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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teachers' Competence and Instructional Experiences in the Implementation of Makabansa 3: Pedagogical Perspectives from Public Elementary Schools in Legislative District V, Schools Division of Isabela

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Abstract

The implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum in the Philippines introduced Makabansa as an integrated learning area designed to strengthen learners' civic consciousness, cultural identity, values formation, and socio-emotional development through contextualized and interdisciplinary instruction. As one of the newly introduced learning components in the elementary curriculum, Makabansa 3 requires teachers to demonstrate pedagogical flexibility, interdisciplinary competence, and learner-centered instructional practices. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the competence and instructional experiences of teachers implementing Makabansa 3 in public elementary schools in Legislative District V, Schools Division of Isabela. Specifically, the study examined teachers' pedagogical competencies, instructional approaches, classroom experiences, implementation challenges, and coping mechanisms in delivering Makabansa instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum framework. Twelve public elementary school teachers handling Grade 3 Makabansa classes were purposively selected as participants. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials. Using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework, findings revealed that teachers employed contextualized and integrative pedagogical approaches, collaborative learning activities, experiential tasks, and values-oriented instruction to promote active learner engagement. Teachers demonstrated adaptability and commitment despite experiencing challenges related to insufficient instructional materials, limited training opportunities, curriculum unfamiliarity, time constraints, and diverse learner needs. The findings further revealed that continuous professional development, peer collaboration, administrative support, and localized instructional resources significantly contributed to teachers' instructional competence and confidence in implementing Makabansa 3. The study concludes that successful implementation of Makabansa 3 requires sustained institutional support, comprehensive teacher capacity-building initiatives, and strengthened contextualized learning resources to ensure effective interdisciplinary instruction and meaningful learner development. The findings contribute to the growing discourse on curriculum reform, teacher competence, and elementary education pedagogy in the Philippine educational context.

Keywords: Makabansa 3, MATATAG Curriculum, teacher competence, instructional experiences, pedagogical perspectives, elementary education, qualitative research, public elementary schools

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INTRODUCTION

Educational reforms in the Philippines continuously evolve to address the changing demands of society, globalization, and the diverse learning needs of Filipino learners. One of the most recent reforms introduced by the Department of Education is the MATATAG Curriculum, which aims to decongest the existing curriculum, strengthen foundational skills, and promote values formation and holistic learner development. Under this reform, Makabansa emerged as a new learning area designed to integrate social studies, values education, arts, music, health, and physical education into a more contextualized and interdisciplinary instructional framework. Specifically, Makabansa 3 focuses on developing learners' civic consciousness, cultural appreciation, social responsibility, nationalism, and socio-emotional competencies among Grade 3 learners through integrative and experiential learning experiences.

The implementation of Makabansa 3 significantly transformed instructional practices in elementary education. Teachers are expected to employ learner-centered pedagogies, interdisciplinary integration, contextualized instruction, and authentic assessment strategies to facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Unlike traditional compartmentalized instruction, Makabansa requires teachers to synthesize multiple competencies and learning domains into coherent and developmentally appropriate classroom activities. Consequently, teachers' competence, instructional preparedness, and pedagogical adaptability become crucial in ensuring effective curriculum implementation.

However, despite the intended goals of the MATATAG Curriculum, teachers continue to encounter challenges related to curriculum transition, insufficient instructional resources, lack of training opportunities, varied learner abilities, and instructional workload. Public elementary school teachers, particularly those in geographically and socioeconomically diverse communities, often experience difficulties in contextualizing lessons, preparing interdisciplinary activities, and addressing learners' developmental needs within limited classroom time. Previous studies emphasized that successful curriculum implementation depends largely on teachers' pedagogical competence, instructional decision-making, and institutional support systems (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Moreover, culturally responsive and contextualized teaching practices remain essential in promoting learner engagement and meaningful understanding among elementary learners (Gay, 2018).

