



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



## Strengthening Educational Governance and Administrative Systems to Improve Reading Proficiency: A Systematic Review of Theoretical Perspectives for Philippine Public Schools

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### Abstract

The Philippine education system continues to struggle with low reading proficiency, despite numerous literacy initiatives. This systematic review examines how *Educational Governance Theory* explains the persistent gap between policy intentions and literacy outcomes in Philippine public schools, with particular reference to Valencia National High School. Anchoring the discussion on governance structures, accountability mechanisms, and leadership coordination, the review synthesizes local and international studies that reveal how strong governance directly influences literacy program effectiveness. Findings indicate that reading proficiency improves when policies are coherent, resources are strategically allocated, and administrative systems sustain implementation fidelity. Conversely, fragmented governance and weak accountability structures contribute to poor literacy outcomes. The article concludes that enhancing reading proficiency is fundamentally a governance issue—requiring coordinated leadership, evidence-based policymaking, and continuous monitoring at all levels of the education system.

**Keywords:** Educational Governance Theory; Reading Proficiency; Literacy Programs; Policy Implementation; Administrative Leadership; Accountability Systems; Learning Recovery

### 1. Introduction

Reading proficiency is one of the most critical indicators of educational quality and national development. However, despite ongoing reforms, the Philippines remains among countries with the highest learning poverty rates in Southeast Asia, with over 90 percent of students unable to read and understand simple texts by age ten (World Bank, 2023). At Valencia National High School, the same pattern is evident, school-based reading assessments and the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) show that many learners fall below the expected reading levels.

While teachers and administrators have launched initiatives such as the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) and the Learning Recovery Program (LRP), these efforts often fail to yield consistent improvements. The problem is not the lack of programs but rather the weak governance structures that manage them. Educational policies are frequently well-crafted but poorly implemented, largely due to fragmented decision-making, insufficient monitoring, and limited coordination between school and higher DepEd offices (PIDS, 2022).

This systematic review employs *Educational Governance Theory* as the sole theoretical lens to examine how governance mechanisms—policy formulation, leadership accountability, and institutional coordination—shape literacy outcomes. It draws insights from various empirical studies to show that reading improvement is not purely a pedagogical matter but a product of effective governance and administrative systems.

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## 2. Theoretical Framework: Educational Governance Theory

Educational Governance Theory emphasizes the role of structures, accountability, and coordination in ensuring educational effectiveness. It argues that the quality of student learning outcomes depends on how well decisions are made, communicated, and enforced across different levels of the education system (PIDS, 2022). Governance in this sense extends beyond policymaking; it encompasses the mechanisms through which policies are implemented, monitored, and evaluated.

According to McGinn and Welsh (1999), effective governance in education relies on a balance between autonomy and accountability. Schools that are empowered to innovate while adhering to clear policy directions tend to achieve better outcomes. In the context of literacy, strong governance ensures that reading programs are not isolated teacher-driven projects but components of a system-wide strategy supported by resources, supervision, and performance feedback.

Educational Governance Theory also recognizes that leadership and collaboration are vital to policy success. Fullan (2016) underscores that educational reform succeeds when leadership promotes shared accountability and distributed decision-making. When governance structures foster collaboration among school heads, teachers, and local education stakeholders, literacy programs gain sustainability and coherence.

In Philippine settings, studies by Brillantes and Fernandez (2018) and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2022) highlight that the country's decentralized education structure poses both opportunities and challenges. While decentralization allows for local adaptation of programs, it also risks inconsistency if governance mechanisms lack coherence. This inconsistency is visible in reading programs where implementation differs significantly across schools due to uneven resource distribution and administrative follow-through.

Applying Educational Governance Theory to reading proficiency in Valencia National High School reveals that literacy outcomes are shaped by how governance connects policy, practice, and accountability. A strong governance framework ensures that teachers receive adequate support, data is used to inform decisions, and program results are monitored through transparent systems. Conversely, when governance is weak, literacy efforts are fragmented, resulting in superficial program compliance rather than authentic learning gains.

