



Instructional adaptability of grade 1 teachers to Integrated Learning Experiences (ILE)

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Abstract

This study investigated the instructional adaptability of Grade 1 teachers in implementing Integrated Learning Experiences (ILE) in Tabaco City Division during School Year 2024–2025. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, ten purposively selected teachers from ten clusters were interviewed to capture their experiences, strategies, and challenges. Findings revealed that teachers perceived ILE as holistic and rewarding, fostering improved mastery of skills, active engagement, and deeper comprehension among pupils. Adaptability was demonstrated through contextualized strategies, differentiated instruction, responsive lesson planning, classroom management, and ICT integration. However, teachers encountered readiness gaps among pupils lacking foundational literacy and motor skills, as well as continuity challenges due to lengthy integrated lessons disrupted by suspensions, activities, or absenteeism. To address these, an Instructional Adaptability Plan was developed, emphasizing shorter lesson units, contextualization, and professional development. The study concludes that teacher adaptability is central to bridging policy and practice, ensuring ILE's sustainability and effectiveness. Recommendations include continued implementation, institutionalized professional development, and refinement of ILE lessons. This research contributes to strengthening instructional leadership, guiding policy refinement, and supporting teacher professional growth, ultimately enhancing learner outcomes.

Keywords: Integrated Learning Experiences; Instructional Adaptability; Grade 1 Teachers; Tabaco City Division

1. Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is globally recognized as foundational to lifelong learning, yet many systems struggle with quality and literacy outcomes. In the Philippines, functional illiteracy and frustration-level reading remain pressing challenges, undermining the goals of ECE. To address these, the Department of Education Region V – Bicol institutionalized Integrated Learning Experiences (ILE), a holistic, learner-centered approach that interweaves subjects into meaningful ten-day cycles. Anchored in Republic Act No. 10533 and DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2024, ILE aims to strengthen literacy, numeracy, and holistic development. However, its success depends largely on teachers' instructional adaptability—their ability to contextualize resources, manage diverse learners, and sustain engagement despite resource constraints. Since ILE's first year of implementation in 2024–2025, limited research exists on how teachers have adapted to this initiative. Tabaco City Division, with its diverse school contexts, provides a meaningful setting to examine these experiences. This study explores Grade 1 teachers' adaptability in implementing ILE, their challenges, and strategies, ultimately proposing an instructional adaptability plan. By bridging policy and classroom realities, the study underscores the centrality of teacher adaptability in realizing ECE's promise as a foundation for lifelong learning.

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2. Materials

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through structured interviews with ten Grade 1 teachers from Tabaco City Division, each representing one of the ten clusters. These participants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in implementing ILE during School Year 2024–2025. Secondary data included books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and official DepEd memoranda that contextualized and validated findings. The main research instrument was an interview guide consisting of three sets of open-ended questions. The first set explored teachers' experiences in implementing ILE, including pupil responses and the impact on teaching practices. The second set examined how teachers adapted their strategies, contextualized resources, and assessed their adaptability skills. The third set identified difficulties encountered during implementation. To ensure validity, the instrument underwent face validation by the Thesis Committee and content validation by external experts, including a Public Schools District Supervisor, a principal, and a Master Teacher. Supporting materials included the ILE Learning Resource Package, which provided integrated curriculum maps, lesson exemplars, worksheets, and performance tasks. These materials ensured coherence between national policy and classroom practice, while the interview guide captured authentic teacher perspectives.

3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to capture the authentic experiences of Grade 1 teachers in implementing ILE. Phenomenology was chosen because it emphasizes lived experiences and provides insights into how individuals perceive and adapt to educational reforms. Ten teacher-participants were purposively selected, representing one school per cluster in Tabaco City Division. Purposive sampling ensured that participants had direct, first-hand experience with ILE implementation. Data collection was conducted through structured interviews guided by open-ended questions aligned with the study's statement of the problem. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of participants, with informed consent obtained prior to participation. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and anonymized to maintain confidentiality. Data analysis followed thematic analysis, beginning with transcription and familiarization, then coding meaningful segments of data. Codes were grouped into broader themes that captured recurring ideas across participants. These themes were connected to construct a coherent narrative addressing the research questions. Validation of findings was achieved through triangulation with secondary sources and supervisory feedback. This methodological design ensured that the study provided a comprehensive understanding of teacher adaptability, contextual challenges, and instructional strategies in implementing ILE.

