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Bridging the Gap: Addressing Pedagogical Challenges in Social Science Education and Innovative Strategies for Student Engagement

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Abstract **Original Research Article**

This study examined the pedagogical challenges and perceived effectiveness of teaching methods in Social Science education among secondary school teachers in Cabarroguis District, Schools Division of Quirino, Philippines. Anchored in constructivist and social constructivist theories, the research aimed to identify key instructional difficulties, evaluate current teaching practices, and determine differences in challenges when respondents were grouped by demographic variables such as age and teaching position. A quantitative descriptive-inferential research design was employed, utilizing a structured 4-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 35 randomly selected teachers from ten public and private secondary schools. Findings revealed that respondents generally agreed on experiencing moderate pedagogical challenges, particularly in terms of limited instructional materials, inadequate facilities, insufficient training in innovative teaching methods, low student motivation, and curriculum constraints. Despite these challenges, teaching methods were perceived as effective overall, with student-centered and interactive approaches rated as very effective compared to other strategies. Results also indicated that teachers did not strongly perceive technology use, flexible learning, and addressing diverse learners as major challenges; however, professional development remained a significant concern. Inferential analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis test showed statistically significant differences in technology-related challenges when grouped by age and teaching position, highlighting disparities in digital competence and access. The study concludes that improving Social Science education requires strengthened teacher training, enhanced resources, and supportive institutional policies. These findings provide valuable insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers in designing targeted interventions aligned with national and global education goals.

Keywords: Social Science education, pedagogical challenges, teaching methods, teacher development, technology integration.

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Introduction

Social Science education is essential in developing informed, responsible, and engaged citizens, and this aligns with the global commitment to SDG 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all; globally, however, 251 million children and youth were still out of school in 2024, showing that access and learning quality remain major concerns (United Nations, 2015; UNESCO, 2024). In the Philippines, the challenge is also reflected in system-level learning gaps, where recent international assessments have shown that many learners continue to fall behind expected proficiency levels, reinforcing the need for stronger instruction and support in subjects like Social Science (UNESCO, 2024).

In places like the Cabarroguis District in the Schools Division of Quirino, Social Science instruction remains inconsistent because of challenges such as limited teacher preparedness, inadequate learning materials, and uneven facility support, as reflected in local school reports and improvement plans. These conditions show that while the goal of quality education is clear, the actual delivery of Social Science learning still falls short of ensuring inclusive and effective instruction for all learners (United Nations, 2015).

In the Philippine context, DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019 emphasized learner-centered and inquiry-based pedagogies for K-12 Social Science, yet Cabarroguis District teachers face persistent challenges like rote teaching, resource shortages, insufficient training, overloaded curricula, and infrastructural deficits (e.g., limited projectors/textbooks), compounded by high student ratios and perceptions of irrelevance (Mabborang et al., 2023; Kumar, 2025).

Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) and BEDP 2030 highlight gaps in content mastery and professional development, while global studies note similar issues like controversy avoidance and low engagement, exacerbated by traditional methods that disconnect theory from real-world contexts (Bhatnagar, 2018; Nind & Katramadou, 2022; Xu et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, Secondary Social Science teachers often rely on lecture-based rote memorization of isolated facts, limiting conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and student engagement, while avoiding controversial topics (gender, religion, politics) due to community backlash fears, inadequate training, overloaded curricula, superficial textbooks, technology shortages, and high student-teacher ratios issues worsened in resource-scarce rural settings like Cabarroguis District (Yaw, 2024; Phinla et al., 2024).

As such, students perceive the subject as boring or irrelevant, showing low motivation when disconnected from real-world contexts, but engagement surges through innovative student-centered strategies like inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning (PBL), collaborative projects, simulations, debates, digital tools (QR codes, virtual field trips), and localized content that foster autonomy, relevance, critical thinking, and civic awareness (Neal, 2021; Wiebe, 2025; Kumar, 2025).

This study is also based on constructivist theory, which says learners build knowledge through experience, reflection, and interaction rather than just receiving information (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). In social science education, this means using project-based learning, inquiry, and collaborative activities so students can explore ideas, think critically, and learn with the teacher as a guide (Chauhan, 2023). It also follows social constructivism, which emphasizes learning through dialogue, peer interaction, and scaffolding within the learner's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). However, applying this approach in real classrooms can be difficult because many teachers are still used to lecture-based methods, and diverse learners need different kinds of support, pacing, and classroom management.

