

Contextualization of the Kindergarten Curriculum in the Philippines: Philosophy, Legal Bases, and Strategies for Implementation

GREG TABIOS PAWILEN

*College of Human Ecology
University of the Philippines, Los Banos*

Abstract: *The integration of Kindergarten in the Philippine basic education system posted several opportunities and challenges. One of which is contextualization of the curriculum that ensures the curriculum to be relevant and responsive to the needs and sociocultural context of the learners. Contextualization of the kindergarten curriculum makes the Kindergarten curriculum learner-centered and empowering for the learners. This paper discusses the philosophy and legal bases for contextualizing the Kindergarten Curriculum in the Philippines. It also identifies several of the strategies that schools and teachers do to implement contextualization of the curriculum. As the whole country is in its transition period for the implementation of its K-12 education program, curriculum contextualization is one of the programs for making the curriculum aligned to the culture and context of the different local communities across the country.*

Keywords: *contextualization; curriculum; kindergarten*

1. Introduction:

Teaching young children has a long history in the Philippines. It is as old as the country itself. It is part in the oral and written history of the country that the ancestors taught their young children focusing on life skills, cultural values, local literatures, basic mathematical skills like counting, comparing, size, shapes, problem solving, and understanding nature their surroundings which is the basis of science. The parents, particularly the mothers, and community elders served as teachers for young children. The Filipino ancestors understand the importance of early education to prepare young children to become full adults. Education during this period is home-based and community-based.

Spain colonized the Philippines for 333 years. The coming of the Spaniards as colonial masters brought a lot of changes in the Philippines. The Spaniards started to put a structure to Philippine education. Though it is not accessible to all Filipinos, the Spaniards established schools for boys and girls under the supervision of the Catholic Church. Vocational training, religious instruction, reading, writing, and arithmetic are the content of the curriculum. There is no mention of kindergarten education during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines but the home-based education and indigenous education continued to flourish. The Filipino Muslims also have their own Madrasah, which is a religious school to teach Islamic religion and values to young children. Indigenous education system among the cultural groups and tribes were also sustained.

The coming of the Americans and their stay as colonial masters for more about 47 years in the Philippines saw a gigantic change in Philippine education system. Public education system was established, protestant missionaries established private schools, and the curriculum was structured to follow the US curriculum for public schools. Teacher education was established to train Filipino teachers who were deployed in different provinces in the country. The Americans introduced the system of community schools and primary schools in remote areas of the country. The US government, through a democratic but colonial government, allowed the indigenous education system to continue but missionaries were sent to establish church-related schools or mission schools for some tribes and rural communities in their desire to influence and Americanize the mentality and culture of the Filipinos.

The Methodist, Presbyterian, and other protestant churches formally introduced kindergarten education in the Philippines through the mission schools established during the American period. Progressive models and philosophies of Kindergarten were introduced in the country and eventually became popular. Play, English language, western literature and music, arts, physical education, social studies, science, and values education are taught in Kindergarten classes. Kindergarten education is not compulsory and it is offered in private schools and sectarian schools. All kindergarten schools are supervised under the Bureau of Private Education under the former Department of Education Culture and Sports.

Since the liberation of the Philippines in 1946 until the early years of the 21st Century, the kindergarten curriculum in the Philippines is highly influenced by western models except for the Muslim Madrasah that maintained its Islamic Filipino identity. It was in 2012 when the Philippine government, in consonance with the Millennium Development Goals on achieving Education for All (EFA) by the year

2015, declared a policy of the State to provide equal opportunities for all children to avail of accessible mandatory and compulsory kindergarten education. This is hoped effectively promote physical, social, intellectual, emotional and skills stimulation and values formation to sufficiently prepare them for formal elementary schooling.

