

Practices, Problems, And Perspectives Of Reading Program Administrators In Ip-Dominated Basic Education Institutions: Foundations For A Reading Program Academy

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Abstract

Literacy remains a global priority, yet Indigenous learners continue to face barriers to culturally responsive reading programs, a concern evident in Indigenous Peoples (IP)-dominated schools in Talaingod. Despite growing attention to literacy in marginalized settings, little research has examined the perspectives of reading program administrators who shape literacy initiatives in these communities. To address this gap, the study explored the practices, problems, and perspectives of reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education institutions as a basis for establishing a reading program academy. Using a qualitative case study design, the research engaged twelve purposively selected reading coordinators from elementary, secondary, and integrated schools, and employed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The results show that administrators employed culturally anchored practices, including localized materials, community engagement, context-sensitive assessments, everyday coaching, and flexible scheduling. They also faced persistent challenges such as limited culturally aligned resources, teacher shortages, weak home-school literacy reinforcement, unstable funding, and the linguistic diversity of learners. Administrators expressed a unified vision for a Reading Program Academy that would strengthen teacher preparation for IP contexts, formalize school-community partnerships, support the development of localized reading resources, and establish culturally informed evaluation systems. These insights highlight the need for an academy that equips administrators, coordinators, and teachers with the culturally responsive leadership and instructional competencies required to sustain meaningful literacy development in indigenous communities....

Keywords culturally-responsive literacy, indigenous peoples education, reading program administrators, reading program practices, Philippines..

Introduction

Literacy is globally recognized as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of social and economic development, enabling individuals to access knowledge, participate fully in society, and cultivate lifelong learning (Crawford et al., 2024; OECD, 2012; Shea & Ceprano, 2017). As a foundational skill, reading supports critical thinking, communication, and equitable participation in society (Rico-Juan et al., 2024; Stocker et al., 2023), making it central to global development agendas such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 on Quality Education, SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities, and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) context, literacy continues to be a strategic priority under the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021–2025, which emphasizes inclusivity and equity as key drivers of regional educational development (Hashim, 2023).

Despite these commitments, substantial disparities in literacy attainment persist, especially among Indigenous Peoples (IPs). Global evidence indicates that indigenous learners in countries such as Canada, New Zealand, and Australia encounter persistent difficulties in literacy acquisition due to structural inequities, language barriers, and the inadequate recognition of cultural contexts (Gillon et al., 2024; Gutierrez et al., 2019). Similar patterns are evident across ASEAN member states, including Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar, where indigenous and ethnic minority learners face disparities linked to linguistic diversity, geographic isolation, and limited access to culturally relevant reading materials (Spink & Cheng, 2020; Yusooff et al., 2025).

One gap emerging from existing scholarship is the limited attention given to reading program administrators, despite their central role in planning, implementing, and sustaining literacy programs in indigenous settings (Bennet & Lancaster, 2012; Klieve & Flückiger, 2015). Available literature in the Philippines and Southeast Asia predominantly focuses on learners' performance or teachers' instructional practices, with minimal examination of how administrators navigate the complex realities of literacy management in IP communities. This lack of attention restricts understanding of how leadership decisions influence program coherence, cultural responsiveness, and literacy outcomes for IP learners.

Another gap involves the lack of structured frameworks and professional development models that address the intersection of literacy leadership, cultural diversity, and indigenous education (Bennett et al., 2017; Cheesman & Pry, 2010; Gutierrez et al., 2019). Studies indicate that existing training programs for administrators often rely on generic leadership models that do not reflect the linguistic demands, community dynamics, or culturally rooted learning systems present in IP-dominated schools (Pont et al., 2008). As a result, administrators often implement fragmented or short-term literacy initiatives that fail to fully align with indigenous educational contexts.

In the Philippines, these concerns are particularly pronounced in IP-dominated basic education institutions where administrators must work within conditions marked by resource scarcity, multigrade classrooms, shifting community needs, and linguistic diversity (Bastida et al., 2024; Brooks & Brooks, 2018). Even with inclusive education policies in place, a mismatch persists between standardized literacy programs and the lived realities of IP learners, reinforcing the need for context-sensitive literacy leadership (Krasnoff, 2016).

Against this backdrop, this study examined the practices, problems, and perspectives of reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education schools. Specifically, it sought to identify their culturally anchored literacy practices, the challenges they face in planning and sustaining programs, and their perspectives on strategies and directions for strengthening literacy development.

Ultimately, the study aimed to establish the foundation for a Reading Program Academy, a dedicated institutional mechanism that would capacitate administrators, coordinators, and teachers through culturally responsive professional development, localized resource creation, and context-sensitive literacy leadership. By aligning with ASEAN educational priorities and global SDG commitments, the study contributes to advancing equitable and culturally grounded literacy systems for indigenous learners.

Objectives

This study aimed to explore the practices, problems, and perspectives of reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education institutions as a foundation for establishing a Reading Program Academy. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

What are the practices of reading program administrators in managing reading programs within IP-dominated basic education schools?

What problems do reading program administrators encounter in the planning, implementation, and sustainability of reading programs in IP-dominated basic education schools?

How do reading program administrators view strategies, opportunities, and directions for improving literacy programs that may inform the establishment of a Reading Program Academy?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The philosophical underpinning of this study was grounded in interpretivism, which emphasized the understanding of social realities through the perspectives and meanings that individuals assigned to their roles and contexts. In examining the practices, problems, and perspectives of reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education institutions, interpretivism was particularly suitable because it valued context-specific knowledge rather than universal generalizations. This perspective allowed the study to capture how administrators interpreted their responsibilities and challenges within culturally diverse and resource-limited environments. Such an orientation ensured that the findings were sensitive to cultural and institutional nuances, an essential consideration in educational research involving Indigenous Peoples.

Building on this foundation, the study employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach. A qualitative design was appropriate because it enabled the researchers to obtain detailed, descriptive accounts that revealed the depth and complexity of administrators' practices and challenges. The case study strategy further strengthened this orientation by providing an in-depth focus on IP-dominated institutions as bounded systems. The IP-dominated basic education institutions were examined as a case, allowing the research to highlight particular conditions while also identifying broader themes across multiple sites. This dual attention to uniqueness and pattern made the case study approach especially effective in generating the kind of nuanced understanding needed to inform the establishment of a Reading Program Academy.

Finally, the study used in-depth interviews as the primary method. Interviews were well suited to uncover the perspectives and reflections of reading program administrators in their own terms. They provided a flexible yet structured way of exploring how administrators managed reading programs, what problems they encountered, and how they envisioned improvements. Compared with surveys or standardized tools, in-depth interviews created opportunities for clarification, elaboration, and exploration of contextually significant issues. This method was particularly valuable in IP-dominated schools, where discussions on culturally relevant practices, pressing problems, and strategic perspectives required depth, sensitivity, and openness.

