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Utilization and implementation of an integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan in the Philippine education: Practices and challenges

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the utilization of an integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan (Philippine Social Studies) in elementary grades. The study investigates the extent of integration, how teachers employ the approach, and the challenges faced in implementation. Using a mixed-methods research design, data were collected from elementary school teachers through interviews and analysis of lesson plans. The findings reveal varying levels of integration among participants, with some teachers using the approach infrequently while others use it consistently. The most frequently integrated parts of lessons are Application, Motivation, Discussion, and Assignment, highlighting a focus on real-world application and interactive learning.

Challenges identified include negative attitudes, resource constraints, insufficient training, and weak leadership, all of which require targeted interventions to improve outcomes. Addressing these challenges can enhance student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes, contributing to holistic development and critical thinking skills essential for real-world challenges.

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Introduction

An integrative approach to teaching fosters a deeper understanding of the curriculum by highlighting meaningful connections among different subject areas. Through interdisciplinary learning, students develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the ability to view concepts from multiple perspectives. This approach promotes holistic learning experiences that prepare learners to address real-world challenges more effectively. In the context of *Araling Panlipunan*, a subject centered on Philippine

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history, culture, governance, and society, the integrative approach offers significant potential in making lessons more relevant, engaging, and meaningful for students.

Despite its importance, Araling Panlipunan is often perceived by learners as difficult and uninteresting. This lack of interest is reflected in students' academic performance. Notably, results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) from 2016 to 2018 showed that Araling Panlipunan consistently obtained the lowest mean percentage score among all assessed subjects (Department of Education [DepEd], 2018). These results suggest the need for more effective teaching strategies that can enhance students' engagement and improve learning outcomes. Among the various factors influencing student interest and achievement, teaching methodology plays a crucial role. Anwar (2019) emphasizes that instructional methods significantly influence students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Thus, adopting innovative and learner-centered approaches may help address the persistent challenges in teaching Araling Panlipunan.

Although the integrative approach is widely promoted in curriculum frameworks and educational reforms, there remains limited empirical research examining its actual implementation and effectiveness in teaching Araling Panlipunan, particularly at the elementary level. Existing studies often focus on theoretical discussions of interdisciplinary learning without thoroughly investigating how teachers design, implement, and assess integrative lessons in real classroom settings. Furthermore, localized studies in the Philippine context that examine how integrative strategies can directly address low performance and declining student interest reflected in national assessments are scarce. There is also insufficient evidence establishing a clear link between the integrative approach and measurable improvements in students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. Additionally, limited research has examined the practical challenges teachers face in implementing this approach, including time constraints, resource limitations, curriculum alignment, and professional development needs.

In response to these identified gaps, this study seeks to examine the utilization and implementation of an integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan in the elementary grades. By integrating related subject areas and employing innovative instructional strategies, the study aims to enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall learning experiences. It is anticipated that the findings will contribute not only to improving classroom practices but also to strengthening instructional approaches in Araling Panlipunan and addressing persistent concerns regarding student performance and interest in the subject.

Literature review

This part reviews the literature that provides the concepts underpinning the study's conceptual framework.

Teaching Araling Panlipunan

Araling Panlipunan is one of the subjects in the basic education in the K to 12 Program in the country. According to Corpuz and Salandanan (2015), mastering the learning competencies in Araling Panlipunan is expected to contribute to the holistic development of a citizen who is aware of, knowledgeable about,

and critically analyzes current social issues and concerns at the local as well as global levels. Through Araling Panlipunan, pupils deepen their understanding of the world, including other cultures and their worth across eras, locations, and circumstances. Additionally, they develop a perspective on their surroundings and how it is developing (Lao-at, 2019). past, our current course in the present, and our front door to the future. Academic success depends on interest, a potent motivator that drives learning, guides academic and professional paths, and energizes learning (Tashlanovna, 2022).

