

# Development, Validation and Perceived Effectiveness of Contextualized Reading Material for Multigrade English Class

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to develop, validate, and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of contextualized reading materials for the multigrade English classroom at Cagandungan West Elementary School, Luna, Apayao for the School Year 2024–2025. Guided by the Research and Development (R&D) framework and the ADDIE model, the study focused on two Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for Grades 5 and 6: examining images that present particular viewpoints, and making connections between viewed information and personal experiences. The resulting instructional output, titled Development, Validation and Perceived Effectiveness of Contextualized Reading Materials for Multigrade English Class was designed to reflect learners' cultural background, local environment, and real-life experiences.

The materials underwent expert validation using the Department of Education Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. Results showed very satisfactory ratings across all indicators: Content (4.32), Face Validity (4.72), Presentation and Organization (4.85), and Accuracy and Up-to-Datedness of Information (4.88), confirming the materials' appropriateness for classroom implementation.

A thematic analysis of teacher feedback identified four core elements that contributed to the effectiveness of the materials: cultural and community relevance, values formation and character development, environmental consciousness, and problem-solving and social responsibility. Additionally, four key factors were found to influence effectiveness across different grade levels—relevance to learners' experiences, adaptability to proficiency levels, teacher scaffolding, and student motivation.

The study concludes that well-designed, culturally responsive, and pedagogically sound reading materials such as Contextualized Reading Materials significantly enhance learner engagement and reading comprehension in multigrade settings. These findings support the integration of localized content in literacy instruction as a strategy for addressing diverse learning needs.

**Keywords:** contextualized reading, multigrade education, reading comprehension, literacy intervention, Minimum Essential Learning Competencies

## INTRODUCTION

The integration of contextualized English reading materials has emerged as a crucial approach to addressing literacy challenges, particularly in multigrade classrooms. Multigrade education, which involves the simultaneous instruction of students from different grade levels in a single classroom, presents unique instructional challenges [1]. The use of contextualized English reading materials which are educational resources that reflect the cultural, social, and environmental experiences of learners has been

recognized as an effective strategy in multigrade classrooms, especially for Grade 5 and Grade 6 pupils [2]. Contextualization not only enhances comprehension but also strengthens students' connection to their own culture and experiences, which is particularly valuable in rural and indigenous communities [3].

In response to the pressing need for effective reading interventions in multigrade classrooms, this study developed Contextualized Reading Materials, a set of localized and pedagogically structured reading materials tailored for Grade 5 and Grade 6 multigrade learners. The Contextualized English materials integrate cultural relevance, real-life contexts, and differentiated instructional strategies, ensuring that students engage with texts that resonate with their lived experiences. Designed to align with the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) reading levels, reading provides structured content that supports both struggling and progressing readers by offering materials that cater to varying proficiency levels [4]. As a contextualized reading material, reflects the principles of student-centered and culturally responsive education, aligning with DepEd's initiative for localized learning resources (DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019) and the mandate of Republic

Act No. 10533, which emphasizes culturally relevant and adaptive education. The stories developed for C-STAR also embed the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for Grades 5 and 6. For Grade 5 learners, the materials include images and narratives that encourage the examination of perspectives and cultural viewpoints, addressing stereotypes in areas such as gender, age, and traditional roles, as aligned with the Quarter 2 MELC. For Grade 6 learners, the stories and follow-up tasks require them to relate the content of what they view and read to their personal experiences, directly supporting MELC EN6VC-IVd-1.4. These integrations ensure that the reading intervention does not only address comprehension gaps but also fosters critical thinking and personal reflection as prescribed in the national curriculum.

These materials incorporate local traditions, environmental awareness, values formation, and community-based narratives, ensuring that learners develop literacy skills while strengthening their connection to their own heritage.

Research has demonstrated the importance of localized and culturally adapted materials in promoting literacy. The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results revealed that Filipino students continue to struggle with reading comprehension, ranking among the lowest in the global assessment [5]. This underscores the urgent need for reading interventions that go beyond generic, one-size-fits-all materials. The Department of Education (DepEd) has responded to this challenge through initiatives that encourage the development and use of contextualized learning resources [6]. DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019 specifically promotes the creation of materials that are tailored to the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive characteristics of learners, in line with the Matatag curriculum and Republic Act No. 10533, which mandates culturally relevant and responsive education [8].

At Cagandungan West Elementary School in Luna, Apayao, the need for contextualized English reading materials is particularly evident. The school operates a multigrade classroom comprising Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners, where students have varied reading comprehension levels. Recent Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) results indicate that a significant number of students fall under the frustration level, meaning they struggle significantly with reading comprehension the reason why contextualized materials is needed.

In response to this challenge, contextualized stories for reading materials have been designed for Grade 5 and Grade 6 multigrade learners. These materials include stories, informational texts, and reading exercises that align with the MELCS. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing these materials, using differentiated strategies that allow students to progress at their own pace while addressing the learning tar-

gets in the curriculum.

The development of localized and differentiated reading materials is essential in promoting literacy among students in multigrade settings, particularly in rural communities where educational resources are often limited. Teachers who work in multigrade classrooms require innovative instructional tools that not only support literacy development but also foster instruction in a way that is inclusive, engaging, and reflective of students' lived realities through contextualized English stories for teaching and reading materials [11].

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study aimed to develop contextualized reading materials based on selected Minimum Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for the Multigrade English class at Cagandungan West Elementary School for the School Year 2024–2025, and to determine their validity and perceived effectiveness as evaluated by teacher-evaluators. Specifically, the research sought answers to the following questions:

1. What contextualized reading materials can be developed from selected Minimum Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS)?
2. What were the results of teacher-evaluators' assessments of the developed Contextualized Reading Materials with respect to the following criteria?
  - a. Content
  - b. Face validity
  - c. Presentation and organization
  - d. Accuracy of information
3. What is the perceived effectiveness of the contextualized reading materials for Multigrade English Class?

