



Towards Holistic Learning: Examining the Integration of Araling Panlipunan in the Makabayan Curriculum

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Abstract:

This systematic review examines the integration of Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan curriculum in the Philippines, focusing on key challenges, implementation strategies, and empirical evidence. Findings reveal significant ambiguity in the framework of the Makabayan learning area, coupled with a lack of clear integration guidelines for Araling Panlipunan, leading to confusion among educators and hindering effective integration. Moreover, the fragmentation of the Social Studies discipline within Makabayan, with its separate teaching time and grading system, limits holistic integration efforts. Discrepancies in implementation strategies across educational levels underscore the need for standardized approaches to ensure coherence and consistency. Furthermore, the review highlights a dearth of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of integration efforts, emphasizing the necessity for further research to evaluate their impact on student learning outcomes and citizenship development. Addressing these challenges and gaps requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, educators, and researchers to develop clear guidelines, promote coherence in implementation, and conduct rigorous empirical studies. Ultimately, enhancing the integration of Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan curriculum holds promise for fostering national identity and holistic student development in the Philippines.

Keywords: Araling Panlipunan, Makabayan curriculum, integration, curriculum reform, Philippines

Introduction:

Educational reforms are critical endeavors undertaken by nations worldwide to adapt to evolving social, cultural, political, and technological landscapes. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) embarked on a significant reform effort in 2002 with the introduction of the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC). This initiative aimed to enhance the quality of education by fostering lifelong learning and functional literacy among Filipino students (Albert, et al., 2023).

The BEC marked a departure from previous curricular frameworks, particularly through its restructuring of learning areas and emphasis on integration (Kgwefane, 2018). Central to this reform was the introduction of the Makabayan learning area, envisioned as a "laboratory of life" where students could develop practical knowledge, life skills, and a strong sense of national identity (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2003).

A key component of the Makabayan curriculum is the integration of disciplines such as Social Studies, Home Economics, Physical Education, Health, Music, and Arts. However, the articulation and implementation of these integrated approaches, particularly concerning Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies), warrant deeper examination (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2003).



While the BEC laid out ambitious goals for curriculum integration, its implementation faced challenges. Critics argue that the lack of a clear framework for Makabayan, as well as the dilution of the integration theme, hindered the effective integration of subjects like Social Studies (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2009).

Understanding the nuances and complexities of integrating Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan learning area is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of the BEC and informing future educational reforms in the Philippines.

Literature Review:

Educational reforms have long been recognized as crucial mechanisms for adapting to changing societal needs and advancing the quality of education. In the Philippines, the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) represented a significant shift in the approach to curriculum development, with a focus on integration and holistic learning (Mucavele, 2008). This section provides a comprehensive review of literature surrounding the BEC, particularly focusing on the integration of Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies) within the Makabayan learning area.

The BEC introduced a restructuring of learning areas, moving away from the traditional subject-based curriculum to a more integrated framework (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2003). Central to this reform was the creation of the Makabayan learning area, which aimed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of Filipino culture, values, and citizenship (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2006). Within Makabayan, various disciplines such as Social Studies, Home Economics, Physical Education, and Arts were integrated to offer a holistic educational experience (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2003).

Araling Panlipunan, as a core component of the Makabayan curriculum, plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of society, history, and citizenship. In the elementary level, Social Studies focuses on themes of national identity, unity, and integrity, aiming to instill positive attitudes and values in students (Philippine Elementary Learning Competencies, 2002). Meanwhile, secondary level Social Studies delves into Philippine history, government systems, and contemporary global issues, preparing students for active participation in society (Philippine Secondary School Learning Competencies, 2002).

Despite the ambitious goals set forth by the BEC, several challenges have been identified in the implementation and integration of Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan framework. One major critique revolves around the absence of a clear conceptual framework for Makabayan, resulting in a lack of coherence and direction in curriculum design (Mendoza & Nakayama, 2003). Without a solid framework, the integration of disciplines like Social Studies becomes fragmented and disjointed, undermining the effectiveness of the curriculum (Gaston, 2015).

Furthermore, the dilution of the integration theme within the BEC has also been a point of contention. While Makabayan was intended to serve as a platform for interdisciplinary learning, the separate treatment of subjects like Social Studies, Home Economics, and Physical Education within the curriculum undermines this integration (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2003). This compartmentalization limits the potential synergies that could arise from true integration, hindering students' ability to connect and apply knowledge across different domains (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2003).

