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PHIL-IRI-BASED EVALUATION OF REMEDIAL READING OUTCOMES AMONG INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS: THE ROLE OF LOCALLY-FUNDED TEACHERS IN ORAS EAST DISTRICT, EASTERN SAMAR

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of remedial reading instruction delivered by Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers among intermediate learners (Grades 4–6) in public elementary schools in Oras East District, Eastern Samar. Using a quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, the study utilized the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as both a diagnostic and outcome assessment tool. Fifty learners identified as struggling, frustrated, and instructional readers through Phil-IRI pre-assessments participated in a structured intervention program led by locally funded teachers. Descriptive statistics revealed a notable shift in reading proficiency levels following the intervention. Before the program, 82% of learners were categorized as either struggling or frustrated readers. Post-assessment results showed that 70% had progressed to instructional or independent reading levels. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test yielded a test statistic of 0.0 and a p-value of 5.18×10^{-8}, indicating a statistically significant improvement in reading performance. The findings confirm the instructional value of Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers in addressing literacy challenges in intermediate grades and support the continued use of Phil-IRI in tracking learner progress. The study contributes to the growing body of research advocating for localized, data-driven interventions as a strategic response to learning poverty in underserved educational settings.

KEYWORDS: *Phil-IRI, Remedial Reading, Locally-Funded Teachers, Reading Proficiency, Intermediate Learners*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is not only a foundational skill for all academic learning but also a lifelong tool for personal and professional development. In the context of basic education, the ability to read fluently and comprehend texts critically determines a learner's success across all subject areas. However, despite numerous initiatives to improve literacy, reading underachievement remains a persistent problem, especially in public elementary schools in underserved regions like Eastern Samar.

Globally, the urgency to address learning poverty has never been greater. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022) reports that an alarming 70% of children in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read and comprehend a simple story by the age of 10. This crisis in foundational learning has only deepened in the wake of educational disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Philippines, the 2019 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) revealed that over 27% of Grade 5 learners did not meet the minimum reading proficiency level expected for their grade level (UNICEF, 2020). The Department of Education (DepEd, 2023) acknowledged this gap, particularly in rural public schools, where inadequate instructional time, large class sizes, and limited access to reading support programs often compromise learners' reading development.

To address these challenges, DepEd promotes school-based reading interventions, including the use of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) – a standardized tool for diagnosing, monitoring, and enhancing reading proficiency. Designed to assess both oral reading fluency and comprehension, the Phil-IRI is widely used to inform instruction and remedial action across Philippine public schools.

One noteworthy response to the literacy crisis is the deployment of Provincial and LGU-funded teachers tasked with providing supplemental learning support, particularly in reading. In Eastern Samar, the provincial government hired over 1,000 such teachers under its Learning Facilitators Program (PIA, 2023), reinforcing public school manpower and prioritizing reading remediation at both early and intermediate grade levels. These teachers are designated to support struggling readers through focused, small-group instruction, particularly those

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identified through the Phil-IRI as functioning below grade level.

While there are numerous studies that examine remedial reading programs, most have concentrated on early grades or general classroom-based interventions. Limited empirical research explores the specific impact of Provincial and LGU-funded teachers in delivering targeted remedial instruction to intermediate learners (Grades 4–6) using Phil-IRI as the assessment framework. This research gap is particularly important to address, considering that many struggling readers in the upper elementary grades may have been missed by early interventions and continue to fall behind without specialized support.

Thus, this study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of remedial reading instruction conducted by Provincial and LGU-funded teachers in Eastern Samar public schools. By examining learners' Phil-IRI pre- and post-assessment results, the study seeks to provide evidence on whether these localized efforts are yielding measurable improvements in reading proficiency among intermediate learners. The findings are expected to offer critical insights that may guide future deployment, capacity building, and program planning efforts related to reading remediation in public education.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of remedial reading instruction delivered by Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers to intermediate learners in Oras East District, Eastern Samar using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as the primary assessment tool.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the reading proficiency levels of Grades 4–6 learners based on the Phil-IRI pre-assessment results before the remedial reading intervention?
2. What are the reading proficiency levels of the same learners based on the Phil-IRI post-assessment results after the intervention?
3. Is there a significant difference between the pre-assessment and post-assessment Phil-IRI results of the learners who received remedial reading instruction?