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The present study is anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, which provide the theoretical basis for the development and validation of contextualized reading materials in multigrade English classrooms. These theories highlight the importance of learner-centered, Socially relevant, and culturally sensitive approaches in addressing the diverse needs of students, particularly in multigrade settings.

Constructivist Learning Theory emphasizes that learning is an active process where individuals construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with the environment [12]. According to this theory, learners are not passive recipients of information but actively build understanding based on prior knowledge and meaningful engagement with new content [13]. The theory also underscores the role of scaffolding, where learners are supported to gradually achieve mastery of concepts. In the context of this study, this principle supports the idea that contextualized reading materials should be designed to build on students' existing knowledge and experiences, ensuring relevance and engagement. For example, materials that integrate familiar themes, such as local traditions or community practices, enable students to connect new information to their personal realities, thereby fostering deeper comprehension.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory focuses on the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning. [14] posits that cognitive development is influenced by the tools and symbols of the learner's culture, as well as interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers or peers. A key concept in this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks a learner can accomplish with appropriate guidance but cannot yet perform independently. This theory is directly relevant to the current study, as the development of contextualized reading materials is seen as a means of providing learners with culturally appropriate tools that facilitate meaningful learning. These materials

serve as scaffolds, bridging the gap between the students' current reading levels and the skills they need to develop. In multigrade classrooms, where students have varying levels of proficiency, the materials must be designed to address individual needs while promoting collaborative learning opportunities.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), as articulated by [15], advocates for the inclusion of students' cultural backgrounds in the teaching and learning process. CRP emphasizes the importance of validating and incorporating students' lived experiences, languages, and traditions into the curriculum to create an inclusive and engaging learning environment. This theory aligns with the study's aim of developing contextualized reading materials that reflect the diverse cultural and social realities of students in rural multigrade classrooms. When students encounter content that resonates with their identities and daily lives, they are more likely to feel motivated and valued, which enhances both engagement and academic performance [16].

The integration of Differentiated Instruction further complements the study, as it provides a framework for addressing the wide range of abilities and learning styles in multigrade classrooms. [17] Contextualized reading materials aligned with differentiated instruction principles ensure that all students, regardless of their proficiency levels, can access and benefit from the learning content, these theories guide the development and validation of contextualized reading materials aimed at improving the reading comprehension and learning outcomes of Grade 5 and Grade 6 students in multigrade English classrooms.

**Figure 1. Research Paradigm**

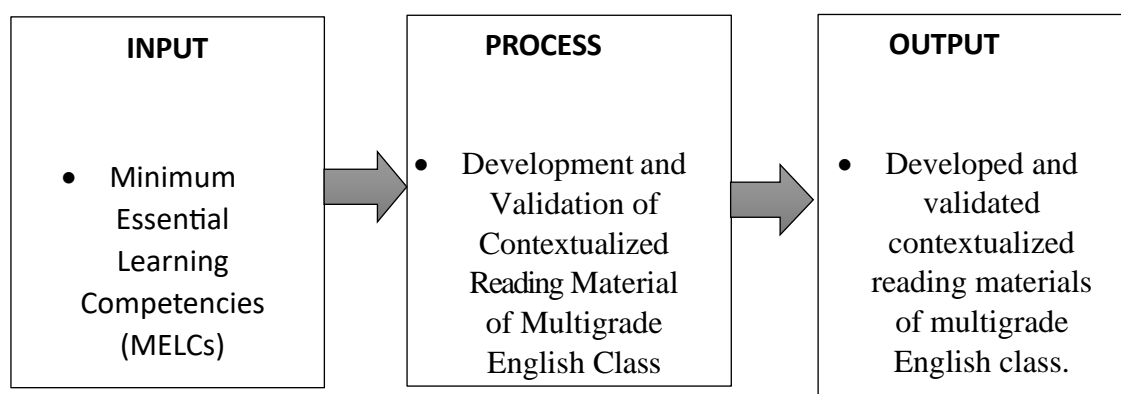


Figure 1 presents the Input-Process-Output (IPO) framework of the study, which outlines the systematic flow of developing and validating contextualized reading materials for Multigrade English classrooms at Cagandungan West Elementary School for the School Year 2024–2025.

In the Input phase, the study considered three core elements: the development of contextualized reading materials aimed at enhancing reading comprehension in multigrade settings, the identification of factors that influence their effectiveness across different grade levels, and the specific Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) targeted for each grade level. For Grade 5 (Quarter 2), the targeted competency is “Examine images which present particular viewpoints, e.g., stereotypes (gender, age, cultural), opinions on an issue.” For Grade 6 (Quarter 1), the focus is on “Make connections between information viewed and personal experiences” (EN6VC-IVd-1.4).

The Process phase involves the development of C-STAR (Contextualized Stories for Teaching and Reading), a set of reading materials crafted to align with the identified MELCs and contextual realities of the learners. These materials undergo expert validation by selected teacher-evaluators who assess them

using key criteria such as content, face validity, presentation and organization, and accuracy of information. Data are collected during this phase to support the analysis of the materials' relevance and instructional quality.

The Output phase results in the production of developed and validated contextualized reading materials specifically designed for multigrade English classrooms, offering culturally relevant and pedagogically sound resources that support comprehension and engagement among Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners.

The research followed a Research and Development (R&D) approach utilizing the ADDIE model—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—carried out across five phases:

Phase 1: Development of the contextualized reading materials based on selected MELCs and contextual realities;



Phase 2: Validation of the developed materials by selected teacher-evaluators using DepEd's Evaluation Rating Sheet;



Phase 3: Incorporation of feedback, comments, and suggestions from validators to refine the materials;



Phase 4: Finalization of the C-STAR reading materials for instructional use in multigrade English classes



Phase 5: Collection and analysis of data on the perceived effectiveness of the finalized materials as evaluated by teacher-experts.

