the research in writing the content of the examination.

Before being administered to the respondents and subjects of the study, the research instruments underwent processes of validation. The researcher first obtained the advisor's consent regarding the validity of the study's instruments and sought comments and feedback from three experts to assess the instrument of the study. The test questionnaire underwent the validation process from a research expert, an English school administrator, such as a coordinator/master teacher, and an Assessment Development Supervisor. Also, the researcher adopted the survey instrument validation rating scale in the study of Oducado (2020). This validation instrument was anchored on the evaluation tool set forth by Good and Scates (1972), content validity by Polit and Beck (2004, 2006), and the Cultural Equivalency Model for Translating and Adapting Instruments by Chavez and Canino (2005).

This study developed and assessed the level of acceptability of a contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool and determined its effect on enhancing the

reading competencies of Grade 6 learners in one elementary school in the Philippines. The data collection methods were done through test questionnaires for learners and survey questionnaires for teachers. The data gathering procedures consisted of the following actions: (1) The preparation of the instruments and approval of their use. The researcher ensured that these tools underwent validation from the experts. Afterwards, (2) Before distributions, the researcher secured relevant documents for data gathering. One is the consent form distributed to the parents or guardians of the pupils, allowing their child to participate in the administration of the test. Second is the letter sent to the division superintendent and principal of the inclusive school for data collection among learners and teachers. (3) The distribution of the instruments was performed after approval and permission from the concerned individuals. This was done through a face-to-face modality at the convenience of the participants. (4) The data were retrieved by the researcher and tallied using the template provided by the statistician. The raw file was sent to the expert for analyzing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study attempted to assess the level of acceptability of the proposed contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool and to determine the competencies of the grade 6 pupils in reading using the two different tools.

- 1. The level of acceptability of the assessment tool as rated by the teacher-respondents.

Table 1

Level of Acceptability of the Assessment Tool as rated by the Teacher-Respondents

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. The content of the learning resource is accurate and reflects the ways in which knowledge is conceptualized within the domain.	3.70	MA
2. Supports learners’ deepening of knowledge within the content domain.	4.16	MA
3. Presents controversial issues with balance and fairness and in accordance with the DepEd curriculum policies, where these apply.	4.23	HA
4. Uses language and symbols of the content domain and its ways of representation, and support learners in developing and using them.	4.20	HA

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
5. The following are used correctly and appropriately: - terms and expressions - symbols and notations - diagrammatic representation - graphical representation	4.17	MA
6. Assists the learner with identifying and differentiating between different points of view and perspectives presented	4.20	HA
7. Uses text data in ways that are real to life/authentic for learners.	4.73	HA
8. are not over simplified or trivialized.	4.44	HA
9. make sense to learners within their imaginary or real world	4.78	HA
10. are realistic within the relevant context.	4.67	HA
11. enhance learners' social capital – their knowledge of how the world works and how to make a way in it	4.64	HA
12. Reflects the learner profile for (an agreed group of priority grade/year levels/strands) agreed curriculum priority area	4.35	HA
13. Presents the same idea to – learners in multi/multiple directional modes	3.43	MA
14. *visual text (e.g. pictures, diagrams)	3.40	A
15. *verbal (written) text	4.80	HA
16. symbolic representations	4.30	HA
17. oral (spoken) text	3.42	MA
18. both static and dynamic images	3.40	A
19. Learning objectives are made explicit to learners	4.15	MA
20. The target learners are clearly identified (academic level/technical ability/demographics addressed)	4.14	MA
21. The learning resource structures information content in order to scaffold learners learning	4.15	MA
22. The learning resource provides an opportunity for learners to obtain feedback either within or outside the learning content	4.18	MA
23. Pre-requisite knowledge/skills are clear with connections to prior and future learning	3.42	MA

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
24. The learning resource stands alone and reflects an awareness of the varying educational environments in which learning sequences and resources may be used.	4.24	HA
Overall Weighted Mean	4.17	MA