Research Locale

The research was conducted in the basic education institutions of Talaingod, Davao del Norte, covering the elementary schools, junior/senior high schools, and integrated schools, which served as the educational centers for the Ata-Manobo community. This locale was highly suitable for the study because Talaingod was predominantly inhabited by Indigenous Peoples, with the Ata-Manobo tribe representing one of the largest indigenous groups in the province. As such, its schools embodied the realities of IP-dominated education, where administrators were tasked with addressing the dual challenge of meeting national literacy standards while ensuring cultural sensitivity and relevance in reading programs. The area was also characterized by geographic isolation, resource limitations, and linguistic diversity, factors that directly influenced how reading initiatives were planned and managed. By focusing on Talaingod, the study was able to generate contextually grounded insights into the practices, problems, and perspectives of reading program administrators in IP settings, thereby offering a strong empirical basis for the envisioned establishment of a Reading Program Academy tailored to indigenous educational contexts.

Research Participants

This study employed purposive sampling to identify and select participants who were most knowledgeable and directly involved in the administration of reading programs in Indigenous Peoples (IP)-dominated basic education institutions. A total of 12 reading program coordinators served as participants, with representation across different school types to capture a broad perspective of practices, problems, and insights. Specifically, the participants consisted of four (4) coordinators from elementary schools, four (4) from junior and senior high schools, and four (4) from integrated schools. This distribution allowed the study to draw insights from varying institutional contexts, thereby ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of reading program administration in IP-dominated settings.

The selection of participants was guided by explicit inclusion criteria. First, they had to be designated as reading program coordinators or administrators in their respective schools, either formally appointed or recognized by their school heads. Second, they were required to be actively engaged in the planning, management, or monitoring of reading programs at the time of the study, ensuring that their perspectives were grounded in current realities. Third, participants needed to come from schools located in IP-dominated areas, particularly those serving the Ata-Manobo communities in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. Finally, a minimum of two years of experience in administering or coordinating reading programs was considered essential to ensure that participants had developed sufficient familiarity with the dynamics, challenges, and practices of literacy program management.

The justification for these criteria rests on the study's aim of generating contextually rich insights into the administration of reading programs within IP schools. Reading program coordinators were considered the most appropriate participants because they carried both managerial and instructional responsibilities that directly influenced the implementation and sustainability of literacy initiatives. By including representatives from elementary, secondary, and integrated schools, the study acknowledged the differences in reading demands, developmental needs, and program structures across grade levels. The two-year minimum experience requirement further ensured that participants had undergone at least two program cycles and had meaningful exposure to recurring challenges and institutional practices, thus strengthening the depth and reliability of their contributions. This purposeful and structured selection of participants contributed to the credibility, richness, and applicability of the findings, laying a strong foundation for recommendations toward establishing a Reading Program Academy. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of research participants of the study.

Table 1**Distribution of Research Participants**

Level	No. of Participants	Participants	IDI Code
Elementary Schools	4	School A Coordinator 01	RC_ES_01
		School B Coordinator 01	RC_ES_02
		School C Coordinator 01	RC_ES_03
		School D Coordinator 01	RC_ES_04
Junior/Senior High Schools	4	School E Coordinator 01	RC_HS_05
		School F Coordinator 01	RC_HS_06
		School G Coordinator 01	RC_HS_07
		School H Coordinator 01	RC_HS_08
Integrated Schools	4	School I Coordinator 01	RC_IS_09
		School J Coordinator 01	RC_IS_10
		School K Coordinator 01	RC_IS_11
		School L Coordinator 01	RC_IS_12
Total	12		

Table 1 presents the distribution of the research participants, who were composed of 12 reading program coordinators drawn from IP-dominated basic education institutions in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. The participants were equally distributed across three school levels: four from elementary schools, four from secondary schools (junior/senior), and four from integrated schools. This balance ensured that the study captured perspectives from different institutional contexts, reflecting the varied demands of literacy program management across the basic education spectrum.

For purposes of confidentiality and organization, each participant was assigned an In-Depth Interview (IDI) code. The coding system followed a structured format: ‘RC’ denoted Reading Coordinator, followed by an abbreviation of the school level (‘ES’ for Elementary Schools, ‘HS’ for High Schools, and ‘IS’ for Integrated Schools) and a numerical sequence that indicated the order of participants within each category (e.g., RC_ES_01, RC_HS_05, RC_IS_09). This system allowed the researcher to refer to participants consistently in the findings and analysis while protecting their identities. Importantly, the codes did not signify hierarchy, rank, or seniority, but merely served as neutral identifiers for clarity and anonymity.

The use of this coding scheme was particularly effective for data analysis and presentation. It enabled the systematic attribution of responses, making it easier to trace which insights came from which level of school while still ensuring that individuals and institutions remained confidential. For instance, perspectives on resource challenges could be compared between RC_ES_01 and RC_IS_11 without revealing the actual names of schools or coordinators. By adopting this approach, the study adhered to ethical research practices, safeguarded participants’ privacy, and maintained analytical rigor. The codes, therefore, served a dual function: they were protective measures for anonymity and practical tools for managing and presenting the qualitative data.

Data Gathering Procedure

The process of gathering data for this study was carefully designed to ensure rigor, ethical compliance, and contextual sensitivity in exploring the practices, problems, and insights of reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education institutions. Each step of the procedure was carried out systematically, beginning with formal agreements to secure institutional approval and access, followed by participant selection and ethical clearance through informed consent. The researchers then employed in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection, complemented by careful transcription, validation, and coding to maintain accuracy and credibility. This structured process ensured that the information gathered was authentic, reliable, and representative of the realities within the schools of Talaingod, Davao del Norte. The study followed the following steps:

Forging a Memorandum of Agreement for the Conduct the Study Between Davao del Norte State College and Department of Education Davao del Norte Schools Division Office. The study began with the forging of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Davao del Norte State College and the Department of Education (DepEd) Davao del Norte Schools Division Office. This formal agreement authorized the conduct of the research and outlined the responsibilities of both institutions. Establishing the MOA ensured legitimacy, secured institutional support, and facilitated access to the selected IP-dominated schools where the study was conducted.

Coordinating with the Department of Education Talaingod Public Schools District Supervisor's Office for Schools and Participants Profile. Following the MOA, the researchers coordinated with the District Supervisor's Office of DepEd Talaingod. This step allowed the researchers to obtain the list of schools and profiles of potential participants who met the inclusion criteria. Coordination with the district office was necessary to identify qualified reading program coordinators, secure endorsements, and ensure that the process complied with DepEd procedures and local protocols.

Administering Informed Consents to Research Participants and Conducting Inception Meetings. Once the schools and participants were identified, the researchers administered informed consent forms to the selected reading program coordinators. These forms explained the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. Inception meetings were also conducted to discuss the scope of the study, clarify expectations, and build rapport with the participants. This step guaranteed that the participants fully understood the study and willingly agreed to take part.

