

Teachers' Contextualization Practices in Social Studies Instruction in Higher Education Institutions: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the contextualization practices utilized by Social Studies Educators at higher education institutions in the Philippines. While there is an extensive enactment of contextualization practices in primary and secondary education, their practical application in higher education institutions remains unclear due to the lack of sufficient guidelines and operational frameworks. This gap highlights the need to investigate the perception, strategies, benefits, and challenges associated with contextualization. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were acquired from 15 Social Studies Educators affiliated with State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Bulacan, Philippines. The thematic analysis revealed that educators consistently perceive contextualization as an educational mechanism that synergizes academic content with students lived realities and cultural backgrounds. The identified strategies encompass inquiry-based methodologies, community-responsive activities, field-based initiatives, and engagement techniques. The findings suggest that contextualization can enhance student participation, cognitive attributes, and cultural awareness among learners. Despite its transformative qualities, contextualization faces challenges encompassing diverse learners' backgrounds, insufficient capability programs, and inadequate institutional support. To mitigate the identified adversities, the study recommends strategic educational measures, consisting of adequate contextualization seminars and workshops, the creation of guidelines and contextualized instructional materials through institutional support, and partnership with the community for efficient resource acquisition. The findings advocate holistic development and sustainable enactment of contextualization in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Contextualization, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Phenomenological Approach, Social Studies, Thematic Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are tasked with facilitating learning in the Philippine Educational Landscape, and it is imperative to foster academic competence by making the subject matter relevant and meaningful for learners. As a result of this shift in the educational landscape, teachers need to adopt learning practices that enable them to deliver the subjects more effectively. This led to the emergence of several teaching pedagogies, and one of the most notable is the concept of contextualization. Berns and Erickson (2001) suggest that Contextualization/Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is a designed teaching practice where teachers make the subject matter relevant to students by tailoring educational content to their lived experiences, local context, and cultural norms. Bridging the educational content to the local knowledge of the students enables them to easily grasp abstract concepts and reframe these ideas in relatable real-world situations. The explicit descriptions of contextualization as a critical educational practice in the Department of Education (DepEd) framework are further supported by Republic Act No. 10533, which created the K–12 program in 2012 and mandates the teachers to localize and contextualize their instruction. Additionally, CHED CMO No. 74, s. 2017 Section 6 outlines that Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) are to "Articulate the rootedness of education in philosophical, sociocultural, historical, psychological, and political contexts " in accordance with K-12 curriculum standards that prioritize a learner-centered approach and culture-sensitive pedagogies. While not defining contextualization specifically, it requires Social Studies teachers to exhibit community engagement, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to deliver educational content in a contextually relevant

manner. Social Studies Instruction is a key part of changing how students perceive education. The essential application of contextualization in higher education institutions remains uncertain due to the lack of salient policies and guidelines that support it, despite its widespread implementation in primary and secondary education.

The study by Saguin et al. (2020) showed that Contextualized Differentiated Instruction (CDI) has a significant implication in the engagement and active participation of learners in the Grade 10 Contemporary Issues Subject. The findings suggest that the formulation of the Instructional and Learning model helps students increase their proficiency in the subject matter, thus supporting the aim of the curriculum to meet the expected student outcomes. Colminar & Padullo (2023) suggest that through contextualized lessons and the integration of local history, educational content extends beyond the mere acquisition of historical facts, stimulating learners' interest in engaging with the lessons. Empirical evidence and studies offer comprehensive insights about the positive implications of contextualization; however, the application of this approach remains inconsistent in classroom settings. The lack of adequate programs to support teachers' development becomes a significant barrier to implementing contextual pedagogies. The lack of proper training and specific teaching guidelines leads to a poor understanding of academic documents supporting contextualized instruction programs (Calo, 2025). Arellano (2024) asserts that adequate contextualization lies in the credibility of resources and their relevance to the lessons; however, time constraints can also be a significant obstacle to the acquisition of these academic materials. The findings by Abad (2022) support this concern, emphasizing the difficulty of integrating the contextualization approach within the usual teaching time frame, as this method requires meticulous preparation and proper planning.

Asanza (2025) underscores the unsustainable aspect of contextual teaching and learning, highlighting that it consumes teachers' personal time due to administrative tasks. This results in poor execution and inconsistent implementation of the approach, especially in public schools. Although contextualized teaching is a valuable method, teachers struggle to integrate this pedagogy due to the lack of training programs for educators to be fully prepared to deliver lessons. This gap underscores the crucial role of teachers' resourcefulness and flexibility in adapting to learners' diverse local contexts (Gutierrez & Pascual, 2022). To mitigate these challenges, teachers must possess comprehensive grasps of contextualization practices, which can be fostered through conducting teacher development program in educational institutions (Asanza, 2025). Additionally, Sambayon et al. (2023), further emphasized the importance of localized instructional materials which enable students to construct personal interpretations and applications that are responsive to their local contexts and areas of interest. The investigation of contextualization practices in higher education institutions remains underexplored. This is evident in majority of studies that primarily focus on its implications in elementary and secondary education. This gap suggests that contextualization practices in higher education require systematic investigation to identify how Social Studies Instructors perceive, conceptualize, and apply this pedagogy in the teaching-learning process. The lack of research investigation in this context leaves a substantial gap in exploring its innovative potential at the tertiary level. Addressing this underexplored area is essential not only for improving instructional practice but also developing relevant policy frameworks, and alignment of teacher development programs that promotes sustainable implementation of contextualization in higher education institutions.