Several characteristics, including interests, favorable psychological aspects, motivation, attitudes, discipline, and others, are necessary to produce positive learning results (Herpratiwi & Ahmad, 2022). Ofiaza (2023) found that teaching methods play a crucial role in shaping students' learning interest in Araling Panlipunan. His study revealed that students view effective teaching methods as helping to make them more motivated. These methods promote active learning and provide students with opportunities to engage with the subject matter in different ways, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of the subject (Adipat et al., 2021). Teachers can address this by incorporating real-life examples and experiences relevant to students' daily lives. For example, teachers can connect the subject matter to current events and issues relevant to students' lives, making it more relatable and engaging (Walczak, 2018).

Integrative approach

The term 'integrative approach to learning' is employed as an overarching concept of comprehensive education. It describes the integration of knowledge and skills from different school subjects in an attempt to provide a synthesis (Spelt et al., 2009) of the matter being considered that can exclusively be acquired from an interdisciplinary perspective (Klein, 2002; Lenoir et al., 2015; Mansilla, 2010). This approach, derived from the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), aims to introduce interdisciplinary skills into schools to educate integrative thinkers (Blackshields, 2015; Tynjälä & Gijbels, 2012).

According to Klein (2002), interdisciplinarity in education is a process, not a fixed body of content—thus, as Lenoir et al. (2015) point out, 'the question of pedagogy is inescapable'. It is a strategy that connects other subject matter in other subject areas and is called an integrative approach. This is another way of organizing those learnings from another subject area and making instructional design more interesting and integrative (Panicker, 2014).

Integrative approach in the classroom

Hilda Taba (cited in Aydin et al., 2017) was a pioneer in the use of an integrative approach to teaching and learning and called for teachers and students to employ this instructional design across different academic contexts. In her integrative curricula, she claimed that the following assumptions should be taken into consideration: Learning is a social process and this signifies the need for social interaction between teachers and students; learning is a linear process; the effective employment of social environments to promote learning among students; the need to develop modern curricula conforming to the advanced learning theories; as a comprehensive integrated process needing much effort by both Sakhelashvili (2016) supported such idea and called for using integrative approach as an effective

It provides learners with the opportunity to interact with different content areas within any given school subject while working to integrate them fully. In this sense, teachers can work with students by synthesizing the various curriculum components in a cohesive structure, while each component fulfills specific skills to reach a certain level of mastery.

The conceptual framework aims to determine the effectiveness of using an integrative approach in teaching elementary grades. Based on the teacher's experience using an integrative approach to teaching Araling Panlipunan in the Elementary grades. This study also aims to address the challenges of using an integrative approach in teaching Panlipunan and to evaluate its utilization, ultimately providing insights and recommendations for improvement.

Conceptual framework

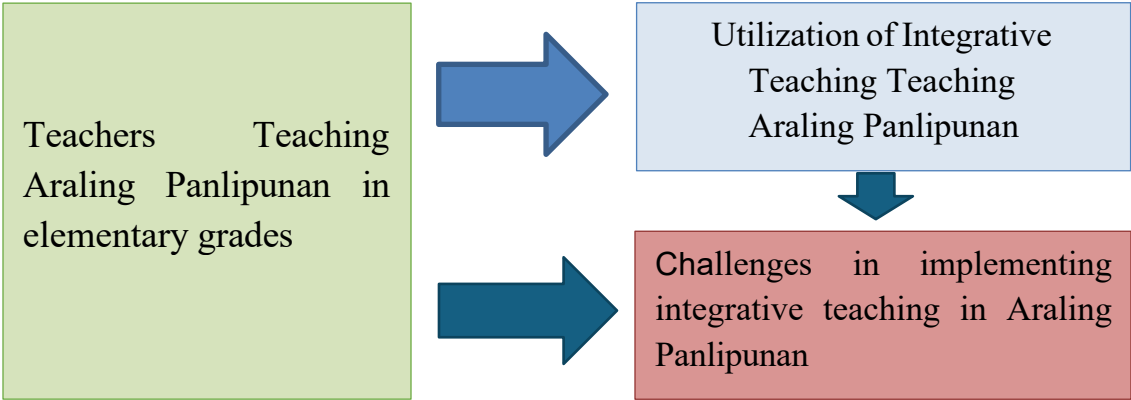


Figure 1: Research Paradigm

The research paradigm illustrates the relationship among the study's key variables. It begins with teachers teaching Araling Panlipunan in elementary grades, which serves as the main context of the research. Teachers play a significant role in delivering lessons and selecting appropriate teaching strategies for their learners.

