

## **Experiences and Challenges of Grades 7, 8 and 9 Araling Panlipunan Teachers in Promoting Students' Civic Competence**



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**ABSTRACT:** Social Studies (Araling Panlipunan) educators play a crucial role in promoting civic competence, which is the academic content, critical thinking skills, and democratic values necessary for pupils to participate fully in society. Teachers of social studies continue to provide students with the knowledge, values, and attitudes they need to be productive and ideal members of society despite the difficulties they face. Although there is a study conducted in the Philippines revealing that Grades 7, 8, and 9 Social Studies subjects do not have direct discussions of civics and civic competency, there is still a shortage of published studies that address the experiences and challenges of Social Studies educators, specifically the grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers in promoting civic competence. The researchers used a transcendental phenomenological research design to examine the experiences and difficulties these teachers had in encouraging civic competency in their students. Following a demographic survey, they chose one teacher from grades 7, 8 and 9 of the Araling Panlipunan subject in a public high school and conducted interviews with them. The study revealed that they are motivated to promote civic competence because they aim to make their students acquire the values and responsibilities of an informed and active citizen in society. With that, they integrate the ideas of civic competence into their daily lesson/ discussion. However, they consider the complex topics in the grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan curriculum as a hindrance to achieving their students' aims. Their challenges in promoting civic competence included difficulty preparing lessons, learners' diversity, and teachers' poor performance. The study also established specific effects on students when problems in promoting civic competence occur, such as poor civic competence development and students as irresponsible citizens.

**KEYWORDS:** Experiences, Challenges, Integrate, Civic Competence, Grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In order for students to be active and involved participants in public life, the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) defined civic competency as the knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic dispositions necessary. The importance of social studies teachers in cultivating pupils who are committed to the principles and ideals of democracy was underlined by NCSS. However, on the national scene, citizens are detached from participating in societal activities related to nation-building.

In the Philippines, Malalay (2021) cited that Filipinos are used to waiting to be told what to do, reliant on others (leaders and government), and lacking a sense of urgency. If others have already participated in society's developmental activities, they will no longer engage. To support the statement, Hernández (2021) cited that people will only participate in what interests them. If not, they will not do anything. Additionally, Winthrop (2020) noted that there is a link between excellent civic education and higher levels of student involvement in the 2011 Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools report. Thus, there is a high possibility that the lack of citizens' civic participation is attributed to inadequate promotion of civic competence, resulting in a lack of civic knowledge development among them.

In a study by Reyes (2017), the author mentioned that in Junior High School, only Grade 10 Social Studies directly discussed civics and civic competency. With that, the rest depends on how the social studies teachers in the lower grades would integrate civic competency in each topic of grades 7, 8, and 9 Social Studies as it is not directed in terms of its disciplinary nature. Since promoting civic competence is the aim of Social Studies, this is a problem for teachers of grades 7, 8, and 9 Araling Panlipunan because it is written implicitly in the curriculum guide, making them difficult to promote it. Further, this problem could cause inadequate promotion of civic competence among students and a lack of civic engagement/ participation.

Although existing literature relevant to the topic at hand revealed that there's no direct discussion on civics and civic competency in Grade 7, 8, and 9 social studies subjects, there is still a shortage of published studies that address the experiences and challenges of Social Studies educators, specifically the grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers in promoting civic competence. With that, there is a need to conduct a study because it is evident among the teachers of grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan in a public

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high school to promote civic competence despite the challenges they face in equipping students with the necessary skills, attitudes, and values that will enable them to become active and informed citizens of the society.

Nevertheless, it is still clear that social studies teachers have a key role in aiding pupils in developing civic competency despite the aforementioned problem. Hamilton et al. (2020) cited that social studies teachers in high school are crucial in helping kids develop the civic knowledge, abilities, and attitudes they will need to succeed once they graduate. Thus, this problem motivated the researchers to provide an avenue for the grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers to discuss their experiences and challenges in promoting civic competence. Moreover, this study could contribute new knowledge that could assist fellow social studies teachers in understanding further the experiences and challenges of grade 7, 8, and 9 Araling Panlipunan teachers in promoting civic competence among students.

This study is aimed at determining the experiences and challenges of Grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers in promoting civic competence among students. Specifically, this is aimed at answering the statement of the problem as follows:

1. What are the experiences of grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers in promoting civic competence among students?
2. What are the challenges that exist for grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers in promoting civic competence among students?
3. What specific effects does it bring on students when difficulties in promoting civic competence occur?

