

Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies) in the Philippine Makabayan Learning Area:

Problems and prospects in articulating social studies as a discipline

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Abstract—In 2002, the Department of Education of the Philippines organized a new basic education curriculum that is aimed Filipinos to be empowered lifelong learners who are functionally literate. This 2002 Basic Education Curriculum featured four key reforms: (1) restructured learning areas (Filipino, English, Science, Mathematics, and Makabayan); (2) stronger integration of competencies and values across learning areas; (3) greater emphasis on the learning process and integrative modes of teaching; and (4) increased time to gain mastery of competencies. This paper discusses the new learning area featured the curriculum called Makabayan, which is an integration of various disciplines such as Araling Panlipunan, Home Economics, Physical Education, Health, Music, and Arts. Makabayan aims to have a learner that has a healthy personal and national identity. As such, the problems of recognizing the aims of MAKABAYAN curriculum are discussed, focusing on the weak conceptualization and articulation of social studies as a discipline under the said curriculum. In the process of studying the MAKABAYAN curriculum, there is a weak conceptualization of social studies due to a loose definition of the learning area and the lack of framework thereof.

Keywords—Makabayan curriculum; BEC; social studies; Philippine curriculum

I. INTRODUCTION

Educational reforms are often undertaken by national agencies to update and adapt to the various social, cultural, political, and technological contexts of the global world. The Philippines is not an exemption to educational reforms such that in 2002, the national government, through the Department of Education (DepEd), undertook a grand reform effort to change the curriculum. This reform effort resulted to the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) and was implemented through DepEd order No. 25 on the school year 2002-2003 (a school year starts on the month of June). The rationale behind the reform was to raise the quality of Filipino graduates by empowering them to become lifelong learners, which can only be achieved by being functionally literate [1]. It is to be noted, however, that the BEC was only implemented from 2002 to 2012 and was replaced by another curriculum starting school year 2012-2013 called the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum.

The BEC featured a decongested curriculum, comparing to its predecessors—the 1983 New Elementary School Curriculum (NESC) and the 1991 New Secondary Education Curriculum (NSEC). To solve the overcrowding in the old curricula, DepEd has restructured BEC into five (5) learning areas: Filipino, English, Science, Mathematics, and Makabayan. By integrating the competencies within and across these learning areas, DepEd is hopeful that it will raise the quality of student learning. As such, this paper explores the integrative method that BEC is offering, focusing on Makabayan, and how Araling Panlipunan (social studies) was integrated and articulated in the said learning area. The first part of the paper will discuss BEC's foundation and features. The second part will focus on Makabayan learning area, discussing its framework and structure, and Araling Panlipunan as a component of the said learning area. The third part, on the other hand, will explicate the articulation and conceptualization of Araling Panlipunan in the whole Makabayan curriculum. The concluding part endeavors to summarize the problems on the articulation of Araling Panlipunan, and the loose integration of the discipline to the whole curriculum.

II. 2002 BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM (BEC)

Documents pertaining to the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum often tell that the basis for such curricular reform was to adapt to the changing world [1]. Moreover, several studies, reports, and consultations with stakeholders were done starting 1995 in order for the Department to design a new curriculum. At long last, the report of the Philippine Commission on Educational Reforms (PCER), created by the virtue of Executive Order No. 46, recommended in its 2000 report that a new and restructured basic education curriculum must be adopted starting 2002 [2].

Central to the philosophy of BEC is a Filipino learner empowered for lifelong learning. Inspired one of the Four Pillars of Education from the Delors Report [3]. Learning to be DepEd envisions its learners to be a person who is *makabayan* (patriotic), *makatao* (mindful of humanity), *makakalikasan* (respectful of nature), and *maka-Diyos* (godly). In order to be an empowered lifelong learner, the Department believes that functional literacy is an essential concept that must be incorporated in the new curriculum.

The BEC document also states that the curriculum has two main sources of knowledge the expert systems of knowledge and the contextualized learners' experience [1]. As such, the BEC was restructured in a way that these two sources will have an interaction. Teachers, on the other hand, are expected to be facilitators of learning in collaboration with fellow teachers. Collaborative teaching and learning is promoted in this curriculum [1].