Conducting In-Depth Interviews with the Research Participants. After consent was secured, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the twelve reading program coordinators. The interviews served as the main method of data collection and focused on eliciting detailed accounts of their practices, problems, and insights in administering reading programs in IP-dominated schools. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to capture complete and accurate responses.

Transcribing Interviews' Audio-Recordings. The audio recordings of the interviews were then transcribed verbatim by the researchers. This process provided a written record of the coordinators' responses, which served as the primary data set for analysis. Transcriptions ensured accuracy, preserved the richness of the participants' perspectives, and allowed for systematic coding and categorization of information.

Subjecting Interview Transcripts for Member-Checking and Validation. The transcribed interviews were subjected to member-checking, in which participants reviewed their transcripts to verify accuracy and authenticity. In addition, the transcripts were validated by experts to ensure their truthfulness and fidelity to the audio recordings. This two-fold validation process allowed participants to confirm that their statements were correctly represented while ensuring technical accuracy through expert review. It also gave participants the opportunity to clarify or refine their responses. Together, these measures strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

Assigning Codes to the Validated Transcripts. Finally, the validated transcripts were assigned identification codes to maintain anonymity and organize the data systematically. Codes such as RC_ES_01, RC_HS_06, and RC_IS_11 indicated the participant's role as a reading coordinator, the school level (elementary, high school, or integrated school), and the sequence number of the participant within each category. Sentences were also coded for traceability, using a format such as [RC_ES_01_S01], where "S01" represented the first sentence in the transcript. This dual coding system ensured both confidentiality and precision in referencing, enabling efficient data management and supporting the thematic analysis of practices, problems, and insights.

Research Instrument

The researcher-made interview guide was developed to gather data through in-depth interviews. Its construction was guided by the study's three research questions, with each question supported by five probing items to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the practices, problems, and perspectives of reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education institutions. The initial pool of questions was drafted based on a review of literature on reading program administration, indigenous education, and instructional leadership.

The instrument underwent content validation by three experts in reading education, language teaching, and educational management, who evaluated the clarity, relevance, and alignment of each item with the study variables. The validation yielded a high content validity index (CVI = .92), indicating strong expert agreement on item suitability. After incorporating the validators' suggestions, the instrument was pilot-tested with non-participating informants possessing similar characteristics to the target participants. The pilot testing confirmed that the questions were clear, logically sequenced, and capable of eliciting rich and meaningful responses. Minor refinements were made to improve wording precision and interview flow, resulting in a final version that was ready for full implementation in the main data-gathering phase.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, which provided a systematic and flexible framework for interpreting qualitative data according to the procedures recommended by qualitative methodologists (Morse et al., 2002). The researchers followed the six phases of thematic analysis. First, in the familiarization phase, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, verified for accuracy, anonymized, and read repeatedly. During this stage, the researchers manually wrote reflexive notes to record initial observations, emerging ideas, and contextual insights, strengthening their immersion in the dataset.

Second, in the coding phase, the researchers manually conducted line-by-line coding of all transcripts. Codes captured both semantic (explicit) and latent (underlying) meanings. A researcher-developed codebook was created to define each code, specify inclusion and exclusion criteria, and document illustrative excerpts. This codebook was refined iteratively as the researchers identified additional patterns and clarified conceptual boundaries. Third, in searching for themes, the researchers grouped related codes into broader conceptual categories to form initial themes. Manual clustering techniques, such as organizing printed codes, drafting tables, and constructing thematic diagrams, were used to identify patterned responses related to the practices, problems, and perspectives of reading program administrators.

Fourth, during the reviewing themes phase, each theme was examined for internal coherence and alignment with the full dataset. The researchers revisited coded extracts and reread transcripts to ensure that each theme accurately and meaningfully represented participants' accounts. Themes were reorganized, merged, or refined to enhance analytic clarity and coherence.

Fifth, in the defining and naming themes phase, the researchers finalized the scope, focus, and boundaries of each theme. Clear and concise names were assigned, and detailed theme descriptions were written to capture the central meaning and analytic significance of each theme. These descriptions were explicitly linked to the study's three research questions to ensure conceptual alignment.

Finally, in the reporting phase, the researchers synthesized the final thematic structure into a coherent narrative, integrating participants' quotations with interpretive insights. The resulting analysis provided a comprehensive explanation of how the practices, challenges, and perspectives of reading program administrators informed the conceptualization of a Reading Program Academy.

Validation of the analysis was achieved through member checking and external validation of the analytic outputs. For member checking, preliminary thematic summaries were shared with selected participants to review the accuracy, clarity, and completeness of interpretations. Their feedback confirmed the credibility of the themes and prompted refinement of several theme descriptions. For analytic validation, an independent reviewer examined the coded data, codebook, and thematic structure to assess the coherence and consistency of the analysis. This review ensured that the themes were firmly grounded in the data and that the researchers' interpretations logically emerged from participants' accounts.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure rigor in qualitative inquiry, the study adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria provided a structured framework for establishing the quality and authenticity of the findings and ensuring that the interpretations accurately reflected the experiences of reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education institutions.

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truthfulness of the findings. In this study, credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with the data, iterative reading of transcripts, and systematic thematic analysis. Member checking was also conducted, wherein preliminary thematic summaries were shared with selected participants to validate the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. Their feedback helped refine theme descriptions and confirm that the findings reflected their perspectives. Additionally, validation of the analysis by an independent reviewer further strengthened credibility by confirming that the thematic structure was coherent, consistent, and grounded in the dataset.

Transferability concerns the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts. This was ensured by providing thick, detailed descriptions of the institutional settings, participant profiles, and the socio-cultural environment of IP-dominated schools. These contextual descriptions enable readers to determine whether the study's insights may be applicable to other educational settings with similar characteristics. The thematic analysis also highlighted contextual nuances that help future researchers and practitioners assess the relevance of the findings to their contexts.

Dependability pertains to the stability and consistency of the research process over time. Dependability in this study was supported by maintaining a systematic and documented analytic process. Although the study involved manual analysis, the researchers kept detailed records of coding decisions, revisions to the codebook, reflexive notes, and analytic procedures. The independent review of the coded data and thematic structure served as an external check on the consistency of the analysis. These procedures allowed the research process to be traceable and replicable, ensuring that others could follow the logic and sequence of analytic decisions.

Confirmability addresses the neutrality of the findings and the degree to which they are shaped by participants rather than researcher bias. This study established confirmability through reflexive journaling, where the researchers documented assumptions, personal positions, and potential biases throughout the research process. These reflections were reviewed during analysis to minimize undue influence on the interpretation of data. Validation of the analysis by an external reviewer also contributed to confirmability by ensuring that the themes were supported by the data and not influenced by researcher predispositions. Furthermore, the presentation of direct participant quotations in the final thematic narrative demonstrated that the findings were grounded in actual participant experiences.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical standards to ensure the protection and well-being of all participants, particularly those working in IP-dominated basic education institutions. Participants were provided with clear information about the study's objectives, procedures, voluntary nature, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Written informed consent was secured before each in-depth interview (IDI), and confidentiality was upheld by removing identifying information from transcripts and using coded identifiers throughout the reporting process. All audio recordings, transcripts, and consent forms were stored securely in password-protected digital folders accessible only to the researchers.

