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Uncovering the Untold Stories of Social Studies Teachers in a Resource-Trapped Classroom in Rural Secondary School

Cleofe Corazon Hijara Iba^{1*}

¹*Master of Arts in Teaching major in Social Studies*

^{*}*Corresponding author*

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Abstract

Teaching Social Studies in resource-limited rural schools presents various challenges related to the multiple roles teachers assume, the difficulties they encounter, and the strategies they develop to sustain instruction. This study explores the experiences, challenges, strategies, and professional growth of Social Studies teachers at Cabales-Enarbia Sr. Integrated School, a rural secondary school in Purok Daisy, Lomuyon, Kiamba, Sarangani Province. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through key informant interviews, analyzed using thematic analysis, and interpreted within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Findings reveal that Social Studies teachers in resource-limited settings fulfill multiple roles beyond classroom instruction, including mentorship, community engagement, and advocacy for students' learning needs. To address instructional constraints, teachers employ resourceful strategies such as developing self-made instructional materials, utilizing community-based learning, and adopting interactive teaching methods, including storytelling and role-playing. These adaptations enable them to sustain student engagement despite the absence of modern teaching resources. Furthermore, these challenges contribute to teachers' professional growth by fostering resilience, adaptability, and instructional innovation. The study emphasizes the need for institutional support to strengthen Social Studies instruction in rural schools. Recommendations focus on improving resource allocation, expanding access to professional development, and establishing support systems for teachers dealing with instructional and socio-economic constraints. These findings serve as a reference for educators, policymakers, and school administrators in formulating policies and interventions that improve Social Studies teaching in resource-deprived environments.

Keywords: Social Studies Teachers; Resource-Trapped Classroom; Multiple Roles; Rural Secondary School

1. Introduction

Education serves as a cornerstone for nurturing critical thinking, social awareness, and promoting academic development among learners (Swargiary, 2024). Within the Philippine education system, Social Studies plays a pivotal role in equipping students with an understanding of historical, cultural, and societal structures essential for their development as informed citizens (Garcia, 2021). The effectiveness of this subject

depends not only on curriculum design but also on how teachers navigate the realities of their teaching environments (Healy, 2023). Their experiences and strategies are essential to addressing the challenges that come with limited resources and diverse student needs. In rural secondary schools, the challenges of teaching Social Studies become even more pronounced. Teachers are often tasked with delivering a rich, multidisciplinary curriculum while contending with resource constraints, varying levels of student preparedness, and limited access to professional development opportunities (Maina et al., 2021). These factors require educators to demonstrate creativity and resilience in adapting their teaching methods to bridge the gap between curriculum expectations and the realities of their classrooms (Day & Gu, 2013). Understanding their lived experiences is important in exploring how they manage to fulfill their roles despite the limitations imposed by their environment. Although educational reforms in the Philippines have aimed at enhancing teaching and learning conditions, the unique struggles of Social Studies teachers in resource-deprived rural schools remain underexplored (Fu et al., 2024). This lack of focus emphasizes a significant research gap, particularly in understanding how these educators navigate their challenges, implement the curriculum, and inspire learners in a setting marked by limited instructional resources and support systems (Healy, 2023). This study examined the untold stories of Social Studies teachers working in resource-limited classrooms at Cabales-Enarbia Sr. Integrated School, located in Purok Daisy, Lomuyon, Kiamba, Sarangani Province. It explored into their experiences, challenges, and strategies, offering a deeper understanding of their resilience and creativity in addressing the constraints of their teaching environment.