In light of these challenges, there is a need for a more robust framework for curriculum integration within the Makabayan learning area. This framework should provide clear guidelines for aligning learning objectives, content, and assessment across various disciplines (Alonzo, et al., 2023). By establishing a coherent structure for integration, educators can ensure that Araling Panlipunan and other subjects within Makabayan are seamlessly integrated into the curriculum, fostering deeper learning and meaningful connections for students (Camu, 2023).

The integration of Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan learning area presents both opportunities and challenges for Philippine education. While the BEC represents a significant departure from traditional curriculum models, its implementation has been hindered by issues related to conceptual clarity and integration. Moving forward, it is essential to address these challenges and develop a more coherent framework for curriculum integration, ensuring that students receive a well-rounded and holistic education.

Methodology:

A systematic review methodology was employed to comprehensively analyze existing literature regarding the integration of Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies) within the Makabayan learning area of the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in the Philippines. The systematic review followed established guidelines for conducting rigorous and transparent reviews of academic literature (Higgins et al., 2019).

A comprehensive search strategy was developed to identify relevant studies. Electronic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and PsycINFO were systematically searched using relevant keywords and Boolean operators. The search terms included "2002 Basic Education Curriculum Philippines", "Makabayan learning area", "Araling Panlipunan integration", and variations thereof.



Initial screening of studies was conducted based on titles and abstracts to assess their relevance to the research questions. Subsequently, full-text articles were retrieved and evaluated against the inclusion criteria. Any discrepancies in study selection were resolved through discussion and consensus among the research team.

A standardized data extraction form was developed to systematically extract relevant information from selected studies. Data extracted included study characteristics (author(s), publication year, study design), key findings related to the integration of Araling Panlipunan, and any challenges identified in the implementation process. The methodological quality of included studies was assessed using established criteria appropriate for the study designs employed (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods). Studies were evaluated based on criteria such as clarity of research aims, appropriateness of methodology, and validity of findings.

Findings and Discussion:

Framework Ambiguity and Lack of Integration Guidelines:

The integration of Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan learning area of the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in the Philippines presents a significant challenge due to the ambiguity of the framework and the absence of clear integration guidelines. This challenge has been underscored by various studies, including those by Bernardo & Mendoza (2003) and Cuizon and Cuizon (2024), which have shed light on the shortcomings of the BEC in providing a robust framework for curriculum integration.

Bernardo & Mendoza (2003) highlight the lack of clarity surrounding the framework for the Makabayan learning area, emphasizing the need for specific guidance on how to effectively integrate disciplines such as Araling Panlipunan. The authors argue that while the BEC introduced the concept of curriculum integration, it failed to articulate concrete strategies or principles to facilitate the seamless integration of subjects within Makabayan. This ambiguity has left educators grappling with uncertainty and has impeded their efforts to align teaching practices with the overarching goals of the curriculum.

Similarly, Monje, et al. (2019) echoes these concerns, noting that the absence of clear integration guidelines has led to confusion among educators regarding the implementation of the Makabayan curriculum. The author emphasizes the importance of establishing a coherent framework that delineates the roles and responsibilities of educators in integrating Araling Panlipunan and other subjects within Makabayan. Without such guidance, educators may struggle to develop cohesive lesson plans and instructional strategies that effectively integrate concepts from different disciplines.

Furthermore, the lack of integration guidelines has hindered the development of collaborative approaches to teaching and learning within the Makabayan learning area. Without clear directives on how to integrate Araling Panlipunan with other subjects, educators may resort to compartmentalized teaching practices that undermine the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum. This fragmentation can impede students' ability to make connections between different areas of knowledge and may hinder the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The ambiguity surrounding the framework for the Makabayan learning area and the absence of clear integration guidelines pose significant challenges to the effective implementation of the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum in the Philippines. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to provide educators with the necessary guidance and support to integrate Araling Panlipunan and other subjects seamlessly within the Makabayan curriculum.

Fragmentation of Social Studies Discipline:

The fragmentation of the Social Studies discipline within the Makabayan curriculum of the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in the Philippines is a notable finding that underscores challenges in achieving curriculum integration. As highlighted by Canuto (2022), despite the intention for Social Studies to serve as an integrated study of social sciences and humanities within the Makabayan framework, it remained compartmentalized, thus hindering its holistic integration and diluting its role in fostering national identity and citizenship among students.

