TOWARDS A CULTURALLY AND SOCIO-EMOTIONALLY RESPONSIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE CURRICULUM MODEL FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Kyle Aris Dayvid D. Roño
SPC Program Chair and
Collegiate Faculty

Noriel C. Navita
Adviser

This study aimed to develop a Culturally and Socio-Emotionally Responsive Social Science Curriculum Model for Senior High School. The research examined the academic performance of Senior High School students, assessed the level of Social and Emotional Learning competencies, evaluated the quality of Social Science curriculum and the level of cultural responsiveness the current curriculum, and explored how these elements shape the teaching and learning of Social Science. A mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design was employed. Quantitative data were gathered from 302 SHS students through stratified random sampling and 18 Social Science teachers through total enumeration. Additionally, eight teachers and eight students who had completed core Social Science subjects participated in qualitative focus group discussions. Results revealed that students exhibited high academic performance in Social Science and demonstrated a very high level of SEL competencies with a mean of 3.42. Teachers rated both the quality Social Science curriculum with a mean of 3.71 and the level of cultural responsiveness with a mean of 3.58 as very high. Thematic analysis produced 11 themes from students' SEL experiences and 16 themes from teachers' perspectives on cultural responsiveness.

Keywords: Social Science, Social and Emotional Learning, Cultural Responsiveness, Curriculum Model

Introduction

Education serves not only to impart academic knowledge but also to shape national identity, preserve cultural heritage, and foster holistic human development. Within the Philippine educational landscape, foundational subjects such as Filipino and Panitikan play a critical role in cultivating linguistic proficiency, critical thinking, and civic commitment among learners. However, recent curriculum adjustments proposed by the Department of Education (DepEd) involve integrating independent Filipino courses into restructured Social Science disciplines. While this structural shift streamlines academic offerings, it presents a critical challenge: ensuring that the depth, cultural value, and identity-shaping role of native language and cultural studies are not diminished. To address this transition effectively, educators must forge meaningful interdisciplinary connections between Filipino content and the Social Sciences.

Concurrently, contemporary educational research highlights Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as an indispensable framework for improving academic achievement, emotional well-being, and interpersonal resilience. Global frameworks emphasize that students must develop core socio-emotional competencies—specifically self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Nevertheless, standardized SEL implementations often lack cultural responsiveness. In collectivist and culturally diverse societies like the Philippines, students navigate unique socio-cultural norms, such as pakikisama (smooth interpersonal relationships), hiya (sense of propriety), and familial harmony, which shape how they express emotions and engage with social realities. Without grounding SEL and Social Science curricula in local cultural contexts, educational systems risk alienating learners and failing to address systemic inequities.

Despite the recognized importance of holistic education, existing curricula often suffer from overcrowded learning competencies, implementation constraints, and a heavy reliance on Western-centric instructional materials. The gap between prescribed curriculum standards and the lived realities of Filipino senior high school learners necessitates a systematic evaluation of existing Social Science core subjects and the creation of an integrated pedagogical model.

Anchored on the Social and Emotional Learning Theory (Lawlor, 2019) and the Deliberative Curriculum Theory (Schwab; Noye's Six-Phase Deliberation Model), this study investigates the intersection of academic performance, SEL competencies, curriculum quality, and cultural responsiveness. Specifically, the independent variables of the study encompass the level of students' Social and Emotional Learning competencies and the teachers' assessment of the quality and cultural responsiveness of the Social Science curriculum, while the dependent variables include students' academic performance in Social Science core subjects and the development of an optimized curriculum model. The purpose of this study is to design and propose a comprehensive Culturally and Socio-Emotionally Responsive (CSER) Social Science Curriculum Model for Senior High School, ensuring that academic instruction successfully harmonizes cognitive rigor, emotional intelligence, and national identity.

Method

This study employed a two-phase mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, collecting and analyzing quantitative data before using qualitative findings to contextualize the results. In the quantitative phase, stratified random sampling selected 302 Grade 12 students (from a population of 1,389 across three private senior high schools in San Pablo City, Laguna) who had completed core Social Science subjects, alongside total enumeration of all 18 Social Science instructors. For the subsequent qualitative phase, purposive criterion sampling selected 8 teachers and 8 students to participate in focus group discussions (FGDs). Data collection relied on a semi-structured FGD guide and two researcher-made surveys—one assessing five domains of student Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, and another evaluating Social Science curriculum quality and cultural responsiveness—both validated by five experts via Lawshe's Validity Tool and demonstrating strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranging from .81 to .97).

