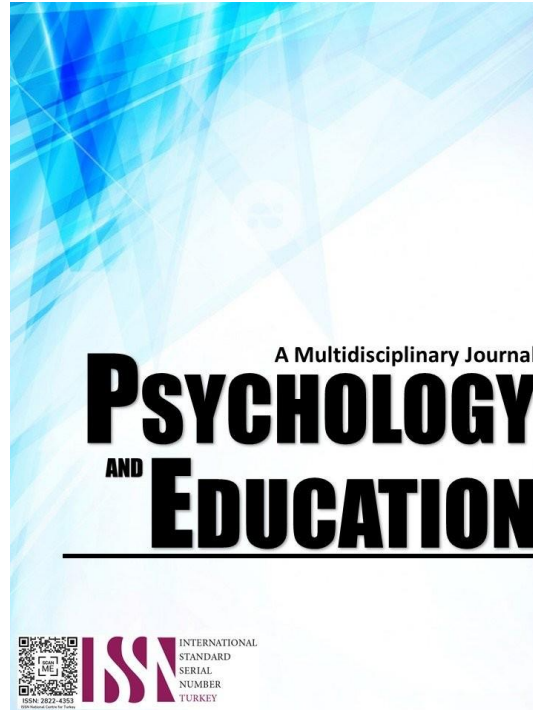


CATS (COPY, ALTER, TRANSFORM, AND SUPPLY): AN APPROACH ADDRESSING WRITING DIFFICULTIES IN ELEMENTARY PUPILS



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CATS (Copy, Alter, Transform, And Supply): An Approach Addressing Writing Difficulties in Elementary Pupils

Hannah Victoria D. Paler,* Shenna Mae M. Endrina, Jovieme C. Caug, Princess A. Takiold,
Jonelson C. Escandallo, Deveyvon L. Espinosa, Conie B. Cerna, Kristy Jane R. Muegna,
Regine L. Generalao

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative inquiry was to determine the level of writing difficulties of grade 3 pupils of Clementa F. Royo Elementary School. It aimed to find out the effectiveness of the intervention and provide valuable insights into the writing challenges faced by third graders through the adaptation of the instrument of Crocker et al., 2020, contingencies of self-worth theory and measurement. It aimed to find out if there was a difference of the mean from the pre-test and post-test of the CATS (Copy, Alter, Transform, and Supply). This inquiry utilized descriptive-quantitative method in which numerical and non-numerical responds was analyzed. The participant of this research were the 40 of grade 3 section orange and pineapple in Clementa F. Royo Elementary School. The data collection was through Likert Scale and survey questionnaire which compose of In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The result found out that there was a difference between the pre-test and post-test based on its overall mean. The statistical evidence, indicated by the mean of the pre-test was 2.37 with 0.18 standard deviation while the post-test was 3.90 with 0.32 standard deviation. The pre-test determine that the pupils having difficulties in writing while the post-test, after implementation of the CATS determines that the pupils are good in writing. The success of this program could serve as a model for similar educational interventions aiming to bolster academic skills among young learners. The results shows implementing CATS can improve in writing skills in elementary pupils with writing difficulties.

Keywords: *action-research, elementary, qualitative, CATS (Copy, Alteration, Transform and Supply)*

Introduction

The development of writing skills in elementary grade learners is a cornerstone of their academic and personal growth. As outlined by the Institute of Educational Sciences (2012), proficiency in writing at a young age significantly correlates with long-term academic success and effective communication. These foundational skills not only enhance students' ability to articulate their thoughts and learning but also foster critical thinking and problem-solving abilities that are essential throughout their lives.

In Malaysia, the core issue regarding the teaching and learning of writing skills, revolves around the significant challenges faced by both students and teachers. ESL students struggle with limited vocabulary, inadequate grammar, and spelling difficulties, compounded by a lack of readiness and insufficient exposure to reading materials. These obstacles hinder their ability to acquire and refine writing skills effectively. Concurrently, teachers encounter their own set of challenges, which include motivating students, managing classrooms with varied skill levels, navigating complex teaching materials, and operating within tight time constraints. These multifaceted difficulties create a complex environment where teaching and learning writing skills become a strenuous task for all parties involved as highlighted by Moses & Mohammad (2019).