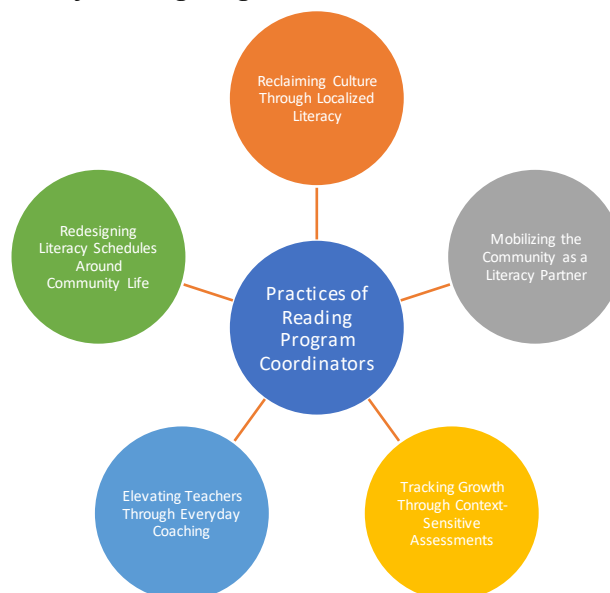
Cultural sensitivity was observed by consulting school leaders familiar with IP contexts and ensuring that the conduct of IDIs respected local customs, communication norms, and community values. The researchers carefully crafted interview questions to avoid psychological or professional harm, and participants were free to skip or decline any question they found uncomfortable. Data were managed with integrity, transcribed accurately, stored securely for the required retention period, and designated for proper disposal thereafter. Reflexive journaling supported the researchers in monitoring potential biases and maintaining ethical awareness throughout the study. The study was subjected to institutional ethics review to ensure compliance with national and institutional standards for research involving human participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Practices of Reading Program Administrators in Managing Reading Programs within IP-Dominated Basic Education Schools

Reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education schools implement a range of practices that reflect culturally grounded, community-oriented, and contextually responsive approaches to literacy development. Their work demonstrates how reading programs are organized, adapted, and sustained through strategies that honor indigenous culture, promote learner engagement, and strengthen collaboration with teachers and community members. Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the study identified clear patterns in how administrators design activities, localize materials, monitor learner progress, and coordinate literacy initiatives within their respective schools. Figure 1 illustrates the themes for the practices of reading program administrators in managing reading programs within IP-dominated basic education schools.

Figure 1 Practices of Reading Program Coordinators in IP-Dominated Schools



Theme 1. Reclaiming Culture Through Localized Literacy

Reading program administrators in Talaingod described how they intentionally anchored reading instruction in the cultural life of the Ata-Manobo community. They emphasized adapting and creating reading materials that incorporated familiar cultural elements such as ancestral narratives, forest environments, traditional livelihood practices, and community rituals. Administrators shared that learners appeared more motivated and confident when engaging with texts that resembled their daily experiences. They viewed this localization effort as essential in honoring the cultural identity of the children and creating entry points for them to participate meaningfully in reading activities.

The administrators' accounts reflect a strong alignment with global perspectives on culturally responsive literacy, which highlight that children learn more effectively when instruction is grounded in cultural familiarity (Manera et al., 2025; McIntyre & Hulan, 2012; Pedrosa et al., 2023). Their decisions to use localized texts indicate an understanding that literacy is not simply a cognitive task but also an emotional and cultural experience. For the Ata-Manobo learners, whose earliest learning occurs through oral tradition, familiar stories act as bridges between community knowledge and school-based print literacy. The administrators' actions demonstrate that localized literacy supports comprehension, reduces learner anxiety, and affirms identity, leading to richer engagement with reading tasks.

This theme suggests that for literacy programs in IP contexts to thrive, localization should be recognized as a core instructional and leadership practice rather than an add-on strategy. The findings imply that reading program success in Talaingod depends on the continued integration of indigenous narratives and cultural experiences into instructional materials (Nataño, 2023; Promma & Saihong, 2025). The administrators' practices also point to the need for structured support in developing culturally grounded reading resources and fostering collaboration with elders who safeguard cultural knowledge. Finally, the implication is that embedding culture in literacy instruction strengthens both learning outcomes and the cultural continuity of the Ata-Manobo community.

Theme 2. Mobilizing the Community as a Literacy Partner

Reading program administrators shared that mobilizing the community was central to their literacy work in Talaingod. They recounted inviting tribal elders, parents, and community leaders to participate in literacy activities such as storytelling sessions, reading corners, and school-based reading events. Administrators observed that when community members took part in reading activities, learners demonstrated heightened enthusiasm and interest. They viewed these engagements as opportunities to deepen the school's connection with the community while enriching the literacy experience with authentic cultural voices.

The administrators' perspectives are consistent with long-standing educational insights that emphasize the power of community involvement in supporting children's learning (Little, 2010; Stauss et al., 2020; Zeichner et al., 2016). In indigenous communities where knowledge transmission is traditionally communal, involving elders and parents reinforces the social nature of literacy and enhances the legitimacy of school-based reading programs (Wijaya et al., 2022; Woldegiorgis, 2021). Storytelling by elders, for example, strengthens oral language skills, narrative comprehension, and cultural rootedness, which the administrators viewed as foundational to early literacy. The administrators interpreted community involvement as a form of co-teaching that not only enriches literacy instruction but also affirms the communal values central to Ata-Manobo culture.

The theme implies that the sustainability and relevance of reading programs in Talaingod depend on intentional and continuous collaboration between schools and the community. The administrators' experiences suggest that literacy initiatives gain credibility, support, and long-term viability when communities are positioned as active partners rather than passive beneficiaries. This highlights the need for systems that institutionalize school-community collaboration, such as regular cultural consultations, shared reading events, and mechanisms for community members to contribute to literacy resources (Stauss et al., 2020). Overall, the implication is that mobilizing the community strengthens both literacy outcomes and social cohesion, making it a vital component of reading program leadership in IP-dominated schools.

Theme 3. Tracking Growth Through Context-Sensitive Assessments

Reading program administrators in Talaingod described how they consistently relied on context-sensitive assessments to monitor learners' reading progress. They shared that conventional assessment tools often failed to capture the actual abilities of Ata-Manobo learners, especially those still transitioning from oral traditions to formal print-based tasks. As a result, administrators used flexible and culturally attuned assessment practices such as oral reading checks, informal language conversations, and teacher-created comprehension tasks based on localized stories (Rayon, 2017). They emphasized conducting assessments in familiar settings, sometimes outdoors or in small-group environments, to reduce learner anxiety. These administrators viewed continuous and adaptive assessment as essential in understanding where learners were and how best to support their literacy development.