As a new and restructured curriculum, the BEC mainly features these four characteristics that were not present in its predecessors (NESC and NSEC): (1) restructured learning areas (Filipino, English, Science, Mathematics, and Makabayan); (2) stronger integration of competencies and values across learning areas; (3) greater emphasis on the learning process and integrative modes of teaching; and (4) increased time to gain mastery of competencies [1].

The first feature answers the problem congestion in the old curricula by having five (5) major learning areas. The use of the word learning area is new to the Philippine curriculum development experience to denote that these are not subjects to be taken up only, but to be learned by the student. Also, BEC regards Filipino, English, Science, and Mathematics as basic tool subjects that are essential to functional literacy. Filipino and English promotes mastery in linguistic fluency, while Science and Mathematics develops scientific-numerical competence. As basic tool subjects, DepEd has increased the time for these learning areas to gain mastery of basic competencies [1]. The fifth learning area, which is new in the BEC, is called Makabayan (literally, a person who loves his/her country). DepEd envisions this learning area to be a laboratory of life. It differs from the other learning areas such that it is integrative, experiential, interactive, interdisciplinary, and value-laden. Moreover, Makabayan, as a learning area, cultivates in the learner a healthy personal and national self-concept, which is derived from the name of the learning area itself [1]. Further discussion of this will be on the next part of this paper.

Integration of competencies and values is also a main feature of BEC. Innovative and interdisciplinary modes of instructional delivery are expected to be present in various curriculum documents such as lesson plans and operation manual. Curriculum integration is set forth by BEC such that the five learning areas have links, and skills and knowledge are developed and applied in more than one area of study. This feature is cognizant to Shoemaker's definition of curriculum integration that views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflects the real world, which is interactive [4].

The BEC document also cited the context of the curriculum, which are the following: (1) legal bases (1987 Philippine Constitution, 1982 Education Act, and the 2001 Governance of Basic Education Act); environmental context (Medium Term Philippine Development Plan, globalization and the digital age, and other trends in education); (3) the Department of Education's vision of its learners who are *makabayan*, *makatao*, *makakalikasan*, and *maka-Diyos*; and (4) the various learning needs [1].

The articulation of the curriculum is expressed in the parameters set by the Department of Education. These include the objectives, which are expressed in competencies; content, which is determined by the objectives and is delivered in various ways and media; materials and sources, which can be extracted from the textbooks, the use of ICT, and the community; the teaching and learning process, which is learner-centered; and the evaluation of learning, which should be assessed in variety of measures [1]. These curriculum parameters are present in the various documents such as the manual of operations for each learning area and DepEd orders and memoranda.

In summary, the BEC provided a new direction for Philippine education. Reducing the learning areas into five and integrating its competencies and values is also a revolutionary reform effort that requires well-qualified teachers, change-making research institutions, and flexibility in the teachers and schools, so that adaptability to these changes will be smooth [5]. Moreover, integration in the curriculum is the main idea of BEC to decongest the curriculum and to make learning interactive and meaningful. As such, curriculum parameters of BEC must articulate cross-curriculum sub-objectives, activities, and assessment [6].

III. THE MAKABAYAN LEARNING AREA

A. General Overview and Framework

One of the highlight reforms in BEC is the introduction of a new learning area called Makabayan. This fifth learning area is described in the BEC document as the 'laboratory of life,' which provides learning experiences that are geared towards practical knowledge and life skills, particularly the skills of empathy, vocational efficiency, and problem-solving in daily life. As stated earlier, Makabayan aims to cultivate Filipino learners to have a healthy personal and national self-concept. This aim is realized through the integration of varied disciplines such as Social Studies, Home Economics, Physical Education, Health, Music, and Arts. Further, it is stated in the BEC document that the core competencies of Makabayan would be the core competencies also of the said disciplines under it. Integrated units of learning tasks will be developed without nullifying the integrity of each discipline within Makabayan [1].