**Table 1: MINIMUM ESSENTIAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES OF MULTIGRADE ENGLISH CLASS**

Grade level	Selected Quarter	Minimum Essential Learning Competencies	Duration	K-12 CG Code
5	Q 2	Examine images which present particular viewpoints, e.g. stereotypes (gender, age, cultural), opinions on an issue	Week 3	EN5G-Ia-3.3
6	Q 1	Make connections between information viewed and personal experiences	Week 4	EN6G-IVd-1.4

## METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods used in the study. The study focuses on the development and validation of contextualized reading materials tailored for multigrade English classrooms, specifically targeting 25 learners in grade 5 and 6. The methodology aimed to ensure a systematic approach in addressing the research objectives, which include improving the reading comprehension skills of learners and evaluating the effectiveness of the developed

materials. Each step in the research process is designed to align with the study's theoretical framework and the unique needs of a multigrade classroom setting.

### **Research Design**

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) design, guided by the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation), to systematically develop and validate contextualized reading materials intended for use in the Multigrade English classes of Grade 5 and Grade 6 at Cagandungan West Elementary School.

In the Analysis phase, the study identified specific Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for each grade level and gathered insights from relevant literature and practicing educators to ensure that the developed materials would be responsive to the instructional needs of multigrade learners.

The Design and Development phases involved the creation of contextualized reading materials under the title C-STAR (Contextualized Stories for Teaching and Reading). These materials were designed to incorporate local culture, community realities and engaging pedagogical strategies aligned with the selected MELCs. The materials were initially crafted with attention to content alignment, readability, learner engagement, and contextual relevance. During the Evaluation phase, the developed C-STAR materials were subjected to expert validation by teacher-evaluators using the DepEd Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Materials. The materials were assessed based on content, face validity, presentation and organization, and accuracy of information. Feedback from the evaluators was analyzed and used to further refine the materials to ensure their quality and instructional value.

### **Locale of the Study**

The study will be conducted at Cagandungan West Elementary School, located in the Cagandungan, municipality of Luna, Apayao is a DepEd managed partially rural area in the northern part of the Philippines established in 1997.

In particular, the study will focus on a Grade 5 and Grade 6 multigrade classroom, where learners of varying ages and academic levels are taught together.

Cagandungan West Elementary School serves as the primary educational institution for children in the surrounding barangays, catering to learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

### **Respondents of the Study**

The respondents of this study were categorized into two groups: teacher-experts and learner-end-users, each serving distinct roles in the development and validation of the Contextualized English Reading materials

#### **Teacher-Experts (Validators)**

The first group consisted of four teacher-experts who participated in the validation of the developed contextualized reading materials. These validators were selected based on their relevant qualifications, such as their designation as multigrade teachers, English subject teachers, and instructional material coordinators.

**The table below further specifies the teacher-experts:**

Schools	Number of Teacher-Experts
Cagandungan East Elementary School	1
Cagandungan West Elementary School	3
Total	4



#### Learner-End Users (Recipients of the Intervention)

The second group of respondents comprised all Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners enrolled in a multigrade classroom at Cagandungan West Elementary School, Luna, Apayao, during the School Year 2024–2025. This group, totaling 25 pupils—12 from Grade 5 and 13 from Grade 6—served as the recipients of the reading intervention. These learners were not involved in the validation of the materials but were the primary beneficiaries, providing feedback and performance data to evaluate the effectiveness of the contextualized stories in actual classroom use.

The breakdown is further highlighted in the table below:

Grade Level	Frequency	Percentage
5	12	48
6	13	52
	25	100

On the other hand, the study employed total enumeration in selecting the respondents, meaning that all Grade 5 and Grade 6 students in the multigrade classroom were included in the study. This method ensures a comprehensive assessment of how the contextualized reading materials impact learners across different grade levels within the multigrade setup.

#### Research Instruments

This study utilized two primary research instruments to gather data on the reading levels of multigrade pupils and the factors influencing the effectiveness of contextualized reading materials in multigrade English classes.

Part I: Evaluation Rating Sheet for PRINT Resources (Department of Education, 2021)

As part of the study's validation process of contextualized reading materials was assessed using the Department of Education (DepEd) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. This standardized evaluation tool ensures that instructional materials meet quality standards in terms of content, face validity, presentation and organization, and accuracy. Teacher-experts used this instrument to evaluate contextualized reading materials effectiveness, appropriateness, and overall suitability for multigrade learners in Grade 5 and Grade 6.

Part II: Interview Protocol (*Researcher-Made Instrument*)

To gain deeper insight into the factors that influence the effectiveness of the developed contextualized reading materials across different grade levels, the study utilized a researcher-made interview protocol. This instrument was designed to gather qualitative feedback from teacher-experts and learner-end-users regarding their experiences with the C-STAR materials in multigrade English classrooms.

The interview protocol focused on the following thematic areas:

Student Engagement and Motivation

How do the materials affect learners' interest and enthusiasm for reading activities?

Comprehensibility and Readability

Are the texts appropriate in complexity and clarity for both Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners?

Cultural and Contextual Relevance

Do the themes, settings, and characters resonate with learners' lived experiences and local contexts?

### Instructional Support

In what ways do teachers integrate and modify the materials for effective use in a multigrade environment?

### Challenges in Implementation

What barriers or issues arise during the use of the contextualized stories in teaching and learning?

This semi-structured interview approach allowed for flexible yet focused discussions, enabling respondents to provide detailed insights while maintaining alignment with the research objectives. The data gathered were subjected to thematic analysis, which informed the identification of pedagogical, cognitive, and contextual factors impacting the materials' effectiveness. These findings guided the refinement of the C-STAR materials to better serve multigrade English learners.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure was conducted in five systematic phases, aligned with the development, validation, and evaluation of contextualized reading materials designed for multigrade English instruction at Cagandungan West Elementary School. The study focused on two specific Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs):

Grade 5 – Quarter 2 MELC: *Examine images which present particular viewpoints, e.g., stereotypes (gender, age, cultural), opinions on an issue.*

Grade 6 – Quarter 1 MELC: EN6VC-IVd-1.4 – *Make connections between information viewed and personal experiences.*

#### Phase 1: Development of Contextualized Reading Materials for Multigrade Class

In this phase, contextualized reading materials were created based on the identified MELCs for Grade 5 and Grade 6. The development process involved integrating relevant themes, cultural elements, and community-based scenarios that reflected learners' real-life contexts. Materials were structured to support the target competencies while promoting critical thinking, comprehension, and engagement among multigrade learners.