Objectives

The study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of contextualization practices in higher education institutions, specifically in State Universities and Colleges in Bulacan.

To explore the research problem, the following objectives will be sought:

1. How do Social Studies teachers perceive contextualization as a classroom pedagogy?
2. What specific strategies do Social Studies teachers employ to integrate Contextualization Practices in State Universities and Colleges in Bulacan?
3. What are the perceived impacts of integrating contextualization into Social Studies instruction?

4. What challenges do Social Studies teachers experience when implementing contextualization practices in their lessons?
5. What potential strategic educational measures could be introduced to strengthen contextualization in Social Studies Instruction?

METHODS

The study utilized a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to examine the integration of contextualization practices in Social Studies instruction in higher education institutions. This design enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding contextualized pedagogies in classroom settings (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The study utilized purposive sampling to ensure that the selected participants were relevant to the research objectives. According to Young et al. (2020), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method commonly used in qualitative research where participants are intentionally selected based on specific characteristics related to the study.

The study's sampling population consisted of 15 Social Studies educators from State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), including 8 participants from Bulacan State University and 7 from Bulacan Agricultural State College. All key informants were licensed professional teachers with master's degrees in Social Studies education and specialized in Social Science-related subjects such as The Life and Work of Rizal, Gender and Society, and The Contemporary World. They also held Bachelor's degrees in Secondary Education majoring in Social Studies and had 5–25 years of teaching experience. Their diverse academic backgrounds and lived experiences provided valuable insights relevant to the study, and participation in the research was entirely voluntary.

The study utilized validated semi-structured interviews to gather detailed narratives and lived experiences from the informants. According to DeJonckheere & Vaughn (2019), semi-structured interviews provide a balance between consistency and flexibility, allowing researchers to gain deeper insights into participants' ideas, emotions, and experiences. The interview guide consisted of validated open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives, focusing on educators' perceptions of contextualization, instructional strategies, student participation, cultural awareness, and the challenges encountered in implementing contextualized teaching.

The study will use thematic analysis of transcribed interview data to identify recurring themes, concepts, and patterns related to contextualization in Social Studies instruction (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Deductive coding will be applied to organize and analyze data, enhancing credibility through the comparison and synthesis of participants' responses and lived experiences. This approach enables deeper interpretation of teachers' perspectives and classroom practices rather than merely summarizing statements, allowing the identification of socially constructed meanings of contextualization in real teaching contexts.

The interview process will be conducted either face-to-face or via video call, depending on the informants' preference and availability. With prior consent, all sessions will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy. The interviewer will first explain the ethical considerations of the study before administering the interview questions, while an assisting researcher will take notes during the process. All recordings will be transcribed verbatim to support detailed analysis. To ensure confidentiality, transcripts will be anonymized by assigning codes to each participant, removing any identifying information throughout the data validation process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The key informants were asked to provide their definition of contextualization as classroom pedagogy in Social Studies Instruction. The thematic analysis presents two emerging themes: Grounding in Students' Realities and Contextual Relevance

Table 1: Identified Themes on Perceived Definition of Contextualization as a Classroom Pedagogy

Rank	Themes
1	Integration of Learner's Lived Context
2	Community-Based Learning

Grounding in Students' Realities

Educators consistently define contextualization in the context of Social Studies Instruction as the integration of students lived realities into the learning content. The teachers perceive contextualization as a challenge to make lessons relevant to learners lived experiences and backgrounds. The instructors interviewed highlight that contextualization is not an abstract pedagogy, suggesting that it is a way of making the topics more engaging and meaningful for learners by associating the content with their prior knowledge. TR1, TR3, and TR6 collectively believe that contextualization involves utilizing relevant connections to bridge the concepts and ideas from the curriculum, transforming them into pieces of information that resonate with the student's own experiences. This includes providing relevant and aligned examples that students can relate to. This highlights the capability of teachers to adapt to the learner's contextual knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding and making the subject matter grounded in the students' local narratives. The qualitative data reflect a student-centered pedagogy, highlighting the importance of contextual relevance rather than mere rote memorization

TR1: "Contextualization in social studies means we are relating the lesson to the lived experiences, culture, and local realities of our students"

TR3: "This means how our studies are based on the context of the real situation of the students"

