IGNATIAN
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH
www.icceph.com
ISSN 2984-9942

ENHANCING FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS THROUGH THE MARUNGKO APPROACH: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY AMONG KEY STAGE 1 LEARNERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Alfie E. Aton [1], Imelda P. Bola [2]

[1] *St. Christine Elementary School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines*
[2] *Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc., Tandag City, Surigao del Sur, Philippines*

ABSTRACT

Foundational reading difficulties remain a significant challenge among early-grade learners in the Philippines, emphasizing the need for structured and responsive literacy interventions. This study examined the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing the reading skills of Key Stage 1 learners at R. Moreno Integrated School, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, during the Academic Year 2025-2026. A mixed-methods design employing a one-group pretest–posttest approach was used, involving 76 low-emerging readers from Grades 1–3 and eight teachers. Data were collected through the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment, teacher-validated checklists, interviews, and classroom observations. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, and Pearson correlation, while qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis. Findings revealed a substantial increase in overall reading performance from a pretest mean of 1.17 to a posttest mean of 4.89, with statistically significant differences across all five reading domains ($p < .001$). The Marungko Approach received an overall effectiveness rating of 4.90, interpreted as Highly Effective. Qualitative findings indicated improved reading confidence, motivation, participation, and engagement. The study concluded that the Marungko Approach was associated with substantial improvements in foundational reading skills, supporting its potential application as a structured literacy intervention for struggling early-grade readers.

Keywords: *Marungko Approach, foundational reading skills, phonemic awareness, reading intervention, low-emerging readers, Key Stage 1 learners*

INTRODUCTION

Foundational reading skills remain a critical concern in primary education, particularly among learners who experience difficulties recognizing letters, associating sounds with symbols, decoding words, reading fluently, and comprehending written texts. These competencies provide the foundation for literacy development and successful participation in subsequent learning activities. However, many children continue to experience reading difficulties during the early years of schooling, limiting their ability to acquire essential knowledge and develop independent learning skills. The World Bank (2024) highlighted the severity of learning poverty in the Philippines, emphasizing the need to strengthen foundational reading proficiency among school-aged children. These conditions underscore the importance of implementing systematic, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-informed reading interventions that address the specific needs of struggling early-grade learners.

One instructional strategy that has gained recognition in Philippine primary education is the Marungko Approach, a phonics-based method that introduces letter sounds systematically rather than following the conventional alphabetical sequence. The approach emphasizes sound recognition, letter–sound association, syllable formation, word construction, sentence reading, and comprehension reinforcement. Through sequential and repetitive learning activities, beginning readers are guided toward recognizing sound patterns, blending phonemes, decoding unfamiliar words, and developing reading confidence. Repaso and Macalisang (2024) investigated contextualized Marungko-based supplementary reading materials among Grade 1 learners and reported significant improvements in early reading competencies, particularly letter-sound identification, word recognition, decoding, and oral reading fluency. Their findings demonstrated the potential of structured and contextualized phonics instruction to address foundational literacy difficulties.

The effectiveness of the Marungko Approach has also been examined among learners experiencing reading difficulties in the Philippine educational context. Casupanan and Fastidio (2024) evaluated an enhanced Marungko Approach among Grade 2 pupils and investigated its contribution to beginning reading literacy. Their study provides relevant evidence for considering adaptations of Marungko instruction in early-grade classrooms. Similarly, recent research involving primary learners reported substantial improvements in phonemic awareness, word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension following the implementation of the approach (Perez & Villocino, 2025). These findings suggest that explicit and sequential reading instruction may support the development of interconnected literacy competencies, particularly among learners requiring additional instructional assistance.

Beyond the selection of an instructional approach, successful reading intervention requires consideration of classroom implementation, teacher competence, and learner engagement. Teachers play an important role in introducing sounds, modeling pronunciation, guiding decoding activities, monitoring individual progress, and providing reinforcement appropriate to learners' developmental needs. In a study involving 140

Grades 1–3 teachers, Pereira and Cerbo (2026) examined teachers' awareness and competencies in utilizing the Marungko Approach and their relationship with learners' reading performance. Their investigation highlighted the relevance of teacher preparedness in implementing structured reading instruction. This perspective suggests that evaluating a reading intervention should consider not only changes in learners' assessment scores but also the instructional processes and experiences associated with its implementation.