The administrators' approach reflects a global recognition that assessments must be responsive to cultural and linguistic contexts to accurately reflect learner growth (Choi et al., 2022; Sparks et al., 2024). In many indigenous communities, formal testing environments can create unnecessary pressure or may not align with learners' communication styles. The administrators' preference for oral and narrative-based assessments aligns with universal findings that young learners, especially those rooted in strong oral cultures, demonstrate comprehension more naturally through storytelling, conversation, and guided dialogue (McKeough et al., 2008). By adjusting assessment formats and environments, administrators sought to create inclusive opportunities for learners to demonstrate their skills. Their practice shows an understanding that assessment is not merely a measurement tool but an instructional guide that must be sensitive to learners' cultural identities and developmental trajectories. This theme suggests that effective literacy monitoring in IP-dominated schools requires assessment tools and routines that honor the cultural and linguistic realities of the learners. Administrators' experiences imply the need for institutional support in developing flexible, culturally grounded, and developmentally appropriate assessment frameworks for indigenous education settings (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Preston & Claypool, 2021). Their practices also highlight the importance of training teachers to design and interpret assessments that capture oral comprehension, cultural knowledge, and incremental reading growth. The implication is that context-sensitive assessments not only provide a more accurate picture of learners' literacy development but also support culturally respectful teaching practices. These assessment approaches help ensure that reading programs in Talaingod respond effectively to learner needs while affirming the cultural strengths that learners bring to the classroom.

Theme 4. Elevating Teachers Through Everyday Coaching

Reading program administrators in Talaingod described how everyday coaching became an essential component of their leadership practice in managing literacy programs. They explained that teachers in IP-dominated schools often faced unique challenges, including limited access to formal training, high teacher turnover, and the need to teach multigrade classes with diverse reading levels. In response, administrators provided frequent, informal coaching sessions that included co-teaching, quick feedback conversations, classroom demonstrations, and on-the-spot modeling of reading strategies. They shared that these coaching interactions often occurred during classroom visits, transitions between classes, or informal gatherings. Administrators believed that this hands-on, consistent presence helped teachers feel supported and more confident in delivering reading instruction tailored to Ata-Manobo learners.

The administrators' emphasis on everyday coaching aligns with universal insights in instructional leadership literature, which highlight that ongoing, job-embedded professional support fosters teacher growth more effectively than sporadic training (Caingcoy & Lincuna, 2020). Research widely acknowledges that teachers working in marginalized or culturally diverse contexts benefit from continuous mentoring that is responsive to their immediate instructional needs (Arnsby et al., 2023; Saylor et al., 2018). Administrators in Talaingod recognized that traditional one-shot seminars or centralized training programs were insufficient for addressing the nuanced realities of indigenous education. By positioning themselves as accessible mentors rather than distant supervisors, administrators enacted a relational form of leadership that nurtured trust, built teacher competence, and strengthened classroom practice. Their approach reflects global understandings that teacher development is most successful when embedded within authentic teaching contexts and informed by real-time classroom observations (Galdames-Calderon, 2023).

This theme highlights the importance of establishing sustained and context-responsive professional development systems in IP-dominated schools. The administrators' experiences suggest that school-based coaching should be formally recognized and supported as a core strategy for improving literacy instruction in indigenous settings (Robertson et al., 2019). Their practices underscore the need for educational agencies to invest in leadership development programs that equip school administrators with coaching skills tailored to culturally diverse classrooms. Additionally, the findings imply that everyday coaching contributes to teacher retention, instructional consistency, and improved learner outcomes. Ultimately, the implication is that elevating teachers through continuous coaching is not just an instructional support mechanism but a crucial leadership responsibility that strengthens the overall literacy environment for Ata-Manobo learners in Talaingod.

Theme 5. Redesigning Literacy Schedules Around Community Life

Reading program administrators in Talaingod explained that they continuously adjusted literacy schedules to align with the cultural rhythms, daily routines, and seasonal activities of the Ata-Manobo community. They shared that attendance patterns and learners' readiness to participate were strongly influenced by community obligations such as tribal gatherings, farming and harvesting seasons, and family mobility in upland areas. Administrators described how rigid class schedules often resulted in low participation, especially during culturally significant events. To address this, they implemented flexible scheduling strategies, such as conducting reading sessions during times when children were most available, integrating literacy tasks into community-centered activities, and

modifying the pacing of reading programs during peak agricultural periods (Rayon, 2017). They viewed this flexibility as necessary in ensuring consistent learner engagement despite the fluidity of community life. The administrators' practices are aligned with global insights emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive and context-aware educational systems, particularly in indigenous communities where learning schedules must reflect local rhythms rather than standardized institutional routines (Syafiulia et al., 2025; Veintie et al., 2024). Literature on indigenous education highlights that time structures in schools often clash with communal responsibilities, resulting in learner disengagement when schedules fail to accommodate cultural practices (Ramli et al., 2025). The administrators' decision to adapt literacy schedules demonstrates their recognition that effective teaching requires responsiveness to sociocultural contexts. By viewing time as a flexible resource rather than a fixed constraint, they positioned literacy instruction as something that should support, rather than disrupt, community life. This perspective reflects a broader understanding that learning is most effective when it respects the social ecology in which it takes place.

This theme suggests that flexible and culturally grounded scheduling should be embedded into literacy program design in IP-dominated schools. The administrators' experiences imply that standardized, uniform scheduling practices are insufficient in contexts where community life shapes learner availability and engagement (Nataño, 2023). Educational institutions and policymakers must consider creating guidelines that allow schools, particularly those serving indigenous learners, to implement adaptive scheduling without being constrained by rigid compliance requirements. The findings further suggest that when literacy schedules are aligned with community routines, learners participate more consistently, teachers experience less instructional disruption, and reading programs become more responsive and sustainable. Ultimately, this theme underscores that honoring the rhythm of community life is not only a cultural accommodation but also a strategic approach to strengthening literacy outcomes for Ata-Manobo learners in Talaingod.

Problems Encountered by Reading Program Administrators in Planning, Implementing, and Sustaining Reading Programs in IP-Dominated Basic Education Schools

Reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education schools in Talaingod navigate a literacy landscape shaped by persistent structural, cultural, and instructional challenges. As they plan, implement, and sustain reading programs, they confront constraints that extend beyond the classroom and reflect the broader realities of indigenous education. These challenges influence the continuity, quality, and cultural responsiveness of literacy initiatives and often require administrators to make complex, context-sensitive decisions with limited resources. The themes that emerged from the analysis illuminate how administrators experience and interpret these barriers, offering a nuanced understanding of the operational and systemic issues that shape literacy work in Ata-Manobo communities. Figure 2 presents the problems encountered by Reading Program Administrators in Planning, Implementing, and Sustaining Reading Programs in IP-Dominated Basic Education Schools.

