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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY, LITERATURE-BASED INSTRUCTION, AND INCLUSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICES IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL FILIPINO CLASSROOMS: A QUALITATIVE CASE

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### Abstract

*This qualitative case study explored the culturally responsive pedagogical practices, literature-based instruction, and inclusive special education approaches employed in Senior High School Filipino classrooms at Ditumabo National High School. Anchored on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Constructivist Theory, and Inclusive Education Frameworks, the study examined how Filipino teachers integrate local culture, literature, learner diversity, and inclusive practices in teaching Senior High School learners. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, focus group discussions, and document analysis involving Filipino teachers and selected Senior High School learners. Thematic analysis revealed four major themes: (1) contextualized and culturally grounded Filipino instruction, (2) literature-based learning as a tool for learner engagement and cultural appreciation, (3) inclusive classroom practices and learner support mechanisms, and (4) challenges in implementing culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogy. Findings showed that teachers utilized local literary texts, community experiences, collaborative learning activities, and differentiated instructional approaches to make learning more meaningful and inclusive. Literature-based instruction enhanced learners' critical thinking, cultural identity, communication skills, and emotional engagement. Teachers also demonstrated inclusive practices through adaptive instruction, peer support, scaffolded activities, and flexible assessment strategies to accommodate diverse learner needs, including learners with special educational needs. However, limited instructional materials, inadequate teacher training, time constraints, and diverse learner abilities emerged as persistent challenges. The study highlights the importance of strengthening culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogical practices in Filipino classrooms to promote equitable, contextualized, and meaningful learning experiences among Senior High School learners.*

**Keywords:** *culturally responsive pedagogy, literature-based instruction, inclusive education, Filipino classrooms, qualitative case study, Senior High School, Philippines*

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## **Introduction**

The increasing diversity of learners in contemporary educational settings has strengthened the need for culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogical practices, particularly in language and literature classrooms. In the Philippine educational context, Filipino classrooms serve not only as spaces for language instruction but also as venues for cultural transmission, identity formation, critical reflection, and social understanding. Through culturally responsive pedagogy and literature-based instruction, teachers are able to connect academic content with learners' cultural experiences, local realities, and sociocultural identities, thereby making learning more meaningful and relevant.

Literature-based instruction plays a significant role in developing learners' critical thinking, communication skills, empathy, and cultural appreciation. Literary texts allow learners to explore societal issues, cultural values, historical experiences, and human emotions while enhancing language proficiency and interpretive skills. In Senior High School Filipino classrooms, literature becomes an important tool for promoting reflective learning and cultural awareness among learners from diverse backgrounds and abilities.

Simultaneously, inclusive education has become a central educational priority in the Philippines. The Department of Education continues to strengthen inclusive education policies aimed at ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all learners, including those with special educational needs. Inclusive classroom practices require teachers to employ adaptive teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, learner-centered approaches, and supportive classroom environments that address varying learner needs and learning styles.

At Ditumabo National High School, Filipino teachers encounter diverse learners with varying cultural backgrounds, abilities, interests, and educational needs. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges in implementing culturally responsive, literature-based, and inclusive instructional practices. Teachers are expected to integrate local culture, contextualized learning experiences, and differentiated instruction while ensuring meaningful participation among all learners, including those with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

Although several studies have examined culturally responsive teaching, literature instruction, and inclusive education independently, limited qualitative research has explored the intersection of these approaches within Senior High School Filipino classrooms in Philippine public schools. There remains insufficient understanding of how Filipino teachers integrate cultural responsiveness, literature-based learning, and inclusive special education practices simultaneously within actual classroom contexts.

This study explored the culturally responsive pedagogical practices, literature-based instruction, and inclusive special education approaches employed in Senior High School Filipino classrooms at Ditumabo National High School. Specifically, the study examined instructional practices, learner engagement strategies, inclusion mechanisms, and implementation challenges associated with culturally responsive and inclusive Filipino instruction.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy developed by Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings, Constructivist Theory by Lev Vygotsky, and Inclusive Pedagogy by Lani Florian.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy emphasizes the integration of learners' cultural experiences, values, language, and identities into classroom instruction to enhance meaningful learning and learner participation. Literature-based instruction becomes more effective when literary texts and classroom discussions are contextualized according to learners' sociocultural realities.