From this context, the study examines the utilization of the integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan. The integrative approach is a method of connecting concepts from different subjects, experiences, or real-life situations to make learning more meaningful and comprehensive for elementary pupils.

However, while teachers attempt to apply this teaching approach, they may encounter various challenges in implementing integrative teaching in Araling Panlipunan. These challenges may include limited resources, time constraints, lack of training, or difficulties in integrating multiple subject areas effectively.

Overall, the paradigm shows that elementary teachers serve as the primary implementers of the integrative approach in Araling Panlipunan, and their experiences help identify the challenges they face in applying

this method in the classroom. The framework helps guide the study in examining both teachers' practices and the difficulties they encounter in implementing integrative teaching strategies.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the utilization and implementation of an integrative approach to teaching Araling Panlipunan in the elementary grades, with particular focus on teachers' practices and the challenges they encounter in its implementation.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the extent of utilization of the integrative approach in teaching Araling Palipunan?
2. How do the teachers employ an integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan?
3. What are the challenges in implementing an integrative approach?

Methodology

The study employed research methodologies including research design, data gathering instruments, population, study locale, data gathering procedures,

Research design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative data to analyze the effectiveness of the Integrative Approach in Teaching Elementary grades. The quantitative data were collected through the extent to which teachers employed an integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan, while the qualitative data were collected through interviews. The mixed-methods approach was chosen to assess the extent of the use of an integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan in the elementary grades.

Locale of the study

This study was conducted at Divine Word College of Laoag, located in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, among teachers currently enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education, Major in General Education program.

Population and sampling

The study encompassed Elementary teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education, Major in Gen. Education, at Divine Word College, who are currently teaching Araling Panlipunan (AP) in elementary grades, through total enumeration sampling.

Data gathering instruments

The study employed an interview guide for teachers to identify the challenges in implementing an integrative approach in Teaching Araling Panlipunan. The interview guide was administered online and face-to-face, depending on participants' preferences, and included a request for a copy of their lesson plan.

Data presentation and analysis

The presentation of the findings followed the arrangement of the problem statement. It specifically answered the following questions:

Problem 1. What is the extent of utilization of the integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan?

Table 1 presents the extent of the integrative approach's use in teaching Araling Panlipunan, based on responses from 10 elementary school teachers who completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Rarely) to 4 (Consistently), allowing quantification of the frequency of the application of an integrative approach. Results reveal varied levels of adoption among participants. Approximately 20% of respondents seldom use the approach, possibly due to other preferred teaching methods or limited opportunities for integration. The most common response, representing 40% of participants, is occasional utilization, suggesting selective incorporation depending on specific topics, student needs, or lesson objectives. A smaller portion, 10%, rarely integrates the approach, possibly due to personal preferences or perceived implementation challenges. Conversely, another 10% consistently apply the integrative approach, underscoring its potential effectiveness when used regularly. These findings indicate a need for targeted professional development to support more consistent and effective integration of the integrative approach across teaching practices.

These findings support existing studies emphasizing that integrative teaching helps learners connect ideas from different disciplines and promotes deeper understanding. According to Drake and Reid (2018), an integrated curriculum enables students to apply knowledge across subject areas, making learning more meaningful and relevant. This supports the finding that some teachers occasionally apply the approach, depending on the topic and lesson objectives.