In the Philippines, particularly in Zamboanga, language teachers have identified a pressing issue concerning the poor English writing skills among elementary pupils. Through their experiences and observations while teaching writing, they have pinpointed five key factors contributing to this challenge. These factors include a deficiency in vocabulary, struggles with conveying and organizing ideas effectively, the perception among pupils that writing is daunting, a lack of motivation and interest in writing, and difficulties with spelling, grammar, and sentence construction. Collectively, these obstacles impede the development of proficient English writing skills among elementary students, highlighting a critical need for targeted interventions and support within the educational system by Saavedra (2020).

In the Division of Davao del Norte, particularly in Clementa F. Royo Elementary School as we observe there are still pupils who have difficulties in writing a simple paragraph. Helping elementary students overcome writing challenges entails offering structured assistance, including breaking down tasks into smaller increments, utilizing visual aids, presenting models for reference, providing ample practice opportunities, and delivering constructive feedback.

The present study aims to address research gap within the context of "CATS: An Approach Addressing Writing Difficulties in Elementary Pupils", whereas previous study by Smith (2019), who highlights the need for longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of writing intervention programs, on elementary students' writing abilities. It investigates its impact on various aspects of writing skills development, such as creativity, fluency, and comprehension, across different demographic groups and academic environments.

Research Questions

The research questions below are to investigate reasons on how to address writing difficulties on Elementary learners. Sentence frames will be an intervention for the learners to address this problem. The research questions that guided this study are the following:

1. What is the level of students' writing strategies before the project CATS intervention on the writing skills of the elementary grade pupils?
2. What is the level of students' writing strategies during the project CATS intervention on the writing skills of the elementary grade pupils?
3. What is the effect of project CATS intervention on the writing skills of the elementary grade pupils?

Proposed Intervention

Writing difficulties among elementary pupils can significantly impact their academic progress and overall development. These challenges often stem from issues such as poor vocabulary, limited sentence structure, and difficulty in organizing thoughts. The CATS approach—Copy, Alter, Transform, and Supply—offers a structured intervention method to help students overcome these obstacles by enhancing their writing skills through systematic practice and creative engagement.

The CATS approach offers a versatile framework for addressing writing difficulties among elementary pupils by combining structured practice with creative expression. By integrating activities that focus on imitation, modification, transformation, and original creation, educators can effectively support students in developing essential writing skills essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

1. Copy: Provide students with well-written sentences or short paragraphs and ask them to copy them by hand. Encourage them to pay attention to punctuation, capitalization, and overall structure. Gradually, introduce variations such as changing a word or rearranging the sentence order to reinforce understanding. It can improve their sentence structure and grammar through imitation and repetition.
2. Alter: Start with simple sentences or paragraphs and instruct students to alter them while maintaining coherence and meaning. This could involve changing verbs, adjectives, or adding descriptive details. Encourage experimentation with different sentence structures (e.g., switching from simple to compound sentences) to expand their linguistic repertoire. It can foster their creativity and flexibility in writing by modifying existing content.
3. Transform: Provide students with a story or factual text and ask them to transform it into another genre (e.g., turning a narrative into a poem or summarizing a passage into bullet points). This exercise encourages them to understand the underlying structure and purpose of different types of writing while enhancing their ability to convey information effectively. It can develop their critical thinking and narrative skills through transforming content into different formats.
4. Supply: Engage students in activities that require them to supply their own ideas and content. For instance, provide story prompts, picture sequences, or thematic topics and encourage students to write their own stories, essays, or descriptive passages. Offer feedback that focuses on both content and structure to guide improvement. It will enhance their vocabulary, creativity, and confidence in generating original content.

Methodology

The design of this research is descriptive quantitative research. Descriptive research is also called as survey research that collected numerical data to answer question about the correct status of the subject of the study. According to Gay (2012) stated that descriptive research is a survey research. Besides, Creswell (2012) stated that survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population.