Constructivist Theory explains that learners actively construct knowledge through social interaction, reflection, collaboration, and meaningful experiences. Through literature discussions, storytelling, collaborative interpretation, and contextualized activities, learners develop deeper understanding and critical engagement with literary texts and social issues.

Inclusive Pedagogy emphasizes extending learning opportunities to all learners through adaptive, flexible, and learner-centered teaching approaches. Inclusive classrooms recognize learner diversity and promote equitable participation regardless of ability, background, or learning needs.

### **Methodology**

The study utilized a descriptive qualitative case study design to explore the culturally responsive pedagogical practices, literature-based instruction, and inclusive special education approaches implemented in Senior High School Filipino classrooms at Ditumabo National High School.

The study was conducted at Ditumabo National High School located in San Luis, Aurora, Philippines. Participants included Senior High School Filipino teachers and selected learners from Grades 11 and 12. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants directly involved in Filipino instruction and inclusive classroom practices.

Data were gathered through multiple qualitative data collection methods to ensure comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and instructional practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain detailed insights regarding culturally responsive pedagogy, literature-based instruction, and inclusive classroom practices implemented in Senior High School Filipino classrooms. Focus group discussions were likewise utilized to encourage collaborative sharing of experiences, perceptions, and reflections among learners and teachers concerning classroom engagement and cultural learning experiences. Classroom observations were conducted to examine actual teaching strategies, learner participation, classroom interactions, and inclusive instructional approaches employed during Filipino lessons. In addition, document analysis of lesson plans, literary materials, instructional resources, and learning activities was undertaken to identify the integration of culturally responsive, literature-based, and inclusive educational practices within classroom instruction.

Permission to conduct the study was secured from school administrators. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained prior to data gathering. Interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Thematic analysis following the framework of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke was employed in analyzing qualitative data. Codes and themes were systematically generated from recurring patterns identified across interviews, observations, and documents.

Credibility was established through triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement with participants. Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation and audit trails. Confirmability was strengthened through reflective analysis and triangulation, while transferability was supported through detailed descriptions of participants and classroom contexts.

### **Results/Findings**

#### **Theme 1: Contextualized and Culturally Grounded Filipino Instruction**

Participants emphasized the importance of contextualizing Filipino lessons according to learners' cultural experiences, community realities, and everyday social interactions. Teachers explained that Senior High School learners become more engaged and participative when lessons are connected to familiar cultural situations, local traditions, and actual community issues. Participants believed that culturally grounded instruction allows learners to better understand literary concepts, language use, and social themes discussed in Filipino subjects.

One teacher shared:

"Mas naiintindihan ng mga estudyante ang aralin kapag konektado ito sa kanilang kultura at karanasan."  
("Learners understand lessons better when these are connected to their culture and experiences.")

Another participant explained:

"Kapag ginagamit namin ang mga karanasan nila sa komunidad, mas nagiging interesado sila sa talakayan."  
("When we use their community experiences, they become more interested in the discussion.")

Teachers incorporated local examples, community concerns, indigenous experiences, contemporary social issues, and culturally relevant discussions into classroom instruction. Discussions involving local traditions, family values,

environmental concerns, and community relationships were frequently integrated into Filipino lessons and literary analyses.

Classroom observations revealed that learners became more expressive and active when discussions reflected familiar social realities and cultural contexts. Learners openly shared personal experiences, opinions, and reflections during discussions involving local practices and community issues. Teachers also observed that learners demonstrated stronger emotional connection and cultural appreciation when literary texts reflected Filipino identity and indigenous experiences.

One learner shared:

“Mas nakaka-relate kami kapag tungkol sa tunay na buhay at kultura namin ang pinag-uusapan.”  
 (“We can relate more when the discussions involve our real-life experiences and culture.”)

The findings indicate that contextualized and culturally grounded instruction strengthens learner engagement, participation, cultural appreciation, and understanding of Filipino language and literature. These findings support the argument of Geneva Gay that culturally responsive teaching strengthens learner participation and meaningful learning by connecting instruction with learners’ sociocultural experiences. Studies further revealed that culturally responsive pedagogical practices improve learner engagement, motivation, and classroom participation when learners perceive lessons as culturally relevant and personally meaningful.

Similarly, research on culturally responsive instruction found that learners become more engaged and academically motivated when teachers integrate community experiences, cultural identity, and contextualized examples into classroom instruction. The findings of the present study affirm that culturally grounded Filipino instruction contributes significantly to learner participation, cultural identity formation, and meaningful educational experiences.