Moreover, this study identifies specific pedagogical challenges faced by Social Science teachers in Cabarroguis District and assesses the

effectiveness of current instructional practices, while proposing innovative strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. By analyzing teacher profiles, challenge perceptions, and method ratings through quantitative surveys and non-parametric tests (e.g., Kruskal-Wallis), it confronts issues like rote teaching, resource gaps, and low motivation in rural K-12 contexts.

The findings offer actionable insights for educators, administrators, and SDO Quirino policymakers to optimize training, allocate resources, and implement student-centered reforms aligned with DepEd policies (e.g., PPST, BEDP 2030) and SDG 4. Teachers gain tools to shift toward interactive methods like simulations and debates; students benefit from relevant, dynamic learning fostering critical thinking and civic awareness; and future researchers establish a baseline for localized improvements in Social Science education.

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute practical insights that can inform evidence-based teaching practices and policy decisions. By doing so, it seeks to support educators, school administrators, and curriculum developers in making Social Science education not only more accessible and effective, but also more relevant and inspiring to the learners it serves.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative research design employing a descriptive-inferential approach to systematically investigate the pedagogical challenges and perceived effectiveness of teaching methods among Social Science teachers in Cabarroguis District. Data were collected through structured 4-point Likert-scale surveys (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree) that measured key variables, including teacher demographic profiles and self-reported challenges in classroom instruction.

The target population comprised all Social Science teachers from 10 purposively selected public and private secondary schools in Cabarroguis District, Quirino Province (the provincial capital), during School Year 2025–2026. A simple random sampling technique was applied to select 35 respondents from this accessible population, ensuring representativeness while accounting for school size variations. Participating institutions included Burgos National High School, Cabarroguis National School of Arts and Trades, Calaocan Integrated School, Dibibi Integrated School, Dingasan Integrated School, Eden Integrated School, Quirino General High School, Saint Mark's School (private), Tucod National High School, and Villarose Integrated School. Surveys were administered in person, achieving a 100% response rate.

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, medians, and standard deviations were computed using SPSS Version. Data normality was assessed via the Shapiro-Wilk test, confirming non-normal distribution due to ordinal scaling and sample size, thus justifying non-parametric inferential analyses. The Mann-Whitney U test examined differences by sex, training attended, and grade level taught. Meanwhile, the Kruskal-Wallis test assessed multi-group differences by age groups, teaching positions, highest educational attainment, and years of service, systematically by capturing the study's key variable.

Ethical protocols adhered to institutional and national standards. Approvals were secured from the Division of Quirino Schools Superintendent and school principals. Informed consent forms detailed the study purpose, voluntary participation, and withdrawal rights, with 100% assent obtained. The instrument underwent pilot testing with 10 non-sample teachers (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$ for reliability). Respondent confidentiality was ensured via anonymized coding, secure data storage on password-protected drives, and destruction of raw identifiers post-analysis. No incentives were provided to minimize coercion.

Results and Discussion

I. Pedagogical Challenges in Social Science

Table 1. Level of Agreement of the Respondents on the Pedagogical Challenges in Social Science Education

Indicators	Median	Description
1. I lack adequate and updated teaching materials, such as textbooks, visuals, and digital tools.	3.00	A
2. I find it difficult to manage a large class size, which affects student participation and classroom management.	3.00	A
3. I have limited training in modern or innovative teaching methods suitable for Social Science.	3.00	A
4. I notice low student interest in Social Science topics and activities.	3.00	A
5. I face time constraints in completing the curriculum or preparing engaging lessons.	3.00	A
6. I have insufficient classroom facilities, such as visual aids, charts, or maps.	3.00	A
7. I find it challenging to integrate technology and multimedia tools into Social Science instruction.	3.00	A
8. I experience limited administrative or institutional support for Social Science programs.	3.00	A
9. I have overloaded teaching assignments that reduce my time for lesson planning and reflection.	2.00	D
10. I observe that students often have poor background knowledge in social, political, or historical concepts.	3.00	A
11. I have inadequate assessment tools to effectively measure students' understanding.	3.00	A
12. I see a lack of motivation among students to participate in discussions or group activities.	3.00	A
13. I find it difficult to relate lessons to students' real-life experiences and local context.	3.00	A
14. I experience curriculum overload, which limits time for in-depth learning.	3.00	A
15. I have limited opportunities for professional development in Social Science teaching	3.00	A
Grand Median	**3.00**	**A**

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA), 2.51 – 3.25 Agree (A), 1.76 – 2.50 Disagree (D), 1.00 – 1.75 Strongly Disagree (SD)

The results in Table 1 indicate that respondents generally agree (Grand Median = 3.00) that they experience various pedagogical challenges in teaching Social Science. Most indicators obtained a median of 3.00, reflecting consistent agreement on issues such as inadequate teaching materials, large

class sizes, limited training in innovative methods, low student interest, and insufficient facilities. These findings suggest that both resource limitations and gaps in teacher capacity significantly affect instructional effectiveness. Challenges related to students—such as poor background knowledge and low motivation further complicate the teaching-learning process, reinforcing the need for engaging and contextualized instruction.