Integrative mode of teaching is central to Makabayan so that students will be able to personally process and synthesize a wide range of skills and values (cultural, aesthetic, athletic, vocational, politico-economic, and ethical). Moreover, schools are given the freedom to design and contextualize its implementation, but DepEd accepted that fact that this integration can neither be perfect nor total especially from Grade 4 to Grade 6, and First Year High School to Fourth Year High School [1].

The Makabayan framework works on the premise that (*Pagka*)*Makabayan* (love of country) is the thematic thread that integrates the different disciplines housed under the learning area. *Pagkamakabayan*, which is the basis for the title Makabayan, is defined by DepEd as follows: "Love of country,

which Andres Bonifacio described as *banal na pag-ibig*, serves as the highlight that radiates the rainbow-like diversity of values in this learning area...Makabayan will promote a constructive or healthy patriotism, which is neither hostile nor isolationist toward other nations but appreciative of global interdependence” [1]. Further, the document states that Makabayan can be represented in an acronym called SIKAP—S is for *Sibika* (Civics), *Sining* (Art); I for Information (and Communication Technology); K for *Kultura* (Culture); AP for *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies), *Pagpapahalaga* (Values Education), *Pangkatawan* (Physical Education), *Pangkalusugan* (Health), and *Pantahanan* (Home Economics) at *Pangkabuhayan* (Entrepreneurship).

Each discipline under Makabayan is given its weekly time allotment. From Grades 1 to 3, 300 minutes is allotted; 500 minutes for Grade 4; 600 minutes for Grades 5 and 6; and 780 minutes for 1st Year to 4th Year High School. For Grades 1 to 3 Civics and Culture, with the integration of MSEPP, constitutes the whole learning area. Starting Grade 4 to 4th Year High School, each discipline—Social Studies, EPP/THE, MSEPP, and VE are given separate time allotments.

Grading system for Makabayan is done through averaging of grades in each component. Individual rating for each component are still reflected. There shall be only one (1) grade for Makabayan, which is the basis if the student passed the learning area (Note: BEC 2002 considers that each learning area shall have a grade of at least 75% to be marked as passed), regardless of whether the student has a failing grade in any of the component subjects [7].

Overall, the Makabayan proves to be a new and restructured learning area yet, it still maintains the integrity of the disciplines under it. From its framework and overview, there is much to be done to present the actuality of integration of its disciplines. The framework presented only the aims and/or goals of Makabayan, but not the integration itself. The structure of disciplines under Makabayan are ambiguous, such that it wanted to be integrated but presents itself as a separate discipline by having a separate time allotment. On the other hand, these disciplines are diluted in terms of learners’ performance, such that averaging of ratings for each subject constitutes the whole Makabayan experience. The intended Makabayan curriculum has a grandiose aim and plan but lacks the grounding and framework for implementation.

B. Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies) in Makabayan

One of the disciplines under the Makabayan learning area is Social Studies. The rationale for subsuming Social Studies under this learning area, rather than being separate like Science or English, is the aim of Makabayan to have learners who can demonstrate deeper appreciation of Filipino culture and patriotism [7]. With Social Studies as an integrated study of social sciences and humanities drawing from various disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology [8], DepEd deemed the discipline befitting to be included in Makabayan.

At the Elementary level, the focus of social studies is Civics and Culture (*Sibika* at *Kultura*), and Geography,

History, and Civics (*HeKaSi- Heograpiya, Kasaysayan, at Sibika*). Social Studies or *Araling Panlipunan* is not used as a term rather, acronyms were utilized to denote the focus of the study. Details of the elementary social studies curriculum under BEC 2002 can be found in the Philippine Elementary Learning Competencies (PELC). According to PELC [9], the goal of social studies in the elementary level is as follows:

“Nagpapakita ng pagmamahal sa bayan at pagmamalaki sa mga pambansang pagkakakilanlan, at mga karapatan at tungkuling dapat gampanan; may positibong saloobin at pagpapahalagang nakatutulong sa pag-aangkop sa nagbabagong panahon; may kakayahan sa pangangasiwa sa kapaligiran, kasanayan sa masusi at mapanuring pag-iisip at may global na pananaw upang makaagapay sa mga pagbabago sa daigdig” [9].