Based on the results presented above, the assessment of the level of acceptability of the proposed contextualized researcher-made learning assessment. The assessment resulted in an overall weighted mean of 4.17, which is interpreted as Moderately Acceptable. This means that the tool was perceived as acceptable but with room for enhancement. Based on the data, it is notable that twelve (12) indicators received an assessment of Highly Acceptable (HA), representing half of the total number of indicators. A remarkable assessment was seen in the indicator number 7 Uses text data in ways that are real to life/ authentic for learners, with a weighted mean of 4.73, indicator number 9 make sense to learners within their imaginary or real world with a weighted mean of 4.78 and indicator number 10 are realistic within the relevant context received a weighted mean of 4.67. These indicators support the idea of the crafted contextualized learning assessment, highlighting the integration of the real-life context of the participants. There were ten (10) indicators who received a moderately acceptable rating, suggesting that although these indicators were acceptable for the respondents, these aspects of the assessment tool could still be improved. Only two indicators were considered acceptable by the respondents. The results imply that the assessment tool could be improved by including visual and symbolic representations among the items. This also indicates that the proposed contextualized learning assessment tool may need further development on its structural content.

2. The level of reading competencies of the learner-respondents as measured by the assessment tools.

Table 2

Level of Reading Competencies of the Learner-Respondents as Measured by the Assessment Tools of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Diagnostic Assessment Tool

Proficiency Level	Number of Learners	Percentage
Independent	8	5.63%
Instructional	96	67.61%
Frustration	38	26.76%
Total	142	100.00%

Scores Range	Proficiency Level
1 - 7	Frustration
8 - 14	Instructional
15 - 20	Independent

Average Score ()	9.57
Proficiency Level	Instructional

The level of reading competencies of the learner-respondents as measured by the assessment tools using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) diagnostic assessment tool. As shown in the table, out of 142 respondents, a very high proportion of 96 learners (67.61%) fall under the instructional category of proficiency level, which demonstrates that most learners are developing their reading skills but may still require support to reach full mastery. However, 38 learners (26.76%) fell under the frustration category, which suggests the need for targeted intervention as they demonstrate beginning-level reading competencies. Further, only 8 learners (5.63%) reached the independent level of proficiency, as it reflects a small portion of learners who exhibit strong and proficient reading abilities. The data imply that while most learners are on their way to achieving reading proficiency, there remains a considerable percentage at the emerging level who may benefit from remedial reading programs or differentiated instruction. The relatively low percentage of learners at the advanced level highlights the opportunity to strengthen reading instruction to further elevate learners’ comprehension and fluency. Similar results were found in the study of Tolibas (2025), assessing the reading skills of intermediate grade learners (Grades 4 to 6) in a public school in Tacloban using the Phil-IRI. The results indicated that learners were at an instructional (Progressing) level across all levels. The result calls for a need for reading intervention to improve the reading competencies of the pupils.

Table 3

Level of Reading Competencies of the Learner-Respondents as Measured by the Contextualized Researcher-made Learning Assessment Tool

Proficiency Level	Number of Learners	Percentage
Independent	129	90.85%
Instructional	13	9.15%
Frustration	0	0.00%
Total	142	100.00%

Scores Range	Proficiency Level
1 - 7	Frustration
8 - 14	Instructional
15 - 20	Independent

Average Score ()	17.89
Proficiency Level	Independent

The level of reading competencies of the 142 learner-respondents as measured by the contextualized researcher-made learning assessment tool. The majority of the respondents belong to the independent proficiency, which obtained 129 or 90.85, indicates that a high level of reading competency among the learners, with most demonstrating strong comprehension and mastery of the skills measured by the assessment tool. Further, only 13 or 9.15% of the learners fall under the instructional proficiency level, which suggests that the learners are still in the process of strengthening their reading skills, and notably that none of the learners were categorized as frustration proficiency level, which indicates that all students have surpassed the initial stages of the reading development.