In the Philippine context, limited studies specifically explore teachers' lived instructional experiences and pedagogical competence in implementing Makabansa under the newly introduced MATATAG Curriculum. Most existing studies focus primarily on curriculum policies, foundational literacy, and general instructional reforms, leaving a gap in understanding how elementary teachers navigate interdisciplinary instruction in actual classroom settings. Given the significance of teachers' roles in translating curriculum standards into meaningful learning experiences, there is a need to examine their instructional realities, challenges, and professional perspectives regarding Makabansa implementation.

Hence, this study aimed to explore the competence and instructional experiences of public elementary school teachers implementing Makabansa 3 in Legislative District V, Schools Division of Isabela. Specifically, the study investigated teachers' pedagogical practices, instructional competencies, classroom experiences, implementation challenges, coping strategies, and recommendations for improving Makabansa instruction. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to curriculum development initiatives, teacher training programs, and policy recommendations that strengthen interdisciplinary instruction and learner-centered pedagogy in Philippine elementary education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers implement Makabansa 3 in public elementary schools?
2. What pedagogical competencies and instructional practices do teachers demonstrate in teaching Makabansa 3?
3. What instructional experiences and challenges do teachers encounter during curriculum implementation?
4. How do teachers address classroom challenges and diverse learner needs in Makabansa instruction?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the competence, instructional experiences, and pedagogical perspectives of teachers implementing Makabansa 3 in public elementary schools. The phenomenological approach was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to examine the participants' lived experiences, classroom realities, and instructional meanings attached to the implementation of the Makabansa learning area under the MATATAG Curriculum. The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in Legislative District V, Schools Division of Isabela, which were chosen due to their active implementation of Makabansa instruction and diverse learner populations. The participants consisted of twelve Grade 3 teachers selected through purposive sampling. Participants were included based on the following criteria: currently teaching Makabansa 3, possessing at least three years of teaching experience, and directly involved in implementing the MATATAG Curriculum. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans, instructional materials, and assessment tools. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. The study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework involving data familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, and interpretation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, credibility was established through member checking and triangulation of data sources, while dependability was strengthened through audit trails. Confirmability and transferability were further ensured through reflective journaling and thick descriptions of participants' experiences and classroom contexts.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Theme 1: Contextualized and Integrative Pedagogical Practices in Makabansa 3 Instruction

The findings revealed that teachers implemented Makabansa 3 through contextualized, interdisciplinary, and learner-centered instructional practices that connected lessons to learners' daily experiences, community culture, and real-life situations. Teachers emphasized that Makabansa instruction became more meaningful when lessons were localized and integrated with values formation, social interaction, arts-based activities, and experiential learning tasks. Classroom observations showed that teachers frequently utilized storytelling, collaborative activities, role-playing, community-based examples, music integration, and reflective discussions to facilitate active learner engagement and participation.

One participant shared:

"Mas naiintindihan ng mga bata ang aralin kapag inuugnay ito sa kanilang pamilya, komunidad, at pang-araw-araw na karanasan."

Another teacher explained:

"Ang Makabansa ay hindi lang basta pagtuturo ng konsepto kundi paghubog din ng pagpapahalaga, disiplina, at pagiging mabuting mamamayan."

A participant also emphasized:

"Mas nagiging masaya at aktibo ang klase kapag may activities tulad ng storytelling, group work, at performance tasks."

The findings suggest that teachers recognized the importance of contextualized and integrative teaching approaches in promoting meaningful learning experiences among Grade 3 learners. Teachers demonstrated pedagogical competence by incorporating interdisciplinary strategies that supported not only cognitive development but also socio-emotional and moral learning. The findings align with the principles of culturally responsive teaching, which emphasize connecting instruction to learners' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences to improve participation and understanding (Gay, 2018). Similarly, the findings support Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which highlights the importance of social interaction, collaboration, and guided learning in knowledge construction.