#### Phase 2: Validation of Contextualized Reading Materials by Subject Teachers

The developed materials were subjected to validation by selected subject teachers with expertise in English and experience in multigrade instruction. Using the Department of Education Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Materials, the validators assessed the materials along four key dimensions: content, face validity, presentation and organization, and accuracy of information.

#### Phase 3: Incorporation of Comments and Suggestions

Following the validation process, all qualitative feedback, comments, and ratings provided by the teacher-evaluators were reviewed and analyzed. Constructive suggestions were used to revise and refine the materials to ensure clarity, coherence, instructional quality, and cultural relevance aligned with the learners' needs.

#### Phase 4: Finalization of the Contextualized English Stories for Instructional Materials

After integrating the suggested revisions, the contextualized reading materials were finalized, were formatted and prepared as instructional materials for Grade 5 and Grade 6 multigrade classrooms. The final version ensured alignment with the identified MELCs and addressed the diverse academic levels within a multigrade setting.

#### Phase 5: Perceived Effectiveness of the Contextualized Reading Materials for Multigrade Class

The final phase involved gathering data on the perceived effectiveness of the developed C-STAR materials. Subject teachers were asked to evaluate how well the materials supported teaching and learning



in the multigrade classroom. A structured feedback tool was used to collect data regarding the relevance, practicality, engagement level, and impact of the materials on learners' comprehension skills.

### **Statistical Treatment of Data**

Descriptive and qualitative methods were employed to analyze the data gathered in the development, validation, and evaluation of the contextualized reading materials for multigrade instruction. The statistical treatments used in the study are as follows:

Frequency and Percentage Distribution were utilized to summarize the responses from teacher-evaluators during the validation of the contextualized reading materials. These statistics provided an overview of the distribution of responses across various criteria, offering a clear picture of the evaluators' assessments of the materials.

Mean and Standard Deviation were applied to determine the overall evaluation of the developed contextualized reading materials based on the teacher-experts' ratings. The mean scores represented the average level of acceptability of the materials in terms of content, face validity, presentation and organization, and accuracy of information. The standard deviation indicated the degree of consistency or variability in the responses.

Likert Scale was used to measure the perceived quality and effectiveness of the developed materials, specifically the C-STAR (Contextualized Stories for Teaching and Reading). A five-point scale guided the evaluators' responses, with the following descriptive interpretations:

Scale Point	Descriptive Rating	Statistical Range	Interpretation
5	Very Satisfactory	4.20 – 5.00	Highly Validated
4	Satisfactory	3.40 – 4.19	Highly Valid
3	Moderately Satisfactory	2.60 – 3.39	Valid
2	Needs Improvement	1.80 – 2.59	Undecided
1	Poor	1.00 – 1.79	Not Valid

These ratings guided the interpretation of the teacher-evaluators' feedback and allowed for a standardized analysis of the materials' perceived effectiveness. The average scores were computed and matched with the corresponding descriptive categories based on the statistical range.

Thematic Analysis was employed to analyze the responses from open-ended questions included in the evaluation instrument. This qualitative method was used to identify common themes, patterns, and insights related to the effectiveness of the contextualized reading materials. It allowed for a deeper understanding of teacher perspectives regarding learner engagement, instructional challenges, and the practical application of the materials in the multigrade English class.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Developed Contextualized Reading Materials**

The development of contextualized reading materials represents a targeted pedagogical response to the instructional challenges present in multigrade classrooms. These settings require differentiated strategies due to the presence of learners with varying literacy levels and cognitive abilities. Standardized texts often fail to meet the needs of such classrooms, thus reinforcing the

necessity for materials that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and adaptable across grade levels.

In this study, the researcher developed C-STAR (Contextualized Stories for Teaching and Reading) with the primary goal of enhancing the reading comprehension skills of Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners in a multigrade classroom. Contextualized reading materials were constructed to reflect the learners' immediate environment, cultural background, and socio-emotional realities. According to Bautista and Rocero, learners exhibit greater engagement and comprehension when instructional materials resonate with their lived experiences and cultural knowledge [22]. Similarly, Jeyaraj and Harland emphasized that culturally aligned texts provide learners with a sense of relevance and identity, fostering deeper cognitive processing and retention [23].

The materials were carefully developed to include themes grounded in the learners' own contexts. A thematic analysis of the developed stories identified four central elements that contribute to their effectiveness. These include cultural and community relevance, values formation and character development, environmental consciousness, and problem-solving and social responsibility. Each element was purposefully integrated to foster a more meaningful, engaging, and inclusive reading experience for multigrade learners.

#### Cultural and Community Relevance

One of the most dominant themes that emerged from the analysis of the developed stories is cultural and community relevance. The materials were deliberately set in actual communities known to the learners, such as Alitagan, Talissik, Labuagan, and Manica's River. These real locations serve as the primary backdrop of the narratives, allowing learners to connect the content of the stories with their own geographical and cultural realities. This practice aligns with the Schema Theory, which posits that learners comprehend texts more effectively when they can activate prior knowledge and connect it with new information Anderson and Pearson [26].

An illustrative example is found in the story entitled "The Lost Necklace of Alitagan", which follows the protagonist Julia as she assists an elderly woman in recovering a family heirloom. The narrative emphasizes core Filipino values such as respect for elders, bayanihan (collective community action), and compassion. When learners encounter values and experiences that mirror their own, they are more likely to process information meaningfully and exhibit a higher level of engagement with the reading material. The integration of culturally relevant content has been widely supported in the literature. Bernardo and Gaerlan assert that texts which affirm learners' identity and cultural norms significantly enhance reading motivation and comprehension, especially among learners in marginalized or rural contexts [22].