Hypothesis of the Study

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference between the pre-assessment and post-assessment Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels of Grades 4–6 learners after undergoing remedial instruction facilitated by Provincial- and LGU-Funded Teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Remedial Reading Instruction and Its Relevance

Remedial reading instruction refers to structured, intensive interventions designed to support learners who exhibit reading difficulties. These interventions typically focus on essential components of reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Wanzek et al., 2018). Remedial instruction is often delivered in small-group settings to allow for individualized pacing and targeted skill development. Numerous studies underscore the importance of such interventions, especially when implemented during the elementary years, where literacy gaps are still reversible.

In the Philippine context, remedial reading programs have become a central component of school-based interventions to meet the national reading standards. A study by Arevalo (2023) on Grade 4 learners found that learners who underwent remedial sessions over 8 weeks showed substantial gains in reading comprehension, as measured by pre- and post-assessment results. Similarly, Reyes and Santos (2021) observed that sustained reading remediation enhanced word recognition and comprehension in rural schools, suggesting that such programs can narrow the learning gap when consistently implemented.

Furthermore, Cagsawa et al. (2024) emphasized the role of explicit instruction in phonics and guided reading as key strategies that support learner recovery in Grades 3–5. These interventions not only improved Phil-IRI scores but also positively influenced learner confidence and classroom engagement. The effectiveness of remedial reading has been further validated by Abud et al. (2019), who found that 86% of their Grade 1–6 participants demonstrated measurable improvements in reading fluency after participating in structured pull-out sessions.

Reading Proficiency Levels and Phil-IRI as a Diagnostic Tool

In Philippine public schools, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is a critical tool in diagnosing learners' reading levels. Developed by the Bureau of Learning Delivery under the Department of Education, the Phil-IRI assesses both oral reading fluency and comprehension and classifies learners into four proficiency levels: Independent, Instructional, Frustrated, and Nonreader/Struggling. This categorization enables schools to tailor reading interventions based on the learner's diagnostic profile.

Tampus (2024) highlighted the practical utility of Phil-IRI in designing individualized learning plans. In her study of Grade 4 learners in a rural school, 76% of those categorized as "Frustrated" improved to "Instructional" or "Independent" levels after 10 weeks of targeted instruction guided by Phil-IRI results. Similarly, Casingal (2022) demonstrated that using Phil-IRI for both pre- and post-intervention assessments enabled teachers to track learner growth and adjust reading strategies accordingly.

Despite its diagnostic strengths, some scholars argue that Phil-IRI results should be supplemented with teacher observations and formative assessments to fully capture learners' literacy development. Nonetheless, Phil-IRI remains the most widely adopted national tool and serves as the cornerstone of reading intervention programs in DepEd schools.

The Role of Provincial- and LGU-Funded Teachers in Learning Recovery

One of the innovative responses to post-pandemic learning loss in the Philippines has been the strategic deployment of Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers, especially in regions

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where nationally funded teaching positions remain insufficient. In 2023, the Eastern Samar Provincial Government hired over 1,000 Provincial-Paid Teachers under its Learning Facilitators Program (PIA, 2023), with specific assignments in reading remediation, classroom assistance, and learner monitoring.

These teachers serve as critical instructional support personnel, particularly in high-need schools. However, there is limited empirical research examining their effectiveness, especially in structured remediation programs using tools like Phil-IRI. Bautista and Gatcho (2019) pointed out a research gap in understanding the instructional impact of non-nationally funded teachers, calling for studies that validate their contributions to learning outcomes.

Geroso (2024), through a narrative analysis of remedial teachers' experiences, found that LGU-funded teachers were effective in implementing reading interventions when provided with clear guidelines, structured materials, and continuous coaching. Their flexibility and familiarity with local learners positioned them as strong allies in addressing reading delays. However, challenges such as inconsistent training and unclear role definitions were also cited, pointing to the need for structured onboarding and capacity-building programs.

Remedial Reading in Intermediate Grades: A Neglected but Critical Stage

Much of the national focus in literacy interventions has centered on Key Stage 1 learners (Grades 1–3). However, struggling readers in Grades 4 to 6 often remain underserved despite carrying over foundational deficits from earlier grades. The Hechinger Report (2021) stresses that by the end of Grade 3, students must transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Those who fail to make this transition tend to struggle across all subject areas, making intermediate-level interventions equally, if not more, urgent.

International studies support the viability of remedial reading even in upper elementary years. A study by Hamadeh et al. (2022) in Lebanon found that refugee learners in Grades 4 – 6 showed significant reading gains after a 6-week intervention program, despite having multiple years of interrupted schooling. In the Philippine context, the study of Acita et al. (2022) documented successful reading recovery among Grade 5 pupils using phonics-based and comprehension-monitoring techniques.