### **Theme 2: Literature-Based Learning as a Tool for Learner Engagement and Cultural Appreciation**

Participants described literature-based instruction as an effective pedagogical tool in promoting critical thinking, empathy, emotional awareness, and cultural appreciation among Senior High School learners. Teachers emphasized that literary texts provide opportunities for learners to examine social realities, human experiences, moral values, and cultural traditions within meaningful contexts.

One learner explained:

“Mas nagiging malalim ang pag-unawa namin kapag may mga kwento at panitikan na may kaugnayan sa tunay na buhay.”

(“Our understanding becomes deeper when literary texts are connected to real-life experiences.”)

Another participant stated:

“Sa panitikan namin natututunan ang kultura, problema ng lipunan, at mga aral sa buhay.”  
 (“Through literature, we learn about culture, social issues, and life lessons.”)

Teachers utilized poems, short stories, essays, folk literature, legends, contemporary Filipino literary texts, and indigenous narratives to facilitate reflective discussions and collaborative learning activities. Literature discussions often encouraged learners to examine themes related to identity, family relationships, social inequality, culture, morality, and nationalism.

Classroom observations revealed that learners became more expressive, reflective, and emotionally engaged during literature discussions, role-playing activities, storytelling sessions, and interpretive analyses. Learners actively participated in sharing opinions, interpreting literary symbols, and relating literary themes to their own experiences and community realities.

One teacher explained:

“Kapag may panitikan, mas nakakapagbahagi sila ng saloobin at sariling karanasan.”  
 (“When literature is involved, learners become more open in sharing their feelings and personal experiences.”)

Literature-based instruction also strengthened learners' communication skills, collaborative participation, and critical analysis abilities. Teachers observed that literary discussions promoted empathy and deeper understanding of societal realities because learners became more reflective regarding the struggles and experiences of characters presented in literary texts.

The findings suggest that literature-based learning enhances learner engagement, cultural appreciation, reflective thinking, and social awareness. Literature serves not only as a language learning tool but also as an important medium for cultural transmission, identity formation, and critical understanding of society and human experiences. These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing that culturally relevant literary instruction strengthens learner engagement and emotional connection with classroom discussions because learners are able to relate literary content to their own experiences and identities.

Furthermore, studies on culturally responsive learning environments indicate that reflective discussions and collaborative interpretation of literary texts contribute to stronger learner participation, empathy, and social awareness. The findings of the present study reinforce the importance of literature as a culturally responsive instructional tool that promotes meaningful learning and critical reflection among learners.

### **Theme 3: Inclusive Classroom Practices and Learner Support Mechanisms**

Teachers demonstrated conscious efforts to accommodate diverse learner needs through adaptive and inclusive instructional strategies. Participants acknowledged that learners possess varying learning styles, comprehension levels, abilities, and socio-emotional needs, requiring flexible and learner-centered teaching approaches.

One teacher stated:

"Hindi pare-pareho ang kakayahan ng mga bata kaya kailangan flexible ang pagtuturo."  
("Learners have different abilities, so teaching must be flexible.")

Another participant explained:

"May mga estudyanteng mabilis matuto at mayroon ding nangangailangan ng dagdag na gabay."  
("Some learners learn quickly while others need additional guidance.")

Inclusive classroom practices observed during the study included differentiated instruction, scaffolded learning activities, peer support and collaboration, flexible assessment strategies, simplified instructional materials, individualized learner guidance, and contextualized examples and activities.

Teachers modified classroom tasks and instructional approaches according to learners' needs and comprehension levels. Additional explanations, simplified instructions, and guided learning activities were provided to learners who experienced difficulties in understanding literary texts and classroom discussions.

Participants also emphasized emotional encouragement, patience, positive reinforcement, and supportive classroom environments to ensure participation among learners with learning difficulties and special educational needs. Teachers intentionally created safe classroom spaces where learners felt comfortable expressing ideas, asking questions, and participating without fear of embarrassment.

One learner shared:

"Mas komportable kaming sumagot kapag supportive at hindi nakakatakot ang teacher."  
("We feel more comfortable participating when the teacher is supportive and non-intimidating.")

Peer collaboration was also utilized to support struggling learners through group discussions, partner activities, and cooperative tasks. Teachers observed that collaborative learning encouraged learners to become more confident and participative during classroom activities.