This study involving 40 grade 3 pupils from Clementa F. Royo Elementary School aligns with this guidance, balancing sample size and practicality. Using observation as the primary method, the study aims to deeply understand the behaviors and interactions of these pupils, potentially capturing social and educational dynamics specific to their age group. Conducting the study at Clementa F. Royo Elementary School offers a context-specific lens to understand how the school environment impacts observed behaviors, enriching the study's depth.

The methods that the researchers will be using in data collection is through a direct observation in subjective manner. Direct Observation method is collecting data in which a researcher watches or listens to research participants rather than conducting an interview or manipulating variables through experimental methodology. According to Hadaway (2018) in this method, researchers can gather information on participants' actual behaviors through various methods such as observation, tracking activities, or using tracking worksheets, which can provide more accurate insights compared to what participants might report verbally.

The researchers will document participants' data. It is important for the researchers to grasp the research's essence and purpose, making it simpler to explain and seek permission from participants to engage them in the study, even if it involves direct observational methods. The researchers ensure thorough preparation of all steps required to collect the data.

As the investigation start, the researchers will develop positive relationship toward the participants. The researchers will send a permission letter to the principal and ask the grades 3 pupils adviser a permission to conduct the study. The participants will be informed through the letter of communication and face-to-face encounter, and the flow of the discussion. Moreover, participants will be oriented about the project CATS Intervention. Further, participants' responses will be recorded and each of them will have a copy of the discussion guide. Then, the researchers will assure that the process is in a manner sensitive to individuals.

Furthermore, the process of collecting data is to compare the writing outputs of selected grade 3 pupils experiencing writing difficulties before the project CATS Intervention has been implemented then, conducted three targeted instructions with the results after implementing the project CATS Intervention. The researchers will analyze the data well to provide an exact findings about the spelling performance of the selected grade 3 pupils. Then, recognition will be given with the help of their adviser and the principal of school.

Results and Discussion

This section of the study presents the data gathered by the researchers, which was meticulously organized, presented, analyzed, and interpreted to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the collected information. The researchers utilized a Likert scale, a psychometric response scale, to measure respondents' levels of agreement with given statements. This scale, commonly used in questionnaires, typically ranges from 1 to 5 points, with specific intervals indicating varying degrees of frequency or agreement. The scale interpretation is as follows: a score of 5 (Always) corresponds to a range of 4.21 to 5.00, 4 (Often) corresponds to 3.41 to 4.20, 3 (Sometimes) corresponds to 2.62 to 3.40, 2 (Rarely) corresponds to 1.81 to 2.60, and 1 (Never) corresponds to 1.00 to 1.80. This method enabled the researchers to quantitatively assess and interpret the responses, thereby facilitating a deeper analysis of the gathered data.

Research Question No.1: Level of Students' Writing Strategies Before the Project CATS Intervention on the Writing Skills of the Elementary Grade Pupils

The first variable being in studied is the General Writing strategies among Grade 3 pupils with overall result of the pre-test has a description of Low and the post-test has a description of High which means that the table focuses on different writing strategies used by learners. These strategies include writing in English, writing for pleasure in English during free time, writing notes/messages/diaries, using bilingual dictionaries, English-English dictionaries or handbooks, and reading English writing.

Table 1. *Level of the Use of Learning Strategies in terms of General Writing Strategies*

<i>General Writing Strategies</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Description</i>
I often write in my native language.	3.40	Moderate	4.48	Very High
I often write in English.	2.88	Moderate	3.68	High
I write for pleasure in my freetime in English.	2.00	Low	3.75	High
I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	2.38	Low	3.78	High
I use a bilingual dictionary.	2.05	Low	3.88	High
I use an English-English dictionary.	2.35	Low	3.53	High
I use an English grammar book or handbook.	2.43	Low	3.75	High
I read native English writing.	1.95	Low	4.38	Very High
I use the English words I know in different ways.	2.38	Low	4.18	High
Overall	2.42	Low	3.93	High

Moreover, for each writing strategy, numerical values (ranging from 2.00 to 4.98) are provided across the pre-test and post-test categories. These values represent the level of usage by learners. Strategies like "writing in English" and "writing for pleasure in English" show an increase in usage from pre-test to post-test. Furthermore, the use of bilingual dictionaries and English-English dictionaries also increases. Reading English writing remains consistently high. The increase in strategy usage after intervention suggests that teaching methods or strategies positively impacted learners' use of writing strategies.