Despite the growing body of research supporting phonics-based reading interventions, persistent reading difficulties remain evident in individual school contexts. At R. Moreno Integrated School in Barangay Banahao, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, the beginning-of-school-year Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment conducted on June 24, 2025, identified 76 low-emerging readers across Grades 1–3. Specifically, 26 of 54 Grade 1 learners, 31 of 63 Grade 2 learners, and 19 of 58 Grade 3 learners were classified as low-emerging readers. These findings revealed a substantial need for targeted literacy support within the school. The identified learners experienced difficulties in foundational reading competencies, including letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word recognition and decoding, reading fluency, and comprehension. Such conditions provided the immediate educational basis for implementing and evaluating the Marungko Approach as a structured reading intervention.

Although previous studies have examined improvements associated with the Marungko Approach, additional school-based evidence is needed to understand its implementation among low-emerging readers across the three grade levels of Key Stage 1. In particular, examining learners' performance before and after an intervention alongside teachers' and learners' experiences can provide a more comprehensive understanding of reading development within an authentic classroom setting. Moreover, investigating the instructional components of sound introduction, letter association, syllable formation, word formation, sentence formation, and comprehension reinforcement may help identify aspects of the approach that are perceived as effective. This combined perspective addresses the need for localized evidence that connects measurable reading outcomes with classroom experiences.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing the foundational reading skills of low-emerging Key Stage 1 learners at R. Moreno Integrated School, Lianga District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Specifically, it assessed learners' reading skills before and after the intervention, evaluated the effectiveness of the instructional components, determined significant differences in reading performance, examined relationships between implementation effectiveness and posttest outcomes, and explored the lived experiences of teachers and learners. By integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, the study sought to provide contextualized evidence for developing a sustainable reading intervention program that supports foundational literacy development among struggling early-grade learners.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing the reading skills of low-emerging Key Stage 1 learners at R. Moreno Integrated School, Lianga District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of reading skills of Key Stage 1 learners before the implementation of the Marungko Approach in terms of letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word recognition and decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension?
2. How effective is the Marungko Approach in enhancing learners' reading skills in terms of sound introduction, letter association, syllable formation, word formation, sentence formation, and comprehension and reinforcement?
3. What is the level of reading skills of Key Stage 1 learners after the implementation of the Marungko Approach in terms of letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word recognition and decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension?
4. Is there a significant difference in the reading skills of Key Stage 1 learners before and after the implementation of the Marungko Approach?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach and learners' posttest reading performance?
6. What are the lived experiences of Key Stage 1 teachers and learners in using the Marungko Approach to enhance reading skills?
7. How do the qualitative findings explain, support, or contradict the quantitative results regarding the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach?
8. What reading intervention program can be proposed based on the findings to further enhance the foundational reading skills of Key Stage 1 learners?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating a quantitative one-group pretest–posttest quasi-experimental approach with qualitative interviews and classroom observations to examine the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing the foundational reading skills of Key Stage 1 learners. The quantitative component assessed changes in learners' reading performance before and after the intervention, while the qualitative component explored the experiences and observations of teachers and learners during its implementation. The integration of both approaches provided a comprehensive understanding of reading development and the instructional experiences associated with the Marungko Approach.

The study was conducted at R. Moreno Integrated School, located in Barangay Banahao, Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The participants consisted of 76 low-emerging readers from Grades 1 to 3, identified through the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), and eight teachers involved in implementing the Marungko

Approach. Specifically, the learner-participants included 26 Grade 1 learners, 31 Grade 2 learners, and 19 Grade 3 learners. The teacher-participants comprised two teachers each from Kindergarten and Grades 1, 2, and 3. The selection of learners was based on their classification as low-emerging readers, ensuring that the intervention addressed children with identified foundational reading difficulties. The study involved 84 participants in total.

The primary research instrument was the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment, which was used to determine learners' reading performance before and after the intervention. It assessed five reading domains: letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word recognition and decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. A teacher-validated checklist was also utilized to evaluate the implementation and perceived effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in terms of sound introduction, letter association, syllable formation, word formation, sentence formation, and comprehension and reinforcement. Additionally, informal interviews, guided questions, and classroom observations were conducted to gather qualitative information regarding teachers' instructional experiences and learners' reading development, confidence, motivation, and classroom engagement.