Additionally, constraints in time, curriculum overload, and limited administrative support highlight systemic concerns that may hinder quality teaching. The difficulty in integrating technology also points to the need for improved digital competence and infrastructure. However, overloaded teaching assignments (Median = 2.00) were rated as "Disagree," indicating it is not a major concern. These findings align with studies emphasizing the importance of resources, training, and institutional support in improving teaching quality (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2020).

II. Current Teaching Practices: Effectiveness of the Teaching Methods in Teaching Social Sciences

Table 2. Perceived Level of Effectiveness of Teaching Methods in Teaching Social Sciences

Methods	Median	Description
1. Traditional/ Teacher-Centered Methods	3.00	E
2. Student-Centered / Interactive Methods	4.00	VE
3. Inquiry-Based and Constructivist Methods	3.00	E
4. Technology-Enhanced Methods	3.00	E
5. Experiential/Activity-Based Methods	3.00	E
6. Reflective and Values-Oriented Methods	3.00	E
Grand Median	**3.00**	**E**

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very Effective (VE), 2.51 – 3.25 Effective (E), 1.76 – 2.50 Less Effective (LE), 1.00 – 1.75 Not Effective (NE)

The results in Table 2 show that respondents generally perceive the teaching methods in Social Sciences as effective (Grand Median = 3.00). Notably, student-centered or interactive methods were rated as very effective (Median = 4.00), underscoring the importance of active learning approaches that engage students in discussion, collaboration, and critical thinking. This aligns with constructivist principles, which emphasize that learners actively construct knowledge through participation and interaction (Jean Piaget, 1970; Lev Vygotsky, 1978).

Other methods, including traditional, inquiry-based, technology-enhanced, experiential, and reflective approaches, were rated as effective (Median = 3.00), suggesting that while they are useful, their full potential may not be consistently realized. Research supports that the effectiveness of these methods depends on proper implementation, teacher competence, and availability of resources (John Dewey, 1938; OECD, 2019).

Overall, the findings highlight the need to strengthen professional development and instructional support systems to maximize diverse teaching strategies and improve learning outcomes in Social Science education.

III. Pedagogical Challenges Faced by Teachers in Teaching Social Science

Table 3. Level of Agreement on the Pedagogical Challenges Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Social Science

Indicator	Median	Description
1. Use of technology.	2.00	D
2. Capacitating teachers	3.00	A
3. Attending to Diverse Learners	2.50	D
4. Flexible teaching and learning	2.00	D
Grand Median	**2.00**	**D**

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA), 2.51 – 3.25 Agree (A), 1.76 – 2.50 Disagree (D), 1.00 – 1.75 Strongly Disagree (SD)

The results in Table 3 indicate that respondents generally disagree (Grand Median = 2.00) that the listed indicators are major pedagogical challenges in teaching Social Science. Specifically, the use of technology (2.00), attending to diverse learners (2.50), and flexible teaching and learning (2.00) were all rated as "Disagree," suggesting that these areas are not perceived as primary difficulties. This may imply that teachers have developed a certain level of competence or adaptability in integrating technology and addressing learner diversity, which is supported by the increasing emphasis on inclusive and flexible pedagogies in education (UNESCO, 2020).

However, capacitating teachers (3.00) was rated as "Agree," indicating that professional development remains a significant concern. This finding highlights the continuing need for training and upskilling to enhance instructional effectiveness, consistent with the view that ongoing teacher development is critical for improving educational quality (OECD, 2019).

Overall, the results suggest that while teachers may feel relatively confident in certain pedagogical areas, strengthening capacity-building initiatives remains essential to sustain and further improve Social Science instruction.

