



CHALLENGES AND COPING PRACTICES OF 21ST CENTURY SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHERS IN TEACHING CURRENT AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the challenges and coping practices of 21st-Century social science teachers in teaching current and controversial issues in terms of teaching and learning resources, learners' diversity, social media, and information, dealing with controversial issues, and administrative support, and the level of coping practices.

The study utilized the descriptive method to prove the relationship of the challenges and coping practices of 21st-century social science teachers in teaching current and controversial issues in Secondary School in Santa Cruz, Laguna. Questionnaire was used in gathering the data needed supplemented by an unstructured interview with the respondents.

KEYWORDS: *Challenges, Coping Practices, Current and Controversial Issues, Learning Resources, Learners Diversity, social media and Information, Administrative Support, Instructional leadership*

INTRODUCTION

The social studies classroom is an ideal platform from which students learn the foundation of critical thinking, problem-solving, decision making, global awareness, civic knowledge, and empathy. In classrooms, social studies teachers must approach controversial issues in a spirit of critical inquiry and expose students to a variety of ideas. It is through social studies that students are expected to gain knowledge, skills, attitudes that will help them to effectively deal with issues in our contemporary society.

As a social studies educator, it is important to engage students in lively discussions of controversial issues to prepare students for effective citizenship and to promote a deeper understanding of their social world. Teaching about issues that are controversial requires a lot of time, preparation, and in-depth study. Resources that will motivate students to learn are often hard to find and of course there is always the risk of offending a student, parent, or another colleague, which can end up in the principal's office. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there have been many changes in the development of national and world education. Various challenges are faced by social science teachers such as lack of instructional updated material related to social science, inadequate training

facilities for teachers' lack of administrative support, inability to manage personal and professional expectations, limited teaching resources, lack of professional development, and difficulty handling behavioral problems in the classroom. According to Dogre (2014), teaching is getting more and more complex and challenging these days. The patience level of students is decreasing while rudeness, argumentation, disobedience, and short temper is on the rise, due to modern age competition, stress, availability of alternate sources of knowledge like internet or violence shown in movies, TV series, and video games. Teachers are the most influential factor in students' learning process. Without recognizing their contribution to the society there is no meaning of talking about quality education. There are five main areas of responsibility for teachers – their subject matter, their students, the institution they are involved with, their profession, and finally the community at large. The greatest problem in teaching today is how to create, sustain and motivate good teachers throughout their careers.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to determine the challenges and coping practices of 21st-Century social science teachers



in teaching current and controversial issues in Public Secondary School in Santa Cruz, Laguna. Distinctively, it sought to answer the subsequent questions:

1. What is the level of challenges faced by the 21st Century Social Science teachers in teaching current and controversial issues in terms of:
 - Teaching and Learning Resources.
 - Learners Diversity.
 - Social media and Information; and
 - Dealing with Controversial Issues
 - Administrative Support?
2. What is the level of coping practices of the teacher-respondents in teaching current and controversial issues in terms of?
 - Professional Development; and
 - Instructional Leadership?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of challenges and coping practices of the 21st-century social science teachers in teaching current and controversial issues?

RELATED LITERATURE

Cox (2019) stated that the 21st-century teacher can adapt to whatever comes their way. The 21st-century teachers can look at their practice and adapt based on the needs of their students. They must be able to adapt to the curriculum and the requirements and be able to use their imagination to teach creatively.

Meador (2019) Stated that part of what makes teaching a challenging career is the diversity of the students. All students are unique in having their background, needs, and learning styles. Teachers must be prepared to work with all learning styles in every lesson, requiring more prep time and creativity. However, successfully working this challenge can be an empowering experience for both students and teachers alike.

Dongre (2014) stated that teaching is getting more and more complex and challenging these days. The patience level of students is decreasing while rudeness, argumentation, disobedience, and short temper is on the rise. This is due to modern age

competition, stress, availability of alternate sources of knowledge like the internet or violence shown in movies, TV series, and video games.

