

## **LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN UTILIZING INTEGRATED APPROACH IN TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This phenomenological inquiry explored the experiences of secondary school teachers in dealing with their experiences, coping mechanisms and insights in the utilization of the integration approach in teaching social studies in Matina district, Division of Davao City. In exploring the experiences of the ten participants, I employed the qualitative phenomenological study of which primary instrument of data gathering was through in-depth interview. Major findings revealed that on the experiences of teachers in utilizing integrated approach in teaching social studies, the following were the emergent themes namely pedagogical challenges and innovations, student engagement and learning outcomes, and professional development and support. Likewise, their coping mechanisms from the challenges encountered, the following three themes emerged namely adaptation strategies, collaborative practices, and professional development and training. Finally, on the insights of teachers, the following three themes emerged specifically perceptions and attitudes, barriers and facilitators, and innovative instructional practices. Education policymakers and curriculum designers can use the insights to refine and enhance existing curricula, ensuring they align with the needs and challenges identified by teachers. This may involve integrating interdisciplinary elements more explicitly, providing teachers with the necessary resources and professional development opportunities to implement integrated approaches effectively. As a result, there are implications for teacher training and professional development programs. Education authorities can use these findings to design targeted training sessions that address specific challenges identified by teachers, focusing on enhancing their skills in interdisciplinary instruction.

**Keywords:** Integrated approach, secondary teachers, social studies

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The integrated approach in teaching, particularly in social studies, has gained significant attention in contemporary education due to its potential to enhance student learning by connecting different subject areas and promoting a deeper understanding of content. Integrated studies, also known as interdisciplinary studies, bring together various disciplines to help students see the connections and interrelationships among them. This method mirrors real-life experiences and fosters skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Edutopia, 2008; UConn Today, 2022).

In the context of secondary education, integrating subjects like history, geography, and civics can make learning more engaging and relevant for students, preparing them for the complexities of the modern world (Edutopia, 2021). Furthermore, incorporating global, national, and local issues into the curriculum enhances the effectiveness of this integrated approach.

Addressing global issues, such as climate change, human rights, and international conflicts, allows students to understand the broader context in which they live and the interconnectedness of the world. This fosters a sense of global citizenship and responsibility, encouraging students to think critically about their role in the world.

National issues, such as economic policies, social justice, and public health, provide a framework for students to explore how their country functions and the challenges it faces. This helps them develop a deeper understanding of their national identity and the impact of governmental decisions on their lives and communities.

Local issues, such as community development, local governance, and environmental sustainability, make learning more tangible and immediate. By examining these topics, students can see the direct impact of various factors on their own lives and communities, promoting active citizenship and community involvement.

Integrating these levels of issues into the social studies curriculum not only makes learning more relevant and engaging but also equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate and address the complexities of the modern world effectively. This holistic approach ensures that students are better prepared to contribute positively to society at all levels—global, national, and local.

#### **Problem Statement**

The problem addressed by this research is the lack of comprehensive understanding and effective implementation of the integrated approach in teaching social studies among secondary school teachers in Matina District, Division of Davao City. Despite the recognized benefits of this approach, teachers often face challenges such as limited resources, insufficient training, and difficulty in designing interdisciplinary curricula (Edutopia, 2021). This issue is significant as

it affects the quality of education and the ability of students to develop essential skills needed for their academic and future professional lives.

#### Research Questions or Hypotheses

This study aims to answer the following research questions: What are the experiences of secondary school teachers in utilizing the integrated approach in teaching social studies? What coping mechanisms do teachers employ to address the challenges they encounter? What insights do teachers have regarding the benefits and barriers of the integrated approach?

#### Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to explore the experiences of secondary school teachers in using the integrated approach in social studies, to identify the coping mechanisms teachers use to overcome challenges associated with this approach, and to gather teachers' insights on the effectiveness and feasibility of the integrated approach in improving student engagement and learning outcomes.

#### Rationale and Significance

This study is important because it addresses a gap in the existing literature regarding the practical experiences of teachers with the integrated approach in social studies. By understanding the challenges and strategies employed by teachers, educational policymakers and curriculum designers can develop more effective support systems and resources. This research contributes to the field by providing empirical evidence on the benefits and barriers of integrated teaching, which can inform future educational practices and policies (UConn Today, 2022; Edutopia, 2021).