These studies highlight that intermediate learners can still benefit from remedial reading when given focused, structured, and sustained support. This supports the rationale of the current study, which centers on Grades 4 to 6 – a group that continues to need recovery attention but is often overshadowed by early-grade interventions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. This design is suitable for evaluating the effectiveness of a specific educational intervention . In this case, remedial reading instruction facilitated by Provincial and LGU-funded teachers by comparing learners' reading proficiency before and after the intervention without the use of a control group. The quantitative nature of the design allows for objective measurement of learning gains, while the pretest-posttest structure captures individual learner progress.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools within the Oras East District, under the Schools Division of Eastern Samar. This district was chosen because of its active implementation of remedial reading programs led by Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers, as part of the provincial government's learning recovery initiative. The schools included in the study have existing records of Phil-IRI assessments and assigned remedial reading facilitators.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 50 Grades 4 to 6 learners who had been identified as struggling, frustrated, and instructional readers through their Phil-IRI pre-assessment results. These learners were purposively selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) enrolled in Grades 4, 5, or 6 during School Year 2024–2025; (2) identified as *Struggling*, *Frustrated*, or *Instructional* readers in their pre-intervention Phil-IRI assessments; (3) participated in a structured remedial reading program facilitated by either a Provincial- or LGU-Funded Teacher; and (4) completed the post-intervention Phil-IRI assessment. The remedial sessions took place within the regular class schedule or as pull-out sessions over a designated intervention period.

Sampling Technique

The study utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique wherein participants are selected based on specific characteristics aligned with the study objectives. The selection was coordinated with classroom teachers and school heads to ensure that only those learners who had complete and verifiable Phil-IRI pre- and post-assessment records and underwent actual intervention were included. This approach ensured consistency in measuring the impact of the same type of instructional support across different learners.

Research Instruments

The primary data collection instrument was the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) developed by the Department of Education. It includes two components: (1) Oral Reading Test, which measures learners' ability to decode text fluently and accurately; and (2) Reading Comprehension Test, which assesses learners' ability to understand and interpret text based on literal and inferential questions. Based on performance, learners are classified into four reading levels: Struggling (Nonreader), Frustrated, Instructional, and Independent. These levels were coded numerically (1 to 4) for statistical analysis, with pre- and post-intervention scores used to evaluate changes in reading proficiency.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carried out in a structured and systematic manner. Initially, formal letters were sent to the Schools Division Superintendent and participating school heads to obtain official approval for data access and

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coordination. Once permission was granted, the researcher retrieved the learners' Phil-IRI pre-assessment results from the reading coordinators or class advisers, including their respective classifications based on reading proficiency levels. Following this, the learners received remedial reading instruction facilitated by Provincial- or LGU-funded teachers. These sessions typically emphasized foundational reading skills such as phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension strategies, and were conducted over a period of approximately 10 to 12 weeks. After the intervention, the same group of learners underwent the Phil-IRI post-assessment using the same protocols as the initial assessment. The results from both assessments were encoded into a spreadsheet using standardized numerical codes (1 = Struggling, 2 = Frustrated, 3 = Instructional, 4 = Independent), and the changes between pre- and post-test scores were computed. Finally, the researcher conducted data validation and cleaning by verifying the consistency of entries and removing any incomplete or unmatched records to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the dataset.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to address the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics were employed to present the distribution of learners across the four Phil-IRI reading proficiency levels – Struggling, Frustrated, Instructional, and Independent – before and after the intervention. Frequency counts and corresponding percentages were computed to illustrate the movement of learners between levels, providing a clear picture of the changes in reading proficiency. For inferential analysis, the study utilized the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, a non-parametric statistical method appropriate for paired ordinal data. This test was used to determine whether the observed differences between pre- and post-assessment scores were statistically significant. All statistical computations were carried out using appropriate data analysis software such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The findings were then interpreted in the context of the study's research questions and supported by relevant literature.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles in conducting educational research. Written consent was obtained from parents or guardians of participating learners. Confidentiality of personal data was maintained throughout the study, and results were anonymized. Approval was also sought from the school authorities to ensure compliance with institutional policies. The results of the study will be shared with stakeholders and used to inform reading remediation practices in the district.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reading Proficiency of Intermediate Learners Before the Intervention

The first objective of this study was to determine the reading proficiency levels of Grades 4 to 6 learners before the remedial reading intervention conducted by Provincial- and LGU-Paid Teachers. Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of pre-test reading proficiency levels. Based on the Phil-IRI pre-assessment results, a large proportion of the 50 learners were categorized under the lower proficiency levels, with 6 learners (12%) classified as "Struggling" and 35 learners (70%) as "Frustrated". Only 9 learners (18%) were considered "Instructional", and none fell under the "Independent" category prior to the intervention. This distribution indicates that a majority of the respondents were unable to comprehend grade-level reading materials independently. This finding aligns with the report of DepEd (2023) and SEA-PLM data (UNICEF, 2020), which found that many Filipino learners, especially in rural schools, continue to struggle with reading proficiency beyond the early grades. As highlighted by Garcia et al. (2020), such patterns reflect systemic literacy challenges, particularly in underserved regions like Eastern Samar.

