

Teaching Pedagogies in Social Studies: Narrations of Junior High School Teachers

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Abstract: This research examined how junior high school teachers make Social Studies more engaging by analyzing data from six participants in the Compostela West District, Davao de Oro Division through thematic content analysis. Results pointed to three main approaches, collaborative learning, discussion-driven methods, and the use of multimedia. These strategies reflected the teachers' commitment to spark student interest, even while facing ongoing challenges such as sustaining participation and meeting diverse learning needs. The study also showed that these approaches encouraged critical thinking and helped connect lessons to real-life situations. However, barriers persisted, including limited access to technology and varying levels of student understanding, particularly in rural schools with poor digital infrastructure. Teachers stressed the importance of institutional support, such as training in inclusive strategies and curriculum adjustments to close engagement gaps. Based on their insights, the study suggested practical measures like differentiated instruction, blended teaching approaches, and professional development programs focused on inclusive practices. In conclusion, the findings emphasize that student-centered and technology-supported strategies are essential for making Social Studies a more dynamic subject that nurtures historical empathy and civic responsibility among learners today.

Keywords: Teaching Pedagogies, Social Studies, Narrations, Junior High School Teachers.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching strategies in social studies play a vital role in helping students understand complex social, cultural, and historical contexts. By using a variety of instructional approaches, teachers can promote critical thinking and keep students engaged in the learning process. These methods not only encourage learners to explore different viewpoints but also help them connect classroom content to real-life situations. In today's increasingly interconnected world, effective teaching in social studies is essential for shaping informed and responsible individuals who can contribute meaningfully to their communities and society at large.

Globally, the significance of social studies in the school curriculum is widely recognized. As Crisolo, Camposano, and Rogayan (2021) noted, social studies have long been part of both basic and higher education curricula across many countries. The subject serves as a cornerstone of social development, playing a transformative role in shaping individuals into active and responsible citizens.

In Finland, the approach to teaching social studies reflects an advanced form of constructivism called phenomenon-based learning. According to Yasar (2017), as cited by Estrellado and De Guzman (2022), this transdisciplinary method allows students to learn holistically, rather than studying topics in isolation. Social studies is integrated into broader, action-oriented learning experiences that are eventually assessed through the matriculation exam at the end of upper secondary education.

In Singapore, social studies instruction follows an inquiry-based model. Yang (2021) explained that this shift gained momentum in 2016 with the introduction of the "Issue Investigation" component in the secondary school curriculum. This marked a broader move toward inquiry-driven learning within the humanities, encouraging students to explore issues critically and independently.

Despite these varied and innovative teaching methods, social studies is often perceived by students as dull or uninteresting. Cosme (2019) pointed out several barriers to effective learning in the subject, such as students' lack of

interest, inattentiveness during lessons, low motivation, and failure to complete academic tasks. These factors, as noted by Wijanarko, Eskasasnanda, and Kurniawan (2020), hinder students from appreciating the importance of social studies and engaging meaningfully with its content.

Meanwhile, In Thailand, social studies education faces its own set of challenges. Mangkhang, Jitviboon, and Kaewpanya (2022), citing the Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards (2013), reported that many teachers lack the necessary content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and resources to deliver effective instruction. The continued reliance on traditional methods further limits the potential of social studies to be dynamic and relevant. Teachers often struggle to integrate interdisciplinary perspectives or develop deep, specialized knowledge within their lessons.

In the Philippines, social studies plays a crucial role in promoting citizenship education and national development. The Department of Education's Order No. 36, s. 2013 emphasizes the goal of nurturing Filipinos who are deeply committed to their country, equipped with essential values and competencies, and ready to contribute meaningfully to nation-building. Through social studies, students are expected to develop both character and the 21st-century skills necessary for personal and national progress.

However, in places like Davao Oriental, students' lack of interest in social studies remains a concern. Balante et al. (2023) found that this disinterest often stems from the subject's focus on history, politics, and economics, which may feel disconnected from students' everyday lives. Factors such as teaching style, teacher-student interaction, lesson structure, and the overall learning atmosphere influence how students perceive the subject. As reported by Tomines, Tipolo, and Pantao (2021), these issues contribute to low student performance, with competency scores reaching only 74% out of 100%.