TR6: "Contextualization means connecting the lesson to the real-life experiences and environment of the students"

The findings emphasize the necessity of transforming educational content into a process where students can easily synthesize information drawn from their lived experiences. The results highlight the importance of relating the lessons to the community context, particularly in terms of cultural practices and the immediate environment. This process will help students comprehend complex social studies concepts, which will serve as entry points for academic discourse and learning. This aligns with the findings of Asanza (2025), which emphasize that contextualization is anchored to the principles of Constructivism, where Teachers' primary task is to build knowledge through utilizing "Local Connection" with the students' background and local setting. He also argues that through contextualization practices, such as community projects and local resources, teachers can inculcate a sense of national identity and foster pride in their local heritage. Similarly, Prastuti et al. (2020) emphasize that localizing social science ideas and concepts is pertinent to contextualization. They argue that contextualization allows teachers to enhance student engagement through community-responsive practices that create more opportunities for the teaching-learning process to develop through scaffolding (Dohinog et al. 2025). Grounding academic content within students' lived environments is not just a supplementary pedagogy, but an integral part of achieving learning goals.

Community-Based Learning

The interplay between concepts and students' context generates meaning across the social studies discipline. This process bridges the gaps between academic content and pedagogy that stimulates the learner's interest in the subject matter. Another emerging theme across the qualitative data is the concept of contextual relevance. Most of the key participants collectively agreed that contextualization can be defined as the process of creating meaning by correlating scholarly concepts, facilitating learners to realize that the subject is significant to their daily lives. By simplifying and providing examples tailored to the learner's background, the students can build their knowledge around this example and develop practical applications of theoretical ideas. This theme highlights the significance of local context awareness, from which teachers can draw their relevant examples of the educational content. Contextualization entails teachers' ability to bring local realities into the classroom,

creating a space where students can thrive by engaging their individualized thought processes to generate meaningful connections and insights. Through this contextualization process, students are enabled to construct their knowledge anchored to their socio-cultural context.

TR11: "So, what I do is I try to connect to the lives, to the local community of the students, to the lessons that I teach to them. "

TR12: "You will prove that this is what they need to study because it's part of their subject or it's part of their course, but also, it's part of their life, to which they can create their own insights"

TR14: "You relate to them so that they can understand the lessons better. You don't use generalized examples to our students."

TR15: "It's making sure that students can relate to the information where they can theorize based of what you facilitate to them, I think that is contextualization"

TR12 argues that contextualization extends beyond cognitive comprehension, as it also entails the development of affective values, such as an appreciation for the subject matter. Additionally, TR14 cited that they perceived contextualization as a way of providing community-based and specified examples, which helps learners facilitate their own knowledge construction. These results are consistent with the study by Asanza (2025), which determines that supporting Social Studies concepts with community-based and culturally relevant examples can affect learners' appreciation of topics and establish interest in local narratives. Asanza (2025) also supports the notion that contextualization is pertinent to student-centered pedagogies, which enhance knowledge construction and affective engagement among students. Furthermore, Sambayon et al. (2023) assert that learners are more empowered to draw their interpretation when reading exercises are integrated with local contexts and areas of interest. This reaffirms the role of contextualization as an integral pedagogical mechanism that supports students' learning and enables the construction of meaningful knowledge.

Specific strategies of Social Studies teachers for Contextualization practices

In the contemporary educational landscape, contextualization has become imperative for Social Studies teachers to make the teaching-learning process more relevant, engaging, and effective. The qualitative data reveals four consistent themes regarding the strategies of Social Studies Teachers to incorporate contextualization into the classroom: Inquiry-based Strategies, Community-responsive Strategies, Field-Based Strategies, and Engagement Strategies.

Table 2: Identified Themes on Specific strategies of Social Studies teachers for Contextualization practices

Rank	Themes
1	Inquiry-based Strategies
2	Community-responsive Strategies
3	Field-Based Strategies
4	Engagement Strategies

Among all the recurring themes, the most prevalent is the inquiry-based strategy, which emphasizes the "art of questioning" – a method where teachers probe questions related to what students already know to reinforce the interpretation of new concepts. According to the interviewed Professors, inquiry-based strategies are convenient and commonly used when it comes to contextualization, as they can be utilized to investigate key topics that will resonate with students' lived experiences. According to them, Teachers are utilizing localized events to present open-ended prompts and integrate national issues and controversies that will not only promote critical thinking but also pave the way for fostering civic awareness.