The findings reflect the principles of Inclusive Pedagogy, which emphasize equitable participation, learner-centered

support systems, flexibility in instruction, and recognition of learner diversity within inclusive classroom environments. These findings support studies indicating that inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices strengthen positive classroom culture, learner confidence, and participation among diverse learners.

Research likewise suggests that culturally and linguistically responsive teaching provides multiple ways for learners to participate and demonstrate understanding, thereby strengthening inclusivity and learner engagement. The findings of the study demonstrate that inclusive learner support mechanisms and adaptive teaching strategies contribute to equitable classroom participation and meaningful learning experiences among Senior High School learners.

#### **Theme 4: Challenges in Implementing Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Pedagogy**

Despite positive instructional practices, participants identified several challenges affecting the implementation of culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogy in Senior High School Filipino classrooms. Teachers acknowledged that contextualized and inclusive instruction requires substantial preparation, instructional resources, and pedagogical flexibility.

One teacher explained:

“Mahirap minsan dahil kulang ang materyales at iba-iba ang pangangailangan ng mga estudyante.”  
 (“It becomes difficult at times because materials are lacking and learners have varying needs.”)

Another participant stated:

“Hindi rin sapat minsan ang oras para ma-accommodate lahat ng pangangailangan nila.”  
 (“Sometimes the available time is not enough to accommodate all their needs.”)

Participants identified several challenges including limited culturally contextualized instructional materials, insufficient teacher training, time constraints, large class sizes, diverse learner abilities and needs, limited resources for inclusive education, and difficulty balancing curriculum requirements and learner diversity.

Teachers expressed concerns regarding the limited availability of localized literary resources and culturally relevant instructional materials appropriate for Senior High School Filipino instruction. Some participants explained that existing textbooks and instructional materials often lacked sufficient local cultural representation and contextualized content.

Participants also emphasized the need for continuous teacher training focusing on culturally responsive teaching, literature-based instruction, differentiated learning strategies, and inclusive classroom management practices. Teachers acknowledged that handling diverse learners requires specialized competencies and sustained professional development.

One teacher shared:

“Kailangan pa talaga ng training para mas maging handa kami sa inclusive at culturally responsive teaching.”  
 (“There is still a need for more training so we can become more prepared for inclusive and culturally responsive teaching.”)

Learners also noted that overcrowded classrooms and limited instructional time sometimes affected classroom participation and individualized learner support. Despite these difficulties, teachers remained committed to implementing adaptive and learner-centered strategies to support diverse learners.

The findings suggest that institutional support, continuous professional development, adequate instructional resources, and strengthened inclusive education programs are essential in sustaining culturally responsive and inclusive Filipino instruction. These findings are consistent with studies indicating that teachers often encounter barriers related to limited training, insufficient resources, curriculum demands, and classroom diversity when implementing culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

Similarly, research revealed that while culturally responsive teaching significantly improves learner engagement and inclusivity, its effective implementation depends heavily on teacher preparedness, institutional support, and availability of contextualized learning materials. The findings of the present study therefore highlight the need for sustained institutional initiatives that strengthen culturally responsive and inclusive teaching competencies among educators.

### **Conclusions**

The study revealed that culturally responsive pedagogy, literature-based instruction, and inclusive educational practices significantly contribute to meaningful learning experiences in Senior High School Filipino classrooms at Ditumabo National High School. Teachers demonstrated contextualized, learner-centered, and adaptive instructional approaches that strengthened learner participation, cultural appreciation, critical thinking, and inclusive engagement.

Findings further showed that literature-based instruction serves as an effective platform for connecting learners' cultural experiences, social realities, and reflective learning processes. Inclusive pedagogical practices promoted equitable participation and supportive learning environments for diverse learners, including those with special educational needs.

However, challenges related to instructional resources, teacher preparation, diverse learner needs, and institutional limitations continue to affect the sustainability of culturally responsive and inclusive Filipino instruction. Strengthening teacher professional development, contextualized instructional materials, and institutional support systems is essential in promoting equitable and culturally grounded education in Senior High School Filipino classrooms.

### **Recommendations**

1. Schools should strengthen culturally responsive and inclusive teaching practices in Filipino classrooms.
2. Teachers should be provided with professional development programs focusing on literature-based instruction and inclusive pedagogy.
3. Educational institutions should develop localized and culturally contextualized instructional materials.
4. Schools should strengthen learner support mechanisms and inclusive classroom resources.
5. Future researchers may conduct broader studies involving multiple schools and diverse educational contexts.

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