Following formal administrative approvals and strict adherence to ethical standards—including informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymization, and data confidentiality—surveys were administered in person, while audio-recorded FGD sessions were transcribed using Evernote AI. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using weighted means

to assess SEL and curriculum levels, as well as Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Spearman Rho to test relationships between SEL competencies and academic performance. Finally, the qualitative FGD transcripts underwent thematic analysis to uncover recurring patterns and deeper insights into participants' perceptions of SEL and cultural responsiveness.

Results and Discussion

Academic Performance in Social Science Core Subjects

Senior High School students demonstrated generally high academic performance across the core Social Science subjects, yielding an overall computed average mean score of 89.42. Among the evaluated subjects, Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person recorded the highest mean score of 90.08, followed by Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics (UCSP) with 89.55, and Contemporary Philippine Arts from the Regions (CPAR) with 88.63.

These findings indicate strong cognitive competence and engagement in disciplines addressing human values and societal structures. As supported by Reyes, Cruz, and De Leon (2023), students tend to excel in socio-cultural and values-based subjects when instructional strategies emphasize personal relatability and experiential learning.

Students' Level of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies

Students' self-assessments revealed a composite SEL competency mean score of 3.42, interpreted as Very High.

- Social Awareness ranked highest with a mean of 3.60 (Very High), reflecting exceptional respect for diversity and inclusive values.
- Relationship Skills ranked second with a mean of 3.54 (Very High), highlighted by a strong recognition of trust in interpersonal connections.
- Responsible Decision-Making ranked third with a mean of 3.53 (Very High), demonstrating strong personal accountability and reflection from mistakes.

- Self-Awareness ranked fourth with a mean of 3.32 (Very High), indicating strong emotional recognition, though expressing vulnerability scored lower (2.79).
- Self-Management ranked lowest with a mean of 3.12 (High), indicating that while goal-setting is strong (3.31), maintaining focus amidst digital distractions and exercising impulse control present ongoing developmental challenges.

These results align with CASEL frameworks (2024) while illustrating the influence of collectivist cultural norms, where emotional restraint and social harmony sometimes temper open self-expression (Lim & Lee, 2022; Yeo & Ang, 2022).

Teachers' Assessment of Social Science Curriculum Quality

Teachers evaluated the quality of the SHS Social Science curriculum as Very High, with an overall composite mean of 3.71.

- Assessments ranked highest (mean = 3.79), driven by strong performance-based evaluation tasks (3.94).
- Learning Competencies and Learning Activities tied at rank 2 (mean = 3.74), reflecting effective promotion of critical thinking and real-world application.
- Content ranked third (mean = 3.71), followed by Objectives (mean = 3.70).
- Resources ranked lowest (mean = 3.60), indicating a need for enriched multimedia tools, independent learning supports, and updated reference materials.

These findings corroborate Navarro and Santos (2023) regarding the demand for 21st-century critical competencies, while echoing concerns regarding instructional time constraints and resource limitations (Urbano, 2020; Karakuş, 2021).

Cultural Responsiveness of the Social Science Curriculum

Teachers rated the cultural responsiveness of the curriculum as Very High, yielding an overall composite mean of 3.58.

Objectives ranked highest (mean = 3.71), emphasizing cultural heritage and diverse traditions.

Learning Competencies ranked second (mean = 3.66), preparing students for multicultural participation.

Content (mean = 3.58), Assessments (mean = 3.57), and Learning Activities (mean = 3.56) reflected robust integration of Filipino values.

Resources ranked lowest (mean = 3.43), pointing to gaps in updated cultural trends and accessibility for diverse learners.

The results affirm Tan (2023) and Gay (2018), emphasizing that culturally responsive curricula validate student identity and foster critical consciousness.

Relationship Between SEL Competencies and Academic Performance

Correlational analysis revealed a statistically significant, positive, but weak correlation between students' SEL competencies and their academic performance in Social Science ($r_s = .136, p < .05$). While minimal in statistical strength, this finding confirms that socio-emotional skills play a meaningful auxiliary role in academic success. Cultivating emotional regulation, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills fosters an engaged, focused classroom environment conducive to higher-order cognitive processing.

Qualitative Findings (FGD Insights)

Thematic analysis of focus group discussions produced rich qualitative insights:

- Student Themes: Students perceived SEL as: (1) a foundational framework for understanding abstract social science theories; (2) an enhancer of communication and active engagement; (3) a tool for developing self-awareness and SWOT analysis; (4) a mechanism for stress and conflict management; (5) essential

for collaborative performance tasks (e.g., role-playing); (6) a catalyst for making lessons meaningful; (7) a strengthener of social awareness; and (8) a collective affirmation of holistic learning.