Theme 2: Instructional Challenges and Curriculum Adjustment Difficulties

Despite teachers' positive instructional practices, the findings revealed several challenges encountered during the implementation of Makabansa 3. Participants expressed difficulties related to insufficient instructional materials, limited teacher training, curriculum unfamiliarity, time constraints, and diverse learner needs. Teachers reported that the transition to the MATATAG Curriculum required significant adjustments in lesson preparation, instructional delivery, and assessment practices.

One participant stated:

"Minsan nahihirapan kami dahil kulang pa ang instructional materials at wala pang sapat na references para sa Makabansa."

Another teacher shared:

"Bagong subject pa kasi kaya nangangapa pa kami sa tamang strategies at integration ng competencies."

A participant also explained:

"Iba-iba ang learning abilities ng mga bata kaya kailangan talagang baguhin at i-adjust ang mga activities."

Teachers also highlighted the challenge of managing learners with varying reading comprehension levels, attention spans, and behavioral needs. Some participants noted that interdisciplinary instruction required additional preparation time and creativity in developing localized and developmentally appropriate activities.

The findings indicate that curriculum transition and instructional adaptation remain significant concerns among elementary school teachers implementing new educational reforms. These challenges reflect the realities commonly experienced during curriculum innovation processes, particularly in public school contexts with limited resources and support systems. The findings support the study of Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), which emphasized that teachers require sustained professional development, accessible instructional resources, and institutional support to effectively implement curriculum reforms. Furthermore, OECD (2019) stressed that educational reforms become more successful when schools are provided with adequate teaching materials, teacher mentoring, and continuous pedagogical support.

Theme 3: Teacher Adaptability, Professional Growth, and Collaborative Support Systems

The findings further revealed that teachers demonstrated adaptability, resilience, and commitment in addressing the challenges of Makabansa 3 implementation. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration with fellow teachers, self-directed learning, instructional mentoring, and professional development activities in improving their confidence and competence in teaching Makabansa.

One teacher shared:

"Malaking tulong ang pakikipagpalitan ng ideas sa kapwa guro para mas mapadali ang paggawa ng activities at lesson plans."

Another participant explained:

"Patuloy kaming nag-aaral at naghahanap ng strategies para mas maging epektibo ang pagtuturo ng Makabansa."

A participant also emphasized:

"Kapag may support ang school heads at may trainings, mas nagiging handa kami sa pagtuturo."

Teachers described collaborative lesson planning, peer mentoring, and participation in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions as valuable mechanisms in strengthening instructional competence and curriculum understanding. Participants also highlighted the role of administrative encouragement and supportive school leadership in promoting teacher confidence and innovation.

The findings demonstrate that teacher adaptability and collaborative professional culture significantly contribute to effective curriculum implementation. Teachers' willingness to continuously improve their pedagogical practices reflects professional resilience and commitment to learner development despite existing instructional constraints. These findings align with Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) Inclusive Pedagogy framework, which emphasizes teacher responsiveness and flexibility in addressing learner diversity. The findings also support the argument of Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who emphasized that collaborative professional learning communities enhance teacher effectiveness, instructional innovation, and educational quality.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that teachers implementing Makabansa 3 in public elementary schools demonstrated strong pedagogical commitment toward contextualized, interdisciplinary, and learner-centered instruction despite the complexities associated with curriculum transition. Teachers recognized that Makabansa instruction extends beyond content delivery and serves as an avenue for promoting values formation, cultural appreciation, nationalism, and socio-emotional development among learners. The integration of storytelling, collaborative learning, experiential tasks, arts-based instruction, and reflective discussions reflects teachers' efforts to create meaningful and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for Grade 3 learners. These findings affirm the goals of the MATATAG Curriculum, which emphasizes holistic learner development and contextualized education. The findings further support Gay's (2018) culturally responsive teaching framework, which explains that instruction becomes more effective when connected to learners' social realities, cultural backgrounds, and everyday experiences.