Institutionalizing Kindergarten education to be integrated into the Philippine basic education system was made possible upon the signing of Republic Act 10157, otherwise known as The Kindergarten Education Act on January 20, 2012. The law demands that kindergarten education is compulsory and is a prerequisite before a child can enroll in Grade 1. The inclusion of kindergarten in the basic education system was in consonance with the Millennium Development Goals on achieving Education for All (EFA) particularly in making early childhood education accessible for all children by the year 2015. It is a giant leap in the promotion of children's education, welfare, and rights in the whole country.

The Kindergarten Education Act opened multiple possibilities and opportunities. It made compulsory for public elementary schools to open kindergarten classes, and it paved the way for private kindergarten schools to restructure their existing kindergarten programs to meet the standards set by the law and to comply with the requirements of the Department of Education (DepEd).

The study aims to examine the philosophical and legal framework for contextualizing the curriculum in the Philippines, and identify the implementation strategies done to contextualize the Philippine kindergarten curriculum. With more than 77 ethno linguistic groups, the Philippines is on the right track to embark on a program to contextualize its K-12 Education Curriculum. Specifically, the study answers three important questions: (1) What is the philosophical framework for contextualization of curriculum in the Philippines? (2) What is the legal framework for contextualization of curriculum in the Philippines? (3) What are the strategies done to contextualize the kindergarten curriculum in the Philippines?

2. Curriculum and Contextualization

Curriculum is defined in many ways: as a set of subjects, a set of learning outcomes, as a set of learning experiences, or simply as a plan. In a more artistic way, curriculum can be described as the head and the heart of education. It is the centerpiece of the whole education system whereby all learning areas and disciplines are learned. It is the basis for structuring the education system and organizing all the necessary support systems that are needed in its implementation. In this study, curriculum is characterized as a reflection of peoples' lives. It reflects their goals and aspirations. It embodies their knowledge system and values system, and it offers multiple ways for people to learn various important skills that they need in their everyday life. Curriculum must focus on the ideal and what is real.

Contextualization is a process of humanizing the curriculum by designing and implementing it in the context of the learners' personal experiences and socio-cultural contexts. Erickson (2001) pointed out that when curriculum and instruction engage the personal intellect of students (and teachers), they are more motivated and interested in the study, and exhibit a greater degree of retention and understanding. If the curriculum is relevant and responsive to issues surrounding the human condition

and world, it challenges the intellect and engages the spirit to learn and develop new forms of knowledge (Pawilen & Sumida, 2005; Erickson 2008).

Kenea (2014) views contextualization as one aspect of maintaining the relevance of the curriculum to the learners' experiences and to the situation where it is being implemented. It is an educational process for adapting the curriculum to the context of the learners and community. In contextualization, the curriculum will utilize community resources such as material and natural resources, local history, language, cultural practices, and indigenous learning systems.

King and Schielmann (2004) pointed out that cultures and peoples' traditional knowledge must be included in the curricula for indigenous children and youth at all levels of education. Curriculum is a reflection of life and the way curriculum is designed is a reflection of the structure and organization of human knowledge. It embodies the peoples' wisdom, culture, practices, and aspirations in life; thus, there is no relevance, essence, and quality in a curriculum if it is adapted from a foreign culture. It is a rich reservoir of human knowledge, history, and experiences. One of the functions of education is to preserve and develop the culture of the people for next generations to understand their identity. For local folks and indigenous peoples, it is the knowledge of the interconnectedness of life and other things in the cosmos that will allow future generations to know their roots and enjoy harmony of life.

Contextualization of curriculum is also supported by the view of cultural anthropology that teaching is a form of cultural transmission and learning as culture acquisition (Cajete, 1999; Spindler 1987; Wolcott, 1991). This type of education is founded on the way of life, traditions, worldview, culture, and spirituality of the people and it is a pathway of education that recognizes wisdom imbedded in indigenous knowledge (Cajete, 1999; SIKAT, 1999). Contextualization of curriculum aims to provide a curriculum that is developed and presented within the context of a community in a way that embodies the culture and traditional knowledge of the people, and demonstrating that universal knowledge systems can be met in the process (Pawilen and Sumida, 2007).