#### Values Formation and Character Development

A second central theme found in the developed contextualized reading materials is values formation and character development. This element was systematically integrated into each story to instill moral reasoning, social responsibility, and ethical reflection in young learners. Effective literacy instruction encompasses more than the acquisition of decoding and comprehension skills. It must also cultivate learners' character, critical judgment, and sense of responsibility. The inclusion of moral narratives serves to strengthen learners' socio-emotional development, an approach that has been substantiated by numerous educational researchers.

Mallari [27] asserted that children's literature embedded with values and moral dilemmas significantly contributes to learners' social and emotional growth, particularly when stories provide opportunities for reflection and ethical decision-making. In this study, several narratives were intentionally crafted to

portray characters demonstrating virtues such as courage, compassion, and accountability, allowing learners to engage not only with the text but with the values it promotes.

For instance, the story "The Mysterious Cave of Talissik" follows Leahgrace and MJ as they uncover ancestral stories through a hidden cave. Their curiosity and bravery reflect the importance of valuing heritage and seeking truth even in uncertain situations.

Another narrative, "The Legend of Labuagan's Tree", features Angie and Reyman, who confront community members involved in illegal deforestation. Through their actions, the story conveys themes of environmental stewardship, perseverance, and civic responsibility.

The integration of these themes demonstrates how narrative-based instruction can become a powerful vehicle for character education. According to Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, true education extends beyond technical knowledge and must lead to personal transformation and socially constructive behavior [28]. When young learners are presented with stories that contain ethical challenges and value-laden decisions, they are invited to internalize and apply these lessons in their real lives.

This alignment between literacy and values education is particularly relevant in multigrade settings where learners often serve as role models for one another., C-STAR supports not only academic goals but also the broader mission of holistic and values-based education by encouraging moral reflection through literature

#### Environmental Consciousness

Environmental consciousness emerged as a prominent thematic element in the development of the contextualized reading materials under the C-STAR framework. In light of the increasing environmental degradation observed both globally and within local communities, basic education is now recognized as a critical platform for introducing ecological responsibility. Within this framework, literacy instruction carries a dual mandate: to develop learners' reading proficiency and to cultivate their values, perspectives, and sense of responsibility toward the natural environment.

The reading materials created for this study incorporate narratives that expose learners to realistic environmental issues. These stories are purposefully designed to foster both cognitive and ethical engagement by presenting the consequences of human actions on natural ecosystems. In the story titled "The Secret of Manica's River," the protagonists, Jercem and Sheina, uncover the unlawful discharge of industrial waste into their community's waterway. Their response involves gathering evidence, informing local stakeholders, and calling for accountability. This sequence of events models responsible citizenship and encourages critical thinking while framing comprehension tasks within a meaningful problem-solving context.

This pedagogical approach is supported by recent studies. Reyes and Santos [29] reported that literature embedded with ecological themes enhances learners' critical thinking, empathy, and civic awareness, especially when the narratives allow students to explore causality and evaluate real-life scenarios. Furthermore, Tilbury [30] emphasized that environmental education must lead to transformative learning outcomes. This requires instructional strategies that promote awareness, reflection, and socially responsible action through interdisciplinary and learner-centered practices.

The inclusion of environmental consciousness within the reading materials aligns with the broader goals of education for sustainable development. The stories highlight the fragility of ecological systems while simultaneously demonstrating the capacity of young individuals to respond to environmental threats. Learners are encouraged to move from passive absorption of information toward active engagement with environmental concerns.

In this way, literacy becomes not only a cognitive goal but also a channel for instilling long-term values and encouraging socially relevant behavior.

The integration of environmental themes into culturally contextualized stories confirms the role of reading materials as catalysts for holistic development. In this study, literacy is positioned as a multidimensional tool that develops both intellectual and moral faculties. This orientation is essential in preparing learners to understand, navigate, and respond to the environmental challenges that characterize the twenty-first century.

#### Problem-Solving and Social Responsibility

Problem-solving and social responsibility constitute a pivotal theme embedded in the developed contextualized reading materials. The stories are intentionally structured to foster learners' capacity for critical thinking, decision-making, and civic participation. In multigrade learning environments, where students must often take initiative and navigate challenges with limited supervision, materials that model analytical reasoning and collaborative action serve as both instructional support and behavioral guideposts. Each narrative presents young protagonists engaged in real-world dilemmas that require thoughtful analysis and ethical response. In "The Legend of Labuagan's Banyan Tree," characters Angie and Reyman mobilize their community to protect a sacred tree, embodying environmental leadership and collective resistance. Likewise, in "The Secret of Manica's River," Jercem and Sheina uncover illegal pollution and respond with strategic inquiry and advocacy, highlighting the importance of agency and accountability. These stories contextualize comprehension within meaningful social scenarios, guiding learners to evaluate, reflect, and act in ways that mirror responsible citizenship.

The instructional foundation of these narratives is supported by problem-based learning theory. Jonassen [31] posits that students retain knowledge more effectively when immersed in authentic, problem-centered learning tasks that require higher-order thinking and applied solutions. Through narrative-driven problem-solving, learners not only enhance comprehension but also cultivate the ability to assess consequences, consider multiple perspectives, and respond to complex issues.

This approach also resonates with the findings of Dela Cruz and Ramos [32], who emphasized that literature portraying social and environmental dilemmas inspires learners to see themselves as capable contributors to societal improvement. Exposure to characters who lead, advocate, and persist reinforces the belief that even young individuals can initiate meaningful change.

The inclusion of this theme reinforces the dual function of the reading materials as both literacy instruments and platforms for character education. Culturally grounded scenarios encourage introspection, dialogue, and cooperative action, which are essential components of holistic and transformative learning. In effect, the materials go beyond skill acquisition to cultivate a sense of ethical responsibility and community engagement.