Figure 2 Problems Encountered by Reading Program Administrators



Theme 1. Struggling With Scarce and Culturally-Mismatched Materials

Reading program administrators consistently described the lack of appropriate reading materials as a major constraint in implementing literacy programs in Talaingod. They shared that many available books were written in unfamiliar contexts, depicted urban lifestyles, or used vocabulary that did not resonate with the experiences of Ata-Manobo learners. Moreover, there were insufficient locally developed or mother-tongue-based materials to support early literacy instruction. Administrators expressed frustration that despite their efforts to localize instruction, the scarcity of culturally relevant texts limited what they could consistently provide in the classroom. The administrators' concerns mirror widely documented issues in indigenous education, where learners often struggle with texts that do not reflect their cultural environment (Nataño, 2023). Existing literature recognizes that culturally mismatched materials can impede motivation, comprehension, and connection to the learning process (Silva et al., 2023). The mismatch creates cognitive and emotional distance, making reading tasks more difficult for learners who are still acquiring foundational print literacy skills (Cheesman & Pry, 2010; Rayon, 2017). The administrators interpreted the scarcity not simply as a logistical challenge but as a barrier to culturally responsive instruction, recognizing that literacy development is closely tied to familiarity, identity, and meaningful representation in texts.

This theme suggests the need for strong institutional support in developing, producing, and distributing culturally grounded reading materials for IP-dominated schools. Policymakers and educational agencies must prioritize resource development that aligns with indigenous cultures and languages. The administrators' experiences imply that without adequate materials, even well-designed literacy programs may fall short of meeting learners' needs. Investing in culturally relevant texts would not only strengthen literacy outcomes but also reinforce cultural pride among Ata-Manobo learners. As such, addressing this scarcity is essential for achieving equitable literacy development in Talaingod.

Theme 2. Navigating Teacher Shortages and Instructional Instability

Reading program administrators reported persistent teacher shortages as a central challenge affecting reading program implementation. They recounted situations in which teachers were reassigned frequently, vacated posts remained unfilled, or newly deployed teachers were unprepared for multigrade teaching in an IP setting. Administrators noted that constant turnover disrupted classroom routines and made it difficult to sustain reading interventions. They expressed concern that learners experienced inconsistent instruction, especially in early grade levels where continuity was crucial.

The administrators' experiences align with global findings that teacher shortages disproportionately affect rural and indigenous communities (Carver-Thomas et al., 2024; McHenry-Sorber & Campbell, 2019; McPherson et al., 2025). Such shortages often lead to instructional instability, reduced instructional quality, and limited opportunities for teachers to build expertise in culturally responsive literacy practices (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). Administrators interpreted the instability as a threat to the continuity of reading instruction and to learner progress. The instability also affected teachers' confidence and preparedness, especially when faced with large, multigrade classrooms. For administrators, the teacher shortage was more than a staffing issue; it was a challenge that compromised the integrity of literacy programs.

This theme highlights the need for stronger teacher deployment policies and support mechanisms for educators assigned to IP-dominated schools. Administrators' experiences suggest that stable staffing, adequate preparation, and incentives for teacher retention are essential for sustaining literacy programs. Addressing these challenges would ensure consistent instruction, support professional growth, and improve learner outcomes. Without addressing teacher shortages, reading programs in Talaingod will continue to face systemic barriers to effectiveness.

Theme 3. Bridging Home-School Gaps in Literacy Support

Administrators shared that many parents in Talaingod had limited literacy skills or were preoccupied with livelihood activities, making it difficult for them to support reading tasks at home. They explained that although parents valued education, they often lacked time or the literacy background to reinforce reading skills. Administrators also observed that some families moved seasonally for work, causing irregular attendance and inconsistent home engagement with literacy activities. These gaps, they explained, weakened the home-school connection essential for sustained reading progress.

The administrators' accounts align with universal observations that literacy development is strongly influenced by home environments (Dahl-Leonard et al., 2025). Research consistently highlights that home literacy support, even in simple forms, enhances learner motivation and reading achievement (Capotosto et al., 2017). However, in many indigenous and economically challenged communities, systemic constraints such as low adult literacy, economic pressures, and seasonal mobility limit the capacity of families to engage in literacy activities (Dahl-

Leonard et al., 2025). The administrators interpreted this gap not as a lack of interest from parents, but as a structural reality that complicates efforts to reinforce reading outside school.

This theme suggests a need for accessible, culturally appropriate home-school literacy initiatives that accommodate the realities of IP families. Administrators' experiences imply that programs such as take-home reading kits, parent orientation sessions, community reading corners, and flexible family engagement strategies could help bridge this gap. Strengthening home-school partnerships would support literacy continuity despite socioeconomic and cultural challenges. Addressing the home-school gap is crucial for sustaining learner progress and ensuring that literacy efforts do not end when learners leave the classroom.

Theme 4. Surviving on Unstable Funding Streams

Reading program administrators described financial constraints as a persistent obstacle to planning and sustaining literacy initiatives. They explained that budgets allocated for reading programs were inconsistent, delayed, or insufficient. Administrators often relied on donations, personal funds, or partnerships with external organizations to supplement resources. They noted that the lack of stable funding made it difficult to procure materials, organize reading events, or maintain structured interventions over time.

The administrators' experiences reflect global patterns in educational systems where marginalized and remote schools often operate with limited financial support (Nurhasanah et al., 2025). Existing literature emphasizes that unstable funding undermines program continuity, restricts access to materials, and limits opportunities for innovation (Galut, 2025). Administrators in Talaingod interpreted these financial inconsistencies as threats to the sustainability of literacy programs. They recognized that without reliable funding, even the most committed interventions risk being interrupted or permanently halted.

This theme underscores the necessity for predictable and adequate financial support for literacy programs in IP-dominated contexts. Administrators' perspectives suggest that institutionalizing budget allocations for reading materials, teacher development, and community engagement activities is critical for program sustainability. Strengthening funding structures would allow administrators to plan long-term initiatives and reduce dependence on external donations. Addressing financial instability is essential for creating resilient and effective reading programs in Talaingod.

Theme 5. Teaching Amid Linguistic Complexity and Diverse Learner Readiness

Administrators described navigating linguistic diversity as a central instructional challenge. They shared that learners in Talaingod often spoke multiple dialects and entered school with varying levels of exposure to print and oral language. Teachers struggled to design lessons that addressed these diverse linguistic backgrounds while meeting curriculum expectations. Administrators expressed concern that learners who were unfamiliar with the language of instruction faced additional hurdles in decoding, vocabulary development, and comprehension. The administrators' observations are consistent with global research showing that linguistic diversity significantly influences literacy acquisition (Denopol & Omaña, 2024). Studies widely acknowledge that learners who encounter unfamiliar languages in school often experience delays in reading development (Nag et al., 2018). In indigenous settings where oral traditions dominate and multilingualism is common, learners may require more time and differentiated strategies to develop foundational literacy skills (Leighton, 2022). Administrators interpreted linguistic complexity as an inherent characteristic of their context, requiring instructional approaches that honor learners' linguistic identities while supporting gradual transition to formal literacy.