3. Curriculum Contextualization in Philippine Context

Embarking on programs and projects on contextualization of curriculum is very appropriate in the Philippines where there are more or less 77 major ethno-linguistic groups. The Republic of the Philippines' Constitution (1987) provides a legal foundation for planning a contextualized curriculum. The said constitution recognizes the right of every Filipino to avail quality education regardless of race, ethnic background, or culture. Republic Act No. 8371, known as The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, also recognizes the right of indigenous peoples to an integrated education system that is relevant to their needs. This act empowers indigenous local communities to preserve their culture, indigenous knowledge, traditions, and customs known as community intellectual rights. These serve as framework to further discover the indigenous peoples' culture and indigenous knowledge, and find means on how to utilize them to enhance the quality of education in the Philippines.

Contextualization of curriculum to local needs and conditions is important in the goal of developing a curriculum that is consistent with indigenous peoples' needs, worldviews, and socio-cultural contexts (Pawilen, 2007). It is also consistent with the framework of achieving one of the core goals of Education for All (EFA), that is, universal kindergarten education for all young children especially those who are living in local and indigenous communities.

In Philippine context, contextualization is the big educational umbrella that includes localization and indigenization of the curriculum (DepEd Order 32, s 2014; RA 10533). According to the Department of Education, Localization is the process of adapting the curriculum to local needs and conditions, while an Indigenous Curriculum is a type of curriculum that integrates the cultural knowledge, local language, and cultural values (DepEd Order 32, s 2014).

4.Contextualization of Curriculum and Learner-centered Education

Kindergarten education is always closely connected with learner-centered education. Contextualization of curriculum is also supported by learner-centered education principles. Basically, a learner-centered education refers to a kind of education that considers the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, interests, and beliefs that learners bring into the classroom (Pawilen, 2006; Curtis and Carter, 1996; Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). It pays attention to the needs, concerns, expectations, and the natural environment of the learners (Dewey, 2001; Gandini, 1997), and it includes curricular and instructional practices that are developmentally appropriate for the learners (NAEYC, 2005).

In a learner-centered education, providing children's social and emotional development is an equally important aspect of planning a curriculum that reflects children's lives (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). It focuses on the learner's identity, culture, family life, and the need for power and independence, develop self-esteem among the learners (Curtis and Carter, 1996; NAEYC, 2005; Shor, 1992). These are also addressed in curriculum contextualization. A contextualized curriculum is one that is culture-relevant, culture-appropriate, and culture-responsive.

Ladson (1995) includes teaching practices that are culturally relevant, culturally responsive, culturally appropriate, and culturally compatible educational practices in the definition of a learner-centered education. The term also includes diagnostic teaching (Bell and Purdy, 1985) which means an attempt to discover learners' thinking and idea in relation to a given situation or problem. Learner centered-education also pays careful attention to the language of the learners because it provides a basis for further learning (Bransford et al., 2000).

Contextualization of the Kindergarten curriculum in the Philippines is an important task for all educators and curriculum developers. For now, contextualization is focused on local communities and these communities are also turning to become multicultural communities due to migration processes and intermarriage of individuals from different cultural groups.

This study aims to help Filipino educators understand the context and concept of curriculum contextualization in Kindergarten, and facilitate clear understanding among scholars and international readers about the contextualization of curriculum

in the country. This is the first attempt to study how contextualization is done in the kindergarten level in the Philippines.

5.Methodology

The study is a qualitative research. It utilized qualitative data to answer the three research questions posted in this study. (1) What is the philosophical framework for contextualization of curriculum in the Philippines? (2) What is the legal framework for contextualization of curriculum in the Philippines? (3) What are the strategies done to contextualize the kindergarten curriculum in the Philippines?