The implications of these findings are substantial for literacy pedagogy in multigrade contexts. Contextualized narratives rooted in local culture affirm learners' identities and increase engagement. Values-driven content supports moral development and personal growth. Ecologically themed texts heighten awareness and promote sustainable thinking. Stories centered on problem-solving and social responsibility elevate learners' ability to think critically, act ethically, and contribute constructively to the world around them.

#### Validation of the Contextualized Reading Materials for Multigrade Class

Table 1 presents the validation results of C-STAR (Contextualized Stories for Teaching and Reading), a developed reading material intended for multigrade English classrooms. The evaluation used the DepEd

Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources, covering four critical indicators: Content, Face Validity, Presentation and Organization, and Accuracy and Up-to-Datedness of Information. The responses were interpreted using a 5-point Likert scale, with the following ranges: 4.20–5.00 (Very Satisfactory), 3.40–4.19 (Satisfactory), 2.60–3.39 (Moderately Satisfactory), 1.80–2.59 (Fair), and 1.00–1.79 (Poor).

In terms of Content, C-STAR received an overall weighted mean of 4.31, rated Very Satisfactory. The material was found suitable for learners' developmental stages (4.25), effective in promoting values (4.38), and free from cultural or ideological bias (4.50). These findings support Bautista and Rocero's (2018) claim that culturally relevant materials facilitate learner engagement by building on familiar contexts and everyday experiences [22]. The material also aroused interest among learners (4.50) and addressed safety considerations (5.00). The presence of strong values components such as honesty (4.50), teamwork (4.50), and critical thinking (5.00) aligns with the pedagogical principle that instruction must be holistic and value-driven to develop well-rounded learners.

Under Face Validity, the material obtained a mean of 4.63, again interpreted as Very Satisfactory. Teacher-experts emphasized the high quality of visuals, layout, and print design. The illustrations were deemed culturally relevant and supplemented the text effectively. As Jeyaraj and Harland (2016) emphasized, materials that integrate appropriate and culturally resonant visuals enhance motivation and text navigation, especially in multigrade contexts [23]. This implies that C-STAR's visual and layout design supports its usability and appeal, ensuring that it fosters learner independence in reading.

For Presentation and Organization, the material achieved an overall mean of 4.80, classified as Very Satisfactory. The clear flow of ideas, sentence variation, and vocabulary appropriateness enable learners to comprehend and enjoy the text regardless of their reading proficiency. According to Tomlinson (2014), differentiated instruction is most effective when materials are structured with accessibility and flexibility in mind—qualities that C-STAR demonstrates [24]. This confirms that the material's organization supports comprehension and engagement across diverse learner profiles.

The criterion Accuracy and Up-to-Datedness of Information yielded the highest mean score of 4.83, rated Very Satisfactory. Validators noted the absence of conceptual, grammatical, and typographical errors, and affirmed the clarity of illustrations and labels. As Posamentier and Jaye (2006) asserted, accuracy in instructional materials boosts learner confidence and instructional credibility, both of which are crucial for effective learning outcomes [25]. This validates that C-STAR provides learners and teachers with reliable and error-free content suitable for instructional use.

In conclusion, the validation process confirms that C-STAR meets DepEd quality standards and is a well-developed instructional material for multigrade English classrooms. The findings affirm its pedagogical merit, contextual relevance, and instructional utility, especially in rural or diverse classroom settings. It stands as an effective tool to address literacy challenges through localized, values-integrated, and developmentally appropriate content.

Table 2. Assessment of the teacher-experts on the validity of the developed contextualized reading material for multigrade English class.

CRITERIA	V-1	V-2	V-3	V-4	Mean	Description	Interpretation
A. CONTENT	4.30	4.09	4.50	4.40	4.32	Very Satisfactory	Highly Validated



B. FACE VALIDITY	4.70	4.80	4.60	4.80	4.72	Very Satisfactory	Highly Validated
C. RESENTATION & ORGANIZATION	4.80	4.90	4.80	4.90	4.85	Very Satisfactory	Highly Validated
D. ACCURACY AND UP-TO-DATEDNESS	4.90	4.80	4.90	4.90	4.88	Very Satisfactory	Highly Validated

## Perceived the Effectiveness of Contextualized Reading Materials Across Different Grade Levels

The effectiveness of contextualized reading materials in multigrade English classrooms is influenced by various factors that impact student engagement, comprehension, and overall learning outcomes. Based on the thematic analysis of qualitative responses from four teachers handling multigrade learners, four primary themes emerged: (1) relevance to learners' experiences, (2) adaptability to varying proficiency levels, (3) teacher scaffolding and instructional strategies, and (4) motivation and student engagement. These themes reflect the essential elements that determine how well the reading materials meet the needs of students in different grade levels and learning abilities.

### Relevance to Learners' Experiences

The extent to which learners relate to reading materials significantly influences their comprehension, motivation, and overall engagement. Teachers who implemented the C-STAR contextualized stories consistently emphasized that students became more involved when the texts reflected their cultural background, familiar places, and everyday experiences. This observation affirms that reading materials which align with learners' socio-cultural contexts serve not only as instructional resources but also as affirmational texts that validate student identity and experience.

One teacher shared,

*"My students are more engaged when they read stories set in familiar places, especially when they recognize names of locations or traditions in the story. They even get excited when they see words that are commonly spoken in our community."*

Another teacher explained,

*"Using stories that reflect their everyday lives makes reading more meaningful for them. They do not feel intimidated by the text because they understand the context. It becomes easier for them to predict outcomes and draw connections with their own experiences."*

A third teacher noted,

*"I have noticed that when students relate to the characters and setting, they respond better to comprehension questions. They tend to share personal stories and insights, which helps in building their confidence to express their thoughts."*

A fourth teacher added,

*"Multigrade learners have different levels of exposure to reading. However, when they see familiar settings in a story, even the struggling readers attempt to participate because they feel included in the lesson."*

These responses underscore the pedagogical importance of cultural and contextual relevance in reading instruction. Students who see their own lives, language, and traditions reflected in the materials are more likely to understand, interpret, and discuss the text confidently. For multigrade learners with diverse reading proficiencies, contextualized narratives serve as a bridge between informal knowledge and formal literacy learning.