TR1: *“What I do as an instructor is an inquiry-based approach where I just ask questions to my students. So, I always ask, what is the relevance of the experiences of Dr. Rizal during the 19th century to our current generation?”*

TR2: *“I will ask them what is the connection of that news to their lives. For example, some students reported about the new Catholic priest.”*

TR6: *“Another strategy is inquiry-based learning. I often ask guiding questions like, “What issues do you see in your barangay that connect to what we’re learning today?”*

These findings align with findings of Saro et al. (2024), who argue that enabling students to investigate culturally and locally relevant topics promotes deeper engagement in inquiry-driven learning. Similarly, Colminar & Padullo (2023) contend that teachers commonly rely on integrative techniques, including storytelling and local narratives. They emphasize the importance of posing critical questions for students to navigate their own communities, appreciate historical significance, and establish insights from these related experiences. Social Studies teachers who ground their inquiry strategies in local narratives and relevant social issues transform their students from spoon-fed learners to active contributors of community knowledge. This supports the function of contextualization as an engaging teaching strategy that connects curriculum material to the sociocultural realities of Filipino students.

Community-responsive strategies

Correlating educational content with local narratives has long been a cornerstone of contextualization in Social Studies instruction. The culture, stories, and local realities have a significant impact on students' daily lives. By using these contextualization strategies, educators can draw students in and increase their level of engagement, which creates opportunities for the teaching-learning process to proceed toward greater relevance and meaningful comprehension. The responses gathered from TR11, TR13 and TR15 correspond to an overarching theme of community-responsive strategies.

TR11: *“We are able to give more attention to the life of Dr. Jose Rizal because we are able to connect it to the experiences of students in certain communities”*

TR13: *“What I use to contextualize their lessons is related somehow to their course”*

TR15: *“And of course, festivals and traditions are also useful. If the lesson is about culture, I let students compare the Singkaban Festival in Bulacan with other local events.”*

According to key informants, community-responsive strategies involve integrating familiar cultural references, community experiences, and local events into lesson delivery. Furthermore, TR11 emphasizes the importance of selecting culturally aligned examples that showcase historical figures in a manner significantly relevant to the students' environments. When selecting contextual narratives, TR3 reinforces the significance of students' academic paths and individual interests. Additionally, TR6 highlights the importance of incorporating community celebrations and customs that can serve as entry points for expanding societal horizons. This is consistent with Arellano (2024) findings, claiming that these techniques not only increase the relatability of lessons but also cultivate a stronger sense of identity and relevance, which stimulates students toward active engagement in the systematic educational process.

Field-based and Simulated Strategies

Incorporating an experiential learning approach provides students with the opportunity to expand their ideas rather than merely memorizing dates, names, and events. According to the interviewed educators, Contextualization in Social Studies can be practiced through a Field-based approach. Allowing learners to be immersed in cultural landmarks and historical sites relevant to their academic studies. This strategy can foster the learner's personal reflection and critical thinking, leading to a deeper appreciation of community institutions. This firsthand experience highlights the potential of learners to engage with society and acquire knowledge through observation, thereby contributing to knowledge retention.

TR7: *"With contextualization, you can do field trips, you can go to that place, you can do simple acts of research, or you can do simple role-play."*

TR8: *"I organized a local tour as part of a proposal aligned with the subject The Contemporary World"*

TR9: *"The goal was for the students to observe the proceedings live, so they could see firsthand how local legislation works"*

TR10: *"One strategy I use is storytelling with local examples"*

TR7 and TR10 assert that, aside from experiential approaches, simulated activities such as role-play and storytelling also serve as a practical pedagogy in contextualization practices in Social Studies instruction. Fostering a deeper understanding of social studies concepts is not just limited to direct experiences; instructors can utilize pedagogies that include narrating local experiences and reenacting societal events. This simulated activity helps students move beyond conceptual notions and engage with academic content in a motivated manner. This aligns with the results presented by Tsergas et al. (2021), which emphasize role-playing as a useful pedagogical tool for simplifying complex social concerns in the classroom, thereby empowering learners' communication and critical reflection. The statement from TR8 and TR9 resonates with the findings of Abdullah et al. (2024), which corroborates that the experiential approach as a contextualization pedagogy helps the social studies instruction to bridge lapses from traditional activities to improve students' comprehension of complex social realities and provide educational efficacy.

Engagement Strategies

This theme emphasizes the use of humor-induced strategies to capture students' interest in the lesson. It can be noted from the shared insights of TR3 and TR4 that utilizing jokes and humor goes beyond being a form of class entertainment. However, it emerges as a prevalent pedagogical tool to relate the lessons to the students. This facilitates a relaxed learning environment, encouraging the students to actively participate and form a deeper emotional connection to the social studies concepts.

TR3: *"And by adding a few jokes, we will make our class more contextualized so that the students will be more engaged."*

TR4: *"Students can't avoid looking at their mobile phones. uhm it's part of our current reality. Sometimes, I draw context from social media, using their humor and jokes to capture their interest and make my discussions more engaging."*

These pedagogical strategies demonstrate a shift toward learner-centered education, emphasizing responsiveness, relatability, and relevance. TR4 takes it one step further by utilizing social media context as a tool to gain a deeper understanding of students' interests, thereby creating inclusive and culturally sensitive classrooms. The shared insights also highlight the need to gather information about students' interests and backgrounds to contextualize relevant lessons. Bakar & Kumar (2023) also argue that utilizing relevant references and student vernacular can make the learning content more relatable and engaging, which aligns with the accumulated qualitative data. Interactive and representative learning environments are what educators sought to establish by integrating components of their students' cultural paradigms, whether through social media memes, popular topics, or local narratives. This observation is supported by Bakar & Kumar (2023), who note that rather than reducing academic rigor, these techniques enhance it by making factual concepts more relatable and apparent to students.