This lofty goal of elementary social studies is the guide for crafting various competencies and content topics. For Grades 1 to 3, the study of civics and culture focuses on three (3) major themes: (1) *Pambansang Pagkakakilanlan* (National Identity); (2) *Pambansang Pagkakaisa* (National Unity); and (3) *Pambansang Katapatan* (National Integrity). Social Studies competencies are anchored in these themes to guide the teacher on the content to be taught.

Meanwhile, Social Studies in Grades 4, 5 and 6 are focused on the contents of Philippine Geography, History, and Civics, respectively. Physical and cultural geography are discussed in Grade 4 Social Studies; Philippine History precolonial up to contemporary is discussed in Grade 5; and Civics, particularly the Philippine government system, rights and duties of a citizen, are discussed in Social Studies in Grade 6 [9]. The discipline-centered social studies are the bases for crafting competencies in the intermediate level of elementary schooling. As such, competencies are actually focused on the content rather than the promise of BEC to have an integrative approach of Makabayan in terms of its competencies.

In the case of Social Studies in the secondary level, a handbook of operation for Makabayan was provided that contains the curriculum parameters of the said learning area. Surprisingly, Makabayan is presented not as a holistic learning area, but each discipline under it were separately discussed. This kind of presentation in the curriculum document makes it easy to distinguish Social Studies. According to the handbook [10], the main goal of Social Studies in the secondary level is as follows:

“Pagkatapos ng apat na taon, ang mag-aaral ay inaasahang may sapat na kaalaman, kasanayan at pananagutan upang aktibong makalahok bilang isang mamamayan ng isang malaya, maunlad at mapayapang bansa at daigdig” [10].

This goal is in contrast to the lofty goals of social studies in the elementary level. Social Studies in the secondary level aims the student to gain enough knowledge and competency to actively participate in the nation and world. Actualization of this goal can be found in the scope, content and competencies of secondary Social Studies. Unlike the discipline-centered Social Studies in elementary, the secondary level presents

Social Studies as an expanding horizon, integrating geography, history, economics and other social sciences into one horizon. As such, Social Studies in the secondary level is presented in this manner: (1) 1st year – Philippine History and Government (with Geography); 2nd Year – Asian Studies; 3rd year – World History (with Geography and contemporary issues); and 4th year – Economics. Competencies are aligned with the scope and content of each Social Studies Course. It is to be noted, however, that these competencies are used in Social Studies alone and are not integrated with other Makabayan disciplines such as MSEPP and THE.

Under the Makabayan learning area, Social Studies in general is given its own weekly time allotment. Grades 1 to 3 Social Studies is given 300 minutes/week; 200 minutes/week for Grades 4 to 6; and 240 minutes/week in the secondary level.

Treating it as a separate subject, which is, apart from other subjects under Makabayan, Social Studies in elementary and secondary level has its own assessment and rating. In the elementary level, 40% of the rating is quarterly exam, 25% for quizzes, 20% for recitation/ interactions, 5% for home works, and 10% for themes/experiments/projects [11]. Weighted criteria for rating secondary level Social Studies are as follows: Quarterly Exam – 25%, Quizzes – 10%, Class Participation – 30% Project/ Outputs- 20%, and Home works – 15% [12]. At the end of each quarter the final rating in Social Studies will be included in the weighted averaging to get the “integrated” Makabayan—27% is from Social Studies; THE and MSEPP is 32.5%, and 8% from VE (DepEd 2003, DO 37).

In totality, the restructuring of Social Studies or Araling Panlipunan under the Makabayan learning area was only in the BEC document. Curriculum documents such as the PELC and the handbook of operations show that it is still a separate subject, just like THE, MSEPP, and VE, having its own time allotment and grading system. Moreover, a clear integration of Social Studies in the whole Makabayan integration is lacking such that competencies remain in the discipline. A more in-depth analysis and explanation on this issue will be discussed in the next part.