Canuto's critique emphasizes the persistent compartmentalization of Social Studies within the Makabayan curriculum, which is evident through its separate teaching time, grading system, and assessment criteria. Despite the overarching goal of curriculum integration, the treatment of Social Studies as an isolated subject within Makabayan undermines its potential to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of national identity, citizenship, and societal issues. This compartmentalization limits students' exposure to interdisciplinary perspectives and hampers their ability to make meaningful connections between different social science disciplines.

Moreover, the fragmentation of the Social Studies discipline within Makabayan poses challenges to educators in developing cohesive instructional strategies that promote interdisciplinary learning. Without integration across social science disciplines, educators may struggle to contextualize Social Studies content within broader societal contexts and to facilitate discussions that encourage critical thinking and civic engagement among students. This



compartmentalization also perpetuates a segmented approach to teaching and learning, wherein students may fail to recognize the interconnectedness of social, political, economic, and cultural phenomena.

Furthermore, the fragmentation of Social Studies within the Makabayan curriculum raises questions about its effectiveness in fostering national identity and citizenship among students. By treating Social Studies as a separate entity rather than integrating it with other subjects within Makabayan, the curriculum may fail to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of Filipino history, culture, and societal dynamics. This limited exposure to interdisciplinary perspectives may hinder students' ability to develop a sense of belonging to their nation and to critically engage with issues of social justice, democracy, and human rights.

The fragmentation of the Social Studies discipline within the Makabayan curriculum poses significant challenges to achieving curriculum integration and fostering national identity and citizenship among students. Addressing this fragmentation requires a concerted effort to reconfigure the curriculum framework, instructional practices, and assessment methods to promote interdisciplinary learning and meaningful engagement with societal issues.

Discrepancies in Implementation Strategies:

The systematic review of the Makabayan curriculum implementation strategies revealed significant discrepancies across different educational levels, highlighting the need for standardized approaches to ensure coherence and consistency. Studies, such as Hanushek and Woessmann (2011), have documented variations in the allocation of teaching time, grading methods, and curriculum focus between elementary and secondary levels, indicating challenges in achieving uniformity and alignment across the educational continuum.

Basiga (2006) sheds light on the disparities observed in the implementation of the Makabayan curriculum, particularly in the treatment of Social Studies, at different educational levels. At the elementary level, Social Studies primarily focuses on themes related to national identity, unity, and citizenship, reflecting the foundational aspects of Filipino culture and history. However, as students progress to secondary education, the scope of Social Studies expands to encompass broader topics such as world history, economics, and global issues, reflecting a shift towards a more comprehensive understanding of global citizenship and interconnectedness.

These discrepancies in curriculum focus and content between elementary and secondary levels pose challenges to achieving coherence and continuity in students' educational experiences. Misalignments in curriculum objectives and learning outcomes may result in gaps in students' knowledge and understanding, hindering their ability to make meaningful connections between different areas of study. Furthermore, variations in teaching time allocation and grading methods may lead to inconsistencies in assessment practices and student evaluation, further exacerbating disparities in educational outcomes.

The discrepancies in implementation strategies also underscore the importance of standardized approaches to curriculum design and delivery to ensure equity and fairness in education. By establishing clear guidelines and benchmarks for curriculum implementation across all levels of education, educational authorities can promote consistency and coherence in teaching practices, assessment methods, and curriculum content (Cordova Jr, et al., 2024). Standardization can help address disparities in educational quality and access, particularly among marginalized and underserved communities, by ensuring that all students have equitable opportunities to acquire essential knowledge and skills.

Moreover, standardized implementation strategies can facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing among educators, enabling them to exchange best practices, resources, and instructional strategies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and professional development, standardized approaches to curriculum implementation can support educators in adapting to changing educational needs and emerging trends, thereby promoting innovation and excellence in education (Groenewald, et al., 2023).

The discrepancies in implementation strategies observed in the Makabayan curriculum highlight the need for standardized approaches to ensure coherence, consistency, and equity in education. By establishing clear guidelines and benchmarks for curriculum implementation across all levels of education, educational authorities can promote alignment, collaboration, and continuous improvement, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education for all students.