However, the limited number of teachers who consistently implement the integrative approach may reflect common challenges in classroom practice. Research by Dervić and Bezić (2019) found that teachers often encounter difficulties implementing interdisciplinary strategies due to limited training, resources, and time to plan integrated lessons. Thus, professional development and institutional support are important for helping teachers effectively integrate different learning areas into their teaching practices.

TABLE 1. Extent of utilization of the integrative approach in teaching

Respondent	Frequency(£)	Percentage (%)	Likert Scale
Respondent 1	2	20%	Seldom
Respondent 2	3	30%	Occasionally
Respondent 3	2	20%	Seldom
Respondent 4	1	10%	Rarely

Respondent 5	3	30%	Occasionally
Respondent 6	2	20%	Seldom
Respondent 7	3	30%	Occasionally
Respondent 8	4	40%	Frequently
Respondent 9	3	30%	Occasionally
Respondent 10	3	30%	Occasionally

Index	Likert Scale
5	Consistently
4	Frequently
3	Occasionally
2	Seldom
1	Rarely

Source of Data: Data were obtained from the responses of 10 elementary teachers who are enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education major in General Education at Divine Word College and are currently teaching Araling Panlipunan (AP) in the elementary grades through total enumeration sampling. The data were collected through a questionnaire administered on March 22, 2024.

Range of Scale:

4.51 – 5.00	Consistently
3.51 – 4.50	Frequently
2.51 – 3.50	Occasionally
1.51 – 2.50	Seldom
1.00 – 1.50	Rarely

Problem 2. How do the teachers employ an integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan?

Table 2 shows how teachers employ an integrative approach across different parts of the lesson, based on data collected through the questionnaire and supplemented by qualitative observations from classroom practices. The results indicate that the integrative approach is most frequently used during the Application (70%) and Assignment (60%) phases of the lesson, suggesting that teachers prioritize integration when students are actively engaged in learning tasks. Motivation and Discussion each accounted for 40%, reflecting moderate use at the beginning and during interactive portions of the lesson. The Presentation and Generalization phases were integrated less frequently (20%), whereas Evaluation was used minimally (10%), possibly due to the structured nature of assessments. These findings highlight that while teachers recognize the value of integration, its application tends to be selective and context-dependent, emphasizing areas that encourage active participation and reinforcement of concepts.

These findings are supported by studies on curriculum integration, which emphasize that integrative teaching is most effective when students actively apply knowledge through tasks and learning activities. According to Beane (2016), curriculum integration encourages learners to connect ideas from different disciplines, particularly during activities in which students engage in problem-solving and the

application of concepts. This supports the result that teachers most frequently integrate lessons during the application and assignment stages.

Moreover, Vars and Beane (2015) noted that integrated instruction is often implemented during collaborative and activity-based portions of the lesson because these stages allow students to explore relationships among concepts from different subject areas. In contrast, teachers may integrate less during the presentation and evaluation stages due to the structured nature of direct instruction and formal assessment. These findings underscore the importance of supporting teachers in designing integrative strategies that can be applied throughout the lesson.

TABLE 2. Teachers employ an integrative approach

Parts of the Lesson	Frequency(£)	Percentage (%)
Motivation	4	40
Presentation	2	20
Discussion	4	40
Application	7	70
Generalization	2	20
Evaluation	1	10
Assignment	6	60

Source of Data: Data were obtained from the responses of 10 elementary teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education, major in General Education, at Divine Word College, who are currently teaching Araling Panlipunan (AP) in the elementary grades, through total enumeration sampling. The data were collected through a questionnaire administered on March 22, 2024.

Problem 3. What are the challenges in implementing an integrative approach?

Table 3 presents the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing an integrative approach, based on responses from the questionnaire and supplemented by qualitative insights from classroom observations. The data reveal four main challenges: unfavorable attitudes, inadequate resources, lack of training, and weak leadership. An unfavorable attitude reflects teachers' negative perceptions or reluctance toward adopting new teaching strategies. Inadequate resources indicate insufficient or poor-quality instructional materials necessary to support integrative teaching. The lack of training indicates that some teachers have not received sufficient professional development to effectively implement integrative methods. Lastly, weak leadership refers to ineffective guidance by school administrators, which can lead to disorganization, low morale, and suboptimal academic outcomes. These challenges underscore the need for targeted interventions, including capacity-building, resource provision, and stronger administrative support, to facilitate more effective adoption of the integrative approach in teaching practices.

