

Teachers' Utilization of and Challenges on Marungko Approach toward Reading Tracker Development

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Abstract. This study examined the level of teachers' utilization of the Marungko Approach in teaching beginning reading and the challenges they encountered, serving as the basis for the development of an instructional material. A quantitative research design was employed, involving 15 Grade 1 teachers from ten public elementary schools in Dupax del Norte I District, Nueva Vizcaya, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using an adopted and validated questionnaire covering four components: production of learning resources, teaching strategy, assessment, and recognition. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used in analyzing the data. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a high level of utilization of the Marungko Approach, with an overall mean of 3.87. Among the components, production of learning resources obtained the highest mean, followed by recognition, assessment, and teaching strategy, all interpreted as highly utilized. Despite this, teachers encountered several challenges, including time constraints in preparing materials, limited ICT resources, insufficient budget, pupils' short attention span, lack of parental support, inconsistent attendance, absence of standardized assessment tools, and limited recognition and support systems. Based on these findings, a Marungko Reading Tracker was developed as a supplementary instructional material to improve monitoring, assessment, and intervention in beginning reading. The study concludes that while teachers effectively implement the Marungko Approach, enhanced institutional support, resource provision, and strengthened home-school collaboration are necessary to address existing challenges and improve reading outcomes among learners.

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' intellectual, social, and emotional development, enabling them to engage meaningfully with society and adapt to an increasingly complex world. Beyond the acquisition of basic knowledge, it fosters critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills essential for lifelong learning. In the Philippine context, strengthening foundational literacy remains a critical concern, particularly in early grade levels where reading proficiency serves as the cornerstone of academic success. However, despite sustained efforts by the Department of Education (DepEd), many learners continue to struggle with basic reading skills, which significantly affects their overall academic performance and long-term educational outcomes (Bautista, 2019; Khalfoui, 2018).

Early literacy development is especially vital, as difficulties in foundational reading skills—such as phonemic awareness, decoding, and word recognition—can lead to persistent learning gaps. Studies have shown that systematic phonics instruction significantly improves early reading abilities by strengthening learners' ability to decode and recognize words (Ehri, 2020; Del Cruz & Reyes, 2026). In response to this need, the Marungko Approach has been widely adopted in Philippine public schools as a structured, phonics-based method that introduces letter sounds in a sequence based on frequency and ease of blending rather than alphabetical order (De Belen, 2017). This approach enables beginning readers to gradually develop reading proficiency through systematic sound-symbol association and syllable blending.

Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in improving early literacy outcomes. Learners exposed to Marungko-based instruction demonstrate significant gains in phonemic awareness, decoding skills, and oral

reading fluency (Boltron & Ramos, 2021; Nabua et al., 2025; Santos & De Vera, 2020). Furthermore, contextualized and localized instructional materials aligned with the approach have been found to enhance learner engagement and comprehension, particularly when they reflect learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Repaso & Macalisang, 2024; Perez & Villocino, 2025). These findings highlight the importance of not only the instructional approach itself but also the quality and relevance of the materials used in its implementation.

Despite its demonstrated benefits, the effective utilization of the Marungko Approach remains challenged by several factors. Teachers often encounter difficulties related to limited access to instructional resources, insufficient training, and the need to adapt materials to diverse learner needs, especially in resource-constrained environments (Austero et al., 2025; Balsa et al., 2022; Gonzales & Cruz, 2022). Additionally, disparities in socioeconomic conditions, large class sizes, and varying levels of parental support further influence the consistency and effectiveness of its implementation (Aisa, 2024; Laurente, 2024). These challenges suggest that while the approach is pedagogically sound, its success largely depends on how teachers utilize it and the support systems available to them.

The importance of teacher competence and instructional practices is further emphasized in educational research, which indicates that teachers' ability to effectively implement reading strategies significantly influences learners' reading achievement (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018; Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2022). In this regard, teachers' utilization of the Marungko Approach encompasses not only teaching strategies but also the production of learning resources, assessment practices, and recognition of learner progress (Austero et al., 2025). Effective implementation requires a combination of pedagogical knowledge, resourcefulness, and the ability to provide appropriate scaffolding to support learners' reading development.