The study also highlighted the significant instructional challenges encountered by teachers during the implementation of Makabansa 3. Participants experienced difficulties related to insufficient instructional resources, limited curriculum orientation, lack of comprehensive training, time constraints, and varying learner abilities. These challenges affected lesson preparation, instructional delivery, and classroom management. The findings indicate that the successful implementation of curriculum reforms depends not only on curriculum design but also on the

adequacy of institutional support systems provided to teachers. Similar findings were emphasized by OECD (2019), which stated that educational reforms often encounter implementation difficulties when schools lack adequate resources, professional support, and instructional materials. The findings likewise align with previous Philippine educational studies highlighting that teachers frequently experience curriculum overload, resource insufficiency, and adjustment difficulties during educational transitions.

Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated remarkable adaptability, resilience, and professional initiative in implementing Makabansa 3. Participants actively engaged in collaborative lesson planning, peer mentoring, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and self-directed learning to strengthen their instructional competence and curriculum understanding. The findings suggest that collaborative professional culture and continuous learning opportunities significantly contribute to teacher confidence and instructional effectiveness. Teachers' responsiveness and flexibility in adjusting instructional strategies according to learner needs further reflect the principles of inclusive pedagogy proposed by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011). Moreover, the findings support Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who argued that sustained professional development and collaborative professional learning communities enhance teacher quality, instructional innovation, and learner outcomes.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teachers play a central role in translating curriculum reforms into meaningful classroom experiences. While the implementation of Makabansa 3 presents both opportunities and challenges, teachers' pedagogical competence, adaptability, and commitment remain essential in ensuring effective interdisciplinary instruction and holistic learner development within the Philippine elementary education context.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

The study concluded that the implementation of Makabansa 3 in public elementary schools in Legislative District V, Schools Division of Isabela is characterized by teachers' strong commitment to contextualized, learner-centered, and interdisciplinary instruction. Teachers demonstrated pedagogical competence through the integration of experiential learning activities, collaborative strategies, values-oriented instruction, and localized learning experiences that enhanced learner engagement and meaningful understanding. The findings further revealed that Makabansa 3 serves as an important platform for promoting civic consciousness, cultural identity, social responsibility, and socio-emotional development among Grade 3 learners.

However, the study also concluded that teachers continue to experience challenges related to insufficient instructional resources, limited curriculum training, curriculum unfamiliarity, time constraints, and diverse learner needs. These instructional realities affected lesson preparation, classroom management, and assessment practices. Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and professional commitment by engaging in collaborative learning, peer mentoring, and continuous self-improvement initiatives to strengthen curriculum implementation.

The study therefore concludes that the successful implementation of Makabansa 3 requires sustained institutional support, continuous teacher capacity-building programs, accessible contextualized instructional materials, and strengthened collaborative professional learning environments. Teachers' pedagogical adaptability and professional competence remain critical in ensuring meaningful and effective implementation of interdisciplinary instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study provide important implications for curriculum developers, educational leaders, teacher education institutions, and policymakers. The study suggests the need for

continuous professional development programs focusing on interdisciplinary instruction, contextualized pedagogy, classroom assessment, and learner-centered teaching strategies to strengthen teachers' competence in implementing Makabansa 3. School administrators may also strengthen Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, mentoring systems, and collaborative lesson planning activities to support teachers during curriculum transition and instructional adaptation.

The study further highlights the importance of providing adequate instructional materials, localized learning resources, and curriculum guides that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive to learners' contexts. Policymakers and educational institutions may prioritize resource allocation and instructional support systems that address the practical challenges experienced by public elementary school teachers during curriculum implementation.

Moreover, the findings contribute to the broader discourse on curriculum reform, interdisciplinary instruction, and elementary education pedagogy in the Philippine context. The study may serve as a basis for future research focusing on learner outcomes, teacher preparedness, curriculum effectiveness, and contextualized teaching practices under the MATATAG Curriculum.

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