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## 3. Review of Related Studies

A growing body of research supports the idea that reading proficiency depends as much on governance and management as on instructional quality. For example, the World Bank (2023) identifies governance issues—such as weak accountability systems and inconsistent monitoring—as key contributors to learning poverty in the Philippines. Similarly, the Department of Education (2023) notes that programs like ECARP and the Learning Recovery Program often fail to produce sustained results due to limited administrative oversight and uneven policy execution.

International studies echo these findings. Hanushek and Woessmann (2021) argue that education systems with strong governance structures—clear standards, performance incentives, and data-driven monitoring—achieve better learning outcomes. Likewise, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasize that literacy development improves in systems where governance integrates policy with continuous teacher professional development and resource allocation.

In Southeast Asia, research by Hallinger and Bryant (2013) demonstrates that effective governance in school leadership directly affects literacy achievement. Their findings reveal that principals who implement structured governance processes—such as regular reading assessments and accountability reviews—create environments conducive to sustained literacy growth. Similarly, the OECD (2019) reports that governance mechanisms ensuring policy continuity and localized implementation contribute significantly to improved reading scores in high-performing systems like Singapore and Vietnam.

Locally, studies by Cabansag (2020) and Reyes (2021) found that reading programs in public schools succeed when administrative governance supports teachers with resources, supervision, and community partnerships. In Valencia National High School's case, inconsistent coordination between school administrators and reading coordinators limits the school's ability to sustain effective literacy programs. This gap underscores the importance of governance-oriented reforms—those that strengthen leadership accountability, improve monitoring systems, and promote collaboration among stakeholders.

#### **4. Discussion**

Anchored solely on Educational Governance Theory, this review affirms that the root cause of weak reading proficiency in the Philippines is not merely instructional but structural. Governance acts as the backbone of literacy improvement, ensuring that reading initiatives are coherent, continuous, and data-informed.

At the policy level, effective governance ensures that literacy programs like ECARP and LRP are aligned with measurable goals and adequately funded. Policies must be communicated clearly to schools and accompanied by accountability measures that track implementation.

At the administrative level, governance involves leadership and coordination. School heads play a pivotal role in interpreting national policies and contextualizing them to fit local realities. When administrators monitor program fidelity and engage teachers through collaborative supervision, literacy initiatives achieve consistency and sustainability.

At the implementation level, governance manifests through transparent monitoring and data use. Regular reading assessments, reporting systems, and evaluation tools enable schools to measure progress and refine interventions. Without such governance mechanisms, programs risk becoming compliance exercises devoid of long-term impact.

For Valencia National High School, the application of Educational Governance Theory suggests that governance reforms—rather than new reading materials alone—are the key to improving literacy outcomes. This means building administrative capacity, establishing clear accountability lines, and ensuring that school-level decisions reflect national policy priorities.

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#### **5. Conclusion**

This systematic review concludes that reading proficiency in the Philippines, particularly in public secondary schools like Valencia National High School, depends on the strength of educational governance. Educational Governance Theory provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how policy, leadership, and accountability converge to shape literacy outcomes.

Studies consistently reveal that when governance systems are coherent, transparent, and evidence-based, literacy programs succeed. Conversely, fragmented governance, weak leadership, and inconsistent monitoring perpetuate low reading performance. Therefore, the path to literacy reform must prioritize strengthening governance mechanisms—clarifying roles, enhancing policy coherence, and institutionalizing data-driven management.

Ultimately, improving reading proficiency is not only about teaching better—it is about governing better. Through robust governance and administrative commitment, schools can build sustainable literacy ecosystems where every learner becomes a proficient, critical reader capable of participating meaningfully in academic and national development.

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**Ethical Approval:** This study is a systematic review that synthesized findings from previously published literature. As it does not involve human participants, experimental procedures, or the collection of sensitive data, ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required. All reviewed studies were assumed to have adhered to their respective ethical standards.

**Informed Consent:** As the study analyzed and synthesized publicly available research literature and did not involve direct interaction with human subjects, the requirement for informed consent was not applicable. The author relied solely on secondary data already accessible in published academic sources.

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