Effects of Contextualization

The implications of contextualization to the learners were also elicited, as it is significant in identifying the resourcefulness of contextualization in higher education institutions. By utilizing the insights of social studies educators, qualitative data resulted in the emergence of three themes: specifically, Student Engagement, Student Comprehension, and Cultural awareness.

Table 3: Identified Themes on impacts of Contextualization in Social Studies Instruction

Rank	Themes
1	Student Engagement
2	Student Comprehension
3	Cultural awareness

Student Engagement

The interviewed social studies teachers collectively agreed on the necessity of employing contextualization to ensure active student participation. Educators mentioned that when they utilize contextualization, the lessons become easier to deliver as the students draw more relevance to the Social Studies Concepts. Contextualization and localization support the learner's ability to simplify complex ideas across the social studies discipline, specifically in history and the contemporary world. This includes the ability of students to synthesize their learning and present it confidently to the classroom through collaborative activities. The teachers also observe relatively higher participation in classroom oral recitation.

TR3: "It engages the students actively—because they already have a sense of what to ask and how to respond. This familiarity makes the experience more fulfilling, as they feel confident and validated in their participation"

TR4: "... their attitude shifted—suddenly they were saying, "Ah, ma'am, so this is how it works." We saw them participate more actively during lessons, responding to inputs that they hadn't reacted to in our initial discussions."

TR12: "Engagement really improves because students realize that the lesson is about them. For example, when we were studying political structures, some students shared their experiences volunteering in local campaigns."

TR3, TR4, and TR12 exemplify that contextualization in the Social Studies Discipline contributes to shaping the students' self-esteem and stimulating their curiosity. The benefits of contextualization in Student engagement can be achieved through establishing meaningful connections with the subject matter. TR4 takes this further, as students were able to come up with personal realizations through asking more relevant questions. This instance inherently suggests that students become more curious to learn about the academic content by means of scholarly prompting. Additionally, TR3 and TR12 emphasize that student engagement through contextualization can evolve into affective validation and student-initiated actions toward civic responsiveness. According to Saguin et al. (2020), two significant components — readiness of the learners and teachers' knowledge — are evident in contextualized instruction, as it increases student motivation and facilitates reflective thinking, particularly in community vernaculars. Similarly, Gutierrez & Pascual (2022) emphasize that localized instruction anchored in local realities can foster improved interaction between the learner and the academic material because it allows them to comprehend the significance of the educational content within their own social context. Moreover, Dioneda Jr. (2019) reaffirms that contextualization makes lessons more meaningful resulting in relative development in student experiences and classroom participation which may help the simplification of complex ideas and allows for better communication in collaborative activities and inquiry-based learning,

Student Comprehension

This theme highlights the capacity of contextualization practices to improve the quality of learning and contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes. Social Studies instructors assert that contextualizing lessons can make factual concepts more relatable and easier to comprehend by utilizing cultural and community-based references. This reflects the educator's ability to draw a line bridging academic material and students' diverse backgrounds, resulting in students reinforcing their prior knowledge with emerging concepts.

TR1: *“So now, because we applied it to the situation of a student, when we say economy, it's easier for a student to remember the [definition of] economy because we applied it to their life, inside their house, or to their family.”*

TR2: *“Students were able to score in formative assessments much better compared to traditional pedagogies. They can ask questions to themselves like, why is this happening to me?”*

TR5: *“Another thing I noticed is that their grades in oral recitation and the short quizzes I give them have improved”*

TR6: *“Weeks later, they could still explain the concept clearly because they had a concrete picture in mind.”*

TR1, TR2, TR5 and TR6 articulated consistent perspectives about the pedagogical value of contextualization in Social Studies Instruction. TR1 and TR6 observed that contextualization can help students make connections between ideas, indicating improved knowledge retention. TR5 posits that students achieved better qualitative and quantitative scores on formative assessments, such as quizzes and oral recitations, suggesting an improvement in their academic performance. TR2 revealed that learners were able to apply theoretical concepts in practice, emphasizing the acquisition of higher-order thinking skills. Nataño (2023) emphasizes that contextualization is a dynamic process of meaning-making, where curriculum content is recalibrated to fit the student's background and lived experiences. This enhances the significance, relevance, and comprehensibility of Indigenous Peoples' educational experiences. The study revealed that when lessons are contextualized, such as integrating Indigenous Knowledge into academic materials, students exhibit a deeper understanding and retention of key concepts. Additionally, Navalta (2021) provides compelling evidence for these qualitative insights, arguing that integrating cultural and social realities with abstract concepts can facilitate critical reflection and cognitive processes, which can enhance educational experiences for students. Navalta (2021) supports the notion that contextualized pedagogy is useful for developing higher-order thinking skills, as students exhibit more familiarity with subject matter, drawing connections for personal relevance toward the accomplishment of learning objectives.