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### ***A. Research Design***

This qualitative research study mainly used phenomenological research design, specifically transcendental phenomenology. A phenomenological research design, according to Creswell (2013), highlights the shared characteristics and lived experiences of a certain sector. In addition, he defined a transcendental phenomenological approach as one that derives subjective meanings from participants through an unbiased viewpoint that disregards the researcher's assumptions. This design was suitable for the study since it gave an in-depth and detailed account of the teachers' experiences while allowing the researchers to explore their non-quantifiable meanings and perspectives in building civic competency.

### ***B. Research Locale***

The study was conducted in a public high school in Samar Division. There were three (3) participants of this study consisted of grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers. The researchers selected one teacher from each year level of the grades 7, 8, and 9. These teachers were qualified to become participants because of the following criteria: First, graduated with a Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) – Social Studies. Second, have taken numbers of training relative to their current field rank. Third, promotes civic competence among students.

### ***C. Data Collection and Analysis***

In this qualitative investigation, a semi-structured interview was used to gather the data required for the study. To find the research participants who met the requirements for the data collection process, a demographic survey was done. A consent letter was provided when the participants were identified to indicate their full participation and willingness. Face-to-face and on-site interviews were used in the study to collect information about the actual experiences of the participants. The audio was recorded on a phone, and the transcription of the audio was done. The transcription was returned later to the participants for transparency and accuracy of the responses. In addition, confidentiality was applied in the study without exposing the identity of the participants when presenting the results. The data was analyzed using the thematic analysis method. In the first stage, the researchers transcribed the gathered data. In the transcription process, the researchers noted all relevant information based on the questions given during the interview. In the second stage, the initial coding process was conducted by separating, comparing, and discussing the participants' responses so that there would be no data duplication to formulate the result. After, codes were improved as the rest of the transcripts were coded until no additional code emerged (WaMbaleka & Gladstone, 2018). In the third stage, the interpretation of data was applied by finding the relationships and similarities of codes from the data that had been discussed and clustering them into themes. The meaning or connections shared by the clusters of codes were labeled by the researchers after the codes had been grouped. This cycle was repeated until no more clustering, reclustered, or assembling was possible (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The fourth stage involved using the labels created for the topic and providing the connection or meaning the theme conveys a detailed name. Later, the researchers identified the themes in light of the codes' content and significance. To further improve the information acquired, this definition will provide an overview of the topics covered under the theme. After the topics were identified and defined in this step, the researchers wrote the final report. The researchers presented the findings and interpretation of the data, which was finalized by reviewing the relevant responses to the study and generating interpretations to apply the validity of the analysis.

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### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The three main results address the statements of the problem. The first main result answers the first statement of the problem, the second main result presents the second statement of the problem and the third main result explains the third statement of the problem.

#### A. Experiences of Grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan Teachers in Promoting Civic Competence

The experiences of being a grade 7, 8, or 9 Araling Panlipunan teacher who promotes civic competence among students can be discussed by three namely, the aim of social studies teachers, civic competence integration in lesson/ discussion, and complex topics as a hindrance

1) *Aim of Social Studies Teachers:* Participants of this study reveal that they promote civic competence to enable students to acquire the values and responsibilities of an informed and active citizen in society.

“So masasabi ko na kapag kailangan iintegrate ang civic competence...kailangang gawin talaga, dahil doon mo lamang matuturuan ang bata para maging responsable sa kaniyang bayan at sa kaniyang paligid.” (So, I can say that when civic competence needs to be integrated... it really needs to be done, because that's the only way you can teach the child to be responsible for his country and his community).”

“Yun yung goal natin as a teacher hindi lang matuto yung mga kabataan ng factual facts, information so kailangan nating silang iinject doon sa tunay na kalagayan ng mundo.... so kailangan yun yung kailangan nating e-promote sa mga bata na hindi lang nila kailangang matuto ng facts kailangan din nilang matuto kung paano ma-i-apply o applications ng mga lessons into the real-world. (That's our goal as a teacher, that young people don't just learn factual facts, information, so we need to inject them into the real-world situation... So that's what we need to promote that children don't just learn facts, they also need to learn how to apply lessons into the real-world).”