UN Women (2020) explained that Empowerment of women and girls (and men and boys) through media and information literacy is critical in fostering equitable access to information and knowledge and providing the skills needed to navigate and engage with the content being disseminated through various channels (print, audio, video, digital, etc.). This is especially important given the volume of information and images, including, but not limited to, explicitly harmful content (e.g., pornography, misogynistic, degrading, and violent material) that is easily accessible through the internet and on mobile devices. This is particularly worrying for young people, given the detrimental impacts repeated exposure has on the brain during this critical developmental stage.

As per Department of Education, Deped Order No. 42, series of 2017, The Deped recognizes the importance of professional standards in the continuing professional development and advancement of teachers based on the principle of lifelong learning. It is committed to supporting teachers and taking cognizance of unequivocal evidence that good teachers are vital to raising student achievement. Quality learning is contingent upon quality teaching. Hence, enhancing teacher quality becomes of utmost for long term and sustainable nation building.

Joshi (2018) discussed that teacher play a basic and dynamic role in the educational system. It is said that the good performance of students depends upon the effective teaching of their teachers. Effective teaching is a key responsibility of every teacher. Effective teaching is based on the teachers' teaching experience and their performance. Teachers' teaching experiences always reflect on their performance. So, the quality, competence and character of a teacher are of paramount importance. Teachers' quality is the key to ensuring the quality of education for quality outcomes. Qualified and competent teachers will not be able to carry out their tasks professionally without proper conditions that support their tasks.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Faced by 21st Century Social Science Teachers in Teaching Current and Controversial Issues

Table 1. Challenges Faced by Social Science Teachers as to Teaching and Learning Resources

Indicators	Mean	S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. Cost and expenses in electronic devices and internet for teaching materials	4.46	0.703	Highly challenging
2. Low quality digital version of textbook	3.58	0.792	Challenging
3. Out-to date learning resources especially textbooks and learner's module	3.42	1.004	Challenging
4. Errors on textbook and learner's module	3.51	0.917	Challenging
5. Unequitable access to the same learning environment	3.44	0.876	Challenging
Overall Mean	3.68	Challenging	
Legend:			
4.20 – 5.00 Highly Challenging			
3.40 – 4.19 Challenging			
2.60 – 3.39 Moderately Challenging			
1.80 – 2.59 Lowly Challenging			
1.00 – 1.79 Not at all Challenging			

The study revealed that the cost and expenses in electronic devices and internet for teaching materials is *highly challenging* ($M=4.46, SD=0.703$). They believed that the low-quality digital version of textbook is *challenging* ($M=3.58, SD=0.792$) as well as the outdated textbooks and modules ($M=3.42, SD=1.004$), errors in textbooks and modules ($M=3.51, SD=0.917$), and the unequitable access to the same learning environment ($M=3.44, SD=0.876$). The Overall mean of

3.68 indicates that the teachers experience challenges with the available teaching and learning resources.

This means that there is insufficient availability of appropriate learning materials, poor quality of learning resources, inadequate internet connections and budgets constraints. A disadvantage of teaching with limited resources is that teachers can be tempted to surrender to 'plain talk' and prevents interaction that might causes boredom, the students will have a hard time processing the information and in understanding the lesson.

Table 2. Learners' Perception on Modular Distance Learning

Indicators	Mean	S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. Adjustment to multicultural diversity and sensitivity	4.07	0.7626	Challenging
2. Handling gender and sexual orientation issues	3.90	0.9039	Challenging
3. Lack of literary and historical information about students with multicultural issues	3.36	0.9052	Challenging
4. Encouraging discrimination prevention in the classroom	4.29	0.9835	Highly challenging
5. Handling extreme student behavior, rudeness, aggressiveness, and disrespectfulness	3.85	0.9062	Challenging
Overall Mean	3.89	Challenging	
Legend:			
4.20 – 5.00 Highly Challenging			
3.40 – 4.19 Challenging			
2.60 – 3.39 Moderately Challenging			
1.80 – 2.59 Lowly Challenging			
1.00 – 1.79 Not at all Challenging			



The study revealed that teachers experienced adjustment to multicultural diversity and sensitivity is challenging ($M=4.07$, $SD=0.7626$) as well as handling gender and sexual orientation issues ($M=3.90$, $SD=0.9039$) and lack of literary and historical information about students with multicultural issues

($M=3.36$, $SD=0.9052$) while encouraging discrimination prevention in the classroom is highly challenging ($M=4.29$, $SD=0.9835$). The overall mean of 3.89 indicates that the teachers experience challenges in teaching diverse learners.