- Teacher Themes: Teachers identified key pedagogical strategies: (1) contextualization and indigenization of lessons; (2) learner-centered cultural sharing; (3) performance-based initiatives like the Siklab Film Festival; and (4) promoting cultural relativism. Simultaneously, they noted structural challenges: (5) lack of localized, updated materials (heavy reliance on Western philosophy); (6) managing diverse beliefs and sensitivities; (7) student reluctance to share; (8) time constraints; and (9) limited student prior cultural knowledge. Teachers recommended: (10) retaining core anthropological concepts (ethnocentrism, cultural relativism); (11) strengthening Filipino values education; (12) reviving traditional games; (13) reintroducing dedicated Philippine History; and (14) adding Citizenship Education.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Senior High School students possess strong academic standing in Social Science core subjects and exhibit very high levels of Social and Emotional Learning competencies, particularly in social awareness and relationship skills, though self-management requires targeted reinforcement. Teachers express high confidence in the quality and cultural responsiveness of the curriculum, particularly regarding objectives, competencies, and performance-based assessments. Although the statistical correlation between SEL competencies and academic performance is weak, it is statistically significant, confirming that emotional intelligence complements cognitive achievement. Qualitative narratives validate SEL and cultural responsiveness as vital pedagogical foundations that bridge abstract concepts with students' lived realities. Finally, the empirical and qualitative findings provide a robust rationale for implementing an integrated Culturally and Socio-Emotionally Responsive Curriculum Model guided by Deliberative Curriculum Theory.

Recommendation

School administrators, curriculum developers, and policymakers are advised to institutionalize the proposed Culturally and Socio-Emotionally Responsive (CSER) curriculum model in Senior High School programs. Educational institutions should enrich Social Science syllabi with localized, updated instructional materials and multimedia resources that reflect Filipino values and diverse cultural perspectives. Teachers should receive continuous professional development and capacity-building workshops focused on integrating culturally responsive pedagogy and SEL strategies into daily instruction. Furthermore, school counselors and educators should design targeted self-management interventions to foster emotional resilience and impulse control among adolescents. Future research should pursue longitudinal tracking across diverse school locales to evaluate the long-term impact of CSER models on student engagement and academic outcomes.

References

AKARI Curriculum Management. (2024). Curriculum assessment in higher education. https://akarisoftware.com/2024/04/24/curriculum-assessment-in-higher-education/

Bautista & Enriquez (2023) – Social awareness and civic responsibility among Filipino senior high school students: Connects SEL competencies—specifically social awareness and responsible decision-making—to civic engagement and Social Science learning outcomes among Filipino Grade 12 learners.

Castillo et al. (2024) – Social and emotional learning affecting the academic performance of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose: Serves as a direct Philippine Senior High School benchmark examining how SEL competencies correlate with student academic performance.

Cipriano et al. (2023) – Advancing social and emotional learning: New findings on student outcomes and engagement: Offers updated

meta-analytic evidence linking SEL competencies directly to academic engagement and measurable performance outcomes.

Durlak et al. (2022) – Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice: Provides the primary empirical synthesis demonstrating how structured SEL interventions enhance student behavior, emotional well-being, and academic achievement.

Garcia & De la Cruz (2021) – Revisiting the social science curriculum: Socio-cultural relevance in Philippine senior high schools: Examines how aligning Social Science content with Filipino socio-cultural realities improves learner engagement and relevance.

Gay (2018) – Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice: Articulates the seminal theoretical foundation for culturally responsive pedagogy, grounding the teacher questionnaire's assessment of cultural responsiveness in the Social Science curriculum.

Ladson-Billings (2021) – Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: Aka the Remix: Expands culturally relevant teaching into contemporary classroom contexts, emphasizing academic rigor alongside cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness.

Lim et al. (2024) – Evidence-based practices of culturally responsive social and emotional learning (SEL) programs: Bridges the study's two core constructs by demonstrating through systematic review and meta-analysis how integrating cultural responsiveness strengthens SEL program effectiveness.

Mendoza et al. (2022) – Assessment of curriculum design by learning outcomes (LO): Supports the teacher survey's structural evaluation of curriculum quality across learning competencies, objectives, instructional activities, and assessments.

Navarro & Santos (2023) – The contemporary social science curriculum in Philippine senior high schools: Competencies, challenges, and prospects: Situates the teacher curriculum evaluation within the current K–12 Philippine Senior High School Social Science landscape, highlighting systemic competencies and implementation gaps.

Rungduin & Reyes (2015) – Social and emotional dimensions of Filipino learners in a cultural context: Contextualizes emotional regulation and interpersonal dynamics specifically within Filipino cultural values, ensuring SEL constructs are interpreted appropriately for local learners.