Data Gathering Procedure

1.Document analysis. Laws, Department Orders, and some documents on contextualization were analyzed to examine the philosophical and legal framework for contextualization of the Kindergarten Curriculum.

2.Curriculum analysis. The new kindergarten curriculum was analyzed to look into curriculum guidelines on how contextualization is envisioned to be implemented at the level of the intended curriculum.

3.Focus Group Discussion. This was used to identify strategies used to implement contextualization of the kindergarten curriculum in various areas in the Philippines.

Research Participants

Purposive sampling was used to identify 25 education supervisors and local schoolteachers who participated in this study.

1.They are involved in the contextualization of curriculum in their school, district, or region for at least 10 years.

2.They have served as teachers, supervisors, curriculum resource persons, and instructional materials developers in various local schools.

Research Instrument

This study utilized a questionnaire to guide the researcher and the research participants in identifying the strategies and programs they do to contextualize the kindergarten curriculum in their area.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data from the document analysis and focus group discussion were analyzed qualitatively. The pertinent laws, memoranda, and Department Orders were identified and discussed in this study. A graphical presentation was used to illustrate the philosophical framework of contextualization followed by relevant discussion of the philosophy of contextualization. The laws and Department Orders were identified and several sections of this legal framework were reported in the paper with proper interpretations.

The result of the focus group discussion was also analyzed and reported qualitatively. Strategies and programs on contextualization were identified and discussed in the paper.

5.Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are reported qualitatively. The results are clustered and reported based on the 3 research questions of this study. Ideas, experiences, and concerns of the participants were analyzed thematically to answer the research questions.

A. What is the philosophical framework for contextualization of curriculum in the Philippines?

Contextualization of curriculum, from the philosophical strand, is understood as the process of embedding knowledge in history, culture, philosophical questions, and personal experiences in the curriculum. It involves the humanization of knowledge that refers to the linking of theoretical knowledge to the situation or the context of those who pursue it.

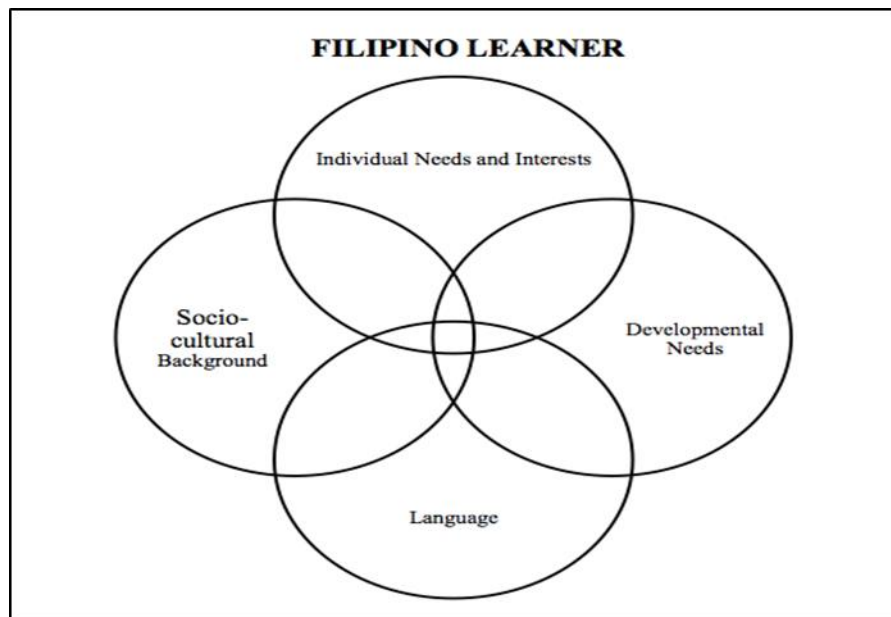


Figure 1. Emerging Philosophical Framework for Curriculum Contextualization

Figure 1 shows the emerging philosophical framework of curriculum contextualization in Kindergarten in the Philippines. The philosophical framework of curriculum contextualization in the Philippines takes its foundation from the overall framework of the K-12 Curriculum as stated in the Republic Act 10533. It is a learner-centered curriculum that aims to develop functionally literate and holistically developed Filipinos. The learner-centered philosophy permits contextualization of the Kindergarten curriculum based on the socio-cultural background, language, developmental needs, and individual needs and interests of the learners.