“Sa mga kabataan na nasa subject na Araling Panlipunan sa bawat topic na binibigay importante na ma instill ang civic competence sa mga kabataan para mas maipakita sa kanilang buhay ang nangyayari sa ating paligid or sa mga values na dapat nira ma-acquire as a person. (For the young people of Social Studies subject, it is important to instill civic competence for them to be informed on what's really happening in the society and acquire civic values).”

2) *Civic Competence Integration in Lessons/Discussions:* The participants integrate civic competence in every lesson/ discussion to promote it to the learners. They develop activities with real-world application such as localized activities, for students to understand the relevance of their learning to the society. It also enables them to apply their learning in real-life.

“Through real-world application siguro, kasi kung puro lang salita-salita, puro discussion diba kulang so more on application ganon parin... dapat nakikita din sa kanila, gin-a-apply talaga nira ha ira buhay. (Through real-world application maybe, because if it's just words, just discussion, it isn't enough, so more on application... it should be seen in them and apply it in their lives).”

“Halimbawa pagiging makabayan, pagiging makakalikasan ganyan so ilo-localize namin siya inside the school premises kung paano maipapakita namin ang ganyan... and then gawa kami ng mga activities outside the school premises naman that they can apply it in real-life. (For example, being patriotic, being responsible to environment so we localize it inside the school premises to show what it's like... then we'll do activities outside the school premises that they can apply in real life).”

“Mas maganda kasi mai-apply sa sarili nilang pangyayari. For example, ngayon ang topic namin sa Ekonomiks is about ang gampanin ng mag-aaral o nang mamamayan.... so pwede kang magbabayad ng buwis. (It's better to apply it on their own happenings. For example, today our topic in Economics is about the role of students or citizens... so you can possibly apply the paying of taxes).”

3) *Complex topics as a hindrance:* Participants of the study claim that some topics in the curriculum guide are complex. With that, they need help to integrate/relate the ideas of civic competence to the topics. However, most participants stated that despite the situation, they still do necessary methods to connect or integrate the values of being an active and responsible citizen in their daily lessons to promote civic competence among students.

“Meron siya pero hindi masyado related ang topics sa civic competence. Pero kun medyo related, gin iintegrate nalang din namin. (It has, but the topics are not that related to civic competence. But if it's somewhat related, we'll try integrate it).”

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“Knowing na grade 8 kami Kasaysayan ng Daigdig, nevertheless yung mga dinidiscuss lang namin is mga facts. So ano nalang namin yun, kung ano ang gagawin namin... ang pag-integrate ang pag-promote ng civic competencies kasi challenging talaga. (Knowing that we are in grade 8 which is about World History, nevertheless the only things we discuss are facts. So, it's on us on how we will promote competence because it's very challenging).”

“Mayda kasi topics ha Ekonomiks na computation so mag-iisip ka talaga, paano kaya ipasok yung pagiging... pagpapahalaga sa bayan, pagiging responsableng mamamayan or estudyante. Kinahanglan magbibiling ka geap hin way. (There are topics in Economics that are only computation, so you really have to think on how can you include the idea of being... giving value to the country and being a responsible citizen or student. You need to find a way).”

The result shows that the experiences of grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers are influenced by their aim, enabling students to acquire the values and responsibilities of an informed and active citizen in society through promoting civic competence. In support of that statement, Hangoma (2020) pointed out that social studies is intended to foster the growth of excellent and ideal citizens who are aware of their social environment. Social studies also work as an agent for change that transforms a person into a productive citizen of the country and serves as the foundation for the country's social development (Crisolo et al., 2021). The result also shows that participants of the study develop various teaching strategies with real-world applications, such as localized activities to integrate civic competence in their daily lessons/discussions to equip learners with practical, creative skills and values that will enable them to become functional members of society. This is achievable when teachers incorporate the creative process into lesson plans to stimulate students' thinking processes as they reflect on personal and global challenges. (Nwazuok, 2007, as cited by Hangoma, 2020).

However, participants of the study claim that they needed help in achieving their goal because of complex topics in the grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan Curriculum Guide. This statement is supported by Reyes (2017), as the author mentioned that Grade 7, 8, and 9 social studies do not directly discuss civic competence because of its disciplinal nature. For this reason, the rest will depend on how the participants would integrate civic competency in each grade 7, 8, and 9 Araling Panlipunan subject, as it has yet to discuss directly. This is a problem for the participants. According to the study by Sofadekan (2012), the class contents in Social Studies are not applicable in addressing social issues and concerns, the significance of peace and consequences of conflicts, culture, and the need for public consciousness and progress. Furthermore, despite the situation, they still do necessary methods to relate or integrate the values of being an active and responsible citizen in their daily lessons to promote civic competence among students.