Cultural Awareness

This theme explores the profound impacts of contextualization on the cultural awareness of students. Contextualization is also viewed by the Social Studies Educators as an approach not only as a way to capture their interest but also to establish a way where learners can interact with the community and learn to appreciate their local heritage. The interplay between academic content and contextualized pedagogies creates a space where it encourages students to expand horizons using reflective activities. This empowers the learner to go beyond the curriculum content and find something that is not just taught but experienced. The dynamics created by contextualization intensify the exposure of students to local resources where they can nurture their cultural identity and historical understanding.

TR7: *“Some of them shared their gender-based experiences related in their belief in religion, while others were able to share their experiences, their personal experiences”*

TR8: *“They now understand the culture of proper waste disposal So, our next lesson is discipline in the environment.”*

TR15: *“.... contextualization allows students to celebrate their identity. One class activity was about comparing local traditions. Students from different towns shared unique practices, like the Buntal Festival or Minasa Festival.”*

Through contextualization, learners can comprehend the subject matter with greater ease, while also gaining the confidence to appreciate and take pride in their cultural background (Nataño, 2023). TR7 shared how contextualization can strengthen meaningful discourse about social concerns, particularly in terms of Gender and Religion. TR8 articulated that students can raise their awareness about civic responsibilities. The qualitative data indicate the emphasis on contextualization in identity formation and cultural understanding, as

stated also by TR15. Nataño (2023) posits that contextualized pedagogies play an integral role in promoting Indigenous knowledge and cultural identity among students. He revealed that contextualized and localized practices encourage the learners to embrace their social realities and become more aware of their heritage, specifically in terms of indigenous knowledge. He also notes that students who are exposed to cultural frames tend to be more appreciative and grounded with local pride. These are formed through enriching their educational experience by embedding relevant examples and introspective exercises. In other disciplines, Claeys et al. (2025) note that many professionals struggle to empathize with patients from diverse backgrounds due to narrow ideas of cultural frames. Their findings reveal that a contextualized educational module leads to deeper awareness and inclusive practices.

Challenges in employing contextualization

Contextualization is a valuable pedagogy in Social Studies instruction; however, its implementation poses challenges for educators. As contextualization entails adaptive and localized practices, educators must be equipped with a profound understanding of learners' backgrounds and lived experiences, requiring them to lean towards differentiated instruction. Moreover, teachers must be capable of adjusting the academic material to reflect local realities without compromising the accomplishment of learning objectives. To explore these gaps, the qualitative data were able to determine three themes: Socio-culturally Diverse learners, Teacher-related Challenges, and Institutional & Structural Barriers.

Table 4: Identified Themes on Challenges in employing contextualization

Rank	Themes
1	Socio-culturally Diverse learners
2	Teacher-related Challenges
3	Institutional & Structural Barriers.

Socio-culturally diverse learners

The diversity of learners, and the varying levels of exposure to local realities are the integral foundation of this theme. Classrooms in the Philippines are inherently diverse, as students may come from different provinces, each with its own distinctive cultural roots. Unfamiliarity with contextualized content even emerged for certain students, as they possessed different local narratives. These differences in grassroots conditions can impede the educational experience for learners, as their cultural biases do not always align with the presented contextualization strategies.

TR1: “....one of the main problems that I have experienced so far is the cultural differences of the students, and [uhm], some of the students I know are poor but some are rich, sometimes they are familiar with this, sometimes not”

TR2: “Some of them are from Manila. So basically, there are still students who don't relate to what we're talking about, the life of a student in the classroom based on the culture they have.”

TR3: “the student may not be willing to study topics related to Social Studies - especially since I teach in that field”

TR6: “Another challenge is diversity. Some of my students come from different provinces or even Pampanga, so not all of them can relate when I use strictly local examples”

Aside from cultural differences, TR1 also noted that the disengagement caused by a lack of awareness regarding the students' socio-economic status can impede the promotion of inclusivity inside the classroom. TR2 and TR3 observed that students may lose interest because the contextualized examples and content are not aligned with the course and culture they are familiar with. To ensure every student benefits equally from contextualized learning experiences, differentiated strategies must be implemented as a supplementary

approach (Claeys et al., 2025). In a similar vein, Tica-a & Wangdali (2023) imply that utilizing unfamiliar references and irrelevant examples in contextualized practices is ineffective under contextualization strategies. Their findings underscore that an insufficient knowledge of learner's cultural background can impede the teaching-learning process. This lack of awareness inadvertently results in cultural misunderstandings, which can reduce the level of interest and student engagement. According to Suganob & Oliva (2021), learners may find it challenging to connect with localized instruction if they are unfamiliar with the lessons or if they do not feel like they belong to the prevailing social and cultural lens that is being used in the classroom.