The learner-centered philosophy is also shared by Republic Act 10157, which is known as The Kindergarten Education Act. Certain provisions in Section 8 states that:

“The curriculum shall include standards and competencies expected of five-year old children along developmental domains. It shall focus on the child’s total development according to his/her individual needs and socio-cultural background.”

The curriculum for Kindergarten in the Philippines prescribes curriculum standards and competencies based on the five domains that are essential in the holistic development of the learners: (1) Values Education, (2) Physical Health and Motor Development, (3) Social and Emotional Development, (4) Cognitive Development, and (5) Sensory-Perceptual Motor Development. Under cognitive development are the following four learning areas: Mathematics, Understanding of the Physical & Natural Environment, Understanding of the Social Environment, and Language, Literacy and Communication.

All the competencies in these five domains are expected to be taught in a learner-centered manner which is constructivist, collaborative, and integrated (RA 10533). It is also expected that these four learning areas are taught in consideration of the cultural context of the learners that embodies the wisdom and the cultural and historical experiences of the communities where they belong (RA 10533). Teaching in kindergarten is a form of cultural transmission and cultural acquisition.

Contextualization of the kindergarten curriculum can also be seen as a form of empowering education. Through its learner-centered curriculum, it promotes open inquiry, develops the intellectual abilities of the learners in a developmentally appropriate manner, and leads the learners to develop insights and knowledge based on their personal and social experiences. It also allows the learners to use the local language in learning that enables them to express ideas, ask questions, share insights, and experience metacognition. Contextualization places the learners at the center of the curriculum.

Curriculum contextualization as a learner-centered activity is also a form of equity pedagogy by putting prime value on local culture, history, language, and values in the curriculum. It allows the learners to develop deeper appreciation of their cultural identity and history. Contextualization integrates indigenous knowledge (IK) in the curriculum. This enables the learners to realize that their community culture and the IK system practiced by the people are relevant and at par with the culture and knowledge system of other people and cultures in different countries.

The core of contextualizing the kindergarten curriculum is the development of Filipino identity among young kindergarten children. Cultural identity is important for Filipino children to develop a sense of pride for becoming Filipinos who are part of a global community.

B. What are the legal bases for contextualization of curriculum in the Philippines?

Contextualization in the Philippine Kindergarten curriculum is supported by several legal mandates from both local and international bodies. These legal

frameworks are essential in determining the parameters in contextualizing the curriculum and in guiding teachers, administrators, and educational institutions in planning, designing, developing, and implementing a contextualized curriculum for Kindergarten.

The legal framework is also essential in understanding the context in which contextualization of curriculum is seen essential in Philippine education and for every Filipino learner in particular. It provides the necessary conditions for every curriculum policy and curriculum programs to be developed.

Table 1. Legal Framework in Support for Contextualization

- 1987 Republic of the Philippines Constitution
 - 1997 Republic Act No. 8371, The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act
 - 2012 Republic Act 10533, Enhanced Basic Education Act
 - 2012 Republic Act 10157, The Kindergarten Education Act
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The 1987 Philippine Constitution provides the necessary legal foundation for curriculum contextualization in the whole education system in both from public and private schools. Section IV of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines states that:

“It is the duty of the state through the Department of Education (DepEd) to ensure that every Filipino, including children and adult special learners, will have access to quality educational programs that are relevant and responsive to their needs and interests.”