This thematic insight aligns with the findings of Bernardo and Gaerlan (2020), who emphasized that culturally embedded texts enhance reading comprehension and motivation, particularly for students from rural and multicultural communities [22]. Similarly, Cummins [33] argued that affirming learners' cultural identities within academic content promotes deeper engagement and contributes to more equitable learning outcomes.

Designing reading materials that reflect the local culture and lived experiences of students is essential in fostering both comprehension and a sense of inclusion. In multigrade settings, where learners often rely on prior knowledge and shared community experiences, culturally relevant reading texts help dismantle barriers to understanding and increase learners' willingness to participate in literacy tasks.

#### Adaptability to Varying Proficiency Levels

Multigrade classrooms present inherent challenges due to the diverse reading proficiency levels of learners. Within such settings, it is essential that instructional materials are designed to support both struggling readers and those performing at or above grade level.

The effectiveness of the C-STAR contextualized reading materials was consistently linked by teachers to their structural flexibility, particularly in terms of text complexity, vocabulary, and questioning strategies. One teacher shared,

*"In my class, some pupils can read fluently while others struggle with decoding words. The contextualized story reading helps because they include simple vocabulary but also provide challenging ideas for advanced learners to explore."*

Another teacher observed,

*"I appreciate that the stories have clear sequencing and a logical flow, which helps struggling readers. The question sets also have different levels, so I can adjust them depending on the capability of my students."*

A third teacher stated,

*"The inclusion of illustrations and guided questions allows me to modify my approach. I let my Grade 5 students focus on basic comprehension, while my Grade 6 students tackle inferential questions."*

A fourth teacher reflected,

*"One challenge in a multigrade setup is that younger students sometimes get intimidated by older ones. However, when they read the same story but answer different questions, they all feel included in the lesson."*

These accounts demonstrate the value of differentiated instruction in multigrade classrooms. The teachers highlighted that C-STAR's built-in features such as tiered questioning, visual support, and the progression of textual complexity enabled them to tailor lessons based on each learner's needs. This responsiveness to learner variability not only fosters inclusivity but also enhances individual learning outcomes.

This theme is strongly supported by Vygotsky's theory on the Zone of Proximal Development, which posits that learning is most effective when instructional materials are situated within a learner's zone of emerging capability, provided that appropriate scaffolds are in place to support comprehension and progression [14]. When materials are designed to meet learners at their current level while gradually extending their skills, they become more effective tools for literacy development.

The implication of this theme is that contextualized reading materials must include built-in mechanisms for differentiation. These may include leveled comprehension questions, visual-text integration, and flexible content structures that allow for adjustment based on individual readiness. In multigrade

classrooms, such adaptability is essential in creating equitable and effective literacy instruction that meets learners where they are and guides them toward where they can be.

#### Teacher Scaffolding and Instructional Strategies

The role of the teacher in facilitating the use of contextualized reading materials is a critical determinant of their effectiveness in the classroom. Although the materials are designed with cultural relevance and developmental appropriateness in mind, their instructional value is significantly enhanced through structured mediation by the teacher. Respondents emphasized that how the materials are introduced, discussed, and reinforced directly affects learners' comprehension and engagement.

One teacher explained,

*"Even if the materials are engaging, they won't be effective unless I guide the students properly. I use pre-reading discussions to activate prior knowledge, and after reading, we do activities that connect the story to real-life experiences."*

Another teacher shared,

*"I noticed that when I introduce vocabulary words before reading, my students have better comprehension. I also encourage them to predict what will happen next, which makes them more engaged in the story."*

A third teacher stated,

*"The question sets are helpful, but I also add my own follow-up questions to encourage deeper thinking. For instance, I ask them how they would act if they were in the character's situation."*

A fourth teacher remarked,

*"In a multigrade class, I use peer learning. My Grade 6 students help explain difficult words or concepts to the Grade 5 students. This not only improves comprehension but also builds confidence among my learners."*

These accounts highlight that teacher scaffolding is indispensable in maximizing the instructional potential of contextualized texts. Teachers serve as facilitators who guide learners through the process of constructing meaning from the text. Strategies such as activating background knowledge, pre-teaching key vocabulary, promoting inferential thinking, and utilizing collaborative learning enable students to engage more deeply with reading tasks.

This theme is supported by the work of Bruner [34], who underscored the principle of scaffolding in literacy development. He argued that learners construct knowledge most effectively when provided with structured support from more knowledgeable others, particularly during the initial stages of cognitive development. In the context of a multigrade classroom, scaffolding not only bridges gaps in comprehension but also encourages interaction across proficiency levels, thereby fostering collective growth and learner autonomy.

The implication of this theme is that contextualized reading materials must be implemented alongside intentional instructional strategies. These include, but are not limited to, pre-reading preparation, guided vocabulary instruction, reflective questioning, and structured peer interaction. When such strategies are integrated consistently, the materials do not function merely as reading texts but as catalysts for higher-order thinking, collaborative learning, and transformative engagement with literacy.

#### Motivation and Student Engagement

Motivation and engagement emerged as critical factors influencing the effectiveness of the contextualized reading materials. Teachers consistently observed that students were more responsive and enthusiastic when the stories captured their interest, which in turn contributed to improved comprehension and

participation. When students perceive the reading materials as enjoyable and meaningful, they become more invested in the learning process.

