

Difficulties Faced in Teaching Geography Lessons at Public Secondary Schools Division of Zambales, Philippines

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Abstract: The study investigated the unpopular aspects of Geography lessons in Social Studies in terms of the contents of the discipline and instructional resources used that led to difficulties in teaching the discipline. This study also identified innovative strategies that serve as intervention to help overcome the challenges. The study covered a total of 62 Social Studies teachers from Botolan District, Division of Zambales, Philippines. Action research was utilized as research design and survey questionnaire was the main tool of data collection. Using the weighted mean, the study found that the teachers agreed that the unpopular aspect of teaching Geography as to contents were the voluminous factual information which have to be considered by teachers during planning the lesson and the long Geography lesson duration was challenging. The teachers also agreed that teaching Geography demands a regular use of instructional resources and more reference books and materials. The strategies highly considered by the respondents as innovative enough to help address the difficulties and challenges in teaching Geography were the conduct of activities such as interviews, collection of samples and recording of information; the utilization of student centered strategies; and the use of computer aided instruction which can stimulate the students to think, to work cooperatively with others, be good observers and knows how to form concepts and generalizations. It was suggested that school heads/administrators may prioritize the purchase of more books and reference materials so as to address the needs of the students and teachers to have enough instructional resources exclusively for Geography. Teachers and school heads have to work together for a successful utilization of the innovative strategies presented in this study for a quality Geography teaching.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the 18th century geography began to achieve recognition as a discipline and was taught for the first time at the university level and eventually basic education. According to de Guzman (2015), Geography one of the branches of Social Sciences encompasses a lot of topics in our life on earth such as physical and cultural geography and topical, regional and systematic geography. The National Council for Social Studies in 2002, identified that the curriculum standards for Geography under the Social Studies program should focus on People, Places, & Environments. In the Philippine setting, the Curriculum Guide of AralingPanlipunan K to 12 released by DepEd in 2012 specified Geography lessons such as Introduction to Geography, Geography of Asia, World, Oceania and many others. These were treated as exclusive topics and also integrated to other lessons or topic in Social Studies (AralingPanlipunan) of Grade 7, 8 9 and 10.

It is said that geography is one of the most important subject in the school curriculum. Grosvenor (2005) said that our daily lives are link with Geography. People come to understand their activities and others' activities through the knowledge of Geography and acquisition of Geographic skills. Geography helps learners to understand the beginnings of nations and helps put events in perspective (Lambert & Morgan, 2011), and helps people to be appreciative of cultural diversity (Standish, 2009). Geography allows humankind to make decisions about how people should utilize its resources. When planning for teaching and learning Geography, there are aspects that need to be considered. The syllabus for Geography should allow learners to acquire appropriate skills (Benjamin, 2014), the Geography instructors have to use the most effective method and approaches (Gökçe, 2009), utilize suitable student-centered strategies (Köseoğlu & Ünlü, 2006), and have technical facilities, map rooms and equipment (Wambui, 2013). These activities that require students' involvement in the learning process makes learning more meaningful for learners and long lasting.

There are problems and difficulties met by educators in teaching Geography such as teachers' quality of instruction and sufficiency of knowledge on the discipline (Aydin, 2011), inefficiency of time allocated (Paradis, & Dexter, 2007), the Geography program is not student-centered (Elton, 2001) and the issue of

sufficient equipment to be used in geography education. In the Philippine setting, Durban & Catalan (2012) argued that the most important mission of every schools is to provide quality education to all students. However, public schools face diverse problems which hindered the delivery of quality education and some of these are inadequacy of facilities and instructional materials.