Table 3. Challenges Faced by Social Science Teachers as to social media and Information.

Indicators	Mean	S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. Promoting Online safety and privacy	4.54	0.7269	Highly challenging
2. Lack of control for appropriate content	3.49	0.8783	Challenging
3. Lack of adequate technology or tool for differentiated instruction	3.54	0.9882	Challenging
4. Differing device capabilities and instruction	3.66	0.8223	Challenging
5. Lack of funding on internet connection and devices	3.98	1.0254	Challenging
Overall Mean	3.84		Challenging
Legend:			
4.20 – 5.00 Highly Challenging			
3.40 – 4.19 Challenging			
2.60 – 3.39 Moderately Challenging			
1.80 – 2.59 Lowly Challenging			
1.00 – 1.79 Not at all Challenging			

The study revealed that promoting online safety and privacy is *highly challenging* ($M=4.54$, $SD=0.7269$), while lack of control for appropriate content ($M=3.49$, $SD=0.8783$), as well as lack of adequate technology or tool for differentiated instruction ($M=3.54$, $SD=0.9882$), differing device

capabilities and instruction ($M=3.66$, $SD=0.8223$), lack of funding on internet connection and devices ($M=3.98$, $SD=1.0254$) is *challenging*. The overall mean of 3.84 indicates that teachers faced challenges in using media information.

Table 4. Challenges Faced by Social Science Teachers as to Dealing with Controversial Issues

Indicators	Mean	S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. Maintaining Safe and supportive classroom environment to confront sensitive issues involving gay, lesbian, and bisexual students.	4.31	0.623	Highly challenging
2. Keeping classroom management when the subject touches on some sensitivity (e.g., political, or religious)	4.29	0.4931	Highly challenging
3. Consider a variety of perspectives on teaching controversial subjects	3.98	0.8807	Challenging
4. Selecting appropriate statements about an issue, person, or group directly and respectfully to a person to whom the issue is important.	4.22	0.7672	Highly challenging
5. Appropriate use of language in dealing controversial issues	4.25	0.7094	Highly challenging



Overall Mean	4.21	Highly challenging
Legend:		
4.20 – 5.00	Highly Challenging	
3.40 – 4.19	Challenging	
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Challenging	
1.80 – 2.59	Lowly Challenging	
1.00 – 1.79	Not at all Challenging	

The study revealed that maintaining safe and supportive classroom environment to confront sensitive issues involving gay, lesbian, and bisexual students is *highly challenging* (M=4.31, SD=0.623), and keeping classroom management when the subject touches on some sensitivity (e.g., political, or religious) is *highly challenging* (M=4.29, SD=0.4931), as well as to consider a variety of perspectives on teaching controversial subjects is *highly challenging* (M=3.98, SD=0.8807), in selecting appropriate statements about an issue, person, or group directly and respectfully to a person to whom the issue is important is *highly*

challenging (M=4.25, SD=7672), and the appropriate use of language in dealing controversial issues is also *highly challenging* (M=4.25, SD=7094). The overall mean of 4.21 indicates that teacher is facing difficulties in dealing with controversial issues.

Table 5. Challenges Faced by Social Science Teachers as to Administrative Support

Indicators	Mean	S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
School administrative behavior toward staff is supportive and encouraging.	4.51	0.8585	Highly challenging
Administrator consistently support the teacher in providing continuous professional development.	4.44	0.9518	Highly challenging
Administrator deals effectively with pressures from outsiders the school that might interfere with teaching.	4.51	0.6262	Highly challenging
Administrator evaluates teacher's performance fairly.	4.59	0.6977	Highly challenging
5.Regularly conduct needs assessments survey from teachers to identify areas of professional learning most needed and desired by educators.	4.56	0.9148	Highly challenging
Overall Mean	4.52		Highly challenging
Legend:			
4.20 – 5.00	Highly Challenging		
3.40 – 4.19	Challenging		
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Challenging		
1.80 – 2.59	Lowly Challenging		
1.00 – 1.79	Not at all Challenging		