Anchored on Schema Theory, Theory on Challenges and Support, and Scaffolding Theory, this study recognizes that teachers' prior knowledge, contextual constraints, and instructional support systems collectively shape the effectiveness of reading instruction. Schema Theory explains how teachers' existing knowledge structures influence their instructional decisions, while the Theory on Challenges and Support highlights the interplay between obstacles and available resources in shaping teaching practices. Meanwhile, Scaffolding Theory underscores the importance of guided instruction in helping learners progress from basic decoding to independent reading proficiency.

Despite the growing body of research on the Marungko Approach, significant gaps remain in understanding how teachers actually utilize the approach in classroom settings and the specific challenges they encounter in developing instructional materials. Most existing studies focus primarily on learner outcomes rather than examining the fidelity of implementation and the practical realities faced by teachers (Perez & Villocino, 2025; Repaso & Macalisang, 2024). Moreover, limited attention has been given to how teachers design or adapt localized materials to support phonics-based instruction, particularly in rural and resource-limited contexts.

In response to these gaps, the present study investigates teachers' utilization of the Marungko Approach and the challenges they encounter in its implementation in Dupax del Norte I District, Nueva Vizcaya, during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it examines the extent of utilization in terms of production of learning resources, teaching strategies, assessment, and recognition, as well as the challenges associated with these domains. Based on the findings, the study aims to develop a Marungko Reading Tracker as an instructional tool to support teachers in monitoring learners' reading progress.

This study contributes to the broader goals of improving early literacy and aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes inclusive and equitable access to quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities. It also supports the research agenda of the Department of Education by providing evidence-based insights into instructional practices and material development for early grade reading. Ultimately, the findings are expected to inform teachers, school leaders, and policymakers in enhancing the effectiveness of reading instruction and addressing persistent literacy challenges in Philippine basic education.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to systematically examine and measure teachers' utilization of and challenges in implementing the Marungko Approach in teaching beginning reading. Quantitative research emphasizes the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, relationships, and trends using objective and standardized procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the approach enabled the researcher to quantify teachers' practices and challenges through structured survey instruments, thereby minimizing bias and ensuring consistency in data collection and analysis. The design focused on generating measurable and generalizable findings by utilizing closed-ended questionnaires and applying appropriate statistical techniques.

The study was conducted in Dupax del Norte I District, Nueva Vizcaya, which comprises ten public elementary schools actively supporting reading-related programs of the Department of Education. These include Bitnong Elementary School, Bulala Elementary School, Dupax del Norte Central School, Inaban Elementary School, Ineangan Elementary School, Lamo Elementary School, Mabasa Elementary School, Munguia Elementary School, Naruron Elementary School, and Parai Elementary School. The district is known for its strong emphasis on literacy development, as evidenced by its engagement in various reading initiatives such as read-a-thon activities and storytelling competitions. The selected schools represent diverse educational contexts, with varying historical backgrounds, resource availability, and community involvement, thereby providing a comprehensive setting for examining the implementation of the Marungko Approach.

The respondents of the study consisted of fifteen (15) Grade 1 public school teachers currently teaching during the School Year 2025–2026 in the identified schools within the district. These teachers were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that involves choosing participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). In this case, only teachers with actual experience in utilizing the Marungko Approach in teaching beginning reading were included, ensuring that the data gathered were rich, relevant, and aligned with the purpose of the study. The distribution of respondents showed representation from all ten schools, with the highest number coming from Dupax del Norte Central School and Ineangan Elementary School, each contributing three respondents (20.00%), followed by Inaban Elementary School with two respondents (13.33%), while the remaining schools contributed one respondent each (6.67%), resulting in a total of 100% participation.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure teachers' utilization of the Marungko Approach and the challenges they encountered in its implementation. The instrument was adopted from Austero et al. (2025) and consisted of 20 items covering four key domains: production of learning resources, teaching strategy, assessment, and recognition. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Always), with corresponding descriptive interpretations from very low to very high utilization. The questionnaire underwent content validation by research experts and the study adviser to ensure its relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives. Necessary revisions were made based on their recommendations, and the finalized instrument achieved a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .795, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured permission from the district supervisor and school authorities. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were asked to provide informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation. The questionnaires were then administered at a convenient time for the respondents, allowing them sufficient time to complete their responses. After retrieval, all data were carefully tallied, organized, and prepared for analysis. The responses were scored according to the established scale, enabling the determination of the level of teachers' utilization and the identification of challenges encountered.