4. Results

The study revealed four major findings. First, teachers found ILE holistic and rewarding, as pupils demonstrated improved mastery of skills, active engagement, and deeper comprehension. Professional development and supervisory guidance further strengthened these outcomes. Second, teachers adapted to ILE through contextualized strategies, differentiated instruction, responsive lesson planning, classroom management, and ICT integration. These adaptations allowed them to align lessons with diverse learner needs and classroom realities. Third, significant difficulties emerged. Teachers reported readiness gaps among pupils lacking foundational literacy and motor skills, making the transition from play-based kindergarten to structured ILE tasks overwhelming. Continuity challenges also arose, as lengthy ten-day integrated lessons were disrupted by suspensions, school activities, or absenteeism, leading to fragmented learning despite catch-up efforts. Fourth, an Instructional Adaptability Plan was developed to address these difficulties. The plan emphasized shorter lesson units, contextualization of resources, differentiated instruction, and sustained professional development. Overall, the results highlight that while ILE fosters meaningful learning, its success depends on teachers' adaptability in navigating challenges and sustaining engagement.

5. Discussion

The findings underscore the central role of teacher adaptability in bridging policy and practice. While ILE provided holistic and rewarding classroom practices, its effectiveness was contingent on teachers' ability to contextualize lessons and manage diverse learners. The readiness gap among pupils highlights the need for preparatory interventions in literacy and motor skills before Grade 1. This aligns with global evidence that early childhood education must prioritize foundational skills to ensure smoother transitions. Continuity challenges, caused by lengthy integrated lessons, suggest that lesson cycles should be flexible and modular to accommodate disruptions. Teachers' use of ICT tools and differentiated strategies reflects adaptability but also points to the need for institutionalized professional development. Supervisory support was crucial, reinforcing that reforms succeed when leadership structures provide guidance and monitoring. The Instructional Adaptability Plan developed in this study offers practical solutions, emphasizing shorter

lesson units, contextualization, and sustained training. These findings contribute to policy refinement, highlighting that reforms must be responsive to classroom realities. Ultimately, teacher adaptability ensures that ILE achieves its intended outcomes of holistic learning, engagement, and comprehension, while addressing systemic challenges in Philippine education.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that Integrated Learning Experiences (ILE) provided Grade 1 teachers in Tabaco City Division with holistic and rewarding practices that enhanced pupil mastery, engagement, and comprehension. Teachers demonstrated adaptability through contextualized strategies, differentiated instruction, responsive planning, classroom management, and ICT integration. However, challenges such as readiness gaps and continuity disruptions underscored the need for further refinement of ILE. Pupils lacking foundational literacy and motor skills struggled with the transition from kindergarten, while lengthy integrated lessons were vulnerable to interruptions. These difficulties highlight the importance of preparatory interventions and flexible lesson structures. The Instructional Adaptability Plan developed in this study addressed these challenges by proposing shorter lesson units, contextualization, differentiated instruction, and sustained professional development. The study recommends continued implementation of ILE, institutionalization of training programs, and refinement of lesson resources. For policymakers, the findings emphasize the need to align curriculum frameworks with classroom realities. For school leaders, the study underscores the importance of supervisory support and resource provision. For teachers, it validates their adaptability and provides strategies for professional growth. Ultimately, the study contributes to strengthening instructional leadership, guiding policy refinement, and enhancing learner outcomes. By documenting teacher experiences and adaptability, it bridges the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that ILE fulfills its promise as a foundation for lifelong learning.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest should be disclosed.

Statement of ethical approval

This study was conducted in compliance with institutional ethical standards and approved by the Schools Division Office of Tabaco City

Statement of informed consent

All participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Written consent was obtained from students and their parents prior to participation.

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