Teacher-related Challenges

This theme elaborates on the challenges in implementing contextualization, emphasizing the professional and instructional adversities that Social Studies teachers face. In line with the varied learner profiles, educators observed that they are untrained to modify their pedagogy to cater to the learners' diverse backgrounds. This presents challenges in terms of teaching preparation and the required capability to contextualize academic material. The absence of clear and comprehensive guidelines for contextualization further impedes their capacity to bridge the gaps between learners' prior knowledge and the educational content.

TR4: "Perhaps the issue lies with the teacher—the teacher factor. In this case, it may be that the teacher fails to contextualize the lesson based on what the student is actually experiencing."

TR5: "... gathering this information takes time. A class may run for several days, weeks, or even months before we fully grasp their personal contexts."

TR7: "Allowing students to share their experiences takes longer than just lecturing. Sometimes we run out of time before covering all the planned topics."

Many students reflect local narratives that are entirely distinct from prevailing social frameworks. As a result, TR4 expressed uncertainty about the teachers' competency in contextualizing the lesson and relating the subject matter to the students' lived experiences. The misaligned training courses and lack of competency development in the contextualization field are considered the primary causes of unsustainable implementation. The data is consistent with the findings of Asanza (2025), which point out that many educators recognize the pedagogical value of contextualization; however, they often lack the resources and professional development opportunities necessary to integrate it seamlessly. Additionally, TR5 and TR7 expressed concern about the time constraints in preparing the necessary academic materials for contextualization. They also highlight that examining the socio-cultural context of students can consume a significant amount of time on the part of the teacher, further contributing to the overall educational workload. Arellano (2024) reiterated that time constraints in contextualization practices pose a burden on educators, as they are required to adhere to curriculum protocols, which hinder the teachers' ability to execute locally relevant content due to concerns that the allotted time will be insufficient to attain the intended learning competencies.

Institutional Barriers

The limitations of institutional support and the restricted accessibility of localized resources related to contextualization are all outlined in this theme. The utilization of local and cultural resources makes academic content more relatable; however, social studies teachers often find it challenging to contextualize the learning content due to the scarcity of local historical references.

TR11: "The resources are limited. Just like in Rizal's novels, in the communities that they belong to, the law says that there should be copies so that the future Filipinos can also have access to the novels."

TR12: "Aside from that is the school's management, if there is no proper support in contextualization, especially in the program, it won't be easy"

TR15: "Not all communities have documented histories or accessible materials, which makes it harder for me to prepare locally grounded examples."

TR11 highlights the limitations in accessing local instructional materials due to the lack of collaborative programs between the school and the community. Additionally, TR12 highlighted the absence of institutional support for implementing contextualization practices, while TR15 noted the scarcity of available documents on local histories, underscoring the need for academic research. These challenges reflect the underlying concerns in the Philippine institutional mechanisms. Awa-ao & Roperez (2024) corroborate this finding, presenting that many educators with limited academic support or references will rely on informal sources or personal networks to obtain aligned educational content. Their finding implies that the inadequacy of institutional frameworks and the lack of community ties can delay the development of contextualized instructional materials. Additionally, Tica-a & Wangdali (2023) assert that inconsistent institutional support hinders localization initiatives, resulting in poor implementation. Their findings underscore the necessity of community-school collaboration programs and the establishment of scholarly repositories that preserve and disseminate collective knowledge aligned with the standard curriculum.

Strategic Educational Measures

Challenges in contextualization have become persistent and apparent in the current educational landscape, specifically under the outcome-based frameworks. From the lack of teacher capability programs to the scarcity of local resources, educators often discussed the difficulties they faced. These issues impact the sustainability of contextualization practices, leading to subpar classroom implementation. Two emerging themes were identified from the qualitative data, specifically the Teacher Capability Programs and School-Community Collaborations.

Table 5: Identified themes on Recommended Educational Measures

Rank	Themes
1	Teacher Capability Programs
2	School-Community Collaborations.

Teacher Capability Programs

One of the consistent challenges identified is the gap in professional development related to contextualization. Teachers argue that the contextualization-related seminars are either not prioritized or not aligned. Teacher Capability Programs emphasize the necessity of continuous professional development programs that provide teachers with tools, resources, and instructional frameworks pertinent to contextualizing academic material. Instructors emphasized the importance of mentoring courses and workshops that foster cultural awareness, integration of local history, and provision of guidelines for differentiated instruction tailored to the needs of diverse learner profiles.