This constitutional provision was strengthened when the Congress enacted Republic Act 8371. This law seeks to empower the indigenous people (IP) in the whole country, and part of their empowerment is ensuring that the state should provide all IPs with an education that is relevant and responsive to their culture and needs. Section 30 of RA 8371 states that:

“The state should provide equal access to various cultural opportunities to indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples through the educational system, without prejudice to their right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions by providing education in their own language in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.”

Contextualization was further strengthened when the K-12 Education system was signed into a law. Republic Act 10533, known as Enhanced Basic Education Act, was developed in order to strengthen the educational system of the country. It makes sure that the curriculum is aligned and comparable with international standards while ensuring that the needs of every Filipino student are met. Section 10.2 of RA 10533 states that the curriculum shall be:

- Learner-centered, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate;*
- Relevant, responsive, and research-based;*

- c. Gender and culture-sensitive; and*
 - d. Contextualized and global.*
- Furthermore, the same section of RA 10533 states that the curriculum shall:*
- e. Use pedagogical approaches that are constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative, and integrative;*
 - f. Adhere to the principles of mother tongue-based multilingual education;*
 - g. Use the spiral progression; and*
 - h. Be flexible enough to allow schools to localize, indigenize, and enhance the same based on their respective educational and social contexts.*

In 2013, Kindergarten was integrated to the formal education system of the Philippines under the supervision of the Department of Education. This was made possible through Republic Act 10157, which is otherwise known as the Kindergarten Education Act. Section 2 of Republic Act 10157 states that:

“It is the policy of the state to make education learner-oriented and responsive to the needs, cognitive capacity, the circumstances and diversity of learners, schools and communities through the appropriate languages of teaching and learning”

Furthermore, RA 10157 encouraged the creation of various programs that are relevant to the context of Filipino children such as Kindergarten Madrasah Program, Indigenous People’s Education, Early Intervention Program for Children with Disabilities, and a Headstart Program for Gifted. The Law also encourages the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction to allow young children to be engaged in meaningful teaching and learning. These provisions show that contextualization in the kindergarten level is based on culture, needs and nature of the Filipino learners, which is a learner-centered principle.

These legal frameworks are necessary in the development of curriculum, policies, and implementation strategies for all the contextualization activities in the whole country. The legal framework ensures the sustainability of contextualization of curriculum as a program in the K-12 curriculum. It also ensures the quality of the program and links it with the framework for national development.

Currently, the Department of Education is still in the process of developing a curriculum policy for contextualizing the curriculum from K-12. This policy is hoped to provide guidance and guidelines on the development and implementation of curriculum contextualization in every school in the country. Such proposed policy should include guidance on curriculum designs, curriculum models, and instructional designs that are based on the local context of Philippine communities and schools. It must also consider certain provisions and restrictions provided under RA 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). For example, IPRA has guidelines for conducting research to local and indigenous communities and in reporting the results of studies.

It is also important to see how the proposed policy is linked to the indigenous laws or local custom of the local indigenous communities. This ensures that the curriculum is truly relevant and responsive to the sociocultural and political contexts of the people. It guarantees support and sense of ownership of the curriculum among

the people. This is also important in empowering the people to see contextualization as vital educational program in recognizing the importance of their cultural identity, cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge.

C.What are the strategies done to contextualize the kindergarten curriculum in the Philippines?

The focus group discussion provided a clear picture of how curriculum contextualization is done in the local schools, divisions, and districts in the country, that relevant in this study.