This theme highlights the need for multilingual and differentiated instructional strategies in literacy programs. Administrators' experiences suggest that teacher training in multilingual education, flexible lesson design, and mother-tongue instruction would significantly improve learner outcomes. Institutional support for developing multilingual teaching resources is also crucial. Addressing linguistic complexity is essential for ensuring equitable literacy development among Ata-Manobo learners and for strengthening the cultural and linguistic relevance of reading programs in Talaingod.

Perspectives of Reading Program Administrators on Strategies and Direction for a Reading Program Academy

Reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education schools articulated a forward-looking vision for strengthening literacy development through the establishment of a Reading Program Academy. Their perspectives reflect both the realities of their day-to-day leadership and their aspirations for a more coherent, culturally grounded, and sustainable literacy system for Ata-Manobo learners. Drawing from their perspectives, they emphasized the need for professional learning opportunities that honor indigenous contexts, stronger school-community partnerships, localized reading resources, and evaluation frameworks responsive to IP realities. The themes that emerged capture how administrators imagine an academy that not only addresses existing gaps but also elevates literacy leadership in culturally meaningful ways. Figure 3 illustrates the perspectives of Reading Program Administrators on Strategies and Direction for a Reading Program Academy.

Figure 3 Perspectives of Reading Program Administrators for a Reading Program Academy***Theme 1. Championing a Culturally-Rooted Literacy Vision***

Reading program administrators expressed that any proposed Reading Program Academy must be grounded in a culturally-rooted literacy philosophy that reflects the values, identities, and lived realities of Ata-Manobo learners. They emphasized that literacy development in Talaingod cannot be separated from culture and should honor indigenous stories, community knowledge, and ways of learning. Administrators believed that the Academy should champion a vision where reading is not merely a school requirement but an avenue for cultural affirmation. They saw this cultural rooting as essential for making literacy meaningful and relevant to indigenous learners. Administrators' perspectives resonate with global frameworks asserting that culturally responsive literacy enhances motivation, comprehension, and learner identity (Au, 2007; Cheesman & Pry, 2010; Esquiedo & De La Trinidad, 2023). A culturally-rooted vision positions literacy as an empowering process that bridges school-based learning with community heritage (Nombrado & Rayon, 2026; Piazza et al., 2015). Their emphasis suggests an understanding that literacy flourishes when aligned with indigenous worldviews, oral traditions, and cultural practices (Gutiérrez et al., 2009). Administrators interpreted culture as the foundation, not an accessory, of effective literacy instruction, aligning with universal literature that highlights the transformative impact of culturally sustaining pedagogy.

This theme implies that a Reading Program Academy should institutionalize culturally grounded principles at its core. Such an academy must prioritize curriculum designs, training modules, and leadership frameworks that elevate indigenous culture as a primary resource for literacy development. Administrators' views suggest that embedding culture into the Academy's philosophy could strengthen learners' engagement, enhance program acceptance in communities, and preserve cultural knowledge through literacy. Ultimately, a culturally-rooted vision ensures that the Academy becomes a space that empowers both literacy growth and cultural continuity.

Theme 2. Building Teachers Through IP-Responsive Professional Learning

Administrators highlighted the need for the Reading Program Academy to provide professional learning opportunities specifically tailored for educators in IP-dominated schools. They shared that teachers often lacked training in culturally responsive approaches, mother-tongue instruction, and strategies for multilingual or multigrade classrooms. Administrators believed that the Academy should serve as a dedicated training hub where teachers can develop the competencies needed to serve Ata-Manobo learners effectively. They envisioned

structured workshops, mentoring programs, and practice-based learning anchored in the realities of indigenous education.

This perspective aligns with worldwide findings that context-specific teacher preparation is essential for improving instruction in marginalized and culturally diverse settings (Nganga & Kambutu, 2024). Research consistently shows that teachers who receive targeted training in culturally sustaining pedagogies and multilingual education become more confident and effective in supporting learner progress (Caraballo et al., 2020; Nombrado & Rayon, 2026; Rodriguez-Mojica et al., 2020; Vega et al., 2024). Administrators interpreted teacher development as a powerful lever for improving literacy outcomes, viewing the Academy as a platform to professionalize and empower teachers through ongoing, localized training.

The theme suggests that the Reading Program Academy should prioritize teacher capacitation as a central function. Administrators' experiences imply the need for systematic, continuous, and context-responsive professional learning guided by indigenous education principles. Investing in teacher training would strengthen classroom practice, reduce instructional variability, and support long-term literacy gains. Ultimately, equipping teachers with specialized skills ensures that the Academy serves as an engine of instructional excellence in IP contexts.

Theme 3. Forging Stronger School-Community Literacy Alliances

Administrators envisioned the Academy as a mechanism for reinforcing school-community partnerships in literacy work. They emphasized that reading success in Talaingod depends heavily on the involvement of elders, parents, and community leaders. Administrators believed that the Academy should formalize and strengthen these collaborative relationships by providing space, structure, and shared activities that bring together school and community stakeholders. They explained that community involvement adds authenticity, cultural grounding, and a sense of shared ownership to literacy initiatives.

This perspective aligns with existing literature emphasizing that community engagement enhances educational outcomes, particularly in culturally diverse and indigenous contexts (Klieve & Flückiger, 2015; Stauss et al., 2020; Yasriuddin et al., 2025). Administrators recognized that community members hold cultural knowledge, narratives, and linguistic expertise crucial for meaningful literacy instruction. They interpreted collaboration not as a supplementary activity but as an essential pillar of literacy work. By envisioning the Academy as a bridge between schools and communities, they affirmed global insights that learning becomes more resonant when rooted in collective participation.

This theme suggests that the Reading Program Academy must institutionalize community partnerships as part of its structure and programming. Administrators' insights imply that designing community-led literacy events, partnerships with elders, and shared resource development should be integral Academy functions. Strengthening these alliances could increase community trust, broaden support for reading programs, and enhance the cultural relevance of literacy instruction. A community-centered Academy would ensure that literacy initiatives remain grounded in the collective values of the Ata-Manobo people.

Theme 4. Creating a Dynamic Hub for Localized Reading Resources

Reading program administrators expressed a strong desire for the Academy to serve as a central repository and production hub for localized reading materials. They recalled daily struggles with accessing culturally appropriate texts and viewed the Academy as an opportunity to consolidate, curate, and develop materials that reflect Ata-Manobo culture and language. Administrators imagined a space where teachers, cultural experts, and community members collaboratively create storybooks, big books, and learning aids rooted in indigenous experiences. The administrators' vision aligns with global understandings that culturally relevant materials significantly enhance literacy development (Primadesi et al., 2025; Weldemariam et al., 2023). International research supports the idea that localized resources improve learner engagement and comprehension, particularly for children from indigenous or marginalized communities (Calayon & Bantulo, 2025; Nombrado & Rayon, 2026). Administrators interpreted the Academy's potential resource hub as a solution to persistent gaps in culturally resonant materials, understanding that quality resources form the backbone of effective reading programs.