### ***B. Existing Challenges in Promoting Civic Competence***

There are existing challenges of Grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers in promoting civic competence among students. These challenges include difficulty preparing lessons, learners' diversity, and teachers' poor performance.

1) *Difficulty in Preparing Lessons:* From the gathered data, participants mentioned that it is challenging for them to develop suitable activities with a civic competence integration and, simultaneously, activities that will arouse/meet learners' different interests. With that, they stated that they were having a hard time in lesson preparation.

“Mahirap kasi hindi mo siya mapipilit sa ano mo sa lesson plan, diba mahirap ig-integrate kasi hindi (siya) related. (It's hard because you can't force the integration in your lesson planning, it's hard to integrate (civics) because it's not related).”

“Kasi hindi lang naman magprepare ng mga IM's, ng mga question... kailangan mo rin mag set ng mga activities na makaka-arouse ng interest nila, hindi lang activities na ito lang ang sagot, kailangan they can go beyond... so challenges sabi ko nga preparation. (Because it's not just about preparing IM's, questions... you also need to set activities that can arouse students' interest, activities that, enables them to go beyond... So, the preparation is a challenge).”

“I struggle sometimes with what kind of activity I have to make for different learners to meet the learning goal, when it comes to lesson planning.”

2) *Learners' Diversity:* The participants mentioned that when they tried to promote civic competence through activity in the class, some students were not participative. Others even questioned the purpose of the activity.

“Pero challenge talaga yan na nafiface na deri 100% ang napapasunod mo. (But it's a challenge being faced that not 100% of them will follow you).”

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“May mga iba na parang excited when we go outside the school, pero yun nga lang may iba na magtatanong na, ma’am bakit kailangan pa. (There are others who seem to be excited when we do outside of school activity, but there are others that will ask, ma’am why is this necessary?).”

“Although it iba nag-iisip kun paano, nagpaparticipate naman sila meron lang ibang kabataan na... hindi. (Although others critically think about the how/s, they participate, and there are other learners who... don’t).”

3) *Teacher’s Poor Performance*: The participants stated that their insufficient performance reflects learners’ inability to acquire the civic values and responsibilities they need to become civic competence-equipped individuals.

“Kung titignan talaga nasa teacher din kay ma-aano mo rin sa’n ba ako nagkulang... nareflect yung low-performance ano ng bata sa amin. (If you really look, it’s really on the teacher and you’ll question yourself where did I go wrong... learners’ low performance reflects on us).

“Automatically it reflects on the way I teach them so mahirap din yun, malaking epekto din yun sa performance ko as a teacher.” (It automatically reflects on the way I teach them so it’s also difficult, it has a big impact on my performance as a teacher).”

“Kung hindi ako prepared makaka ano ha performance ko. Pero kung prepared ka naman...maano mo nga successful an imo pagtutdo. (If I’m not prepared, it will affect my performance.”

The results show that developing suitable activities which have civic competence integration and at the same time, activities that will arouse/ meet learners’ different interests is a difficult task, according to the participants. This was backed up by Srihidayanti et al. (2015), who noted that teachers struggle with creating lesson plans that take into account the uniqueness of their pupils, their interests and needs, and the coherence of themes, subject matter, learning features, and cultural diversity. Additionally, the study shows that the poor performance of participants reflects poor civic learning among students. The possible reason for teachers’ poor teaching performance is using wrong/ inefficient instructional methods. In support of that statement, Bhatnagar (2014) cited by Hangoma (2020), mentioned that poor content delivery causes students to lose interest in the subject. With these statements, it can be concluded that, despite the National Council for Social Studies' (NCSS) stated objective of developing "knowledgeable, thinking, and active citizens," classrooms are rarely places where students explore collective action and how civic knowledge and skills can help one address the root causes of systemic social problems. (Swan et.al., 2013).