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Frequency and percentage were used to describe the profile of respondents and to identify the common challenges encountered by teachers. The mean was utilized to determine the level of utilization of the Marungko Approach across the four domains. These statistical measures provided a clear and concise interpretation of the data, allowing for objective conclusions to be drawn based on the numerical results.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of responses was maintained by ensuring that no personal identifiers were disclosed. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researcher upheld principles of respect, integrity, and data privacy, ensuring that all collected information was used solely for research purposes and handled with utmost care.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented according to the research problems, focusing on the level of teachers' utilization of the Marungko Approach, the challenges encountered in its implementation, and the instructional material developed based on the results.

The analysis revealed that teachers in Dupax del Norte I District demonstrated a high level of utilization of the Marungko Approach across all four components, with an overall mean of 3.87 (SD = 0.22). Among these, the production of learning resources obtained the highest mean (M = 3.95, SD = 0.12), indicating that teachers are highly engaged in creating instructional materials such as syllabary charts, flashcards, and contextualized reading tools aligned with the phono-syllabic structure of the approach. This suggests that teachers compensate for the lack of ready-made materials by producing their own, a practice that supports differentiated instruction and addresses learner variability in rural classrooms. This finding supports earlier studies (e.g., Tamba & Garces, 2024; Balgua et al., 2022), which found that teacher-developed Marungko materials significantly improve early reading outcomes.

In terms of teaching strategy, the mean score ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.25$) also indicates high utilization, although it is the lowest among the four domains. This implies that while teachers consistently apply phonics-based and syllable-blending techniques, there is still room for enhancement, particularly in integrating varied and technology-supported strategies. Existing literature confirms that structured phonics instruction, such as the Marungko Approach, significantly improves learners' phonemic awareness, decoding skills, and reading fluency (Bernabe, 2024; Repaso & Macalisang, 2024). However, the slightly lower mean may reflect constraints such as limited ICT integration and classroom management challenges.

The assessment component yielded a high mean ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.26$), indicating that teachers regularly employ both formal and informal methods to monitor learners' reading progress. This aligns with the nature of the Marungko Approach, which emphasizes continuous assessment of phonemic awareness, decoding, and comprehension. Studies have shown that consistent use of assessment tools enhances instructional decision-making and improves reading outcomes (Pimentel, 2024; Bernabe, 2024). However, despite high utilization, challenges in assessment practices were still reported, suggesting gaps between practice and available support systems.

Similarly, recognition was also highly utilized ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.22$), indicating that teachers actively reinforce learners' achievements through praise, feedback, and other motivational strategies. This reflects a learner-centered approach that promotes engagement and confidence among beginning readers. The findings are consistent with research emphasizing the importance of positive reinforcement in early literacy development (Dalmao, 2023; Apayao, 2024).

Despite the high level of utilization, teachers encountered several significant challenges across all domains. In terms of production of learning resources, the most prominent issue was time constraints in preparing materials (53.33%), followed by limited ICT resources (40%) and insufficient budget (33.33%). These findings highlight systemic issues commonly experienced in public schools, where teachers must balance heavy workloads with instructional preparation. Similar constraints have been documented in previous studies, emphasizing the need for institutional support and resource provision (Dagandara, 2025; Bernabe, 2024).

For teaching strategy, the most pressing challenges were pupils' short attention span (66.67%) and lack of parental support (66.67%), followed by the need for intensive intervention for struggling readers (53.33%). These findings suggest that while the Marungko Approach is effective, its implementation is influenced by learner-related and home-related factors. The lack of parental involvement, in particular, weakens reinforcement of reading skills outside the classroom, which is consistent with studies highlighting the critical role of home-school partnerships in literacy development.