Before conducting the study, the researcher secured approval from the Schools Division Superintendent and permission from the School Principal of R. Moreno Integrated School. Following the necessary approvals, informed consent was obtained from the parents or legal guardians of participating learners, assent was obtained from the learners, and teachers participated voluntarily. A pretest was administered using the CRLA to establish learners' initial reading performance across the five identified domains. Subsequently, the Marungko Approach was implemented through structured and sequential reading activities emphasizing sound introduction, letter–sound association, blending, syllable and word formation, sentence construction, and comprehension reinforcement. Teachers facilitated guided reading exercises, repetitive practice, and instructional activities appropriate to the learners' reading needs.

After the intervention, a posttest was administered using the same assessment instruments to determine changes in learners' reading performance. Teacher checklists were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional components, while interviews and classroom observations documented the experiences of teachers and learners. Qualitative information was organized, coded, and categorized into themes to identify common experiences, instructional challenges, and perceived improvements in reading confidence, participation, and engagement. The qualitative findings were subsequently compared with the quantitative results to determine whether they supported, explained, or contradicted the observed changes in reading performance.

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, weighted mean, and standard deviation to describe learners' reading performance and the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach. A paired-samples *t*-test was employed to determine whether significant differences existed between pretest and posttest reading performance, while Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient (*r*) was used to examine the relationship between the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach and

learners' posttest reading performance. Statistical hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, and the resulting themes were integrated with the statistical findings to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the intervention outcomes.

RESULTS

Table 1

Reading Skills of Key Stage 1 Learners Before the Implementation of the Marungko Approach (N = 76)

Reading skill	Weighted mean	Descriptive category	Rank
Letter recognition	1.51	Not Evident	1
Phonemic awareness	1.17	Not Evident	2
Word recognition and decoding	1.07	Not Evident	3
Reading fluency	1.05	Not Evident	4
Reading comprehension	1.05	Not Evident	5
Overall	**1.17**	**Not Evident**	**—**

Note. Scale: 1.00–1.80 = Not Evident; 1.81–2.60 = Seldom Evident; 2.61–3.40 = Sometimes Evident; 3.41–4.20 = Often Evident; 4.21–5.00 = Always Evident.

Table 2

Effectiveness Ratings of the Marungko Approach Across Instructional Components

Instructional component	Weighted mean	Descriptive category	Rank
Sound introduction	4.95	Highly Effective	1
Letter association	4.91	Highly Effective	3
Syllable formation	4.89	Highly Effective	5
Word formation	4.90	Highly Effective	4
Sentence formation	4.83	Highly Effective	6
Comprehension and reinforcement	4.93	Highly Effective	2
Overall	**4.90**	**Highly Effective**	**—**

Note. Scale: 1.00–1.80 = Not Effective; 1.81–2.60 = Slightly Effective; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Effective; 3.41–4.20 = Effective; 4.21–5.00 = Highly Effective.

Table 3

Reading Skills of Key Stage 1 Learners After the Implementation of the Marungko Approach (N = 76)

Reading skill	Weighted mean	Descriptive category	Rank
Letter recognition	4.92	Always Evident	2
Phonemic awareness	4.86	Always Evident	4
Word recognition and decoding	4.88	Always Evident	3
Reading fluency	4.84	Always Evident	5
Reading comprehension	4.93	Always Evident	1
Overall	**4.89**	**Always Evident**	**—**

Note. Scale: 1.00–1.80 = Not Evident; 1.81–2.60 = Seldom Evident; 2.61–3.40 = Sometimes Evident; 3.41–4.20 = Often Evident; 4.21–5.00 = Always Evident.

Table 4

Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Reading Skills Before and After the Marungko Approach

Reading skill	Pretest M	Posttest M	Mean difference	t	p
Letter recognition	1.51	4.92	3.41	32.85	< .001
Phonemic awareness	1.17	4.86	3.69	36.74	< .001
Word recognition and decoding	1.07	4.88	3.81	38.92	< .001
Reading fluency	1.05	4.84	3.79	38.10	< .001
Reading comprehension	1.05	4.93	3.88	39.45	< .001
Overall	**1.17**	**4.89**	**3.72**	**45.32**	**< .001**

Note. N = 76; M = mean; t = paired-samples test statistic; df = 75, assuming all 76 learners had complete paired observations. All reported tests rejected the null hypothesis at α = .05.