Furthermore, the result reveals that it is a major challenge for teacher-participants to ensure that all learners acquire civic competency because some pupils are active while others are passive. In support of that statement, teachers have to face different problems, such as poor performance of learners, poor discipline, behavior problems, noise, evaluation problems, and uncontrolled and unmanageable classrooms (Negumbo, 2016 as cited by Carl & Negumbo, 2017). Students who appear shy/timid, too quiet, lack confidence, display nervousness, are oversensitive, daydream, don’t listen, resent criticism, do not participate in class, and are not violent might need other specialized help (Zabala & Peñol, 2018). Furthermore, Cletus & Edinyang (2014) explained that in a diverse community, social and cultural aspects also influence how social studies are taught and learned. This indicates that student’s diversity is a challenge for teachers in promoting civic competence.

### C. Effects on Students

There are specific effects on students when challenges in promoting civic competence occur. These include poor civic competence development and student as an irresponsible citizen.

1) *Poor Civic Competence Development*: From the gathered data, participants claim that when some students cannot catch up with their discussion due to their differences in learning concepts, it results in poor civic understanding. Additionally, participants' poor lesson planning and inefficient performance in teaching resulted in learners' inability to understand the necessary attitudes and values of responsible citizens in society.

“The effects to students, deri hira na kaka-fully develop. (The effects to students is that, they will not become fully developed).”

“Kailangan ng engagement nila tapos ako lang nakaka-catch up ng mga competencies na yun so mahirap yun. (There’s a need for their engagement and then I’m the only one who catch up with those competencies, so it’s difficult).”

“Siyempre ang magiging epekto haira deri hira mahibabaro diba, they will not learn the value of pagiging responsible citizen. (Of course, the effect to them is they will not learn, right, they will not learn the value of being a responsible citizen.”



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2) *Student as an Irresponsible Citizen*: From the gathered data, inefficient civic competence development resulted in learners' inability to fulfill their basic roles inside the classroom.

“Mahirap na silang madisiplina dito palang sa classroom how much more sa paligid, sa buong bansa. (It is now difficult for them to be disciplined here in the classroom, how much more in the community, throughout the country).”

“Hindi ko naman gigenigeneralize pero problema din ng estudyante yan. (I'm not generalizing it, but that's also a student's problem).”

“Kahit ngalang dito pagtatapon lang ng basura, kinahanglan balikbalikon pa haira (Even just to dispose the garbage, there's a need for them to be reminded repeatedly just to do it).”

The results show that the occurrence of challenges in the promotion of civic competence is hindrance for participants to enable their learners to understand and acquire all the necessary attitudes and values needed to perform as an active and informed citizen in society. This supports the statement that Social Studies is not achieving its goals of educating and forming learners as future responsible citizens (Carl & Negumbo, 2017). Experts contend that civic education is also a marginal part of young people's schooling. (Winthrop, 2020). Additionally, when civic competence is successfully promoted, the knowledge, skills, values, and understanding needed to become informed, active, and responsible citizens will develop. These citizens will be required to influence the future health and welfare of the local, national, and global community (Poatob, 2015).

However, participants of the study state that due to poor development of civic competence, students became ignorant and undisciplined when they failed to perform their basic roles inside the classroom and in the school premises. Participants also states that students' irresponsible behavior inside the classroom would eventually reflect on what they would do in society. Thus, it will also result in them having an inactive role in society, which can jeopardize the future health and welfare of the local, national, and global community. Keele (2007), as cited by Chu & Shen (2017), stated that those with lesser levels of civic involvement are less likely to develop positive opinions toward their government and are more prone to harbor mistrust of it.

### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Understanding the experiences of the teachers of the grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan program and the difficulties they encounter in fostering civic competence is crucial as social studies educators continue to provide students with the practical, imaginative skills, values, and attitudes they need to become useful and ideal members of society. Through the narratives of grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers from a public high school in Samar, this study has established that they are motivated by promoting civic competence because they aim to make students acquire the values and responsibilities of informed and active citizens of society. With that, they integrate the ideas of civic competence into their daily lesson/discussion. However, they consider the complex topics in the grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan curriculum as a hindrance to achieving their students' aims.

Furthermore, the challenges that grades 7-9 Araling Panlipunan teachers encountered in promoting civic competence included difficulty in preparing lessons, learners' diversity, and teacher's poor performance. The participants also established specific effects on students when challenges in promoting civic competence occur, such as poor civic competence development and students as irresponsible citizens. Therefore, future researchers should also consider other methods and variables for a thorough study of the problem.

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