In connection, Leonida (2019) found that writing is an activity rooted in acquiring skills [skill-getting] until these skills are used in actual needs [skill-using] in a modern perspective on writing. It is noted that writing is a social process which indicates which we are using in our daily communication with others in different contexts or situation. It was added that in writing, a need for critical analysis, interpretation, and communication of ideas based on one's previous experience and knowledge [schema] is a must for a successful write up.

Additionally, a study conducted by Espéret (2019) stated that underscores the necessity of interventions that concentrate on facilitating access to knowledge, implementing processes, fostering interactions among writers, and leveraging computer technology to aid writing. The emphasis on these areas highlights the multifaceted nature of writing skills development and the importance of a comprehensive approach to teaching and improving writing.

The second variable being in studied is the Before Writing Strategies among Grade 3 pupils with the overall result of the pre-test that has a description of Low and the post-test has a description of High. The table compares the use of learning strategies before and after writing. It lists various strategies related to writing tasks and each strategy has corresponding numerical values for both stages.

The values range from 2.05 to 3.25 for "Before Writing" and For "After Writing," they range from 3.28 to 4.78. Higher values indicate

greater use or importance of the strategy. Moreover, strategies include; (1) Considering task instructions carefully before writing (2) Choosing what to say before starting the draft, (3) Ensuring well-organized ideas before writing (4) Making an outline or plan and (5) Maintaining a positive attitude before writing. Furthermore, this table provides insights into how learners approach writing and it highlights planning and attitude adjustments during the writing process.

Table 2. *Level of the Use of Learning Strategies in terms of Before Writing*

<i>Before Writing</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Description</i>
I review my class notes, handouts, and assignment requirements before beginning to write.	2.45	Low	4.75	Very High
I consider the task or assignment and instructions carefully before writing.	2.75	Moderate	4.73	Very High
I discuss what I am going to write with other students or my teacher.	2.53	Low	3.28	Moderate
I brainstorm and write down ideas before I begin to write.	2.43	Low	3.93	High
I make plans and notes in my native language before writing.	2.35	Low	3.80	High
I make an outline or plan in English.	2.10	Low	3.00	Moderate
I make a timetable for when I would do my writing.	2.60	Low	3.28	Moderate
Before writing the first draft, I do extra study outside the classroom to improve my writing.	2.15	Low	3.73	High
I think of the relationships between what I already know and new things that I learn.	2.33	Low	4.20	High
I notice vocabulary related to a topic that I would write about and try to remember the words.	2.05	Low	3.48	High
I use a dictionary to check things I am not sure about before I write.	2.25	Low	4.28	Very High
I use a grammar book to check things I am not sure about before I write.	2.18	Low	3.73	High
Overall	2.35	Low	3.85	High

The study by Troia and Graham (2020) highlights the significance of planning in writing, noting that it aids students in idea generation and enhances the quality of their writing. Conversely, students with learning disabilities often produce lower quality writing due to inadequate planning, poor organization, and difficulty recalling ideas. Effective planning, however, leads to well-organized thoughts and higher quality texts.

Furthermore, according to Liwanag (2020) writing exercises were prepared based on the principles and an effective learning material helps learners learn the subject matter by opening the ideas presented in it with the assistance of their teachers. O'Neill reiterated that learning materials need to be developmentally appropriate to their target users to serve their purpose of development.

Research Question No. 2: Level of Students' Writing Strategies During the Project CATS Intervention on the Writing Skills of the Elementary Grade Pupils

The third variable being in studied is the During Writing Strategies among Grade 3 pupils with the overall result of the pre-test that has a description of High and the post-test has a description of High. The table lists several strategies that students use during the writing process. Each strategy is associated with a score indicating the level of use. The table suggests that students engage in various strategies during the writing process. Strategies related to goal-setting, self-assessment, clarity, and self-encouragement play a crucial role in effective writing. The improvement from low use to high use indicates that students benefit from explicit instruction and practice in these strategies.

