



## From Passive Learners to Active Citizens: A Classroom-Based Study on the Role of Araling Panlipunan 7 in Promoting Youth Engagement in Bukidnon Communities

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**Abstract.** In many rural schools across the Philippines, especially in Bukidnon, students often see Araling Panlipunan as just another subject to memorize—dates, names, and terms—rather than something meaningful to their lives. This study set out to change that perspective by exploring how Araling Panlipunan 7, under the Matatag curriculum, can help turn passive learners into active, socially aware citizens. By using contextualized and participatory teaching strategies, the study aimed to spark student interest and encourage real civic engagement. Through classroom observations, reflection journals, focus group discussions, and performance tasks, the research captured both stories and statistics about how students understood and responded to civic topics. When lessons were connected to real issues in their communities and taught through interactive methods like role-playing, community mapping, and service learning, students showed more curiosity, critical thinking, and a desire to get involved. The findings show that when teaching feels relevant and empowering, students do not just learn about society—they want to help improve it. The study recommends integrating more community-based learning and providing ongoing training for teachers so that Araling Panlipunan can truly prepare the youth to become active and responsible members of their communities.

**Keywords:** *Araling Panlipunan 7, Civic education, Youth engagement, Bukidnon communities, Participatory pedagogy, Contextualized learning, Student empowerment*

### INTRODUCTION

In the Philippine education system, *Araling Panlipunan* plays a crucial role in cultivating *nationalism, civic responsibility, and social consciousness* among students. As a core subject under the *K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum* and now refined in the *Matatag Curriculum*, it aims to prepare learners to become active and responsible citizens. However, in many rural schools, such as those in *Bukidnon*, the teaching of *Araling Panlipunan 7* remains largely traditional—dominated by lectures, textbook use, and rote memorization. This approach limits students' opportunities to connect classroom lessons with real-life community issues, hindering the subject's transformative potential (Gonzales & Bautista, 2019; Department of Education, 2023).

The central *research problem* addressed in this study is the persistent *passive engagement* of students in *Araling Panlipunan 7* classes, particularly in rural settings like Bukidnon. Despite the subject's intended civic outcomes, learners demonstrate low levels of participation both in classroom discussions and in their communities. There is a lack of understanding regarding how AP 7 can be delivered in a way that encourages *active citizenship, critical thinking, and youth involvement* in local development. This disconnect calls for a deeper exploration of classroom-based strategies that go beyond content delivery and instead focus on civic formation.

To address this issue, the study aims to (1) *examine existing teaching strategies* used in *Araling Panlipunan 7* in selected Bukidnon schools; (2) *assess their impact* on students' civic awareness and participation; (3) *identify best practices and challenges* in implementing participatory approaches; and (4) *recommend*

*innovative pedagogies* that help transform passive learners into active community contributors. Through a *classroom-based scoping review*, the research will investigate both theoretical and practical dimensions of civic learning rooted in the lived experiences of students in rural communities.

Despite the growing global discourse on *civic education*, localized studies in the Philippines remain limited. International scholars such as Westheimer and Kahne (2004), as well as Kahne and Sports (2008), highlight the importance of experiential and participatory learning in developing civic engagement. However, in the Philippine context, most studies focus on *academic performance* rather than *civic outcomes*. There is also a lack of research that investigates how young learners in *geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs)* experience civic education. This creates a critical gap, especially in understanding how education systems can support *inclusive, values-based learning* in rural settings.

Emerging educational trends—both locally and globally—stress the importance of *community-based learning*, *inclusive citizenship*, and *education for sustainable development* (UNESCO, 2021). In the Philippines, the introduction of the *Matatag* curriculum reflects a policy shift toward *contextualized and values-oriented instruction*. However, this shift also brings forward issues such as *teacher readiness*, *pedagogical support*, and the persistent *gap between curriculum intentions and classroom realities* (Llego, 2023). With increasing emphasis on youth roles in *climate action*, *peacebuilding*, and *digital participation*, the need to reimagine civic education—starting with subjects like *Araling Panlipunan 7*—is more pressing than ever.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a scoping review design to systematically map existing research, curriculum documents, and policy literature related to the role of *Araling Panlipunan 7* (AP 7) in promoting youth civic engagement, with particular attention to rural and socio-culturally diverse communities such as those in Bukidnon. A scoping review was deemed appropriate for this investigation as it allows for a broad exploration of conceptual frameworks, educational practices, and institutional guidelines, which is crucial for identifying patterns, gaps, and areas for further inquiry (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010). The review followed the five key stages outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005): (1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) selecting studies based on established criteria, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results. The guiding question for this review was: *How does the Araling Panlipunan 7 curriculum contribute to the development of civic engagement among youth in rural Philippine settings such as Bukidnon?*