Table 1: Summary of themes, sub-themes, and significant responses

Themes	Sub-Themes	Significant Responses
Perceptions of Roles and Responsibilities of Social Studies Teachers in a Resource-Limited Rural School	Multifaceted Educator Role	"Sa among eskwelahan, wala may igo nga mga libro ug mga visual aid, mao nga gapangita ko og pamaagi nga makahatag og husto nga kasayuran sa mga estudyante." (In our school, we do not have enough books and visual aids, so I find ways to provide students with accurate information.)
	Adaptive Instructional Leadership	"Nagapangita mi og alternatibong paagi sama sa storytelling ug role-playing aron ang mga estudyante makakat-on bisan kulang ang materyales." (We look for alternative ways such as storytelling and role-playing so students can still learn despite the lack of materials.)
Challenges in Teaching Social Studies in a Rural, Resource-Constrained Setting	Instructional Barriers in Resource-Limited Classrooms	"Lisod magtudlo og Social Studies kung walay libro, mapa, ug uban pang gamit. Kinahanglan maghimo og kaugalingong materyales aron masabtan sa estudyante." (It is difficult to teach Social Studies without books, maps, and other materials. I have to create my own resources to help students understand.)
	Socio-Economic Constraints and Student Engagement	"Ang uban sa among mga estudyante mutabang sa ilang pamilya sa uma, mao nga dili regular ang ilang pagsulod ug lisod sila makaapil sa klase." (Some of our students help their families on the farm, so they do not attend school regularly and struggle to participate in class.)
Strategies in Teaching Social	Resourcefulness in	"Nagahimo ko og akong kaugalingong mga

Studies in a Resource-Deprived Environment	Instructional Material Development	handouts ug ginapangita ang impormasyon gikan sa karaang dyaryo ug lumang libro aron adunay basehan ang mga estudyante." (I create my own handouts and gather information from old newspapers and outdated books so students have reference materials.)
	Interactive and Context-Based Teaching Approaches	"Ginahagit namo ang mga estudyante nga mangutana sa ilang mga ginikanan ug katigulangan kabahin sa kasaysayan sa among lugar aron mas masabtan nila ang leksyon." (We encourage students to ask their parents and elders about the history of our community so they understand the lesson better.)
Influence of Challenges and Strategies on Professional Growth and Teaching Practices	Adaptation and Innovation in Teaching Methods	"Tungod sa kakulang sa mga materyales, nakakat-on ko nga maghimo og bag-ong paagi sa pagtudlo. Dili lang mag-agad sa libro kundi magamit ang mga kasinatian sa estudyante." (Due to the lack of materials, I learned to develop new teaching strategies. I do not just rely on books but also use students' experiences in lessons.)
	Resilience and Professional Development	"Nagapaningkamot ko og pangita og libreng webinar ug nagatuon og bag-ong pamaagi sa pagtudlo pinaagi sa online resources." (I make an effort to look for free webinars and learn new teaching strategies through online resources.)

2. SUMMARY

Social Studies teachers in resource-trapped rural secondary schools perceive their roles as multifaceted, extending far beyond classroom instruction. They act as educators, mentors, and community facilitators who promote civic awareness and cultural understanding. These teachers integrate local narratives, encourage community involvement, and adapt instructional content to reflect their students' lived experiences. Despite the lack of formal training and access to updated materials, they demonstrate strong commitment to shaping socially aware and responsible citizens through contextualized teaching.

The challenges encountered by these teachers are primarily rooted in the scarcity of resources and socio-economic constraints affecting their students. Instructional barriers include outdated or insufficient textbooks, a lack of teaching aids and technological tools, and limited opportunities for professional development. Compounded by poor infrastructure and frequent power interruptions, these difficulties hinder effective lesson delivery. Furthermore, the economic hardship faced by students—such as inability to afford basic school supplies or the necessity to assist in household labor—negatively affects their classroom engagement and academic performance.

To overcome these challenges, Social Studies teachers employ resourceful strategies tailored to their context. They develop self-made instructional materials, including handwritten notes and hand-drawn visual aids, and repurpose old newspapers and magazines to supplement lessons. Interactive approaches such as storytelling, role-playing, and local interviews are used to make learning participatory and relevant. Teachers also collaborate with colleagues and community stakeholders to enrich instruction and share effective practices, compensating for the lack of institutional support and formal training.

These challenges and strategies significantly shape the teachers' professional growth and instructional practices. Their resilience and adaptability foster innovation in teaching, encouraging them to continuously refine their methods despite constraints. Through persistent self-learning, collaboration, and contextual responsiveness, these educators cultivate a strong sense of agency and leadership. Their professional identities are marked by a commitment to meaningful education, grounded in the realities of their rural communities and strengthened through the very limitations they face.