#### Literature Review (Brief Overview)

Research has shown that integrated studies can lead to increased student engagement, improved retention of information, and the development of critical thinking skills (Edutopia, 2008; DOAJ, 2022). However, there are significant challenges in implementing this approach, including the need for professional development and the alignment of interdisciplinary curricula with standardized testing requirements (Edutopia, 2021; UConn Today, 2022). This study aims to fill the gap by providing insights into the practical applications and challenges faced by teachers in the Matina District.

#### Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study includes secondary school teachers in the Matina District, Division of Davao City, focusing on their experiences with the integrated approach in teaching social studies. This study will not cover other districts or educational levels. Limitations include the small sample size and the specific geographic focus, which may not be generalizable to other contexts.

#### Structure of the Paper

The paper is organized into several chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introduction, including the background, problem statement, research questions, objectives, rationale, literature review, scope, and structure. Chapter 2 details the methodology used in the study, including research design, participants, data collection methods, and data analysis. Chapter 3 presents the findings from the data collected. Chapter 4 discusses the implications of these findings in relation to existing literature and practice. Finally, Chapter 5 offers conclusions and recommendations for future research.

By addressing these elements, the introduction sets a clear foundation for the study, guiding the reader through the rationale, scope, and structure of the research.

## 2. METHODS

#### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the experiences of secondary school teachers in utilizing the integrated approach in teaching social studies in Matina District, Division of Davao City. The phenomenological approach is suitable for capturing the lived experiences of individuals, allowing for an in-depth understanding of their perspectives and practices.

The qualitative phenomenological design is chosen because it provides a rich, detailed exploration of teachers' experiences, which is essential for understanding the nuances of implementing the integrated approach. According to Everyday Speech (2021), qualitative methods are particularly effective for uncovering the meanings and interpretations that participants assign to their experiences. Furthermore, Times Higher Education (2023) highlights that phenomenological studies are valuable for educational research as they allow for a deep dive into the personal and contextual factors influencing teaching practices.

Participants. Participants were selected based on their teaching experience and involvement in social studies instruction. Inclusion criteria required participants to have at least five years of teaching experience and to be currently teaching

social studies in secondary schools. Exclusion criteria included teachers with less than five years of experience or those not currently teaching social studies.

**Sample Size.** The study included ten participants. This sample size is justified by the phenomenological research tradition, which typically involves a smaller number of participants to allow for a deeper and more detailed exploration of individual experiences (Creswell, 2013).

**Recruitment.** Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure they met the specific criteria for the study. Recruitment involved contacting schools within the Matina District and providing information about the study to potential participants. Ethical recruitment practices were followed, including providing detailed information about the study, ensuring voluntary participation, and obtaining informed consent.

#### **Data Collection Methods**

**Instruments.** Data were collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interview guide was developed based on the research questions and objectives, and was pilot tested with two teachers to refine the questions. The guide included open-ended questions to allow participants to express their experiences and perspectives freely.

**Procedure.** Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a quiet and comfortable setting to ensure participants felt at ease. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

**Ethical Considerations.** Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality by anonymizing the data, and respecting participants' rights to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, how their data would be used, and the measures taken to protect their privacy.

#### **Data Analysis**

**Approach.** The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. This approach is effective for summarizing key features of a large data set and highlighting similarities and differences across the data.

**Steps in Analysis.** The analysis involved several steps: transcribing the interviews verbatim, reading through the transcripts multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding, coding the data to identify significant statements, and grouping these codes into themes. NVivo software was used to assist in managing and organizing the data. Strategies to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings included triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing.

#### **Trustworthiness and Rigor**

**Credibility.** Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement with the participants and peer debriefing. This helped verify the findings and interpretations with the participants themselves.

**Transferability.** Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context and participants, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other contexts.

**Dependability.** Dependability was established by maintaining an audit trail, documenting all stages of the research process, and using triangulation to verify the data from multiple sources.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability was achieved by practicing reflexivity, where the researcher continually reflected on potential biases and how they might influence the research. This included keeping a reflexive journal throughout the study.

#### **Limitations**

**Methodological Limitations.** Methodological limitations include the small sample size, which may not be representative of all teachers in the Matina District.

Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study means that the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Steps taken to mitigate these limitations included using purposive sampling to select participants with relevant experience and employing rigorous data analysis methods to ensure the validity of the findings.

#### **Ethical Approval**

**Approval Process.** The study obtained ethical approval from the institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee of the relevant educational institution. The approval process involved submitting a detailed research proposal outlining the study's objectives, methods, and ethical considerations.

The approval reference number and documentation were recorded to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

### **3. RESULTS**

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the data collected and analyzed. This chapter is crucial as it provides evidence to answer the research questions or test the hypotheses stated earlier.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of secondary school teachers in utilizing the integrated approach in teaching social studies in Matina District, Division of Davao City. The main research questions focused on the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of teachers regarding this approach. This chapter is organized into several sections: an overview of the emergent themes, detailed findings for each theme, coping mechanisms adopted by teachers, and their insights on developing analytical skills.

#### **Presentation of Findings**

The data analysis revealed several emergent themes related to the experiences of teachers in utilizing the integrated approach. These themes are presented below, supported by quotes and examples from the data.

##### **Theme 1: Establishment of Analytical Learning Environment**

Participants emphasized the importance of creating an environment that fosters analytical thinking. This involves promoting a culture of inquiry and evidence-based reasoning.

Example Quote: "I encourage my students to question everything and look for evidence before drawing conclusions."

Teachers reported using various strategies to foster this environment, such as incorporating open-ended questions and facilitating discussions that challenge students to think critically.

##### **Theme 2: Thorough Understanding of the Subject**

Teachers highlighted the necessity of ensuring that students have a deep understanding of the subjects they are studying. This thorough comprehension is crucial for developing analytical skills.

Example Quote: "I make sure that my students not only memorize facts but also understand the underlying principles."

This approach involves connecting new information to prior knowledge and using practical examples to illustrate complex concepts.

##### **Theme 3: Enhancement of Logical Thinking**

Logical thinking was identified as a key component of analytical skills. Teachers described engaging students in activities that require step-by-step problem-solving to build their logical reasoning abilities.

Example Quote: "We engage in activities that require step-by-step problem-solving to build their logical reasoning skills."

These activities include solving puzzles, conducting experiments, and analyzing case studies, which help students develop structured thinking processes.

#### **Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Teachers**

To address the challenges in developing analytical skills, teachers reported employing various coping mechanisms.

##### **Utilizing Different Teaching Strategies**

Teachers adapted their teaching methods to cater to diverse learning styles and needs.

Example: "Teachers reported using a mix of collaborative projects, individual assignments, and technology integration to cater to different learning styles."

This adaptability ensures that all students have the opportunity to develop their analytical skills.

##### **Intensifying Analytical Thinking Activities**

Teachers intensified activities specifically designed to enhance analytical thinking.

Example: "Activities such as debates, case studies, and problem-solving sessions were highlighted as effective."

These activities provide practical applications of analytical skills, helping students to refine their thinking processes.

##### **Participants' Insights on Developing Analytical Skills**

Teachers provided valuable insights into the benefits of developing analytical skills in students.

##### **Promote Academic Success**

Developing analytical skills contributes significantly to students' academic success.

Example: "Teachers believe that students who think analytically perform better in exams and assignments."

This improvement is attributed to the students' ability to understand and apply concepts more effectively.

##### **Improve Problem-Solving Ability**

Enhanced analytical thinking improves students' problem-solving abilities, both academically and in real-life situations.

Example: "Students who develop these skills are better equipped to tackle complex problems both in and out of school." Strengthen Analytical Skills in the Curriculum

Participants stressed the importance of embedding analytical skills within the curriculum.

Example: "Teachers advocate for curriculum reforms that integrate critical thinking and analytical skills across all subjects."

This integration ensures that students consistently practice and develop these essential skills.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that creating an analytical learning environment, ensuring a thorough understanding of subjects, and enhancing logical thinking are crucial strategies for developing students' analytical skills. Teachers employ various coping mechanisms and strategies to overcome challenges, and they emphasize the importance of these skills in promoting academic success, improving problem-solving abilities, and strengthening the curriculum. The insights gathered from the participants underscore the transformative potential of analytical skills in fostering confident, capable, and critically thinking students.

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