Table 5

Pearson Correlations Between Instructional Effectiveness Ratings and Posttest Reading Performance

Variables compared	Effectiveness M	Posttest M	r	p
Sound introduction and letter recognition	4.95	4.92	.99	< .001
Letter association and phonemic awareness	4.91	4.86	.99	< .001
Syllable formation and word recognition and decoding	4.89	4.88	.99	< .001

Word formation and reading fluency	4.90	4.84	.98 < .001
Sentence formation and reading comprehension	4.83	4.93	.98 < .001

Note. M = mean; r = Pearson correlation coefficient. All reported correlations were statistically significant at α = .05.

Table 6

Qualitative Themes from Teachers' and Learners' Experiences With the Marungko Approach

Participant group	Reported themes	Summary of recorded experiences
Teachers	Initial instructional challenges	Difficulties teaching non-readers and learners with weak foundational reading skills
Teachers	Structured phonics instruction	Use of systematic sound recognition, blending, decoding, and sentence-reading activities
Teachers	Observable reading progress	Progress from letter recognition to independent word and sentence reading
Teachers	Increased learner confidence and motivation	Greater participation, enthusiasm, and willingness to read aloud
Teachers	Positive teaching experiences	Increased confidence and satisfaction in teaching beginning reading
Teachers	Perceived effectiveness	Favorable assessments of the approach for phonemic awareness and decoding
Teachers	Sustainability and instructional support	Need for continued implementation, instructional materials, training, and resources
Learners	Improved reading skills	Reported ability to read words and simple sentences more independently
Learners	Reading confidence	Greater willingness to participate in reading activities
Learners	Motivation and engagement	Increased interest and enjoyment during reading lessons
Learners	Positive learning experiences	Favorable experiences with structured Marungko activities

Table 7

Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings on the Marungko Approach

Quantitative findings	Corresponding qualitative findings	Integration
Overall reading mean increased from 1.17 to 4.89	Teachers and learners reported improved reading ability	Converging
Pretest–posttest differences were statistically significant ($p < .001$)	Teachers observed progress among previously struggling readers	Converging
Marungko Approach effectiveness mean was 4.90	Teachers and learners described the approach as helpful and effective	Converging
Sound introduction obtained a mean of 4.95	Learners reported faster and more accurate sound recognition	Converging
Posttest letter recognition mean was 4.92	Learners reported greater ability to recognize letters	Converging
Posttest word recognition and decoding mean was 4.88	Learners reported increased ability to read words independently	Converging
Posttest reading fluency mean was 4.84	Teachers observed greater confidence and willingness to read aloud	Converging
Posttest reading comprehension mean was 4.93	Learners reported improved ability to read and understand simple sentences	Converging

Table 8

Proposed Enhanced Marungko-Based Reading Intervention Program (EMBRIP)

Program component	Proposed activities	Target beneficiaries
Sound introduction	Phonics development and sound drills	Key Stage 1 learners
Letter–sound association	Letter identification and sound-matching exercises	Key Stage 1 learners
Syllable formation	Sound blending and syllable-building activities	Key Stage 1 learners
Word building and reading	Guided word construction, decoding, and word-reading exercises	Key Stage 1 learners
Sentence construction and comprehension	Sentence-reading and comprehension activities	Key Stage 1 learners
Reinforcement and remediation	Regular remedial reading and progress monitoring	Low-emerging readers
Teacher instructional support	Reading-strategy training and instructional guidance	Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers
Home-based reading support	Parent involvement and reading reinforcement	Parents and guardians

Note. EMBRIP = Enhanced Marungko-Based Reading Intervention Program.

DISCUSSION

Reading Skills Before the Implementation of the Marungko Approach

The findings revealed that Key Stage 1 learners at R. Moreno Integrated School demonstrated limited foundational reading competencies before the implementation of the Marungko Approach, as reflected in the overall weighted mean of 1.17, interpreted as Not Evident. Among the five reading domains, letter recognition obtained the highest mean of 1.51, followed by phonemic awareness (M = 1.17) and word recognition and decoding (M = 1.07). Reading fluency and reading comprehension registered the lowest means of 1.05 each. These results indicate that learners had difficulty recognizing and processing printed language, particularly in progressing from identifying individual letters and sounds to reading connected text and understanding meaning. Although letter recognition obtained the highest mean, it remained within the lowest descriptive category, suggesting that even the most developed reading competency required instructional support.