In my own experience, I have seen these challenges firsthand. While teachers are making efforts to use varied and inclusive teaching methods to enhance engagement, student motivation and learning outcomes in social studies remain low. With this in mind, my study aims to explore in depth the pedagogical practices of teachers and their experiences in making social studies more engaging and relevant. This research is meaningful as it supports ongoing efforts to strengthen social studies education and nurture responsible, well-informed citizens.

II. METHOD

This research embraced a qualitative phenomenological design, diving deep into the essence of human experience. The heart of phenomenology lay in collecting unfiltered, raw data, focusing on the collective journeys of individuals within

specific groups. It aimed to unravel how a particular phenomenon shaped their lives, revealing the meanings they attached to it. The spotlight was on witnessing authentic events and traits. As highlighted by Flood (2010) and echoed in the work of Tomaszewski et al. (2020), this approach in qualitative research shone a light on the vital aspects of lived experiences or phenomena, which could be viewed through a multitude of lenses.

This phenomenological study is conducted in accordance with the established ethical standards pertinent to academic inquiry. Securing approval from the RMC Review Ethics Committee (REC) is crucial for this study, as it ensures that researchers maintain their responsibilities towards participants and the communities influenced by the results, which is a vital component of research ethics. The approval process includes a detailed assessment of the research proposal to evaluate its ethical considerations, concentrating on participant welfare, informed consent, confidentiality, and the associated risks and benefits of the study.

Moreover, in gathering information data of this study, six (6) teacher-participants were involved. The participants were social studies teachers from a public secondary school of Compostela West District, Division of Davao de Oro, who had at least 3 years of teaching experience in junior high school handling social studies. Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of participants. The participants were selected from the three (3) different schools categorized as small, medium and large thereby ensuring variety school environment for triangulation.

The research instrument of this study is in-depth interview. It serves as the primary research instrument in this study, allowing for direct and meaningful conversations with teachers on their pedagogies in teaching Social Studies. This method is particularly valuable for capturing their lived experiences, understanding, emotions, and pedagogical insights, as it encourages reflective responses while maintaining depth and authenticity.

In exploring the phenomenon, my role as researcher was crucial in producing reliable research outcomes. Essentially, I was responsible for guiding the interviews and discussions by utilizing the research questions and probing statements. I personally recorded the participants' narratives. Audio-video recording was essential for accurately capturing the information provided by the participants. I also performed the task of transcribing the collected data and analyzing the resulting transcripts myself.

In my data analysis, the data collected underwent a thorough analysis. I meticulously reviewed the transcriptions and distilled the core insights from the participants' responses to the research questions. A key aspect of my data analysis involved categorizing and coding the ideas derived from the

participants' transcriptions. This process, as outlined by Vinitha (2019), referencing Graneheim and Lundman (2004), entailed weaving together the underlying meanings that permeated all categories, ultimately interpreting the latent content within the texts. The subsequent phase involved crafting significant themes that unveiled essential insights from the data. This analytical approach was known as Thematic Content Analysis, which, as noted by King (2004) in Dawadi (2020), sought to identify themes that encapsulated the narratives present within the data sets. This research specifically utilized environmental triangulation. By comparing and integrating findings obtained from various environments, I aimed to enhance the validity of my results. According to Vivek (2023), environmental triangulation is a vital research approach that requires gathering data from multiple contexts.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Teaching methods in Junior High School Social Studies are vital in helping students grasp the significance of history, culture, and society. This study set out to examine the different approaches teachers use in delivering Social Studies lessons at the junior high level. The following are the themes that emerged from the narrations of participants:

➤ *Collaborative Learning*

The findings of the study showed that collaborative learning emerged as one of the most preferred and effective strategies used by Junior High School Social Studies teachers. In this approach, students work together in groups to exchange ideas, solve problems, and build deeper understanding through peer interaction. Previous studies, such as those of Johnson and Johnson (2019), highlight the value of this method in developing teamwork and strengthening social skills. Teachers in the study favored collaborative learning because it encourages cooperation, communication, and the sharing of diverse perspectives. Similarly, Gilbert (2021) noted that collaborative strategies create a supportive environment where interactive skills are naturally cultivated. The participants repeatedly underscored its success in promoting teamwork, improving communication, and enhancing knowledge-sharing among learners.