Research on instructional innovation underscores the importance of teachers' attitudes and perceptions in adopting new pedagogical strategies. For example, Purnomo et al. (2020) found that teacher beliefs and self-efficacy significantly influenced the implementation of integrative and student-centered

approaches, with negative attitudes acting as a barrier to consistent use. This aligns with the current finding that unfavorable attitudes can hinder teachers' willingness to integrate content across lesson components.

Access to adequate instructional resources and professional development is also widely recognized in the literature as critical for successful pedagogical change. According to Çevik and Yılmaz (2019), insufficient teaching materials and a lack of training opportunities were central obstacles to effective curriculum integration in schools, underscoring the need for ongoing professional learning and better educational support systems. These findings correspond with the present study's identification of inadequate resources and lack of training as significant challenges.

Finally, leadership support is a key factor influencing the quality of instructional implementation. Day et al. (2016) demonstrated that strong school leadership positively affects teacher collaboration, morale, and instructional innovation, whereas weak leadership often correlates with fragmented practices and low teacher motivation. This reinforces the notion that administrative support is essential to enabling teachers to adopt and sustain integrative teaching methods.

Collectively, these indexed studies highlight that addressing teacher perceptions, resource constraints, professional development needs, and leadership support are vital for overcoming the challenges associated with implementing an integrative approach in education.

TABLE 3. Challenges in implementing an integrative approach.

Challenges	Explanation
Unfavorable attitudes	An unfavorable attitude signifies a negative viewpoint or sentiment directed towards a particular entity or individual.
Inadequate resources	Inadequate resources are lacking in quantity or quality, which describes a condition where the available resources are lacking in quantity or quality to effectively fulfill a specific need, task, or objective.
Lack of training	Lack of training indicates a scenario where individuals or groups have not undergone comprehensive instruction or guidance necessary to develop proficiency in a specific skill, knowledge domain, or operational procedure.
Weak leadership	Weak leadership in education refers to ineffective leadership by school administrators or district officials, leading to disorganization, low morale, and poor academic outcomes.

Source of Data: Data were obtained from the responses of 10 elementary teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education, major in General Education, at Divine Word College, who are currently teaching Araling Panlipunan (AP) in the elementary grades, through total enumeration sampling. The data were collected through a questionnaire administered on March 22, 2024.

Results and discussion

The findings of the study contribute to both theoretical and practical understandings of integrative teaching approaches within social studies education. The variable extent of utilization among elementary teachers indicates that the adoption of integrative practices is not uniform across classrooms. This outcome supports constructivist and integrative learning theories, which argue that teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and contextual circumstances significantly influence the implementation of pedagogical innovations (Drake & Reid, 2018). The results reinforce the notion that educators adopt integrative practices at varying levels depending on their instructional readiness, personal dispositions, and classroom conditions. Such patterns align with Guskey's (2002) model of teacher change, which emphasizes that meaningful pedagogical transformation requires both cognitive and affective shifts among teachers before new practices become consistently embedded in instruction.

Moreover, the differentiated application of integration across lesson phases provides further insight into how integrative approaches are enacted in actual classroom settings. The findings reveal that teachers more readily incorporate integration during the application and assignment phases of instruction, where student engagement and activity are emphasized. In contrast, integrative practices appear less prevalent during the presentation and evaluation stages. This observation challenges simplistic assumptions that integrative teaching is uniformly applied across all phases of a lesson. Instead, it suggests a more dynamic interpretation of instructional integration, where teachers are more comfortable employing integrative strategies in student-centered contexts. Such patterns support theoretical frameworks that associate integrative pedagogy with learner engagement and active epistemic participation (Beane, 2016). When students are encouraged to connect concepts, apply knowledge, and engage in authentic learning tasks, integration naturally becomes more visible and effective within the teaching process.