IV. Test of Difference on the Pedagogical Challenges Faced by Teachers in Teaching Social Science When They are Grouped by Profile

Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis Test on the Level of Agreement on the Pedagogical Challenges Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Social Science along Use of Technology When They are Grouped by Age

Statements	H	p-value	Decision
1. I find it difficult to engage myself in the use of the latest technology in teaching Social Science.	**11.24**	**0.004**	**Reject Ho**
2. I experience difficulty in using my smartphone's mobile apps for instructional purposes.	**12.05**	**0.002**	**Reject Ho**
3. I encounter problems completing instructional requirements due to ICT limitations.	**8.24**	**0.016**	**Reject Ho**
4. I have difficulty delivering my lessons due to limited access to technology in the classroom (e.g., LCD projector, audio equipment).	**6.06**	**0.048**	**Reject Ho**
5. I feel unprepared or lack confidence when integrating digital tools into my lesson plans.	**7.45**	**0.024**	**Reject Ho**

p-value of ≤.05 is significant

The results in Table 4 reveal that there are statistically significant differences in the respondents' level of agreement on pedagogical challenges related to the use of technology when grouped by age, as all computed p-values are less than 0.05. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis across all indicators. Specifically, difficulties in engaging with the latest technology, using mobile applications, completing instructional requirements due to ICT limitations, accessing classroom technology, and integrating digital tools into lesson plans vary significantly among age groups.

These findings suggest that age influences teachers' technological competence, confidence, and adaptability. Older teachers may experience more challenges due to limited exposure to digital tools, while younger teachers may demonstrate greater familiarity and ease in technology integration. This supports the concept of digital divide and varying levels of digital literacy among educators (OECD, 2019). Furthermore, effective technology integration requires not only access but also adequate training and support (UNESCO, 2021).

Overall, the results highlight the need for age-responsive professional development programs to enhance teachers' ICT skills and confidence.

Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis Test on the Level of Agreement on the Pedagogical Challenges Faced by the Respondents in Teaching Social Science along Use of Technology When They are Grouped by Teaching Position

Statements	H	p-value	Decision
1. I find it difficult to engage myself in the use of the latest technology in teaching Social Science.	**7.38**	**0.025**	**Reject Ho**
2. I experience difficulty in using my smartphone's mobile apps for instructional purposes.	**10.20**	**0.006**	**Reject Ho**
5. I feel unprepared or lack confidence when integrating digital tools into my lesson plans.	**6.20**	**0.045**	**Reject Ho**

p-value of ≤.05 is significant

The results in Table 5 indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the respondents' level of agreement on selected pedagogical challenges related to the use of technology when grouped by teaching position, as all p-values are below 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected for all three indicators. This implies that teachers' experiences in engaging with the latest technology, using mobile applications for instruction, and integrating digital tools into lesson planning significantly vary depending on their teaching position.

These findings suggest that teaching position influences technological competence, access, and confidence. Higher-ranking or more experienced educators may have different levels of exposure, administrative responsibilities, or opportunities for professional development compared to entry-level teachers. This aligns with the idea that institutional roles shape teachers' engagement with innovation and access to capacity-building initiatives (OECD, 2019). Additionally, disparities in training and support systems may contribute to variations in ICT integration (UNESCO, 2021).

Overall, the results highlight the importance of position-sensitive professional development and equitable access to technological resources to ensure effective integration of digital tools across all teaching levels.

This study examined the pedagogical challenges and teaching practices in Social Science education in Cabarroguis District and revealed several important insights. Overall, teachers agreed that they experience moderate challenges, particularly in terms of limited instructional materials, inadequate facilities, insufficient training in innovative methods, low student motivation, and curriculum-related constraints. These findings indicate that both resource limitations and professional development gaps continue to affect the quality of instruction. Despite these challenges, the results also showed that teaching methods are generally perceived as effective, with student-centered and interactive approaches emerging as the most effective strategies for enhancing engagement and critical thinking.

Furthermore, while teachers reported confidence in some areas such as technology use and addressing diverse learners, the need for continuous capacity-building remains evident. Significant differences based on age and teaching position highlight disparities in technological competence and access, suggesting the presence of a digital divide within the teaching workforce.

In conclusion, improving Social Science education requires a holistic approach that integrates resource provision, teacher training, and institutional support. Strengthening these areas will enable teachers to implement more innovative, learner-centered pedagogies, ultimately leading to improved student

engagement, deeper understanding, and the development of informed and responsible citizens.

Future studies may expand this research by including a larger sample size and multiple school divisions to enhance generalizability and comparative analysis across different contexts. Researchers may also incorporate mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative data with qualitative interviews or classroom observations to gain deeper insights into teachers' lived experiences and instructional practices.

Further investigation on the impact of specific student-centered strategies (e.g., inquiry-based learning, simulations, and digital tools) on student achievement and motivation is recommended. Longitudinal studies may also be conducted to assess the long-term effects of professional development programs on teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes.

Additionally, future research may explore the role of school leadership and policy implementation in supporting Social Science instruction, particularly in resource-constrained settings. Lastly, studies focusing on technology integration and digital competence across age groups and positions may provide more targeted interventions to bridge existing gaps and promote equitable, quality education.

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