This theme indicates that the Reading Program Academy should prioritize resource creation, consolidation, and dissemination as key program components. Administrators' perspectives highlight the need for dedicated funding, technical support, and collaborative structures for continuous material development. Establishing a dynamic resource hub would empower teachers, sustain culturally grounded literacy practices, and ensure that Ata-Manobo learners have access to reading materials that reflect their identities and lived contexts.

Theme 5. Establishing an Evaluation System That Honors IP Realities

Administrators emphasized that the Academy should design evaluation systems that reflect the cultural, linguistic, and learning realities of Ata-Manobo learners. They shared concerns that mainstream assessment tools do not adequately capture learner progress, particularly for those still transitioning from oral traditions to print literacy.

Administrators believed that the Academy should develop flexible, culturally sensitive evaluation frameworks that consider attendance patterns, linguistic diversity, and varied learner readiness.

This viewpoint is supported by existing literature which recognizes that standardized assessments often fail to account for cultural and contextual differences among learners (Chitpin & Karoui, 2021; Levy-Feldman, 2025; Walker et al., 2023). Indigenous education research stresses the need for alternative assessment approaches that capture oral language skills, cultural knowledge, and contextual learning pathways (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Nganga et al., 2025; Nombardo & Rayon, 2026; Preston & Claypool, 2021). Administrators interpreted culturally aligned evaluation systems as essential for obtaining accurate representations of learner growth and for guiding instruction that respects learners' cultural starting points.

The theme implies that a Reading Program Academy must institutionalize evaluation systems tailored to indigenous contexts. Administrators' experiences suggest that adopting flexible assessment tools could improve instructional targeting, reduce misdiagnosis of learner difficulties, and promote more equitable literacy development. Developing culturally informed assessments would support teachers in better understanding learners' progress and strengthen accountability systems suited to indigenous education. Such an evaluation framework would ensure that the Academy honors the unique cultural and educational landscapes of Talaingod. A holistic understanding of the practices, problems, and perspectives of reading program administrators in IP-dominated basic education schools is essential for capturing how literacy work is carried out within culturally complex and resource-constrained environments. Their practices reveal how localized materials, community involvement, context-sensitive assessments, everyday teacher support, and flexible scheduling collectively sustain reading programs that honor the cultural realities of Ata-Manobo learners. At the same time, examining the problems they encounter, such as limited culturally relevant resources, teacher shortages, weak home-school literacy reinforcement, inconsistent funding, and linguistic diversity, brings attention to the systemic constraints that shape program implementation and continuity. Equally important are their perspectives on strengthening literacy programs, which highlight the need for culturally grounded professional development, stronger partnerships between schools and communities, a centralized hub for localized reading materials, and evaluation systems that reflect indigenous learning contexts. Finally, these interconnected themes emphasize why understanding administrators' insights is crucial for designing responsive and sustainable literacy interventions and support the establishment of a Reading Program Academy tailored to the unique demands of literacy work in indigenous communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Reading program administration in Talaingod's IP-dominated schools is characterized by practices that affirm culture, strengthen community involvement, and adapt instruction to learners' lived realities. Culturally grounded materials, community participation, context-sensitive assessments, coaching-based teacher support, and flexible literacy scheduling collectively underscore an approach that honors indigenous identity and fosters meaningful literacy engagement. These practices reflect a form of leadership rooted in cultural respect, relational work, and instructional responsiveness.

Persistent challenges, however, continue to influence the management of reading programs. Limited access to culturally aligned materials, unstable teacher deployment, insufficient home-school literacy reinforcement, unpredictable funding, and linguistic diversity create ongoing constraints that shape the literacy environment. These conditions highlight systemic issues that require structural attention, sustained investment, and coordinated support to ensure that literacy efforts in IP communities remain purposeful and resilient. Amid these realities, the perspectives of reading program administrators point toward a culturally grounded and future-oriented direction for literacy development. Their vision emphasizes the centrality of indigenous culture, the need for teacher capacitation tailored to IP contexts, the importance of strengthened school-community partnerships, and the value of accessible localized resources and culturally responsive evaluation systems. These insights underscore the potential for a more coherent and sustainable literacy ecosystem that aligns with the sociocultural landscape of Talaingod.

Overall, the study underscores the need to establish a Reading Program Academy designed specifically for administrators, coordinators, and teachers serving in IP-dominated schools. Such an academy can consolidate culturally rooted practices, address persistent challenges, and build professional competencies essential for indigenous literacy work. Its development requires strong commitment from policymakers, institutions, and local stakeholders, who are called to invest in a system that equips literacy leaders with the training, resources, and culturally grounded frameworks necessary to advance meaningful and sustained literacy development for the Ata-Manobo learners of Talaingod.

Limitations

The number of participants likewise poses limitations. Although 12 reading program coordinators provided rich and diverse accounts, the sample size remains relatively small and context-specific, representing schools only

within Talaingod, Davao del Norte. This geographical concentration may limit the applicability of insights to other IP communities whose cultural, linguistic, and structural conditions may differ. Additionally, participants were exclusively administrators and coordinators; perspectives from teachers, learners, or parents were not included, which may have restricted the study's ability to capture a more holistic picture of the literacy ecosystem. Other notable limitations include the contextual constraints tied to the timing and conditions of data collection. Factors such as school schedules, community obligations, and participants' workload may have influenced the depth and availability of responses. The study also focused on IP-dominated institutions as a bounded case, which, while intentional, narrows the scope of interpretation. Despite these limitations, the study provides a meaningful foundation for future research and for the development of a culturally grounded Reading Program Academy.

Translation Output

The study translates into a clear and actionable direction for Davao del Norte State College (DNSC) and the Department of Education (DepEd) Davao del Norte through the establishment of a Reading Program Academy that directly responds to the needs of reading program administrators, coordinators, and teachers in IP-dominated schools. This academy can serve as a training hub that offers culturally responsive professional development, supports the creation and refinement of localized reading materials, and provides technical assistance in community engagement and context-sensitive assessment practices. It can also function as a collaborative space where educators and cultural stakeholders co-design literacy initiatives tailored to Ata-Manobo learners. By institutionalizing these supports, DNSC and DepEd Davao del Norte can strengthen program coherence, enhance instructional quality, and build a sustainable system for advancing culturally grounded literacy initiatives across the division.

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AI Disclosure

The authors of this manuscript declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used to generate content, ideas, frameworks, or theories during the writing process. AI was utilized solely to enhance readability and refine language, under strict human oversight and control. After using AI technologies, the author carefully reviewed and edited the manuscript to ensure its accuracy and coherence. The authors understand the potential of AI to generate content that may sound authoritative but could be incorrect, incomplete, or biased. Therefore, the manuscript was thoroughly revised through human judgment.

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