In addition, the study identified several categorical challenges that affect the consistent implementation of integrative teaching approaches. These challenges include attitudinal barriers, insufficient instructional resources, limited professional training, and weak leadership support. The presence of these constraints suggests that integrative pedagogy should be viewed not only as an instructional technique but also as a practice shaped by systemic and institutional conditions. This observation aligns with socio-ecological perspectives of educational innovation, which emphasize that teaching practices are influenced by multiple interconnected levels within the educational environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teachers operate within a broader ecosystem that includes school leadership, resource availability, institutional culture, and professional learning opportunities, all of which influence their capacity to adopt and sustain integrative approaches in the classroom. Consequently, theoretical discussions of integrative teaching must account not only for the internal logic of instructional design but also for the external factors that enable or constrain pedagogical change.

From a practical standpoint, the findings highlight several areas where improvements can be made to support the wider adoption of integrative approaches in Araling Panlipunan classrooms. The fact that teachers most frequently employ integration during application and assignment phases indicates that educators naturally gravitate toward integration when students are actively engaged in learning tasks. This suggests that professional development initiatives should focus on helping teachers extend integrative strategies across all stages of instruction, including the presentation and evaluation phases. Rather than limiting integration to activities in which students work independently or collaboratively, teachers can be supported in designing lessons that introduce conceptual connections and interdisciplinary perspectives from the beginning and reinforce them throughout the learning process.

The study also revealed that unfavorable teacher attitudes and limited training remain significant obstacles to effective implementation. Addressing these challenges requires schools and educational stakeholders to invest in sustained professional development efforts. Research has shown that teacher training programs that emphasize reflective practice, collaborative planning, and curriculum design modeling significantly enhance teachers' capacity to implement integrative approaches effectively (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Accordingly, schools should establish professional learning communities, peer mentoring systems, and structured induction programs that allow teachers to share experiences, examine instructional strategies, and collectively design integrative lessons. Such long-term professional engagement is more likely to produce lasting improvements than isolated workshops or short-term training sessions.

Furthermore, the study's findings regarding inadequate instructional resources and limited leadership support highlight the need for systemic interventions at the school level. School administrators play a critical role in fostering an environment that encourages innovative teaching practices. Leaders must ensure that teachers have access to adequate materials that support interdisciplinary learning, such as thematic modules, digital resources, and multimedia instructional tools. At the same time, school policies should explicitly recognize and encourage integrative teaching efforts, creating a culture in which teachers feel supported to experiment with new pedagogical approaches. Without visible leadership support and clear institutional direction, teachers may remain hesitant to adopt integrative strategies despite receiving professional training.

Finally, the results point to important implications for teacher education programs. Preparing future educators to implement integrative teaching approaches should begin during pre-service training. Teacher education curricula can incorporate coursework that emphasizes integrative curriculum design, interdisciplinary planning, and reflective teaching practices. Additionally, practicum experiences can expose pre-service teachers to classrooms where integrative approaches are actively implemented, allowing them to observe and practice these strategies under guided supervision. Such early exposure may help address future barriers stemming from negative attitudes or insufficient instructional skills, thereby strengthening new teachers' capacity to implement integrative teaching methods effectively in their own classrooms.

Conclusion

The integration of an integrative approach in teaching Araling Panlipunan presents both opportunities

and challenges. While some teachers show significant integration, varying levels of adoption highlight the complexity influenced by attitudes, resources, training, and leadership. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts, including comprehensive training, resource allocation, and leadership development. Improving integration can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes, aligning with goals of holistic development and critical thinking skills, and preparing students for real-world challenges.

The author's contribution: The paper is written by the author

Ethical statement: The researcher ensured strict adherence to ethical standards throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection, ensuring that their participation was voluntary and based on a clear understanding of the study's purpose and procedures.

Conflict of interest statement: The author declares no conflict of interest

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