On the other hand, the results imply that the majority of the learners possess advanced reading competencies when assessed using the contextual tool, and only a small portion may benefit from supplemental support. This also suggests the effectiveness and alignment of the contextualized tool with the learners’ actual reading proficiency levels. A contextualized learning assessment was developed in the study of Dinoy (2024) to improve the reading performance of Grade 5 pupils. Despite efforts by educational authorities, such as DepEd, to address the issue, problems persist, with a significant number of students failing tests and assessments, and some being labeled as frustrated readers. To address this, educators must innovate teaching strategies and materials, often resorting to using materials several grade levels below to accommodate struggling readers. The study results indicate that integrating contextualized learning materials significantly improves the reading performance of Grade 5 learners. This conclusion is based on the noticeable improvement in reading scores from pretest to posttest after implementing these materials. The strategy not only enhances reading skills but also boosts the confidence of struggling readers, helping them perform better in English. The findings suggest that using tailored reading materials is an effective method to support learners in achieving essential reading competencies.

Table 4

T-test between Pre-Reading Assessment and Contextualized Reading Assessment Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Difference bet. Means	t Value	Sig
Reading Competencies Tool					
Pre-Reading Assessment	11.49	1.57	-9.69	-29.45	0.000
Contextualized Reading Assessment	21.18	3.62			

The results of the independent sample t-test conducted to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the Pre-Reading Assessment and the Contextualized Reading Assessment in evaluating the reading competencies of the learner-respondents. The mean score in the Pre-Reading Assessment was 11.49 with a standard deviation of 1.57, while the mean score in the Contextualized Reading Assessment was significantly higher at 21.18 with a standard deviation of 3.62. The computed difference between the means is -9.69, indicating that the contextualized assessment yielded higher learner scores on average. The t-value of -29.45 and the significance level (p-value) of 0.000 indicate that the difference between the two means is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that the improvement in scores from the pre-reading to the contextualized assessment is unlikely due to chance. The dissertation of Lengacher (2015) assessed two instructional designs, namely contextualized instruction and non-contextualized instruction, comparing the level of reading skills of the students. He mentioned that a low level of literacy demands teachers to innovate instructional strategies to address the gaps of many students in low reading literacy. However, the normalized gain in achievement demonstrated significance for contextualized courses, indicating that students in these courses showed greater improvement in reading skills compared to non-contextualized courses. The study revealed a significant difference in persistence rates, with students in the contextualized course showing higher rates of successful course completion compared to non-contextualized courses. Based on the results, the study suggests that presenting a contextualized intervention to developmental reading students has value and may be beneficial for their reading achievement and course completion rates. The study also provides suggestions in the field of contextualized reading intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

Results of the study revealed that the level of acceptability of the contextualized assessment tools is found acceptable by the respondents. The respondents found it useful or appropriate, but some aspects need improvement. The results show that areas