The study revealed that when it comes to the school administrative behavior toward staff is supportive and encouraging the teachers perceived it *highly challenging* (M=4.51, SD=0.8585), as well as the administrator consistently support the teacher in providing continuous professional development is *highly challenging* (M=4.44, SD=0.9518), administrator deals effectively with pressures from outsiders the school that might interfere with teaching is *highly challenging* (M=4.51, SD=0.6262),



administrator evaluates teacher's performance fairly is *highly challenging* (M=4.59, SD=0.6977). The overall mean of 4.52 denotes a general response indicating that

the teachers is highly challenge in seeking administrative support.

Level of Teachers' Coping Practices

Table 6. Level of Teachers' Coping Practices in terms of Professional Development.

Indicators	Mean	S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. Actively participate in professional development through workshop, seminars, and trainings to learn new things that can be apply to daily classroom	4.69	0.500	Highly practiced
2. Engage in collaborative learning sessions to solve shared challenges encountered in the school.	4.78	0.4937	Highly practiced
3. Professional Development for teachers can help teachers overcome all the significant obstacle in the classroom	4.75	0.5444	Highly practiced
4. Professional development addresses the variety of circumstances and challenges associated with changing classroom practices.	4.73	0.4853	Highly practiced
5. Attended training on Information and communications technology related seminars.	4.51	0.6791	Highly practiced
Overall Mean	4.69	Highly practiced	
Legend:			
4.20 – 5.00 Highly Practiced			
3.40 – 4.19 Practiced			
2.60 – 3.39 Moderately Practiced			
1.80 – 2.59 Lowly Practiced			
1.00 – 1.79 Not at all Practiced			

the study revealed that the teachers actively participate in professional development through workshop, seminars, and trainings to learn new things that can be apply to daily classroom is *highly practiced* (M=4.69, SD=0.500), and engage in collaborative learning sessions to solve shared challenges encountered in the school is *highly practiced* (M=4.78, SD=0.4937), professional development for teachers can help teachers overcome all the significant obstacle in the classroom is *highly practiced* (M=4.75, SD=0.5444), professional

development addresses the variety of circumstances and challenges associated with changing classroom practices is *highly practiced* (M=4.73,SD=0.4843) and attended training on Information and communications technology related seminars is highly practiced (M=4.51, SD=0.6791). The overall mean of 4.68 also proved that teachers continuously engaged into professional development to coped with the challenges, improve teaching effectiveness, and ensures competence in the profession.



Table 7. Level of Teachers' Coping Practices in terms of Instructional Leadership.

Indicators	Mean	S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. Communicate about instruction, curriculum, and make informed decision to improve the learning environment.	4.63	0.5219	Highly practiced
2. Involve in instruction and work to provide resources to help teachers improve in areas of weaknesses.	4.59	0.5607	Highly practiced
3. Provides helpful feedback, suggestion for improvement balanced with praise for something the teacher did successfully.	4.61	0.5576	Highly practiced
4. Maintain communication with the teachers for information associated with instructional methods, current trends in education and other pertinent news related to effective teaching.	4.61	0.6164	Highly practiced
5. Leading by example and focusing on important learning objectives to promote innovation in teaching.	4.51	0.5981	Highly practiced
Overall Mean	4.59		Highly practiced
Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 Highly Practiced 3.40 – 4.19 Practiced 2.60 – 3.39 Moderately Practiced 1.80 – 2.59 Lowly Practiced 1.00 – 1.79 Not at all Practiced			

Table 7 revealed the data on the responses of teachers in terms of instructional leadership on communication about instruction, curriculum, and make informed decision to improve the learning environment is *highly practiced* (M=4.63, SD=0.5219), Involve in instruction and work to provide resources to help teachers improve in areas of weaknesses is *highly practiced* (M=4.59, SD=0.5607), provides helpful feedback, suggestion for improvement balanced with praise for something the teacher did successfully *highly practiced* (M=4.61, SD=0.5576), maintain communication with the

teachers for information associated with instructional methods, current trends in education and other pertinent news related to effective teaching is *highly practiced* (M=4.61, SD= 0.6164) Leading by example and focusing on important learning objectives to promote innovation in teaching is *highly practiced* (M=4.51, SD=0.5981) The overall mean of 4.68 denotes that teacher are strongly supported by the school Heads in their growth through mentoring, co-planning, and instructional methods.