Table 3. *Level of the Use of Learning Strategies in terms of During Writing*

<i>During Writing</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Description</i>
I try to write in a comfortable, quiet place where I can concentrate.	2.75	Moderate	4.55	Very High
I use my background knowledge (world) knowledge to help me develop my ideas.	2.55	Low	4.13	High
I like to write in my native language first and then translate it into English.	2.40	Low	4.23	High
I like to write a draft in my native language first and then translate it into English.	2.03	Low	4.18	High
I edit for content ideas as I am writing.	2.15	Low	3.20	Moderate
I edit for organization as I am writing.	2.20	Low	3.30	Moderate
I like to change, or make my ideas clearer as I am writing.	2.38	Low	3.63	High
I use a dictionary to check things I am not sure about when I write.	1.85	Low	4.25	High
I use a grammar book to check things I am not sure about when I write.	2.40	Low	3.38	Moderate
If I cannot think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	2.38	Low	3.25	Moderate
I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English when I am writing.	2.70	Moderate	3.68	High
I make my writing assignments fun for myself.	2.18	Low	3.83	High
I think about how learning to write well in English would help me succeed in my other courses.	2.10	Low	4.60	Very High

I encourage myself by telling myself that I can do well.	2.80	Moderate	4.78	Very High
Overall	2.35	High	3.93	High

A study of Badayos (2018) writing is such a complex skill thus, an individual needs necessary competencies to effective writing to come up with an acceptable output. Basics to writing are adherence to the 'writing mechanics', including writing form, spelling, punctuation, and writing conventions. The said basics of writing would serve as an important foundation for learners in effective written communication.

Additionally, a study by Adaş and Bakir (2019) and Datchuk and Kubina (2020) emphasized that the use of contemporary approaches based on students in order to eliminate writing difficulties would increase the success. MacArthur (2020) argued that modern methods and techniques should be applied in relation to technology because it is the technological age of today. In addition, in most of the studies encountered in the literature, it has been suggested that the problem of writing stems from letter writing, which is the first stage of writing, and so this stage should be emphasized in order to eliminate writing difficulties.

Research Question No. 3: Effect of Project CATS Intervention on the Writing Skills of the Elementary Grade Pupils

The table provides a comparison of student engagement levels before and after a intervention. In the first indication which is the General Writing Strategies, the pre-test scores shows the initial engagement level for general writing strategies was "2.35", also categorized as "Low". Moreover in the post-test specifically after the program, the engagement level increased to "3.85", now categorized as "High". Additionally, in the second indicator which is the Before Writing, this specific writing strategy showed improvement from "Low" (Pre-Test: 2.35) to "High" (Post-Test: 3.93). Furthermore, the third indicator which is During Writing, another writing strategy also improved from "Low" (Pre-Test: 2.35) to "High" (Post-Test: 3.93).

Table 4. *Summary on the Level of Student Engagement*

<i>Problem Solving Skills</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>	<i>Description</i>
General Writing Strategies	2.42	Low	3.93	High
Before Writing	2.35	Low	3.85	High
During Writing	2.35	Low	3.93	High
Overall	2.37	Low	3.90	High

The overall engagement score increased from "2.37" (Low) in the pre-test to "3.90" (High) in the post-test. In summary, the program had a positive impact on student engagement, particularly in problem-solving skills and general writing strategies. The significant improvement suggests that the intervention or teaching method used during the program effectively enhanced students' abilities in these areas.

A study conducted by Taşkaya and Yetkin (2015) stated the emphasized the necessity of explaining why good writing is important in their study with classroom teachers. The positive effect of motivation on student achievement was explained and it was emphasized that students could overcome writing difficulties. In addition, it was emphasized that by providing family support for motivation, the students who have problems can continue their practice studies outside the school and thus be successful in solving the problem.

