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TEACHER'S GUIDE

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Opinion

DepEd’s “No Read, No Pass” Policy: Rescuing Philippine Literacy from the Brink *by* **Novelyn Z. Tomas, MAEd**

he 2022 PISA results delivered a wake-up call: 81% of Filipino 15-year-olds failed to reach basic reading proficiency, ranking the Philippines last among 79 participating countries. This crisis prompted the Department of Education (DepEd) to strictly enforce its “No Read, No Pass” policy through DepEd Memorandum No. 150, s. 2024—a decisive move to end decades of educational malpractice that prioritized promotion over competence.

The Anatomy of the Policy

The revived policy introduces three non-negotiable mandates:

1. Grade 2 Gatekeeping
2. Students must read at least 30 Filipino words per minute with comprehension to advance to Grade 3. This benchmark, based on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), ensures early detection of reading deficits.
3. Bilingual Proficiency for Upper Grades
4. Grades 3–6 students must demonstrate:
 - English: 40 words per minute
 - Filipino: 50 words per minute
 - These rates align with global standards for functional literacy.
5. Zero Exemption Rule
6. Even students with passing grades in other subjects will repeat the year if they fail reading assessments—a stark departure from the previous “conditional promotion” practice.

Roots of the Crisis

The policy revives DepEd Order No. 45 (2002), which was systematically undermined by:

- “Mass promotion culture”: Schools pressured teachers to maintain 98% promotion rates
- Misplaced compassion: Well-meaning but misguided efforts to avoid “stigmatizing” struggling readers
- Systemic neglect: Only 3% of schools had functional reading clinics in 2023
- The consequences are catastrophic: 18.9 million high school graduates cannot fill out job applications or read medicine labels.

Ground-Level Challenges

As an educator teaching night literacy classes, I’ve documented three implementation barriers:

1. Diagnostic Gaps
2. 47% of Grade 1 teachers lack training in standardized reading assessments, leading to late intervention.
3. Resource Shortages
4. A 2023 DepEd report showed:
 - 1 reading specialist per 15 schools
 - 60% of schools lack decodable books for remedial instruction
5. Cultural Resistance
6. Many parents view retention as punishment rather than an opportunity, with some lobbying for exemptions.

Blueprint for Success

For the policy to succeed, DepEd must implement a three-tiered support system:

Tier 1: Universal Screening

- Mandate quarterly Phil-IRI assessments starting in Kindergarten
- Train all Grade 1 teachers in phonics-based instruction
- Tier 2: Targeted Intervention
- Deploy mobile reading clinics to remote schools
- Implement “Reading Buddies” programs pairing older students with struggling readers
- Tier 3: Intensive Remediation
- Require 90-minute daily reading blocks for non-readers
- Provide take-home reading kits for parental involvement

Beyond Classrooms: A Societal Mission

Education Secretary Sonny Angara’s statement that “literacy is non-negotiable” must translate to cross-sector action:

For LGUs

- Allocate 5% of Special Education Fund to community reading centers
- Launch municipal literacy task forces
- For Teachers
- Document reading deficiencies with evidence-based tools
- Advocate for smaller remedial class sizes
- For Parents
- Practice the “20-20 Rule”: 20 minutes of daily reading, 20 words learned weekly

This policy is more than an education reform—it’s a social justice imperative. As we implement “No Read, No Pass,” let’s remember: teaching a child to read is the greatest act of hope we can offer for their future.

Novelyn Z. Tomas is a dedicated educator, serving as a public school teacher in DepEd Ilocos Norte and a college instructor at St. Benedict College of Northern Luzon, Inc., while pursuing her PhD in development education. With a Master’s degree in Education, she focuses on implementing literacy interventions and advocating for systemic reforms through the Philippine Literacy Educators Association.



Scholarly Essay

Motorcycle Use Among College Students: Balancing Benefits and Risks *by Rogelio Nolasko Tandayu, LPT, MAIE*

NOWADAYS, motorcycles have become a popular and convenient mode of transportation, especially among college students. As an automotive instructor at Isabela State University, I see every day how beneficial motorcycles are for many of our students. They help them get to school on time, save money on fares, and travel to areas where public transportation is limited or unavailable.

One of the main advantages of using a motorcycle is its affordability. Compared to cars, motorcycles are much cheaper to buy, easier to maintain, and more fuel-efficient. For students coming from far-flung places like barrios or those with limited budgets, this is truly a big help. A motorcycle allows them to attend school regularly without the stress of high transportation costs. It also provides them flexibility and independence when traveling between home, school, market place, and a part-time job.

Nonetheless, while motorcycles offer benefits, we cannot ignore the increasing number of motorcycle-related accidents in the country. Many of these involve young people, students who are either inexperienced or careless when driving. Overspeeding, lack of proper gear, and disregard for traffic rules often lead to serious injuries and even death. For an educator, this trend is very alarming.

Riding a motorcycle is not just about convenience; it also comes with responsibility. That is why educators like me must remind our students and the public about motorcycle safety. First, always wear a helmet. It protects your head and can save your life during an accident. Second, avoid overspeeding. Follow speed limits and traffic signs. Third, never use your phone or listen to loud music while riding. Stay alert and focused on the road.