Given the above discussion, it can be said therefore that the purpose of teaching geography is very relevant and satisfying to learners' lives but the instruction aspect is very challenging which necessitates intervention specifically the need for the utilization of innovative and more effective teaching strategies. The teachers' perceived difficulties of teaching Geography in public secondary schools in the country and intervention strategies to address these problem have given little attention and investigation. This what makes the study valuable. This study aims to help teachers to improve teaching Geography lessons by employing innovative strategies and techniques perceived effective for the discipline. The School Administrations can use the result of the research study by recommending appropriate resources for teaching Geography lessons in Social Studies and eventually invest in these resources that can help the Social Studies teachers to present his/her lesson to students successfully and with quality. By being aware of the proposed innovative strategies, they may consider the conduct of training-seminars for teachers of Social Studies focused on the efficient and effective implementation of these innovative strategies. With these activities, Social Studies teachers can utilize more improved and innovative pedagogical approach in teaching Geography lessons which could also mean that teachers can assure a more effective execution of Geography lesson in the entire class. Moreover, the students will better understand and appreciate contents, features and relevance of Geography in their lives, future endeavors and careers.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to determine the difficulties in teaching Geography lessons in Social Studies at National High Schools in the Division of Zambales. The study also proposed strategies to help improve the teaching of Geography lessons.

Specifically, it sought to identify the unpopular aspects of Geography that causes the difficulties in teaching the disciple in terms of its contents and instructional resources used and determine the innovative strategies as intervention which can help improve teaching of Geography lessons in Social Studies.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is an action research with survey questionnaire as the main instrument for data gathering. Survey is probably the most commonly used in Social Sciences. The study was conducted at public secondary school of municipality of Botolan Division of Zambales, Philippines during the second semester of the academic year 2016-2017. A total of 62 Social Studies teachers participated in the research.

The nature of the study lent itself to the use of a research instrument for data collection. The survey is a flexible research approach used to investigate a wide range of topics and surveys often employ the questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The survey questionnaire developed by the researchers was based from Indicators of Determining Methods used in Teaching Geography by Benjamin (2014) and Scholars Research Library Indicators of Secondary School Students' Opinions about Geography Course by Aydın (2011). The questionnaire is composed of two (2) parts. The first part is about the unpopular aspects of the Geography lessons that led to difficulties in teaching the discipline (15 items). The last part are the strategies to overcome the challenges/difficulties in teaching Geography lessons in Social Studies thereby making the instruction more improved (15 items). This tool measured teachers' perception using a 5-point Likert Scale (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Moderately Agree, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree).

Reliability and validity, the key indicators of the quality of a measuring instrument were considered in the finalization of the research instrument. Reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study. Validity or the state where the instrument measures what is intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. To ensure these two criteria were satisfied. The questionnaire was subject to corrections from the experts of Social Studies Department of the College of Teacher Education, Ramon Magsaysay Technological University (RMTU), Iba. The instrument was also tested to ten (10) Social Studies teachers of Jesus Magsaysay High School, Bangantalinga, Iba, Zambales for reliability purpose. Before data collection, the researchers sought the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd Division of Zambales to administer the survey questionnaires to the Social Studies teachers. The distribution of the instrument was conducted on September 2016 and was done personally. The objectives of the study was also discussed to the respondents. The researchers emphasized the anonymity of responses of the respondents. The statistical treatment utilized descriptive tools such as frequency and mean distribution.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unpopular Aspects of Geography Lessons

The Table 1 shows the unpopular aspects of Geography that led to difficulties in teaching its contents. Indicator 5 obtained an average weighted mean of 4.08 (rank 1) with descriptive equivalent of agree. The respondents agreed that the geography lessons have a lot of factual information to be considered. This content aspect of geography was perceived by the respondents as the most unpopular and challenging part of teaching Geography. Factual information in Geography are inevitable. Teachers have to present these to students in a way that these are understood and appreciated. Therefore, teachers are expected to be constantly up to date on geographic facts, figures, phenomenon and geographic related events. The traditional aspects of Geography according to Al-Nofli (2010) were the dominated students' definitions, including the study of countries, weather, landforms, and maps. Maduane (2016) argued that challenges posed by the Geography textbook signified that content teachers were forced into code-switching; because they could not supplement the difficult concepts found in the textbooks.