Table 5. *Significant Difference Between Pretest And Post-Test*

<i>Type of Test</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Decision</i> <i>α=0.05</i>
Pre-Test	40	39	2.37	0.18	-27.124	< .001	Significant
Post-Test	40		3.90	0.32			

Presented in table 5 is significant difference of the conducted pre-test and post-test scores the performance levels of 40 students in the experimental group in constructing sentence, $t(39) = -27.124$, $p < .001$. Since the probability value ($p < .001$) is less than the level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$), the null hypothesis is being rejected. There is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test.

In terms of the mean scores, the pretest showed a mean of 2.37, with a standard deviation (SD of 0.18), while the post-test showed a mean of 3.90, with the standard deviation of 1.64. This indicates a notable increase in performance from the pre-test to the post-test among the experimental group.

Schultz and Switzky (2019) stated that writing is a difficult skill that requires a lot of effort. Consequently, negative attitudes affecting students' ability to remain focused can ensue. In turn, this leads to shorter texts, lower text quality and creates problems for the semantic integrity of texts. In baseline assessments of this study, it was observed that students were very anxious about what to write. The texts they produced were usually as short as possible and completed as rapidly as possible. After intervention, all the students began to enjoy writing, wrote longer texts, and became more motivated as their knowledge and experience grew.

Conclusions

As researchers and future educators, the CATS (Copy, Alter, Transform, and Supply) approach presents a promising avenue for addressing writing difficulties among elementary pupils. Through a comprehensive analysis of its implementation, this research has shed light on the efficacy of CATS in enhancing writing skills, particularly in fostering creativity and confidence among young learners.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the relatively small sample size and the need for further longitudinal research to assess the long-term impact of CATS on writing proficiency. Nevertheless, the findings underscore the importance of incorporating innovative and adaptable strategies like CATS into elementary education curricula to better support students' writing development.

The journey of this action research was not as smooth as bed of roses. The shortcomings crossed the researchers path through the insufficient time to for implementation due to the various school disturbances. The time management skills of the researcher were test and put into major concern. The worry that the intervention will not be effective surrounds the mind of each researcher. The implementation of the program needs to be efficient in order to prevent possible failures since not only the researchers will be affected but mostly the learners. With the encouragement of the cooperating teachers the research was materialized and gained affirmative result. The experienced that the researchers had, will be a great asset and tool for his/her journey in the teaching and learning process. We strongly believe that continuous advancement and addressing the deficiencies in the school setting will be the great equalizer in carving better individuals equip with strong self-esteem in the near future.

To enhance pupil's writing skills, schools should implement a comprehensive program that includes providing effective writing instruction, comprehensive writing enhancement program, and interactive writing workshops integrated into the daily curriculum. The "CATS (Copy, Alter, Transform, and Supply)" is specifically designed to address these needs. Teachers and staff should receive ongoing professional development to effectively support these initiatives and ensure consistent implementation. Additionally, parental involvement should be encouraged through proving guidelines in writing process on how they can support their children at home. This multifaceted approach aims to create a supportive environment that nurtures pupil's writing skills. Regular evaluation of the CATS Program's effectiveness through surveys and academic performance monitoring is crucial for continuous improvement. Gathering and analyzing data will pinpoint strengths and opportunities for improvement within the program. Fostering a supportive and inclusive school culture that values and promotes every student's progress will lead to better academic outcomes and overall student well-being. Integrating the CATS Program into the educational framework can significantly enhance students' writing skills, fostering resilience and success in both academic and personal endeavors. Overall, continued exploration and refinement of the CATS approach have the potential to significantly contribute to the advancement of writing instruction practices in elementary education.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Hannah Victoria D. Paler

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines

Shenna Mae M. Endrina

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines

Jovieme C. Caug

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines

Princess A. Takiel

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines

Jonelson C. Escandallo, PhD

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines

Deveyvon L. Espinosa, PhD

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines

Conie B. Cerna, MAEd

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines

Kristy Jane R. Muegna, PhD

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines

Regine L. Generalao, MST - Mathematics

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology – Philippines