IV. ARTICULATING ARLING PANLIPUNAN IN THE MAKABAYAN LEARNING AREA

As stated earlier in the discussion, this paper argues that there is a weak conceptualization and articulation of Social Studies or Araling Panlipunan in the new Makabayan learning area. Its aim for learners having a healthy personal and national identity can be mostly attributed to the goals of Social Studies yet, the discipline is diluted in the reforms of the new curriculum. The Makabayan learning area lauds itself for introducing curriculum integration such that various disciplines that constitutes it are learned in an integrated way. However, curriculum parameters set by the Department of Education lacks the proper implementation guidelines, framework, etc. In effect, Social Studies concepts and content were expected to be integrated with other disciplines but due to the lack of conceptualization of curriculum integration, it was merely a convoluted social science disciplines with no common thread. Thus, this weak conceptualization and articulation of

Social Studies stems from the fact that: (1) There is no proper framework for the Makabayan learning area and Social Studies itself; and (2) Key reform theme of integration is diluted [13].

A. *The Absence of a Proper Framework*

One of the recurring problems in Philippine curricular reform is the absence of a proper and contextualized framework. Bago criticized this practice of curricular reform as:

“...piecemeal (pira-piraso) where pieces are deleted, replaced by another, or moved here and there resulting in a mere patchwork (tagpi-tagpi). Again, this is due to the lack of focus (sabog) which inhibits the production of a clear picture of the structure of the whole (malabo). This piecemeal approach is apparent in many curriculum revision projects where subjects are added or subtracted based on either “gut feel” (lakas ng kutob), hunches (haka-haka) or patterned after an existing model (gaya-gaya), whether foreign or local” [14].

In the case of Makabayan curriculum, this piecemeal approach is evident on how the framework of the learning was crafted and resulted to a mere description of goals of each subject area. In fairness to the 2002 BEC, it was a result of a 16-year study encompassing three (3) department secretaries and an executive commission report that ran for two (2) years. Yet, it does not give justice to the conceptualization of the Makabayan learning area. Furthermore, the lack of a proper framework to discuss the aim of having a healthy personal and national identity resulted to the absence of a framework for Social Studies.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Social Studies is treated as social science disciplines integrated into one course of study. What lacks in the Social Studies of BEC 2002 is the proper framework for the teaching and learning process, and how each goal in elementary and secondary level can be achieved. As the Social Studies course was subsumed into a bigger learning area called Makabayan, the discipline was stunted (*nabansot*) such that it bears only a little importance to the overall educational experience compared to English, Math, Science, and Filipino. This stunted experience is evidenced by integrating the already integrated social studies to other disciplines under the Makabayan learning area. Rating for Social Studies does not stand alone but constitutes 27% of the total Makabayan grade. By using this method of rating, how do we measure or verify what we are trying to achieve? Who is accountable, for what and to whom? [15].

Understanding the incorporation of a theory, framework, paradigm or model in a curriculum can lead to a better understanding of the systems and processes involved to establish worthwhile practices in the field. The Makabayan curriculum did not emerge as something perfect, regulated, or predictable. It is a result of various insights, reports, and judgments. Nonetheless, it should still incorporate appropriate theory or framework to identify the relationships within the learning area and how it answers basic curriculum questions like, “What are our aims and goals? How do we translate them

into objectives? What subject matter or content is most worthwhile? What are the best forms of content? How do we organize it?” [15]. By answering the fundamental curriculum questions, the Makabayan learning area could have crafted a clearer framework that would help establish basis for theoretical and practical discussions and help resolve problems and issues in the curriculum [15].

B. Dilution of the Key Reform Theme of Integration

As earlier stated, Makabayan was envisioned to be the “laboratory of life” integrating various disciplines such as Social Studies, Values Education, Music, Arts, Physical and Health Education, and Home Economics into one learning area. But this integration was not materialized in the implementation of BEC 2002, leaving an apparent degree of separation of disciplines under Makabayan. Bernardo and Mendoza, in their article on Makabayan in the Philippine Basic Education Curriculum, described this plan of action of maintaining a degree of separation among subjects:

“To alleviate the concerns of the teachers of the different subject subsumed under Makabayan, the different subjects were simply maintained but these were now clustered under the superordinate learning area of Makabayan. Makabayan became a mere “heading” for the old subject areas” [13].