The findings are consistent with Bernabe (2024), who documented low initial reading performance among Grade 1 pupils before implementing the Marungko Approach. Similarly, Casteleyn (2025), in a broad evidence review of reading instruction, emphasized that reading proficiency depends on the development and integration of decoding, fluency, comprehension, and motivation. The present findings reinforce the need for early identification of reading difficulties and structured interventions that address multiple foundational competencies rather than isolated reading tasks. In the context of R. Moreno Integrated School, the results establish a clear baseline for providing systematic instruction appropriate to the developmental needs of low-emerging readers.

Effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in Enhancing Reading Skills

The Marungko Approach obtained an overall weighted mean of 4.90, interpreted as Highly Effective, across its six instructional components. Sound introduction received the highest mean of 4.95, followed by comprehension and reinforcement (M = 4.93), letter association (M = 4.91), word formation (M = 4.90), syllable formation (M = 4.89), and sentence formation (M = 4.83). All components were rated Highly Effective, indicating consistently favorable assessments of the structured instructional activities. The highest rating for sound introduction highlights the prominence of explicit phoneme instruction within the intervention, while the comparatively lower rating for sentence formation suggests that constructing and reading connected language remained relatively more demanding than foundational sound-level activities.

These findings correspond with Tamba and Garces (2024), who reported improved reading performance among Grade 2 non-readers following the use of Marungko-based instructional materials. Their findings support the instructional relevance of systematic sound recognition, blending, and word-reading activities for learners experiencing early literacy difficulties. Furthermore, Casteleyn (2025) emphasized that effective reading instruction combines explicit teaching with the development of broader literacy competencies. The consistently high ratings obtained in the present study suggest that

the Marungko Approach was perceived as suitable for organizing reading instruction progressively, beginning with sound recognition and extending toward comprehension. Nevertheless, these effectiveness ratings represent assessments of the intervention and should be distinguished from independently established causal effects.

Reading Skills After the Implementation of the Marungko Approach

After the implementation of the Marungko Approach, the learners' overall reading skills increased to a weighted mean of 4.89, interpreted as Always Evident. Reading comprehension obtained the highest posttest mean of 4.93, followed by letter recognition (M = 4.92), word recognition and decoding (M = 4.88), phonemic awareness (M = 4.86), and reading fluency (M = 4.84). All five domains reached the highest descriptive category, representing a substantial change from the learners' initial performance. The improvement in comprehension was particularly notable because this domain had one of the lowest pretest means. This pattern indicates that learners demonstrated greater proficiency not only in recognizing printed symbols and decoding words but also in processing the meaning of reading materials following the intervention.

The findings parallel those of Bernabe (2024), who reported significant gains in word recognition and comprehension among Grade 1 pupils exposed to the Marungko Approach. Likewise, Tamba and Garces (2024) documented improved posttest performance among previously struggling readers following structured Marungko instruction. The present results extend this localized evidence by documenting high post-intervention ratings across five reading domains among learners from Grades 1 to 3. However, reading fluency remained the lowest-rated posttest domain despite reaching the highest descriptive category. This finding identifies fluency as an appropriate area for continued practice and monitoring, particularly because accurate word recognition does not automatically ensure smooth, expressive, and sufficiently paced reading.

Significant Difference in Reading Skills Before and After the Intervention

The paired-samples t-test results revealed statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest reading performance across all five domains, with reported p-values below .001. The overall mean increased from 1.17 to 4.89, representing a mean difference of 3.72, with an overall t-value of 45.32. Reading comprehension demonstrated the largest mean increase of 3.88, followed by word recognition and decoding (3.81), reading fluency (3.79), phonemic awareness (3.69), and letter recognition (3.41). These findings indicate that the learners' assessed reading performance improved substantially between the two measurement periods, with the greatest numerical gains occurring in comprehension and decoding-related competencies.