Relationship between the Level of Challenges and Teachers' Coping Practices

Table 8. Relationship between the Level of Challenges and Teachers' Coping Practices

Challenges	Professional Development			Instructional Leadership		
	r-value	p-value	Analysis	r-value	P-value	Analysis
Teaching and Learning Resources	0.151	0.255	Not significant	0.262	0.045	Significant
Learners' Diversity	0.090	0.500	Not significant	0.203	0.123	Not significant
Social media and Information	0.141	0.287	Not significant	0.016	0.903	Not significant



Dealing with Controversial Issues	0.442	0.000	<i>Significant</i>	0.590	0.000	<i>Significant</i>
Administrative Support	0.369	0.004	<i>Significant</i>	0.490	0.000	<i>Significant</i>
Degree of Correlation: $\pm 0.80 - \pm 1.00$ Very strong $\pm 0.60 - \pm 0.79$ Strong $\pm 0.40 - \pm 0.59$ Moderate $\pm 0.20 - \pm 0.39$ Weak $\pm 0.00 - \pm 0.19$ Very weak						

The results revealed that there is a *significant* relationship between the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with controversial issues and their professional development ($r=0.442$, $p=0.000$). The relationship is positive and moderate. This means that teachers managed the challenges in teaching controversial issues because they engage in professional development, teachers are confident knowing that they have the skills needed to succeed in their line of work. A *significant* relationship exists between the challenges faced by teachers in terms of administrative support and their professional development ($r=0.369$, $p=0.004$). The relationship is weak but positive. This means that administrative support is evident in providing continuous professional development for teachers. The relationship between the challenges faced by teachers in terms of teaching and learning resources and their instructional leadership is *significant* ($r=0.262$, $p=0.045$). The relationship is weak but positive. This means that school leaders involve in instruction and work to provide resources to help teachers improve in teaching. There is a *significant* relationship between the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with controversial issues and their instructional leadership ($r=0.590$, $p=0.000$). The relationship is positive and moderate. This means that school leaders effectively deal with teachers confronting difficulties in teaching controversial issues. A *significant* relationship exists between the challenges faced by teachers in terms of administrative support and their instructional leadership ($r=0.490$, $p=0.000$). The relationship is moderate and positive. This means that school administrators and leaders involve in instruction and work to provide resources to help teachers.

CONCLUSION

From data gathered and discussed, it is concluded that there was a significant relationship between the level of challenges faced by 21st century social science teacher in teaching current and controversial issues in terms of

teaching and learning resources; learners' diversity; social media and Information; dealing with controversial issues and administrative support and the level of coping practices in terms of professional development and instructional leadership for the reason that the teachers continuously engaged into professional development to cope with the challenges in teaching because the school administrators and leaders involve in instruction work to provide resources to help the teachers, thus the null hypothesis was not supported.

RECOMMENDATION

The conclusions made led to the formulation of the following recommendations:

1. The Lawmakers and the Department of Education may increase teacher's motivation in the form of incentives to teachers in their participation and commitment in professional development and ongoing learning to improve their professional competence.
2. The Department of education may reduce massive paperwork and collection of meaningless data with no obvious use for teaching and cut down heavy workload to the teachers for them to have enough time to plan, create and prepared instructional devices for learners with diverse needs.
3. The school administrator may provide support and capacity building to social science teachers particularly in certain areas that reflects teacher's needs using ICT skills to broaden their knowledge in various technique in modern classroom and to eradicate the difficulties in teaching current and controversial issues.
4. The school heads may provide accessible learning platform for offline and online or learning management system for teachers and learners with multimedia learning content which is comprehensive and practical which will serve as great tools in learning new skills or information.
5. The social science teacher may actively involve in promoting the importance of media and information literacy in their teaching and learning and effectively



utilize media content in teaching to develop students to be creative and critical thinkers as well as responsible

users and competent producers of media and information.

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