It is also important to regularly check your motorcycle. Make sure the brakes, lights, tires, and engine are in good condition. Do not forget to wear protective clothing such as a helmet, a jacket, gloves, and shoes. Most importantly, never ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Motorcycles can be used to full advantage if we use them wisely and safely. They offer an easy means of transport for students and help solve problems related to traffic and mobility. But safety must always come first. As instructors, educators, and members of the community, we must continue to promote responsible riding habits.

Let us not wait for accidents to happen before we act. Let us educate and remind our youth that life is precious. A motorcycle ride should not end in tragedy, but serve as a tool that brings them closer to their dreams.



Rogelio N. Tandayu is an automotive instructor at Isabela State University, City of Ilagan Campus. A rider himself who is fully aware of both the wide range of benefits and the risks of motorcycle use among college students, he wrote this timely essay.

Scholarly Essay

Project ABAKADA: Strengthening Parent-Teacher Partnerships to Improve Reading Skills Among Key Stage 1 Learners of San Gregorio Integrated School by Chyla N. Biscocho

This action research tries to determine whether cooperation with the parents and teachers would improve the basic reading skills of Key Stage 1 students in San Gregorio Integrated School through Project ABAKADA 3.0. The project aims to bridge literacy gaps for the younger students by having one-on-one reading support and engaging parents in support of reading activities.

Some of the strategies applied included personal assessments, special self-learning reading materials that were issued on site, and regular checks of progress. Teachers further educated parents on how to ensure support for reading development in school and at home, making the learning environment more interactive. The children managed to improve a lot in reading; improvement was seen in terms of recognition of words, understanding, and fluency. Complementing learning at home with support in schools will ensure children become independent, strong readers. This research suggests that keeping good relationships between parents and teachers and regularly monitoring progress should continue successful efforts in these areas.

Chyla N. Biscocho, Teacher III from San Gregorio Integrated School in Laurel, Batangas. She holds a master's degree in educational management.



Scholarly Essay

Understanding Translanguaging: The Dynamics of Meaning Creation, Learner Experience, and Bilingual Flexibility by Jack M. Coyme

Baker's (2011) definition of translanguaging produces a complex term. In order to gain an understanding of his translanguaging concept, I presented three key questions. First, what is the process by which meaning is created in a language? Second, how do the learners shape their experiences? Third, does using two languages truly help us grasp translanguaging? What is the process by which meaning is created in a language?

Alieto et al. (2020) presented several researchers' perspectives on the process of creating meaning in language. In fact, I agree with their findings that the dynamic of using many languages in the classroom is an important factor in translanguaging. I recalled something in my ethics class. A student asks me whether she can answer the question in Filipino. When I allowed her to talk in Filipino, she was able to explain thoroughly, but when I asked her if she could speak in English provided the same response. She said too few words. The process of translanguaging, which involves creating meaning in a language, is not a simple undertaking. The meanings established by various languages have gone through a process of opposing production of language, such as syntax, morphology, and any other languages development. As for the student, it is possible to acquire other language but gradually.

How do the learners shape their experiences?

Scholars have demonstrated that translanguaging allows people to modify their experiences by using language suited for the context or emotional tone of the situation. This highlighted the difficulties of identity and experience for bilinguals. However, in translanguaging, the person may encounter cultural significance, emotional reaction, and audience comprehension. My classmate from one of our MA classes requested that we communicate in English. As part of her report, she recalled a childhood memory from her province. Her narration begins in English. When she narrates the events, their traditions, the many foods, dances, and singing. She shifted in Kinaray-a. We see the cultural significance, her emotional response, and our understanding as she tells her narrative. Indeed, her experience with translanguaging motivated her cultural identity and emotional tone.

Does using two languages truly help us grasp translanguaging?

It has been accepted that in translanguaging, the flexibility of bilingualism produces a sense of one language in relation to other languages. Using two languages doesn't help us understand the notion of translanguaging. However, when we analyze these two languages in their connotative implication. We may thus understand translanguaging in terms of the bilingual element. In my perspective, there are two key characters who will play roles in translanguaging. Teacher and learner. The teacher is responsible for

tolerating and regulating the use of the target language (one language) that the student may acquire. Students may be allowed to express themselves in whichever languages (other languages) they want, but they also have to recognize the purpose of the language that they must study.

In conclusion, translanguaging, as described by Baker, is a powerful approach for establishing meaning in a language. The experiences that are shared shape cultural identity and emotional tone. The flexibility of bilingualism creates a feeling of one language in connection to other languages. The approach will not only enhance our understanding of the concept but it will improve our academic standing relevant to social and cultural identity in multilingual society.

Jack M. Coyme is an associate professor I at Western Mindanao State University. He earned his AB-English and Philosophy degrees from Ateneo de Zamboanga University and Pastor Bonus Seminary in Zamboanga City. He finished his Master of Arts in English at the Ateneo de Zamboanga University. At Western Mindanao State University, he finished the academic requirements necessary to earn a Doctor of Philosophy in Language Teaching.