The results are consistent with Bernabe (2024) and Tamba and Garces (2024), whose studies similarly documented significant improvements in reading performance following Marungko-based instruction. Nevertheless, statistical significance must be considered alongside the study's methodological limitations. Because the present investigation employed a one-group pretest–posttest design without a comparison group, improvements cannot be attributed exclusively to the intervention. Other influences,

including maturation, repeated assessment, additional classroom instruction, and differences in implementation, cannot be completely excluded. Mesa et al. (2024) demonstrated the importance of instructional dosage and implementation fidelity in early reading interventions, finding that insufficient time and inconsistent delivery could constrain reading outcomes. Consequently, the substantial improvements observed in the present study provide promising evidence for the Marungko Approach within the school context, while further controlled investigations are needed to establish its comparative effectiveness.

Relationship Between the Effectiveness of the Marungko Approach and Posttest Reading Performance

The correlational analysis revealed very strong positive relationships between instructional effectiveness ratings and corresponding posttest reading performance, with reported Pearson correlation coefficients ranging from .98 to .99 and p-values below .001. Sound introduction and letter recognition, letter association and phonemic awareness, and syllable formation and word recognition and decoding each obtained a correlation coefficient of .99. Meanwhile, word formation and reading fluency, and sentence formation and reading comprehension, obtained coefficients of .98. These findings indicate that the measures reported in the manuscript were strongly positively associated across the instructional and reading-performance domains examined.

The relationships are compatible with the instructional principle that systematic teaching of sound–symbol relationships, word construction, and connected-text reading supports the development of foundational literacy competencies. However, the exceptionally high correlation coefficients require careful methodological consideration. The reported means are all concentrated near the upper limit of the five-point scale, and the manuscript does not provide sufficient individual-level statistical details to independently verify the coefficients. Furthermore, correlation does not demonstrate that higher instructional effectiveness caused improved reading outcomes. Casteleyn (2025) emphasized the interconnected nature of reading development, while Mesa et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of examining actual implementation conditions when evaluating intervention outcomes. Thus, the reported associations should be interpreted as relationships within the study's measurements rather than conclusive evidence of instructional causation.

Lived Experiences of Teachers and Learners in Using the Marungko Approach

The qualitative findings revealed positive experiences among teachers and learners during the implementation of the Marungko Approach. Teachers described initial difficulties in teaching non-readers and learners with weak foundational reading skills. Following the introduction of structured phonics-based activities, they reported observable progress in sound recognition, word decoding, sentence reading, and classroom participation. Teachers also described greater professional confidence and satisfaction in delivering reading instruction, while identifying the continued need for instructional resources, training, and sustained implementation. These experiences

suggest that the approach provided an organized instructional framework that teachers considered useful in responding to learners' literacy needs.

Learners likewise reported improvements in reading confidence, motivation, engagement, and enjoyment. Their experiences included greater willingness to read aloud, increased participation in classroom activities, and improved ability to read words and simple sentences independently. These findings are consistent with the broader understanding that reading development involves motivational and affective dimensions alongside technical literacy skills. Casteleyn (2025) identified motivation as an important component of effective reading instruction. Furthermore, Mesa et al. (2024) emphasized that teacher support and practical implementation conditions influence the delivery of supplemental reading interventions. The qualitative findings therefore demonstrate the importance of sustaining a supportive learning environment in which learners can practice reading without excessive pressure and teachers can provide appropriate guidance and reinforcement.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated convergence between the measured improvements in reading performance and the experiences reported by teachers and learners. The increase in the overall reading mean from 1.17 to 4.89 corresponded with participants' descriptions of improved word recognition, decoding, sentence reading, and comprehension. Similarly, the overall instructional effectiveness rating of 4.90 was consistent with teachers' favorable assessments of the Marungko Approach and learners' reports of engaging and helpful reading activities. The quantitative results established the magnitude and statistical significance of the observed changes, while the qualitative findings provided contextual descriptions of how learners and teachers experienced the intervention.

This convergence strengthens the contextual interpretation of the study because different forms of evidence point toward similar patterns of improvement. However, agreement between assessment results and participant accounts does not independently establish causality or eliminate potential measurement bias. Mesa et al. (2024) demonstrated that reading intervention outcomes must be considered in relation to instructional fidelity and practical classroom conditions. Accordingly, the present mixed-methods findings offer a more comprehensive description of the intervention's implementation and associated outcomes, while underscoring the need for future studies that include comparison groups, standardized outcome measures, and longer-term monitoring.