Table 2. Local Strategies on Contextualizing the Kindergarten Curriculum

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- Using the local language as medium of instruction
 - Development of local instructional materials using indigenous materials
 - Integrating local arts in the curriculum
 - Making use of the community environment for teaching science
 - Inviting community elders in class to explain community values and history
 - Integration of local history in the curriculum
 - Integration of different cultural practices and cultural values in the curriculum
 - Using local cultural artifacts for teaching
 - Teaching indigenous forms of music in the curriculum
 - Integrating local literature (stories, songs, poems, proverbs etc.) in the curriculum
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Table 2 shows the consolidated summary of the strategies used by teachers and administrators who are involved in the contextualization of curriculum in different regions and divisions in the country. The participants agreed that the implementation of the Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) provided huge opportunity for curriculum contextualization to prosper in the country. The MTB-MLE is implemented from Kindergarten to early grades in all schools in the country. With the use of the local language, teachers were able to use local songs, local stories, indigenous arts, and local artifacts.

The local schools in indigenous communities are empowered to develop curriculum and instructional materials that reflect the indigenous knowledge of the community. The history of the people, cultural beliefs and values, local literatures

and music, ethno-medicine or the use of herbal plants, ethno science and ethno mathematics are integrated in their curriculum. The teachers also teach indigenous games in their classes. Contextualization also allowed them to invite community leaders to serve as resource speakers in the schools.

The participants agreed that in spite of the strategies and efforts done by the Department of Education in contextualizing the curriculum many teachers and administrators are still in the process of training on how they can implement contextualization of curriculum in their schools. School-based management principles and rules allow and encourage local schools to develop curricular and instructional innovations that are relevant and responsive to the needs and context of the people.

The participants also encountered some problems in the implementation of curriculum contextualization.

1. Not all Kindergarten teachers are equipped in implementing curriculum contextualization in their classes
2. Lack of local materials
3. Limited funding

One of the concerns during the discussion is the immediate need for developing curriculum models for contextualization similar to the Montessori Curriculum, the Reggio Emilia Approach, and the Japanese Kindergarten model that are known to be effective and useful in teaching Kindergarten pupils. The following are summary of the comments made by the research participants:

- *The kindergarten curriculum must be made relevant and responsive to the Philippine context*
- *It must develop Filipino identity and nationalism*
- *The Philippine kindergarten curriculum must promote Filipino values and culture*
- *It must address the cultural diversity of Filipino children*
- *It must consider the learning styles and thinking styles of Filipino children.*
- *The local schools particularly those in indigenous communities must be encouraged to develop an indigenous curriculum for young children.*

There is also a concern raised on the ability of teachers to contextualize the curriculum for Kindergarten. Thus it was suggested that kindergarten teachers must undergo an in-depth training on curriculum contextualization. The training will also

include instructional materials development and teaching methods and strategies that could be used for curriculum contextualization.

6. Conclusion

Contextualization in the kindergarten curriculum in the Philippines is innovative and an act of justice to every Filipino child. The local schools and kindergarten teachers should see contextualization of curriculum as a venue for making the education system, particularly the curriculum, to be truly relevant and responsive to the people. Contextualization should be seen as an act of empowering every learner to have better understanding and deeper appreciation of the role of culture in shaping the school curriculum.

Contextualization in the Philippines is grounded by a learner-centered or humanist philosophy. The constitution and several laws support it. Teachers and school administrators should continue to be strong advocates of contextualization in the curriculum. Several strategies are already mentioned in this study, but the list could increase depending on the context of the local schools. Teacher leadership is an important factor that ensures the success of this program.

Considering that there are different cultural groups in the Philippines, it is possible to identify and develop more strategies to fully contextualize the curriculum. However, there is a need for extensive research on the different aspects of local culture, history, and values that can be integrated in the curriculum. There is also a need to do research on local literatures, music, and arts, and there is a need for teachers to study various cultural and historical artifacts available in their community.

Finally, contextualization of the kindergarten curriculum is a continuous process of ensuring the curriculum to be truly learner-centered. This is due to the fact that the Philippines is composed of many cultural groups and local communities. Each of these local communities deserves to have an education that embodies their cultural values, history, and identity as a people and as a group. Contextualization in the kindergarten curriculum will make the curriculum more meaningful for young children who are in their stage of life wanting to learn more about their identity, culture, and environment.

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