requiring further enhancement included the multi-modal aspect, visual, and images in the test construct. The way respondents viewed the proposed learning assessment tool indicates that it is appropriate for assessing students who are relevant and contextual to them. Teachers may opt to utilize the developed material or create their own based on the profile of their learners. It can also be concluded that pupils are instructional readers when assessed using a PHIL-IRI assessment tool. This means that using this type of assessment material, pupils have basic reading skills that can be improved by considering factors that might affect pupils' scores. The assessment tool, although it was used to diagnose the current reading level of pupils, provided an idea of the necessary support and changes to be tailored by the teachers to help the pupils. Further, the students are classified as independent readers through contextualized assessment tools. This means that readers have demonstrated a high level of reading competency in understanding a text on their own. The assessment tool was designed to include texts that are relevant to pupils' real-life context, culture, experiences, languages, or environment. This helped the pupils answer the test that contained meaningful, relatable, and contextualized context. On the other hand, there is a significant difference between the levels of reading competencies as measured by the two assessment tools. The use of a contextualized assessment tool is higher than the PHIL-IRI assessment. This means that pupils have high reading competencies using a contextualized assessment. It is not because of the chance or probability but due to the design of the contextualized assessment. Since students can relate to the text or content of the assessment tool, they are more comfortable and able to answer the questions from the assessment. The pupils can understand the texts by connecting their experiences, culture, or environment when answering. This supports the idea that contextualized assessment can enhance the reading competencies of the pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher-made contextualized reading assessment tool should be encouraged for utilization for any reading assessments, activities such as formative reading assessments or summative reading. Teachers may opt to utilize the developed material or create their own based on the profile of their learners. Likewise, teachers are encouraged to create more contextualized assessments or materials since the results indicate a high level of acceptability in terms of their relatability. This will greatly help in incorporating real-world and students' experiences. Teachers are also recommended to design reading materials and assessments that reflect real-life scenarios and are culturally relevant to the students, since contextualized assessments highlight the integration of students' real-world context. Use stories, articles, and activities that resonate with the students' environment and experiences to make learning engaging. School heads may also plan for professional development that equips teachers with strategies for identifying reading gaps and implementing contextualized assessment or reading interventions for students. Lastly,

future researchers should broaden the scope of the study. They should include other tests to determine the validity of the developed tool for a more reliable result and data.

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

1. **Funding.** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. The study was conducted without external financial support.
2. **Disclosure Statement.** The author declares that there are no financial or non-financial competing interests that could have influenced the results or interpretation of this research.
3. **Ethical Approval.** This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles governing educational research and complied with the applicable policies of the Department of Education (DepEd), including DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017, and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Throughout the conduct of the study, the researcher implemented rigorous ethical safeguards to uphold participant rights, informed consent, confidentiality, data privacy, and culturally respectful research practices.

Prior to data collection, ethics clearance was obtained from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines through the Research Management Office – University Research Ethics Center (PUP RMO-UREC). Approval to conduct the study was likewise secured from the school head, and a Permit to Conduct Research was obtained from the Schools Division Office before the implementation of the research. All participants received a clear explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and voluntary nature. Written informed consent was obtained from participating teachers and from the parents or legal guardians of the Grade 6 learners, while assent was secured from the learner participants. Participants were informed that they could decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or adverse consequences. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' privacy, all collected data were anonymized using coded identifiers, and only aggregated results are presented in this manuscript. Research records, including assessment results, questionnaires, and interview responses, were stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher and academic advisers, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and DepEd data protection policies. The researcher adhered to the principles of academic integrity by ensuring proper citation of all sources and submitting an original manuscript in accordance with institutional anti-plagiarism policies. These ethical safeguards were integrated throughout the planning, implementation, analysis,

and reporting of the study to uphold the rights, dignity, safety, and welfare of all participants.

4. Declaration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Scientific Writing.

The author declares that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the writing, editing, analysis, interpretation, or preparation of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including the conception, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, and manuscript preparation, were completed solely by the author. To ensure academic integrity and originality, the manuscript underwent originality screening through the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) Intellectual Property Management Office (IPMO) using the University's approved plagiarism detection system. The manuscript obtained a 14% similarity index, which is within the University's acceptable threshold, and a Certificate of Originality was issued prior to submission.

5. Acknowledgment. The author sincerely thanks the Department of Education, the Schools Division Office, the participating school, research adviser, panel members, teachers, learners, and their parents or guardians for their invaluable support and cooperation. The author also gratefully acknowledges her parents, sibling, and husband for their unwavering encouragement and support throughout the completion of this study.