In terms of assessment, inconsistent attendance (53.33%) emerged as the primary challenge, affecting the reliability of reading progress data. Other concerns included lack of standardized tools (26.67%) and difficulties in documentation (20%). These issues point to the need for structured and consistent monitoring systems tailored to the Marungko framework. Without reliable attendance and standardized measures, tracking learner progress becomes fragmented and less effective.

Regarding recognition, the most notable issue was lack of appreciation from parents (53.33%), followed by lack of incentives or rewards (33.33%). These findings indicate that challenges in this domain are largely motivational and relational rather than technical. Teachers may feel undervalued despite their efforts, which can affect their commitment to sustaining innovative instructional practices. Research supports that teacher motivation is strongly influenced by recognition, support systems, and professional acknowledgment.

Based on these findings, the study developed a Marungko Reading Tracker as an instructional material to address identified gaps. This tool is designed to systematically monitor learners' progress in letter-sound recognition, blending, and word reading based on the Marungko sequence. It serves as a practical solution to challenges in assessment and documentation by providing a structured, easy-to-use monitoring system. Furthermore, it supports data-driven instruction, facilitates targeted interventions, and enhances communication with parents and school administrators.

Overall, the results indicate that while teachers demonstrate strong commitment and competence in utilizing the Marungko Approach, effective implementation is hindered by resource limitations, learner variability, and insufficient support systems. The development of the Marungko Reading Tracker responds directly to these issues by strengthening assessment practices and improving instructional efficiency, thereby contributing to enhanced early literacy outcomes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the study lead to several key conclusions. First, teachers in Dupax del Norte I District exhibit a consistently high level of utilization of the Marungko Approach in teaching beginning reading, as reflected in the overall mean of 3.87. Among its components, production of learning resources emerged as the most emphasized practice, followed by recognition, assessment, and teaching strategy, all of which were rated as highly utilized. This indicates that teachers are actively and systematically implementing the approach in their instructional practices.

Second, despite the high level of utilization, teachers encounter significant challenges that affect effective implementation. These challenges are primarily related to limited time, insufficient instructional resources, and inadequate ICT support in producing materials. Learner-related concerns such as short attention span, lack of parental support, and the need for intensive intervention among struggling readers further complicate teaching strategies. Additionally, inconsistent learner attendance and the absence of standardized assessment tools hinder accurate monitoring of progress. Concerns on recognition, including lack of incentives, limited collaboration, and minimal parental and administrative support, also affect teacher motivation and sustainability of implementation. These findings highlight the need for stronger institutional and home-school support systems.

Finally, the development of the Marungko Reading Tracker provides a practical and data-driven instructional material that can enhance the implementation of the Marungko Approach. By systematically monitoring learners' progress in letter-sound recognition, blending, and word reading, the tool supports improved instructional planning, targeted intervention, and more efficient assessment practices. Its use can contribute to more structured and responsive reading instruction, ultimately improving learners' reading outcomes.

The results of the study have several important implications for educational practice, policy, and future research. For classroom practice, teachers may benefit from strengthening differentiated instruction and integrating engaging and technology-supported strategies to address learners' diverse needs and sustain attention. The use of tools such as the Marungko Reading Tracker can enhance assessment practices and provide more organized and evidence-based intervention planning.

For school administration and policy, there is a clear need to provide stronger institutional support through adequate instructional materials, improved access to ICT resources, and continuous professional development programs focused on the Marungko Approach. The establishment of standardized assessment tools and structured monitoring systems can further ensure consistency and effectiveness in implementation. Additionally, fostering collaborative environments through Learning Action Cells (LAC) and recognizing teachers' efforts may improve motivation and sustainability.

The findings also highlight the importance of strengthening home-school partnerships. Increasing parental involvement through orientations and reading support programs can reinforce learners' reading development beyond the classroom.

Finally, for future research, further studies may explore the effectiveness of the Marungko Reading Tracker and similar interventions using qualitative or mixed-method approaches, as well as examine additional variables that influence the successful implementation of reading programs in diverse educational contexts.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.