Proposed Enhanced Marungko-Based Reading Intervention Program

Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings, the study proposed the Enhanced Marungko-Based Reading Intervention Program (EMBRIP) to sustain and further develop the reading competencies of Key Stage 1 learners. The program incorporates sound introduction, letter–sound association, syllable formation, word building, sentence construction, comprehension activities, and reinforcement sessions. It

also includes teacher instructional support, parental involvement, remedial reading activities, and continuous assessment of learner progress. The proposed implementation schedule consists of 30–45-minute sessions conducted five times weekly during the remediation period.

The proposed program responds directly to the reading difficulties identified during the pretest and the instructional needs reported by teachers. Its emphasis on regular practice and systematic monitoring is consistent with Mesa et al. (2024), who identified adequate instructional dosage and implementation support as important considerations in reading interventions. In addition, Casteleyn (2025) emphasized the value of early intervention, differentiated instruction, and teacher professional development in strengthening reading achievement.

Filderman et al. (2025) further emphasized the importance of active participation in professional development for strengthening teachers' reading instructional skills. Their findings provide an evidence-based rationale for incorporating demonstration teaching, collaborative learning sessions, instructional coaching, and supervised practice into the teacher-support component of EMBRIP. These activities may help teachers translate their knowledge of phonics-based instruction into consistent classroom practices. Accordingly, the proposed program should integrate learner-focused reading activities with sustained teacher capacity-building initiatives. Nevertheless, its effectiveness as a distinct intervention program remains to be established through subsequent implementation and evaluation.

Overall, the study contributes localized evidence concerning the use of the Marungko Approach among low-emerging Key Stage 1 readers in a Philippine public school. The findings document substantial pretest–posttest improvements, favorable instructional effectiveness ratings, and positive experiences among teachers and learners. They also highlight the importance of implementation quality, continued reading practice, instructional resources, teacher professional development, and systematic evaluation. While the results support the practical promise of structured Marungko-based instruction, the absence of a control group and the need to verify the reported correlation estimates limit stronger causal conclusions. Future research may address these limitations through controlled or comparative designs, longer follow-up periods, and additional measures of reading achievement.

Conclusions

The study concluded that the Marungko Approach was associated with substantial improvements in the foundational reading skills of low-emerging Key Stage 1 learners at R. Moreno Integrated School, Lianga District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Learners initially demonstrated limited competencies in letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word recognition and decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension, as reflected in the overall pretest mean of 1.17. Following the intervention, the overall posttest mean increased to 4.89, with statistically significant differences across all five reading domains ($p < .001$). The Marungko Approach also obtained an overall effectiveness rating of 4.90,

indicating highly favorable assessments of its structured instructional components, particularly sound introduction and comprehension reinforcement.

Furthermore, the reported positive correlations between instructional effectiveness and posttest reading performance, together with the qualitative findings, demonstrated consistency between learners' measured reading progress and the experiences of teachers and learners. Participants described improvements in reading confidence, motivation, participation, and engagement, highlighting the instructional and experiential benefits associated with the approach. These findings provided the basis for proposing the Enhanced Marungko-Based Reading Intervention Program (EMBRIP), which emphasizes systematic phonics instruction, remedial reading activities, teacher development, parental involvement, and continuous progress monitoring.

Overall, the study contributes school-based evidence supporting the potential of the Marungko Approach as a structured literacy intervention for struggling early-grade readers. However, because the study employed a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group, the observed improvements cannot be attributed exclusively to the intervention. Further research employing comparative designs, standardized reading assessments, and longitudinal monitoring is necessary to establish its effectiveness and sustainability across different educational settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that R. Moreno Integrated School strengthen its foundational literacy initiatives through the continued implementation and systematic evaluation of the Marungko Approach, particularly among Key Stage 1 learners identified as low-emerging readers. Teachers should conduct regular reading assessments to identify learners experiencing difficulties in letter recognition, phonemic awareness, word recognition and decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. The assessment results should guide the development of differentiated reading activities that respond to learners' individual needs and levels of proficiency.

The proposed Enhanced Marungko-Based Reading Intervention Program (EMBRIP) may be adopted as a school-based intervention framework to sustain the reading improvements observed in the study. The program should incorporate structured phonics instruction, sound–letter association, syllable and word formation, sentence reading, comprehension activities, and regular remediation sessions. Particular attention should be given to reading fluency, which obtained the lowest posttest mean among the five reading domains, despite reaching the highest descriptive category. Continuous monitoring and periodic reassessment should be undertaken to determine whether learners maintain their reading progress over time.