REFERENCES

- Abatayo, J., & Al Abri, M. (2020). *Guidelines for developing a reading test in EFL context*. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3543269>
- Abdelrhman, S. A. A. (2019). *Exploring secondary schools teachers' views on students' English reading competence* [Doctoral dissertation, Sudan University of Science & Technology].
- Aggarwal, R., & Ranganathan, P. (2019). Study designs: Part 2—Descriptive studies. *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, 10(1), 34–36. https://doi.org/10.4103/picr.PICR_154_18
- Alexander, A., Wyke, W., Lewis, T., & Taylor-Ryan, M. (2019). Providing reading competence feedback to the national school system of Trinidad and Tobago. *The Reading Teacher*, 73(3), 347–356. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1843>
- Arshad, T., & Noreen, G. (2020). Development of reading comprehension assessment tool: Applying the Rasch model. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 4(2), 772–792. [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020\(4-II\)63](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020(4-II)63)

- Badrasawi, K. J. I., Abu Kassim, N. L., & Mat Daud, N. (2017). The effects of test characteristics on the hierarchical order of reading skills. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 14(1), 63–82. <https://doi.org/10.32890/mjli2017.14.1.3>
- Bhandari, P. (2023, June 22). *Questionnaire design: Methods, question types & examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/questionnaire/>
- Boltron, M. T., & Ramos, A. L. (2021). Improving beginning reading literacy through Marungko approach. *ASEAN Journal of Basic and Higher Education*, 5(1), 1–12. <https://paressu.org/online/index.php/aseanjbh/article/view/285>
- Buchholz, K. (2022, September 12). *This is how much the global literacy rate grew over 200 years*. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/09/reading-writing-global-literacy-rate-changed/>
- Chotimah, S., Bernard, M., & Wulandari, S. M. (2018). Contextual approach using VBA learning media to improve students' mathematical displacement and disposition ability. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 948(1), 012025. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/948/1/012025>
- Conoza, A. P. (2022, September 5). Addressing the Philippines' learning crisis. *BusinessWorld*. <https://www.bworldonline.com/special-features/2022/09/05/474223/addressing-the-philippines-learning-crisis/>
- Culaste-Quimbo, I. C. (2021). Contextualized English reading proficiency toolkit (CERPT): Enhance learners' English reading proficiency. In *MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses)*. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.100041>
- Dela Peña, K. (2023, January 27). Philippines rank 2nd to worst in Grade 5 students' reading, math skills in South-east Asia. *Asia News Network*. <https://asianews.network/philippines-rank-2nd-to-worst-in-grade-5-students-reading-math-skills-in-south-east-asia/>
- Elgort, I., Brysbaert, M., Stevens, M., & Van Assche, E. (2018). Contextual word learning during reading in a second language: An eye-movement study. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 40(2), 341–366. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263117000109>
- Felipe, C. S. (2022, November 27). Government urged to boost learners' reading proficiency. *The Philippine Star*. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/11/27/2226666/government-urged-boost-learners-reading-proficiency>

- Frankel, K. K., Becker, B. L. C., Rowe, M. W., & Pearson, P. D. (2016). From “What is reading?” to what is literacy? *The Journal of Education*, 196(3), 7–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002205741619600303>
- Gabrielsen, E., & Sabatini, J. P. (2020). A closer look at low-performing adult readers in the Scandinavian countries. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 64(2), 242–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2018.1539033>
- Halmasy, C. L. (2019). *Effect of traditional versus contextualized instruction on student growth in a post-secondary developmental reading course* (Publication No. 27541323) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/effect-traditional-versus-contextualized/docview/2309522405/se-2>
- Härtig, H., Nordine, J. C., & Neumann, K. (2020). Contextualization in the assessment of students’ learning about science. In I. Sánchez Tapia (Ed.), *International perspectives on the contextualization of science education* (pp. 113–144). Springer.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27982-0_6
- Huda, K. (2023). Penggunaan contextual teaching and learning pada mata kuliah reading bagi peserta didik pendidikan bahasa Inggris. *JALIE: Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education*, 7(1), 113–132. <https://ejournal.unkafa.ac.id/index.php/jalie-unkafa/article/view/648>
- Jahan, K., Ashraf, S., & Mukhtar, S. (2020). The process of developing a reading test: A review article. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 24(7), 10776–10779.
<https://psychosocial.com/index.php/ijpr/article/view/10454>
- Keyser, A. (2021, February 19). *Why is reading important?* WorksheetCloud.
<https://www.worksheetcloud.com/blog/why-is-reading-important/>
- Lengacher, L. (2015). *The impact of contextualized instruction in reading intervention with adult learners in higher education* (Publication No. 3712595) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/impact-contextualized-instruction-reading/docview/1707929786/se-2>
- Magnusson, C. G. (2022). Reading literacy practices in Norwegian lower-secondary classrooms: Examining the patterns of teacher questions. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 66(2), 321–335.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2020.1869078>