One teacher stated,

*"My students look forward to reading time when we use these materials. The stories are exciting, and the characters feel real to them, so they stay engaged throughout the lesson."*

Another teacher explained,

*"Even students who are not confident readers try to read aloud because they feel interested in the story. They ask questions and make predictions, which helps in developing their comprehension skills."*

A third teacher noted,

*"When I introduce the story with a simple discussion about the setting or a related experience, students become more interested. They actively participate and even ask for more reading materials."*

A fourth teacher pointed out,

*"I have students who struggle with reading but still attempt to follow along because the content is meaningful to them. That level of motivation is important, especially for struggling learners in a multigrade classroom."*

These teacher responses underscore the strong correlation between learner engagement and literacy development. When students connect emotionally with reading content, they exhibit greater willingness to read aloud, make predictions, ask questions, and express opinions. This level of cognitive and affective engagement contributes to the development of essential reading skills such as comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and inferential reasoning.

This thematic insight aligns with Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory [35], which posits that intrinsic motivation enhances learning outcomes. According to the theory, learners who find tasks enjoyable and personally relevant are more likely to demonstrate persistence, effort, and self-regulation in completing academic tasks. In the context of multigrade education, where learners often face increased instructional challenges, materials that foster enjoyment and a sense of relevance can serve as powerful tools for sustaining academic focus and promoting learner agency.

The implication of this theme is that contextualized reading materials should be intentionally designed to sustain learner interest through relatable characters, culturally grounded storylines, and interactive elements such as prediction prompts and discussion-based comprehension questions. In doing so, educators not only support skill development but also cultivate positive reading habits that extend beyond the classroom.

The thematic analysis of teacher responses reveals that the effectiveness of contextualized reading materials in multigrade classrooms is shaped by four interconnected factors: relevance to learners' experiences, adaptability to varying proficiency levels, teacher scaffolding and instructional mediation, and learner motivation. These findings reinforce the conclusions drawn in prior studies, which advocate for the use of culturally relevant, differentiated, and interactive materials in promoting literacy development. The implication of these results is that instructional planning for multigrade settings must consider not only the technical quality of reading materials but also the instructional context in which they are delivered. Teachers must be prepared to adopt flexible strategies that harness the inherent strengths of the materials while responding to the evolving needs of their learners.

Future research may investigate the long-term impact of contextualized reading materials on the reading proficiency, critical thinking skills, and academic confidence of learners in multigrade settings.

Additionally, there is potential for broader exploration of how learner motivation evolves over time when exposed to culturally resonant and instructionally supported texts.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study aimed to develop, validate, and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of contextualized reading materials for multigrade English classrooms, particularly for Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners at Cagandungan West Elementary School for the School Year 2024–2025. The study focused on Minimum Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs): (1) examining images that present particular viewpoints such as stereotypes and opinions, and (2) making connections between information viewed and personal experiences. The reading materials developed—collectively titled Contextualized English Reading Materials—were designed to align with these competencies and to reflect the learners’ cultural background, lived experiences, and environmental realities.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings revealed that the development of contextualized reading materials addressed the instructional challenges commonly encountered in multigrade settings. The stories were carefully crafted to incorporate culturally grounded themes, with four core elements emerging as central to their effectiveness: cultural and community relevance, values formation and character development, environmental consciousness, and problem-solving and social responsibility. These themes enriched the learning experience by allowing learners to see their realities reflected in the narratives, promoting both cognitive and emotional engagement with the texts. Teacher validation results confirmed the quality and appropriateness of the materials. Using the Department of Education Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources, the developed materials received consistently high ratings across all indicators. Specifically, the mean ratings were: Content – 4.32 (Very Satisfactory), Face Validity – 4.72 (Very Satisfactory), Presentation and Organization – 4.85 (Very Satisfactory), Accuracy and Up-to-Datedness of Information – 4.88 (Very Satisfactory). These results validate that material meets the quality benchmarks expected of instructional resources in basic education, particularly in terms of pedagogical integrity, cultural sensitivity, clarity, and engagement.

A thematic analysis of teacher feedback further identified four key factors influencing the perceived effectiveness of the reading materials across different grade levels: (1) relevance to learners’ experiences, (2) adaptability to varying proficiency levels, (3) teacher scaffolding and instructional strategies, and (4) learner motivation and engagement. Teachers noted that learners responded more positively and participated more actively when the materials reflected familiar settings, recognizable names, and cultural traditions. The design of the materials also allowed teachers to differentiate instruction effectively, enabling both struggling and proficient readers to benefit from the same texts through tailored questioning and guided activities.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that the development and validation of Contextualized Reading Materials offer an effective instructional strategy, the developed reading materials is acceptable and follows the Minimum Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS) of grade 5 and 6 MG class. All of the developed reading materials are sufficient and appropriate to its intended users.

The contextualized reading materials developed in this study addressed these instructional needs by integrating culturally relevant content, values formation, environmental consciousness, and problem-solving themes. These elements not only enriched the reading experience but also made literacy instruction

more meaningful, engaging, and responsive to the learners' lived realities. The validation process conducted by teacher-experts confirmed the instructional quality of *the* contextualized reading materials, with consistently high ratings across all criteria, including content, face validity, presentation and organization, and accuracy of information. These results affirm the alignment of the materials with the standards set by the Department of Education for quality instructional resources.

Moreover, the study identified four critical factors influencing the perceived effectiveness of the materials: relevance to learners' experiences, adaptability to varying proficiency levels, teacher scaffolding, and learner motivation. These interconnected factors contributed to increased engagement, deeper comprehension, and improved learner participation. classrooms.

#### Recommendations

**For Teachers:** The use of contextualized reading materials should be integrated into literacy instruction to enhance reading comprehension and engagement. Differentiated instruction strategies should be employed to maximize their effectiveness.

**For School Administrators:** The development of localized and contextualized reading materials should be prioritized, especially in multigrade settings where diverse learning needs exist.

**For Future Researchers:** Further studies may explore the long-term effects of contextualized reading materials on reading proficiency and student motivation. Additionally, similar materials may be developed for other subject areas beyond English.

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