CONCLUSION

Social Studies teachers in resource-limited rural schools take on multiple roles beyond classroom instruction. They perceive themselves as educators, mentors, and community facilitators who must ensure that students develop an understanding of historical, social, and political concepts despite the constraints they face. Their responsibilities extend beyond teaching content, requiring them to design instructional materials, contextualize lessons based on local realities, and foster civic awareness among students. Additionally, they recognize that their role includes supporting students' personal development, often guiding them in addressing socio-economic challenges that affect their learning.

The challenges faced by Social Studies teachers in rural, resource-constrained settings significantly impact their instructional delivery. The most pressing issues include the lack of textbooks, teaching aids, and access to professional development, making it difficult to implement diverse teaching strategies. Beyond resource limitations, socio-economic factors also affect student engagement, as many learners struggle with irregular attendance, competing household responsibilities, and financial hardships that limit their participation in academic activities. These difficulties require teachers to constantly find ways to keep students motivated and engaged despite the barriers that hinder effective learning.

To address these challenges, Social Studies teachers employ various strategies to ensure that learning remains meaningful. They demonstrate resourcefulness by developing self-made instructional materials, repurposing old textbooks, and integrating locally available resources into their lessons. Interactive teaching approaches, such as storytelling, role-playing, and community-based learning, serve as alternatives to traditional instruction, allowing students to actively participate in discussions despite the absence of modern educational tools. These strategies help bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and real-life experiences, making lessons more relevant and engaging for students.

The difficulties encountered in resource-limited rural schools contribute to teachers' professional growth and instructional development. The need to continuously adjust their teaching methods fosters creativity, problem-solving skills, and adaptability. Over time, these experiences strengthen their ability to manage classroom challenges, refine their instructional techniques, and develop resilience in the face of limited resources. Additionally, teachers seek self-directed learning opportunities, such as attending free training sessions and collaborating with colleagues to improve their teaching practices. These experiences not only enhance their capacity to teach in difficult conditions but also shape their long-term career development.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to address the roles, challenges, strategies, and professional growth of Social Studies teachers in resource-limited rural schools.

Social Studies teachers take on multiple responsibilities beyond classroom instruction, requiring additional support to fulfill their roles effectively. Schools and education authorities should provide professional development programs focused on strategies for contextualized instruction and student engagement. Recognizing the role of Social Studies teachers as mentors and community facilitators, structured support

systems, including mentoring programs and peer collaboration, should be implemented to help manage both academic and non-academic responsibilities.

Addressing the challenges of teaching in rural, resource-constrained schools requires systemic improvements in resource allocation. Educational agencies should prioritize providing updated textbooks, teaching materials, and digital resources to rural schools. Partnerships with local government units, non-governmental organizations, and private institutions should be explored to bridge resource gaps and support schools with funding for classroom materials and learning aids. Schools should implement scholarship grants, school-based feeding programs, and attendance monitoring initiatives to improve student participation.

To improve instructional delivery despite resource limitations, teachers should continue developing and utilizing alternative teaching strategies. Educational institutions should provide training on low-cost, interactive teaching methods that maximize locally available materials. Schools should also support teachers in creating and sharing self-made instructional resources by establishing resource-sharing initiatives or digital repositories where teachers can access and exchange teaching materials. Encouraging collaboration with local historians, government officials, and community leaders can also enhance the contextual relevance of Social Studies lessons, allowing students to connect theoretical concepts with real-world experiences.

Teachers' professional growth and resilience in rural schools should be further strengthened through sustained access to professional development opportunities. Education authorities should expand rural teachers' access to training programs, workshops, and online learning platforms to ensure continuous skill enhancement. School administrators should also recognize and support teachers' efforts in self-directed learning by providing incentives, funding for participation in training, or networking opportunities with educators from other schools. Additionally, policies should be developed to improve working conditions in rural schools, ensuring that teachers receive the necessary institutional support to sustain their motivation and long-term commitment to teaching.

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