- Mangubat, A. V. (2023). Development of diagnostic test in reading for Grade 7. *JPAIR Multidisciplinary Research*, 53(1), 236–252. <https://doi.org/10.7719/jpair.v53i1.857>
- Marohn, P. (n.d.). *Literacy doesn't just mean reading*. Smithsonian Science Education Center. <https://ssec.si.edu/stemvisions-blog/literacy-doesnt-just-mean-reading>
- Osika, A., MacMahon, S., Lodge, J. M., & Carroll, A. (2022, March 4). Contextual learning: Linking learning to the real world. *THE Campus*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/contextual-learning-linking-learning-real-world>
- Özdemir, E. Ç., & Akyol, H. (2019). The development of a reading comprehension test. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 7(2), 563–570. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2019.070229>
- Panneton, K. (2019, July 22). *Importance of literacy and reading*. Texas A&M International University. <https://online.tamui.edu/programs/education/ms-curriculum-instruction/reading-specialization/importance-of-literacy-and-reading/>
- Rasinski, T. V. (2017). Readers who struggle: Why many struggle and a modest proposal for improving their reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(5), 519–524. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1578>
- Reyes, J. D., Insorio, A. O., Ingreso, M. L. V., Hilario, F. F., & Gutierrez, C. R. (2019). Conception and application of contextualization in mathematics education. *International Journal of Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 6(1), 1–18. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ijesim/article/454218>
- Schaffner, E., & Schiefele, U. (2016). The contributions of intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation to the development of reading competence over summer vacation. *Reading Psychology*, 37(6), 917–941. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2015.1133465>
- Shaw, J. M., Lyon, E. G., Stoddart, T., Mosqueda, E., & Menon, P. (2014). Improving science and literacy learning for English language learners: Evidence from a pre-service teacher preparation intervention. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 25(5), 621–643. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10972-013-9376-6>
- Sirisilla, S. (2023). *Experimental research design—6 mistakes you should never make!* Enago Academy. <https://www.enago.com/academy/experimental-research-design/>
- Sreekumar, D. (2023). *What is quantitative research? Definition, methods, types, and examples*. Researcher.Life. <https://researcher.life/blog/article/what-is-quantitative-research-types-and-examples/>

- Surbhi, S. (2017). *Difference between census and sampling*. Key Differences. <https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-census-and-sampling.html>
- Wolf, G. M. (2023). Beginning reading instruction: Application of theory and research to practice. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 15(2), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v15i2.20909>
- Yusuf, Q., Yusuf, Y. Q., Yusuf, B., & Nadya, A. (2017). Skimming and scanning techniques to assist EFL students in understanding English reading texts. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education*, 1(1), 43–57. <https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v1i1.4338>
- Zimmerer, M., Skidmore, S. T., Chuppa-Cornell, K., Sindel-Arrington, T., & Beilman, J. (2018). Contextualizing developmental reading through information literacy. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 41(3), 2–8. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1210443.pdf>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KEN-BEE B. DACUSIN is currently a Teacher III at Valeriano E. Fugoso Memorial Elementary School, under the Schools Division Office of Manila. She has been serving in the public education sector for over 8 years. She earned her Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English from the All Nations College and is a graduate of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching (MAELT) at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. Her research interests include reading literacy, inclusive education, and the development of contextualized learning and assessment tools for diverse learners.