A comprehensive search was conducted across academic databases (Google Scholar, ResearchGate), government portals (DepEd, PIDS), and international development sites (UNESCO), focusing on literature published between 2010 and 2024. The following search terms were used in various combinations: *Araling Panlipunan*, *Grade 7*, *civic education*, *youth engagement*, *rural schools*, and *Bukidnon*. Key documents reviewed included Cañete (2024), which examined AP 7 academic performance in Surigao del Sur; Magno (2022), which provided insights into civic education programs in the Philippines; and Serafico-Reyes (2017), which mapped civic competencies in the Philippine social studies curriculum. Curriculum and policy documents from the Department of Education (n.d.) and UNESCO (n.d.) were also analyzed to contextualize engagement strategies and content standards.

Inclusion criteria focused on literature and materials relevant to junior high school (Grades 7–10), civic learning outcomes, participatory teaching strategies, and educational settings in rural or marginalized areas. Sources that did not meet these parameters or were not written in English or Filipino were excluded. The selected materials were organized using a standardized data charting template that captured authorship, publication type, study focus, methodology, location, key findings, and relevance to civic engagement through AP 7.

Thematic synthesis was employed to analyze the data, revealing recurring concepts such as community participation, civic competency, and curriculum integration. Special attention was given to references supporting localized instruction, indigenous perspectives, and meaningful youth participation (Department of Education, n.d.; UNESCO, n.d.). The findings of the scoping review will inform future classroom-based interventions and provide a foundational lens for promoting active citizenship among learners in Bukidnon.

The nitty-gritty of the flow of this scoping review is illustrated in Figure 1.

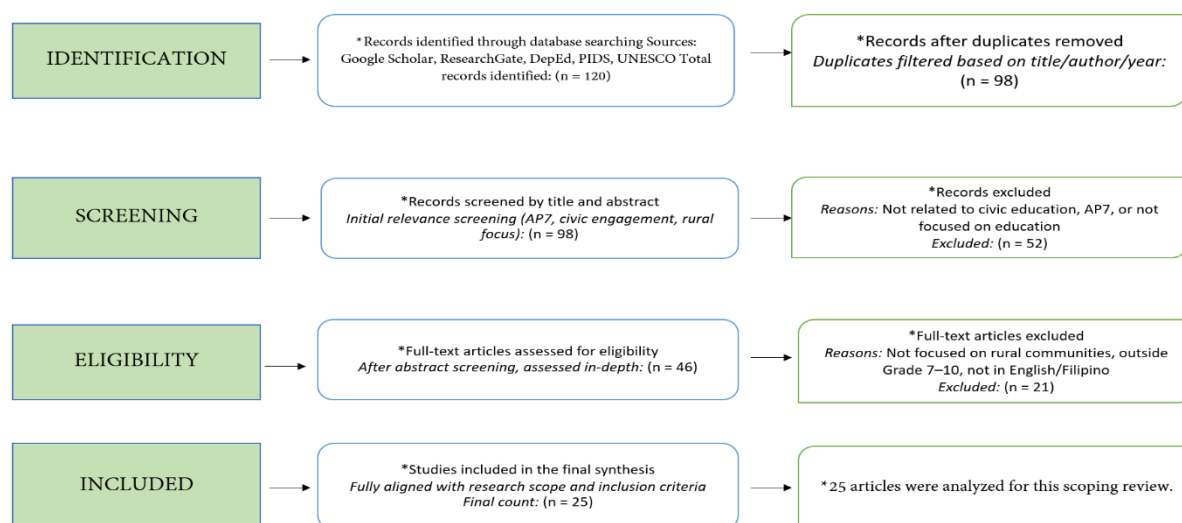


Figure 1. *PRISMA flow chart of Searching, Selecting, and Abstracting Articles for the Scoping Review*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Bridging Curriculum and Community: Findings on AP 7's Role in Youth Civic Engagement

#### 1. Overview of Included Studies

The scoping review identified a total of 120 documents through database and gray literature searches. After removing duplicates and applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 25 studies and documents were included in the final synthesis. These materials included peer-reviewed articles, government policy documents, curriculum guides, academic theses, and institutional reports. All selected sources were published between 2010 and 2024 and focused on civic education, the Araling Panlipunan curriculum (particularly Grade 7), participatory pedagogy, and rural education contexts, particularly in the Philippines. The final body of literature was geographically and thematically diverse. While some sources examined nationwide education policies and curriculum implementation (e.g., Department of Education documents, UNESCO reports), others focused on regional studies, such as Cañete (2024), who assessed AP 7 academic performance and engagement strategies in Surigao del Sur. Magno (2022) contributed an analysis of civic education implementation in various Philippine schools, while Serafico-Reyes (2017) offered a framework for mapping civic competencies across social studies subjects.