Table 1
Unpopular Aspect of Geography Lessons in terms of Contents

Contents	AWD	D.E	Rank
1. There being many issues/topics based on memorization	3.76	A	8
2. The course has too much detail and somewhat difficult	3.88	A	5.5
3. Have a lot of foreign terms and definition	3.72	A	9
4. Some topics are being related to Mathematics	4.00	A	3.5
5. Have a lot of factual information to be considered	4.08	A	1
6. The need to be updated in all Geographic figures	3.88	A	5.5
7. Time limitation in the search for Geographic information	3.80	A	7
8. The need to provide more map and globe skills	3.68	A	10
9. The long Geography lesson duration	4.04	A	2
10. The narrative style of the textbook being so boring	4.00	A	3.5
Over all Weighted Mean	3.88	A	

The indicator 9 gained an average weighted mean of 4.04 (rank 2) and with descriptive equivalent of agree which states that Geography has long lesson duration. The respondents agreed that broad lessons in Geography and long duration of discussion of topics were found difficulties in teaching Geography. With this feature of Geography, the efficient management of time of execution and/or discussion of the lesson have to be carefully considered and done by the teachers. It is important to have an advance planning of instruction on different Geographic lessons. According to Norman (2013), time constraints in teaching and studying Geography affects the teaching and learning process between teacher and students. Indicator 4 obtained an average weighted mean of 4.00 (rank 3.5) and with descriptive equivalent of agree. The teacher respondents agreed that Geography is challenging to teach for Social Studies teachers because many topics are being related to Mathematics. The integration of Mathematics in Geography lesson is inevitable and necessary. Dhlamini & Mwakapenda, (2010) acknowledged that Mathematical approach in teaching Geographic because there are figures in the subject that needs calculation.

Indicator 10 with the average weighted mean of 4.00 (rank 3.5) and with descriptive equivalent of agree. The respondents agreed that because of the narrative style of the textbook for Geography, it was conceived as boring. Nowadays, students rely more on internet and social networking and books are perceived to be tiring when used because it contains a lot of narrative explanations and it does not have enough illustrations. Therefore, the learners' reaction to textbooks needs to be taken into consideration as well when teaching Geography. The indicators 2 and 6 gained an average weighted mean of 3.88 (rank 5.5) with descriptive equivalent of agree respectively. The respondents agreed that the course Geography has too much detail and somewhat difficult for the students to comprehend and the teachers have to be updated in all geographic features and figures all the time. These contents aspect of Geography made the discipline difficulty to teach. Here, the respondents are aware of the need to be more informed and/or to have a wider background of Geographic concepts, facts, figures and structures. Gorman (2015) stated that lack of teacher preparation and development directly affect students falling behind in the subject.

Indicator 7, 1 and 9 obtained an average weighted mean of 3.80 (rank 7), 3.76 (rank 8) and 3.72 (rank 9) respectively. All of these indicators gained an interpretation of agree. The teachers agreed upon that time limitation in the search for Geographic information; there being many issues, topics, lessons based on memorization; and have a lot of foreign terms and definition to be considered were another unpopular aspects of the contents of Geography which made it difficult to teach. Geography lessons are not limited to recall or just cognitive level of knowledge. According to Aydin (2011) teaching and learning of geography needs to be able

to answer the what, the where and how questions too. Teaching of Geography is towards assisting learners to develop higher order thinking and reflection.

Indicator 8 with an average weighted mean of 3.68 (rank 10) gained a descriptive equivalent of agree stating that teachers need to provide more map and globe skills when teaching geography. This was considered least unpopular aspects of geography. The teachers agreed that it is a must for them to have mastery in map reading and use of globe to help students use those materials appropriately and to answer map and globe related exercises. Yousaf, et al. (2012) stated that the students have to know basics about Geography such as location, directions and map scales and symbols though the use of maps and globe. The overall weighted mean was 3.88 with descriptive equivalent of Agree (A). The respondents agreed that there are contents in Geography that were identified as unpopular that causes difficulties in teaching the discipline.

Instructional Resources

Table 2: Unpopular Aspect of Geography in terms of Instructional Resources

Instructional Resources	AWM	DE	Rank
1. The need to use teaching resources/materials regularly	3.92	A	1
2. The limited teaching aids and visual devices	3.72	A	3
3. To have mastery in the use of map, globes and charts	3.40	MA	4.5
4. The need to have more reference books and materials	3.76	A	2
5. The need to provide more worksheets and exercises	3.40	MA	4.5
Overall Weighted Mean	3.64	A	

Table 2 shows the unpopular aspect of teaching Geography lessons in Social Studies in terms of instructional resources used.