➤ *Discussion-Based Method*

The study found that discussion-based approaches are a central strategy in Junior High School Social Studies instruction. Teachers often used guided discussions to help students better grasp complex historical and social concepts. Scholars such as Lindsay and Hart (2021) have emphasized the value of incorporating learners' cultural backgrounds into discussion-oriented teaching. In practice, teachers frequently integrated discussions with collaborative learning, inquiry-driven tasks, and constructivist activities. Supporting this, Restivo (2022) explained that classroom discussions allow students to engage in dialogue, debate, clarification, and reconstruction of ideas, which aids in organizing and making

sense of information. This combination of strategies created interactive and meaningful learning experiences, positioning discussions not only as a tool for knowledge-building but also as an avenue for assessment.

➤ *Multimedia and Technology Integration*

The study highlighted that the integration of multimedia and technology has become a key instructional approach in Junior High School Social Studies, as all participants reported using digital tools in their teaching. A wide range of resources, such as videos, smart TVs, YouTube materials, interactive games, and online platforms like Learning Resource Management Systems, were employed to make lessons more engaging and meaningful. Alstad (2021) emphasizes that incorporating fun and creative activities through technology can significantly enhance learning among students and adolescents. By using multimedia presentations and digital platforms, teachers were able to make historical events and social concepts more concrete, helping students better understand ideas that might otherwise seem abstract.

However, teaching Social Studies in junior high comes with distinct challenges, as teachers work to make historical and societal topics both meaningful and engaging for learners. Many students tend to view the subject as boring or unrelated to their everyday experiences, which pushes educators to adopt innovative strategies that capture attention and sustain interest. In this study, the themes on the coping strategies of teachers in making social studies interesting to the learners yielded the following themes:

➤ *Keeping Students Actively Engaged*

The study showed that sustaining student engagement in Social Studies continues to be a major challenge, largely due to both cognitive and perceptual barriers. Teachers often struggle to keep learners actively involved while trying to turn historical and social concepts into interactive and meaningful experiences. To address student disinterest, educators are compelled to design lessons that stimulate curiosity, encourage critical thinking, and connect classroom discussions to real-world issues. These challenges are further compounded by limited access to digital resources, which widens learning gaps, especially in under-resourced schools. Sezen-Barrie et al. (2019) also noted that low student interest in the social sciences is partly linked to teachers' own limited background knowledge, as many had little exposure to these topics during their own education.

➤ *Addressing Diverse Learning Needs*

The study revealed that meeting the diverse learning needs of students remains a complex and ongoing challenge in Junior High School Social Studies. Teachers noted considerable differences in students' comprehension levels, reading abilities, and overall engagement, all of which directly influenced how lessons were delivered and how well learners performed in the subject. To address these gaps, Social Studies teachers often

had to make extra efforts to simplify content for students who struggled with reading and understanding instructional materials. As Mihret and Joshi (2025) pointed out, learners with strong reading comprehension skills tend to achieve better academic outcomes in areas such as language arts, Social Studies, and science. In contrast, students with weaker reading abilities found it difficult to grasp complex concepts, which not only hindered academic success but also reduced their motivation to learn.

Furthermore, this study puts forward several practical recommendations to improve the teaching of Social Studies in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to implement differentiated instruction, integrate blended pedagogies, and participate in training programs focused on inclusive teaching strategies. These measures are designed to help educators address the challenges they face in delivering Social Studies effectively. Differentiated instruction is particularly valuable for managing varied learning abilities and maintaining student engagement. A blended approach, combining multimedia resources such as videos and digital archives with collaborative discussions, inquiry-based tasks, and project-based learning, can further enrich classroom instruction. In addition, professional development on inclusive practices is essential to equip Social Studies teachers with the skills needed to respond to the diverse needs of their learners.

Overall, this study underscores the pressing need to reframe Social Studies as a dynamic and relevant discipline that connects historical knowledge with contemporary realities. The findings resonate with Piaget's cognitive learning theory, as the use of pedagogies like collaborative learning and inquiry-based approaches supported students' intellectual growth through interaction and active knowledge construction. This reflects Piaget's concepts of assimilation, accommodation, and stage-appropriate learning. At the same time, the results align with Dewey's experiential learning model, emphasizing real-world applications, project-based tasks, and reflective dialogue, which position learning as an interactive process grounded in lived experience.

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