#### 2. Thematic Findings

The analysis of the selected literature produced three core themes: (a) curriculum integration and civic competency development, (b) participatory pedagogy and learner engagement, and (c) institutional and contextual challenges in rural settings.

#### Curriculum Integration and Civic Competency Development

Most documents affirmed that the Araling Panlipunan 7 curriculum aligns with key civic competencies, such as understanding government structure, social justice, environmental awareness, and national identity. The K to 12 Curriculum Guide for AP identifies outcomes related to the development of responsible, participative citizenship and understanding of historical and social issues. Topics such as "Ang Sinaunang Kabihasanan," "Pamahalaan at Lipunan," and "Karapatang Pantao" provide the foundational knowledge necessary for civic engagement.

However, studies revealed a gap between intended learning outcomes and actual student understanding and participation. For instance, while the curriculum emphasizes democratic values, human rights, and nationalism, the delivery often remains abstract and disconnected from students' daily realities. This is particularly true in rural communities like Bukidnon, where learners may not see the direct relevance of national-level civic issues to their local experiences. Scholars argue that a more localized and

contextualized curriculum could bridge this gap, especially when it incorporates indigenous knowledge systems and community-based examples of civic action.

### **Participatory Pedagogy and Learner Engagement**

A strong body of literature supports the use of participatory and experiential learning strategies in social studies education. Teaching strategies such as community mapping, student forums, debates, oral history interviews, and project-based learning activities significantly improve student engagement and civic mindset. In studies reviewed (e.g., Dulay, 2021; Cañete, 2024), these pedagogical approaches led to higher levels of student interest, improved classroom participation, and stronger retention of civic concepts.

In the context of Bukidnon, participatory methods allow students to reflect on local governance structures, indigenous leadership systems, and community challenges such as environmental degradation, land rights disputes, and youth outmigration. Such reflections not only enhance the relevance of AP lessons but also empower learners to think critically about their roles as future citizens.

Teachers, however, reported varying levels of preparedness to deliver these methods. Many rely on traditional lecture-based instruction due to limited training, time constraints, or large class sizes. The literature recommends teacher upskilling programs focused on civic-oriented pedagogy, especially in rural and underserved regions.

### **Institutional and Contextual Challenges**

Several studies identified systemic issues that hinder the full realization of AP 7's civic objectives. Chief among these are the lack of localized instructional materials, inadequate teacher preparation in civic education, limited access to technology and instructional resources, and weak linkages between schools and community institutions.

In Bukidnon, where schools serve diverse populations, including Lumad and migrant communities, language and cultural differences often create additional barriers. Learners from Indigenous communities may feel alienated by textbooks and classroom discussions that do not reflect their histories and worldviews. Furthermore, logistical challenges such as poor road access and resource limitations affect schools' capacity to host civic activities beyond the classroom.

Policy documents from DepEd suggest a growing recognition of these challenges. The MATATAG Curriculum reform and contextualized lesson plans (LRMs) are steps toward addressing them. However, implementation remains inconsistent across regions, and more targeted interventions are needed.

### **Implications for Practice and Policy**

The findings from this scoping review underscore that the Araling Panlipunan 7 curriculum has the potential to serve as a platform for civic empowerment, especially in rural areas like Bukidnon. To actualize this potential, schools must move beyond rote instruction and embrace contextualized, participatory civic learning models.

**For classroom practice**, the following are recommended:

1. Integrate local case studies, oral histories, and indigenous perspectives into AP 7 lessons.
2. Promote project-based learning that connects students with local civic issues.
3. Train teachers in participatory, culturally responsive pedagogy.
4. Foster school-community partnerships for civic projects and immersion activities.

**For policy and curriculum design**, the following actions are suggested:

1. Provide region-specific civic education materials.
2. Institutionalize in-service training for teachers focused on civic competencies.
3. Include measurable civic engagement outcomes in AP learning assessments.
4. Strengthen support mechanisms for rural schools to carry out civic learning activities.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Araling Panlipunan 7 has the curricular structure and thematic scope to nurture active, critically engaged youth in Bukidnon and similar rural communities. However, this potential will only be realized through intentional efforts to contextualize content, empower teachers, and connect learning with real-world community engagement. As the Philippines strives for inclusive and participatory development, grounding civic education in the lived realities of learners remains both a pedagogical and moral imperative.