Indicators 1, 4 and 2 gained an average weighted mean of 3.92 (rank 1), 3.76 (rank 2) and 3.72 (rank 3) respectively. All of these indicators were interpreted as agree. The teachers agreed that the most unpopular aspect of Geography teaching were the need to utilize of teaching resources/materials every time lessons are presented and the need to have sufficient reference books. These results signify that the respondents find it difficult to have sufficient instructional resources and reference materials to be used for teaching Geography lessons in their respective schools. Wambui (2013) emphasized the importance the use of instructional materials, for learners learn more of what they see than what they heard. Olayinka's (2016) concluded that students who were taught with instructional materials performed better than those taught without. Olayinka suggests that teachers in Social Studies should employ the use of essential instructional materials and improvise when necessary

Indicator 3 gained an average weighted mean of 3.40 (rank 4.5) and with the descriptive equivalent of moderately agree. The teachers agreed that mastery of using maps, globes and charts was also identified as difficult aspect of teaching Geography lessons. The result could mean that there are still limitations on the teachers' technical knowhow on the usage of map, globe and charts in teaching Geography. According to Gokce (2014), map reading and use of globe are necessary skills that students must learn and develop. On the other hand, New York State Social Studies Resource Toolkit (2013) stressed that teachers' mastery of using maps, globe and chart allows the student to further understand aspects on interactions of different elements and features in Geography. Indicator 5 gained an average weighted mean of 3.40 (rank 4.5) and with the descriptive equivalent of moderately agree. The teachers agreed moderately that lack of students' worksheets and exercises is unpopular and difficult aspect of Geography teaching. The teachers are aware of the importance of these materials during the execution of the Geography lessons but found wanting in their respective schools. Rajapaksha & Chathurika (2015) stated that teachers should ensure and assure that learners have enough opportunities to be engaged in the knowledge to be learnt like access to variety of teaching aids and ways of improving their instruction.

The overall weighted mean was 3.64 with descriptive equivalent of Agree (A). The respondents agreed that there were really limitation of instructional resources intended for teaching geography lessons which was considered unpopular or disliked aspects of Geography.

Innovative Strategies in Teaching Geography Lessons in Social Studies

The Table 3 shows the different innovative strategies to further improve teaching of Geography. Indicators 10 and 9 obtained an average weighted of 4.56 (rank 1) and 4.68 (rank 2) and with verbal

interpretation of strongly agree respectively. These indicators convey that a teacher should plan and conduct activities aimed at developing students to be a good observer, can form concepts and generalization, knows how to gather data and record those. The teacher respondents strongly agreed that abovementioned skills when utilize can stimulate students' thinking and improve the geography instruction. Limbu (2012) stated that students can learn more by observation for they will gain enormous ideas about the discipline. Gill (2013) preferred a teaching style which is engaging aimed at developing critical thinking skills. Indicator 1 gained an average weighted mean of 4.44 (rank 3.5) interpreted as strongly agree. This indicator emphasized that in teaching Geography lesson, it is appropriate to utilize different kinds of student centered methods of teaching. The teachers agreed that teaching geography needs the conduct of learning activities that are more student centered. Thanh (2010) stressed that student-centeredness of teaching and learning approach allows student independence and activeness.

Table 3: Proposed Innovative Strategies in Teaching Geography Lessons

Indicators	AWM	DE	Rank
1. Uses student-centered teaching methods in Geography education (project-based learning, cooperative learning, problem-based learning)	4.44	SA	3.5
2. Uses model, active learning practices, test method, computer-aided instruction in Geography lesson	4.44	SA	3.5
3. Organizes the main point of the lecture in a systematic and logical sequence	3.96	A	8
4. Uses the lecture method alongside audio materials in order to enhance teaching effectiveness	4.00	A	7
5. Gives students adequate time to search for information to topic	4.12	A	5.5
6. Assists students by suggesting sources of information	4.12	A	5.5
7. Organizes the students in appropriate groups in choose group leaders to record the points raised during discussion	3.92	A	9
8. Requires drill and practice exercises and perform the activity on their own as individuals or as a group	3.76	A	14
9. Trains the students to be good observers, stimulates their thinking, and the formation of concepts and generalizations	4.56	SA	2
10. Involves in data collection activities such as interviews, collection of samples and recording of information	4.68	SA	1
11. Choose real problem in the learner's environment as topic for study	3.88	A	10
12. Emphasizes reflective thinking and intelligent manipulation of materials	3.88	A	10
13. Presents clear purpose for which he/she is going to ask questions	3.84	A	13
14. Questions about Geography concepts and knowledge are prepared in advance	3.88	A	10
15. Emphasizes that Geography as a subject should help the learners to state, interpret, analyse	3.68	A	15
Overall Weighted Mean	3.95	A	