With Makabayan being a mere heading for old subject areas are evidenced by assigning weekly time allotments and separate grading criteria for each subject area. As discussed earlier, in the case of Social Studies, it maintains a separate teaching and learning time from Home Economics, MSEPP, and Values Education. Moreover, it has different criterion for student assessment and evaluation. Documents such as the Philippine Elementary Learning Competencies (PELC) and Philippine Secondary School Learning Competencies (PSSLC) presented the Makabayan competencies under the different subject areas. But to give due credit to the “integrated” Makabayan learning area, a student’s grade is computed by a weighted averaging scheme. Thus, each student will only have one (1) grade in Makabayan, coming from the grades of different subjects under the learning area. In reality, only the ratings or grades of the identified five (5) learning areas of BEC 2002 are considered as the evaluation of students’ mastery of competencies.

This scheme of providing a weekly time allotment and computation of grades clearly shows that there is no actual structure, process of framework to articulate the integration of competencies envisioned in the Makabayan learning area. Moreover, this lack of framework for integration resulted in a dilution of the concept of curriculum integration thus, taking away the integrity of Social Studies as a discipline.

The lack of framework for Makabayan and Social Studies under the BEC 2002 resulted in a dilution of the key reform theme of integration. As such, Social Studies, as well as the other subjects, were jeopardized in the process. With having less contact time, grades being averaged to be clustered into one superordinate, it seems that Social Studies, the main bearer

of instilling national identity became irrelevant in this curriculum.

V. CONCLUSION

With all the predicaments and discussion regarding the BEC 2002, Makabayan learning area, and Social Studies under this scheme, this paper concludes that the articulation of Social Studies is weak. There are two supporting explanations for this claim. First, the curriculum integration under the Makabayan scheme made a loose, or confused even, definition of Social Studies. Competencies presented in the PELC and PSSLC were too fragmented, disconnected, meaningless jigsaw puzzle of discipline-based courses and lacks connection to its goals. It can be inferred that this integrated Social Studies is a product of a prevailing hype during that time where NCSS in 1994 urged high levels of curriculum integration, stating that “social studies programs reflect the changing nature of knowledge, fostering entirely new and highly integrated approaches to resolving issues of significance to humanity” [16]. Otherwise, curriculum planners must have taken into consideration that disciplines are powerful tools since they are essential bodies of knowledge that provide the tools, vocabulary, and rigor required for participation in modern life [16]. Social Studies must have cleared its definition first before integrating it to Makabayan.

Secondly, this loose and confused definition is a result of a lack of framework for the discipline of Social Studies, and its integration to Makabayan learning area. Curriculum parameters have been set by the Department of Education, but these parameters never showed any framework for integration in Makabayan. With integration as a solution for giving more time for all subjects (this is evidenced by an increase in weekly time allotment compared to the predecessors of BEC 2002, the result would be described by Schug [16] as “important areas of the curriculum are simply left out or underrepresented in the school day... Curriculum integration may result in a narrowing of the curriculum and fewer opportunities for learning, rather than more.” However, integration has promising results but the lack of framework thereof resulted into the demise of the learning area and the disciplines under it.

The Makabayan learning area lasted for ten years before the new curriculum, the Kto12 Basic Education Curriculum, was implemented. Makabayan was abolished as a learning area and the disciplines under it regain its own identity. There was no official evaluation of the BEC 2002, more so with the curriculum integration sought in the Makabayan learning area. As such, with curriculum integration being a “thing” in the curriculum development, Shug’s recommendation is a useful tool: (1) Teach and assess academic content; (2) Be sure that integration emerges from within the curriculum; (3) Make meaningful connections and avoid triviality; (4) Use projects when educationally sound; and (5) Study, prepare, inquire, and plan. With these recommendations, articulation of Social Studies under an integrated curriculum can be implemented with minimal issues and/or problems.

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