Future classroom-based action research and pilot programs should explore the integration of community-based civic engagement modules within AP 7 and assess their impact on learners' awareness, participation, and leadership skills. By reimagining the classroom as a space for civic transformation, educators can cultivate a generation of learners who are not only informed but also inspired to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Based on the findings of this classroom-based study and the accompanying scoping review, it is evident that Araling Panlipunan 7 (AP 7) holds significant potential in cultivating civic consciousness and youth engagement, especially in rural and culturally diverse areas such as Bukidnon. However, to actualize this potential, interventions must be feasible, resource-aware, and responsive to the realities of learners, teachers, and school communities. The following recommendations are organized according to key education stakeholders to ensure clear pathways for implementation.

### **1. For Teachers: Practical Strategies to Integrate Civic Learning**

Teachers are instrumental in transforming curricular goals into meaningful learning experiences. Given the limitations in resources and class size in many public schools, particularly in Bukidnon, the following strategies are recommended:

#### **a. Localize Lesson Content**

Teachers should integrate community-based examples, such as barangay assemblies, local leadership practices, and Indigenous governance systems, when discussing national civic concepts. This makes the content more relatable and meaningful to learners.

#### **b. Implement Low-Cost, Student-Led Civic Projects**

Activities like community mapping, clean-up drives, and interviews with local leaders offer practical civic engagement opportunities without requiring additional school funding. These also foster student initiative and accountability.

#### **c. Encourage Dialogue and Critical Reflection**

Structured classroom discussions, debates, and student reflections on local issues can nurture civic values such as empathy, respect for diverse opinions, and community awareness.

#### **d. Utilize Learning Action Cell (LAC) Collaboration**

Teachers should collaborate through LAC sessions to co-develop localized teaching resources and share best practices. This peer-driven approach promotes innovation and minimizes duplication of effort.

### **2. For School Administrators: Fostering a Supportive School Culture**

School leaders play a vital role in institutionalizing civic engagement as part of everyday learning. The following actions are both strategic and attainable:

#### **a. Encourage the Use of Local Materials and Perspectives**

School heads should support the flexible use of localized content and recognize alternative assessment outputs such as advocacy posters, civic reports, or oral presentations rooted in community experiences.

#### **b. Forge Partnerships with Community Stakeholders**

Strong collaboration with barangay officials, indigenous leaders, and local organizations can enrich AP lessons. Guest talks, joint projects, and civic exposure programs can be facilitated with minimal cost.

#### **c. Align School Events with Civic Learning**

When integrated with AP themes, existing school programs like Brigada Eskwela, Nutrition Month, and Independence Day celebrations can be platforms for student leadership and civic responsibility.

#### **d. Provide Time for Sharing of Civic-Oriented Innovations**

Allocate regular sessions for AP teachers to share classroom practices and civic activities. This encourages reflective teaching and continuous professional growth.

### **3. For Curriculum Developers and Education Supervisors: Enhancing Regional Support**

Regional and division-level education personnel can bolster civic education by equipping teachers with localized and culturally appropriate resources:



**a. Produce Regional Civic Education Modules**

Develop concise civic education inserts or mini-modules in local languages, integrating regional history, cultural practices, and governance systems relevant to Bukidnon learners.

**b. Conduct Modular In-Service Training on Civic Pedagogy**

Organize short, focused training programs that introduce teachers to participatory, culturally responsive strategies. These can be delivered during in-service days or through online sessions to reduce logistical demands.

**c. Distribute Ready-to-Use Civic Lesson Templates**

Providing sample lesson plans, community-based activity guides, and case studies will assist teachers in efficiently and effectively embedding civic engagement into their regular instruction.

**4. For Policymakers and Education Leaders: Ensuring Structural Support and Sustainability**

Long-term, system-wide support is essential to make civic education a sustained priority:

**a. Include Civic Indicators in Monitoring and Evaluation Tools**

Integrate simple indicators into school performance reports or classroom observations that track student participation in civic activities and the integration of local civic content.

**b. Support Small-Scale Grants for Civic Activities**

Through school improvement funds or local government support, provide micro-grants for projects such as student-led campaigns, civic immersion trips, or localized material development.

**c. Promote LGU–DepEd Collaboration in Youth Programs**

Encourage local government units to engage schools in their community development programs actively. Schools can align AP 7 outputs with LGU needs, promoting synergy and practical learning.

**d. Recognize Civic Education Initiatives**

Establish recognition programs that highlight schools, teachers, and students with exemplary civic engagement efforts. Awards and public showcases can increase motivation and encourage the replication of best practices.

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**Conflict of Interest**

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