Indicators 5 and 6 gained an average weighted mean of 4.12 (rank 5.5) with verbal interpretation of Agree. These indicators focus on giving ample time to students in searching geographic information and guiding them with the appropriate sources and materials. The respondents agreed that these strategies have to be utilized towards improvement of instruction in Geography. Having enough sources will help students not just in understanding the topic but also according to Tham (2015) it will stress critical analysis and life-long learning.

Indicators 2 and 4 gained an average weighted mean of 4.44 (rank 3.5) and 4.00 (rank 7) with verbal interpretation of strongly agree and agree respectively. The result shows that to be more effective in teaching Geography lessons, the teachers agreed that the use of instructional resources and materials as well as the use of lecture method alongside with instructional aids are recommended. The manipulation of materials that aids teaching are more effective, engaging and memorable. Indicators 3 obtained an average weighted mean of 3.96 (rank 8) with verbal interpretation of Agree. The respondents agreed that in teaching geography, lectures should be presented thoroughly and understandably. Marmah (2014) stressed that lectures allows presentation of ideas and information in an organized and systematized manner but lecturers have to look out for ways of making the lecture more interesting, allows involvement of the students, and not be for a long time to maintain focus. Indicator 7 and 8 obtained an average weighted of 3.92 (rank 9), 3.76 (rank 14) with verbal interpretation of agree

respectively. Results suggest that the respondents agreed that to enhance the teaching of Geography, active leaning in the classroom should also be emphasized, allowing them to work and learn with others. These strategies will ensure learning by doing, by sharing and by participating. For Allen, et al. (2010), interactions with classmates and with teachers are meaningful and engaging. Indicators 13 and 14 with the average weighted mean of 3.84 (rank 13) and 3.88 (rank 10) with verbal interpretation of agree respectively. These two indicators tells that to improve the teaching of geography, teachers agreed to have plan first and ask questions which allows student to think critically and reflectively. According to Elias (2014) questioning creates deeper understanding.

The overall weighted mean was 3.95 with verbal interpretation of Agree (A). The respondents agreed that the presented indicators are the preferred strategies in presenting and teaching Geography lessons in Social Studies. Utilizing these strategies can overcome the unpopular aspect of Geography and thereby improve the teaching and learning the said discipline.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that the there were unpopular aspects of Geography which were considered as difficulties and challenges in teaching the discipline. These aspects include the contents of the discipline and the instructional resources used. The teachers agreed that the unpopular aspect of teaching Geography as to contents were the voluminous factual information which have to be considered by teachers during planning the lesson and the long Geography lesson duration. The teachers also agreed that teaching Geography demands a regular use of instructional resources and more reference books and materials. The strategies highly considered by the teachers as innovative enough to help address the difficulties and challenges in teaching Geography were the conduct of activities such as interviews, collection of samples and recording of information; the utilization of student centered strategies; and the use of computer aided instruction which can stimulate the students to think, to work cooperatively with others, be good observers and knows how to form concepts and generalizations.

It was suggested that school heads/ administrators prioritize the purchase of more books and reference materials so as to address the needs of the students and teachers to have enough instructional resources exclusively for Geography. Improvisation of instructional devices and materials for Geography have to be made to help address the issue of its insufficiency. Teachers may plan ahead lessons in Geography to cover most especially those broad and long lessons efficiently. Teachers, with the help of the school heads have to work together for the successful utilization of the innovative strategies presented in this study for a quality Geography teaching. Lastly, further research study of a wider scope for validation purpose has to be conducted.

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