Table 1. ***Distribution of Pre-Test Phil-IRI Reading Proficiency Levels***

Reading Level	Pre-Test Count	Percentage
1 – Struggling	6	12%
2 – Frustrated	35	70%
3 – Instructional	9	18%
4 – Independent	0	0%
TOTAL	50	100%

Reading Proficiency of Intermediate Learners After the Intervention

Following the implementation of the remedial reading sessions by Provincial- and LGU-Paid Teachers, post-assessment results revealed a marked shift in learners' reading proficiency levels as shown in Table 2. Only 15 learners (30%) remained within the lower two levels, with no learners categorized as "Struggling", and only 15 (30%) as "Frustrated". In contrast, 23 learners (46%) were assessed at the "Instructional" level, and 12 learners (24%) achieved the "Independent" reading level which is a substantial improvement from the pre-intervention state. This considerable improvement suggests that the remedial instruction not only helped learners transition from struggling and frustrated categories but also moved a meaningful portion into instructional and independent proficiency levels. These improvements support the findings of Arevalo (2023), who observed significant reading gains among intermediate learners after a structured 10-week intervention. Similar gains were reported by Cagsawa et al. (2024), who emphasized that even short-term, focused remediation could bridge reading gaps in Grades 3 to 5 when implemented consistently.

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Table 2. ***Distribution of Post-Test Phil-IRI Reading Proficiency Levels***

Reading Level	Pre-Test Count	Percentage
1 – Struggling	0	0%
2 – Frustrated	15	30%
3 – Instructional	23	46%
4 – Independent	12	24%
TOTAL	50	100%

The increase in learners achieving Instructional and Independent levels (from 18% to 70%) underscores the effectiveness of the remedial intervention. These findings support earlier studies by Arevalo (2023) and Cagsawa et al. (2024), who also documented significant literacy gains among intermediate learners after sustained remedial instruction. Furthermore, the upward movement of learners across proficiency levels highlights the potential of targeted support to reverse learning setbacks among struggling readers.

To better visualize the impact of the intervention, Figure 1 illustrates the comparison between pre- and post-test results across the four proficiency levels. The chart reflects a clear upward trend, indicating a downward shift in lower-level readers and an upward movement in higher proficiency categories, particularly those reaching the "Instructional" and "Independent" levels.

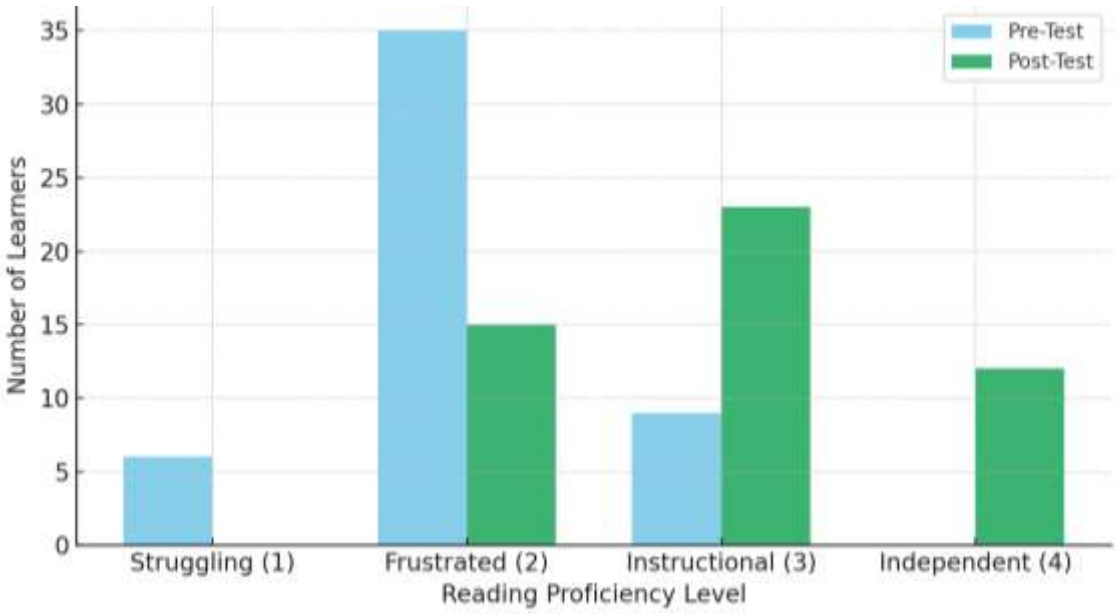


Figure 1. ***Comparison of Phil-IRI Pre-Test and Post-Test Reading Proficiency Levels***