TR2: “And also, maybe we can create seminars, trainings for teachers or professors about the contextualization practices and framework related to it”

TR5: “We must broaden our perspectives and avoid being confined to a fixed set of content. Teaching isn’t just about delivering what’s required—it’s about evolving with the times.”

TR6: “If teachers could attend workshops that focus on local history, culture, and current issues, we’d be more equipped to bring those into the classroom”

TR6 argues that workshops can increase the teacher’s capability and confidence to adopt contextualization pedagogies that empower them to support students in creating meaningful connections with Social Studies Concepts. Furthermore, Dohinog et al. (2025) assert that it is imperative to implement sustainable and comprehensive retooling initiatives that optimize instructional capabilities, ensuring educators can adopt pertinent skills and techniques in contextualization strategies. On the other hand, Teachers emphasize the necessity of developing innovative pedagogies through training wherever possible. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, educators must adopt and navigate ways to sustainably improve themselves toward inclusive and culturally responsive instruction. This will enable instructors to deliver contextual lessons

that are essential for constructing inclusive classrooms, which promote civic awareness necessary to understand various community concerns (Prastuti et al., 2020).

Community-Institution Collaboration

Teachers identified that one of the significant issues in integrating students' lived experiences into the lessons is the lack of access to cultural and local resources. To address this concern, social studies educators proposed to improve the ties between educational and community institutions, suggesting that it will lead to the procurement of necessary resources that will support and facilitate contextualization practices. The provision of contextualized instructional materials tailored to the student community and augmented by field-based activities can be a vital component towards the integration of civic awareness. The educators highlight that a fragmented construction of knowledge will impede learning outcomes, hereby recommending the importance of grassroots instruction, where students create a solid foundation in the community to which they belong.

TR11: "Our students need to have access to enough resources so that they can also have knowledge in their own community."

TR12: "For example, the school should have built in partnership with the local government and non-government organizations so that a particular institution can relate to the culture of a community."

TR15: "It is important to have a strong relationship with [community] institution like for instance when a child learns that the root of our history lies in the Minasa Festival, they're not just studying what the Minasa is. They're exploring the culture and history of the Bustos"

TR15 emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive instruction in instilling appreciation for local heritage among learners. Furthermore, TR11 and TR12 emphasize that connecting abstract concepts with student experiences can be enhanced by establishing essential partnerships with community institutions. These active collaborations can bridge the educational process by fostering a sense of shared ownership of cultural identities and community heritage. According to Phinla et al. (2024), active community partnership derived from local culture and curriculum innovations has generated improvements in teaching-learning mechanisms in educational institutions. Their findings are consistent with the acquired qualitative data, which encourage the promotion of collaborative curriculum design that provides educators the opportunity to adapt to the sociocultural contexts of their students.

CONCLUSION

The qualitative data revealed that Contextualization is a pedagogy utilized by Social Studies instructors in higher education. It involves modifying academic content to fit examples drawn from students' lived realities, allowing for connections between theoretical concepts and accessible community references. Social Studies educators define Contextualization as the systematic facilitation of local narratives and cultural backgrounds, promoting deeper meaning-making beyond factual recall. The inquiry-based approach emerged as the most common pedagogical strategy, encouraging student-led research through critical questioning. Community-responsive strategies foster civic awareness and critical thinking, while experiential learning requires collaboration between educational institutions and community stakeholders for field-based activities like tours and simulations. Engagement strategies, often involving humor and pop-culture references, help create a conducive learning environment. These strategies emphasize contextual relevance and cultural responsiveness, tailoring instruction to students' interests and social dimensions, leading to increased active participation and improved oral recitations. Contextualization promotes critical thinking, resulting in better scores on formative assessments due to effective information retention. By integrating community-related experiences, students develop civic maturity essential for cultural appreciation and participatory citizenship in a diverse society. However, challenges hinder the implementation of contextualization practices. The inherent diversity in educational institutions complicates efforts, as educators must be attuned to students' varied context. Examples used can sometimes exclude certain students, undermining diverse learning needs. Additionally, educators reported uncertainty in contextualizing content due to insufficient development opportunities and a lack of

comprehensive guidelines. Time constraints burden teachers with localizing content, requiring adequate preparation and resources. Moreover, the absence of institutional support in resource acquisition and academic development compromises instructional quality and undermines sustainability.

It is recommended that future research employ a mixed-methods approach, allowing for the exploration of quantitative variables. Due to the inherent limitations of the study, integrating student assessment and perspective can provide a broader understanding of contextualization practices in higher education institutions. Expanding the sampling population is also an imperative suggestion to solidify the credibility of the findings. The study reveals a compelling recommendation to the following: (1) Capacity Development Program for social studies teachers to be profound in employing 21st contextualization practices to cater diverse learning needs of students; (2) Institutional Support that will create comprehensive guidelines and allocate funds towards the creation of contextualized learning materials; and (3) School-Community Collaboration that will facilitate the access toward community-related resources and cultural heritage.

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