Limited Empirical Evidence on Effectiveness:

Despite extensive discourse on the integration concept, empirical studies examining its actual impact on student learning outcomes, citizenship development, and national identity formation were found to be limited. While some studies, such as those conducted by Bernardo and Mendoza (2003), provided valuable insights into the theoretical foundations and challenges associated with integration, empirical investigations into its tangible outcomes were notably scarce.

Bernardo and Mendoza (2003) contributed to the scholarly discourse by offering theoretical insights and critical analysis of the integration concept within the Makabayan curriculum. Their study explored the rationale behind the integration effort and highlighted potential challenges and opportunities associated with its implementation.



However, while such theoretical discussions are valuable for informing curriculum development and policy-making, they do not provide empirical evidence of the actual impact of integration on student learning and development.

The absence of empirical studies assessing the effectiveness of the Makabayan curriculum in practice underscores a critical gap in the existing literature. Without empirical evidence to substantiate its efficacy, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders are left with limited insight into the tangible outcomes of integration efforts. Moreover, the lack of empirical research hinders the ability to identify best practices, address implementation challenges, and make informed decisions regarding curriculum design and reform.

To address this gap, there is a pressing need for rigorous empirical research that evaluates the impact of the Makabayan curriculum on student learning outcomes, citizenship development, and national identity formation (Echavez Jr, et al., 2024). Such research could employ a variety of methodological approaches, including quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, longitudinal studies, and comparative analyses, to provide comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of integration efforts.

Quantitative studies could assess the impact of the Makabayan curriculum on student academic achievement, critical thinking skills, and civic engagement, comparing outcomes between schools that have implemented integrated curricula and those that have not. Qualitative research, on the other hand, could explore students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to the Makabayan curriculum, providing valuable insights into its influence on identity formation, cultural awareness, and social responsibility (Ondog, et al., 2023).

Longitudinal studies are particularly valuable for tracking students' development over time and examining the long-term effects of integration on their educational attainment, career trajectories, and civic participation. Comparative analyses could also shed light on the relative effectiveness of different approaches to integration, identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

While theoretical discussions on the integration of Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan curriculum have been abundant, empirical evidence of its effectiveness remains limited (Uy, et al., 2023). Addressing this gap requires rigorous empirical research that evaluates the impact of integration efforts on student learning outcomes, citizenship development, and national identity formation. By generating robust empirical evidence, researchers can inform policy and practice, support continuous improvement, and ultimately enhance the quality and effectiveness of education for all students.

Conclusion:

The systematic review of the integration of Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan curriculum highlights several key findings and areas for further investigation. Firstly, the review identified challenges stemming from the ambiguity of the framework for the Makabayan learning area and the lack of clear integration guidelines for Araling Panlipunan. This ambiguity has led to confusion among educators and hindered the seamless integration of disciplines within Makabayan. Secondly, the fragmentation of the Social Studies discipline within the Makabayan curriculum was noted, with Social Studies remaining compartmentalized despite its positioning as an integrated study of social sciences and humanities. Thirdly, discrepancies in implementation strategies across different educational levels were observed, indicating variations in teaching time, grading methods, and curriculum focus between elementary and secondary levels. Finally, the review highlighted the limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of integration efforts, emphasizing the need for further research to evaluate the impact of the Makabayan curriculum on student learning outcomes, citizenship development, and national identity formation.

Addressing these findings requires concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, researchers, and stakeholders. Clear and comprehensive integration guidelines need to be developed to provide educators with the necessary support and guidance for effectively integrating Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan curriculum. Additionally, efforts should be made to promote coherence and consistency in implementation strategies across all educational levels, ensuring that integration efforts align with overarching educational goals and objectives. Furthermore, there is a critical need for rigorous empirical research to evaluate the effectiveness of integration efforts in practice, providing valuable insights into their impact on student learning and development.

The integration of Araling Panlipunan within the Makabayan curriculum holds significant potential for fostering national identity, citizenship, and holistic student development. However, addressing the identified challenges and gaps is essential to realizing this potential fully. By leveraging these insights and working collaboratively, stakeholders can contribute to the continuous improvement of the Makabayan curriculum and, ultimately, enhance the quality and effectiveness of education for all students.

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