School administrators should provide adequate instructional materials, professional development opportunities, and technical assistance to support the consistent implementation of the Marungko Approach. Teachers may participate in

collaborative learning sessions, demonstration teaching, and instructional coaching to strengthen their competencies in systematic reading instruction. Furthermore, parents and guardians should be encouraged to participate in home-based reading activities to reinforce classroom learning and promote sustained reading practice.

Future researchers are encouraged to investigate the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach using experimental or quasi-experimental designs with comparison groups, larger samples, and participants from different schools. Longitudinal assessments and standardized reading measures should also be considered to determine the sustainability and generalizability of reading improvements. Further validation of the reported correlation coefficients and examination of instructional fidelity, intervention duration, learner attendance, and home literacy support would strengthen the evidence concerning the approach's effectiveness. These initiatives may contribute to the development of more responsive, evidence-based, and sustainable literacy interventions for struggling early-grade learners.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study adhered to established ethical principles governing educational research involving teachers and minor learners. Before data collection, the researcher secured the necessary institutional approval and permissions from the Schools Division Superintendent and the School Principal of R. Moreno Integrated School, Lianga District, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Written informed consent was obtained from the parents or legal guardians of participating learners, learner assent was secured, and teachers participated voluntarily. Participants were informed of the study's objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty or adverse consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity in reporting were maintained through the use of participant codes instead of personal identifiers. All information collected through reading assessments, interviews, and classroom observations was treated confidentially, securely handled, and used exclusively for research purposes in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The researcher ensured that participation did not interfere unnecessarily with regular instructional activities and that learners were treated with dignity, fairness, and respect throughout the intervention. The study upheld the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, justice, voluntary participation, and academic integrity to safeguard the rights, privacy, and welfare of all participants.

REFERENCES

Bernabe, R. V. (2024). Effectiveness of Marungko approach in enhancing the reading performance among Grade 1 pupils of San Antonio Elementary School. Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies, 50(12), 510–521. https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2024/v50i121718

Casteleyn, J. (2025). Building better readers: Key findings from a broad evidence review. The Reading Teacher, 79(1), Article e70015. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.70015

Casupanan, I., & Fastidio, J. (2024). Enhancing reading literacy in Grade 2 pupils: An evaluation of the enhanced Marungko approach. Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science – Social Sciences, 14(4). https://doi.org/10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.14.4.3067.2024

Filderman, M. J., Didion, L., Austin, C. R., Payne, B., Silvert, C., & Wexler, J. (2025). Teacher professional development for reading: A review of the state of the research. Reading Research Quarterly, 60(4), Article e70054. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.70054

Mesa, M. P., Hall, C., Zucker, T., Dahl-Leonard, K., Oh, Y., & Denton, C. (2024). Unpacking implementation fidelity and barriers to implementation of a kindergarten reading intervention by teachers. The Elementary School Journal, 125(1), 77–105. https://doi.org/10.1086/731257

Pereira, H. T., & Cerbo, T. C. (2026). Awareness and competencies of teachers in the utilization of Marungko approach in reading performance of learners. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 10(7), 11210–11217. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700761

Perez, M. M., & Villocino, R. P. (2025). Effectiveness of Marungko approach in reading literacy among primary learners. International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 7(4). https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2025.v07i04.53026

Repaso, J. C., & Macalisang, D. S. (2024). Effectiveness of contextualized Marungko approach-based supplementary reading material. International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 5(3), 1117–1126. https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.05.03.30

Tamba, R., & Garces, V. (2024). Effectiveness of Marungko approach in teaching reading. Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 25(2), 339–348. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13766097

World Bank. (2024). Philippines learning poverty brief (Version 2). https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099090524085540633/pdf/P179209-b0057b3a-fd8c-476a-a1c6-271b276117ff.pdf

APA Citation:

Aton, A. E., & Bola, I. P. (2026). ENHANCING FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS THROUGH THE MARUNGKO APPROACH: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY AMONG KEY STAGE 1 LEARNERS IN THE PHILIPPINES. Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 4(11), 153–169. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23878543

Corresponding author: *imeldapbola@gmail.com*