Statistical Significance of the Change in Proficiency Levels

To statistically determine the effectiveness of the intervention, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, which is appropriate for paired ordinal data, was performed to compare the pre- and post-assessment scores. The summary of the Wilcoxon test is shown in Table 3. The test yielded a Z value of 0.0 and a p-value of 5.18×10^{8}, which is well below the standard threshold of significance ($p < 0.05$). Since the p-value is well below the standard significance level of 0.05, the result confirms that there is a statistically significant difference between the Phil-IRI pre- and post-assessment scores. This indicates that the improvement was not due to chance, but likely the result of the remedial reading instruction administered by the Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers. This outcome is consistent with the results of Tampus (2024), who used Phil-IRI to document statistically significant improvements among Grade 4 pupils following structured reading remediation. Further, the findings of this study demonstrate that remedial reading interventions, when consistently and systematically implemented, can result in measurable gains in reading proficiency among intermediate learners. More importantly, the results validate the instructional value of Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers, whose targeted efforts directly contributed to the upward shifts in reading levels.

Table 3. ***Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Result for Pre- and Post-Test Comparison***

Test	Statistic	p-value
Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test	0.0	5.08×10^{-8}

To further understand the learning gains, a comparison of movement across reading levels is presented in Table 4. The shift from Struggling and Frustrated to Instructional and Independent reflects both individual progress and the overall

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effectiveness of the intervention. It also validates the strategic deployment of Provincial- and LGU-paid teachers, as advocated by the Department of Education and the Provincial Government of Eastern Samar (PIA, 2023), to address foundational literacy gaps. These results are consistent with the literature that emphasizes the importance of localized, teacher-led interventions (Geroso, 2024; Reyes & Santos, 2021) and affirm that intermediate learners, though often overlooked, can still achieve literacy recovery when given appropriate support. The significant drop in struggling readers and the emergence of independent readers within a short span of intervention points to the potential scalability of such efforts in similar underserved districts.

Table 4. ***Interpretation of Reading Level Changes***

Reading Level	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Change	Interpretation
1 – Struggling	6	0	-6	Decrease in Learners
2 – Frustrated	35	15	-20	Decrease in Learners
3 – Instructional	9	23	+14	Increase in Learners
4 – Independent	0	12	+12	Increase in Learners

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Remedial reading instruction conducted by Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers significantly improves the reading proficiency of intermediate learners. The shift in learner reading levels, as measured by the Phil-IRI, was not only observable but also statistically meaningful.
2. Learners who began the intervention with reading difficulties, particularly those classified as *Struggling* or *Frustrated*, demonstrated meaningful upward movement in their proficiency levels after receiving focused, small-group remediation. Several learners even reached the *Independent* reading level, suggesting that recovery is possible with consistent and well-structured support.
3. The role of Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers was validated as effective and essential in supporting public schools, particularly in rural and resource-constrained districts. Their contribution highlights the importance of localized and community-based teaching initiatives in accelerating learning recovery and improving literacy outcomes.
4. The use of Phil-IRI as a tool for both diagnosis and outcome measurement also proved beneficial, enabling teachers and researchers to monitor progress using standardized benchmarks.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were offered:

1. The Schools Division of Eastern Samar and the Provincial Government should continue and strengthen the deployment of Provincial- and LGU-funded teachers in reading remediation programs. Given their proven effectiveness, sustained support and investment are warranted.
2. School heads and reading coordinators should ensure the systematic use of Phil-IRI not only for identifying struggling readers but also for tracking learner progress and evaluating the outcomes of intervention programs.
3. Teachers, particularly those assigned to remedial reading tasks, should be provided with capacity-building programs and teaching resources to improve instructional delivery and ensure fidelity to effective reading strategies.
4. Future researchers may consider expanding the study to include other districts or a larger sample size, compare different intervention models, or explore the long-term retention of literacy gains among intermediate learners.
5. Policymakers at the regional and national levels should explore ways to institutionalize the role of locally funded teaching personnel in learning recovery, ensuring that their contributions are formally recognized and strategically integrated into basic education reforms.

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