

Harnessing Podcasts as Digital Learning Tools: Implications for Teaching Araling Panlipunan in the Intermediate Grades

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Abstract

Teaching and learning methods have changed as a result of technology's incorporation into the classroom. Learner-centered and technology-enhanced approaches are encouraged for teachers in the Philippines by Republic Act No. 10533 and DepEd policies. This study investigates the use of podcasts as online resources for teaching intermediate students Araling Panlipunan. The research addresses the issue of declining student motivation and difficulty understanding abstract social studies concepts through traditional methods. It is based on studies by Hew (2019), Kay (2012), and Tolosa (n.d.), which highlight the potential of podcasts to increase engagement and comprehension.

In the academic year 2025–2026, this descriptive study was carried out at Niogan Elementary School in Lemery, Batangas. Thirty randomly chosen students in Grades 4–6 took part in Araling Panlipunan classes that included podcasts. Pre-tests, post-tests, and validated questionnaires were used to collect data. Learners' engagement, comprehension, and academic performance were examined using descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and t-test for dependent samples.

With mean scores ranging from 3.5 to 3.9, the results showed that podcast-based instruction was very successful. Students concurred that podcasts made lessons more relatable and pleasurable while also improving motivation, focus, and comprehension. The advantages were not outweighed by the limitations, which were rated as moderate concerns and included things like limited internet access and a lack of technical skills.

According to the study's findings, podcasts greatly enhance students' comprehension, engagement, and academic achievement in Araling Panlipunan. They encourage self-directed, participatory, and purposeful learning opportunities that are in line with 21st-century competencies. Teachers should be trained in podcast production, incorporate audio lessons with visuals, and incorporate podcasts into their lessons on a regular basis. In order to make podcast-based learning inclusive and sustainable in a variety of classroom settings, school administrators should guarantee that students have access to both digital and offline resources.

Keywords: *Podcasts, Araling Panlipunan, Engagement, Comprehension, Digital Learning, Educational Technology, Academic Performance, Learner-Centered Instruction, DepEd Policies, 21st-Century Skills*

Introduction

Today's educational environment is increasingly shaped by technology. Many teachers are shifting from traditional methods to more accessible digital tools that make classrooms more interactive. Among these innovations, podcasts stand out as flexible, audio-based resources students can access anytime. They allow teachers to deliver lessons in a conversational style, encouraging narration and discussion rather than rote instruction. This approach strengthens the connection between technology and education, fostering deeper engagement between teachers and learners.

Araling Panlipunan plays a vital role in teaching citizenship, government, culture, and history, yet many students struggle with its long narratives and abstract concepts. Studies by Nardo (2020) and Olivo (2021) highlight that the lack of audio-visual aids in printed materials often hinders comprehension, leading to disinterest. Podcasts, with their use of voice, storytelling, and discussion, can make lessons more engaging—allowing students to “hear” history unfold and gain deeper understanding.

This study's significance also stemmed from its compatibility with the nation's ongoing educational changes. As highlighted in DepEd Order No. 42, series of 2016, which presents the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), the Department of Education continued to push for the use of technology in the classroom. Teachers were encouraged by this policy to use ICT resources to enhance student learning. Furthermore, DepEd Memorandum No. 78, series of 2020 encouraged teachers to make the most of the digital platforms that were available and supported the adoption of flexible and blended learning modalities. According to the study, using podcasts in the classroom could serve as a model for other digital teaching techniques and enhance these policies. In addition to improving the educational process, this helped pupils acquire the digital literacy skills necessary for the future.

This study aimed to determine *Harnessing Podcasts as Digital Learning Tools: Implications for Teaching Araling Panlipunan in the Intermediate Grade*

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What instructional features characterize the integration of podcasts in teaching Araling Panlipunan among intermediate learners relative to:
 - 1.1 Learning Content
 - 1.2 Classroom Instruction
2. How do learners perceive the pedagogical relevance, advantages, and limitations of podcasts as a teaching strategy in Araling Panlipunan?
3. To what extent does podcast-based instruction improve learners' academic performance, engagement, and comprehension in Araling Panlipunan?

4. What challenges encountered by learners in adopting podcasts as instructional tools in Araling Panlipunan?
 5. Based on the findings, what instructional plan may be proposed to enhance the effective use of podcasts in Araling Panlipunan instruction?
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Methodology

Research Design

The researcher chose the descriptive research design because it focuses on observing and describing the natural learning environment rather than establishing cause-and-effect relationships. With the help of this methodology, the researcher was able to document what actually occurred in the classroom as students engaged with podcast-based instruction in Araling Panlipunan. The project intended to collect candid and genuine input from educators and learners regarding how podcasts aid in comprehend lessons, maintained interest, and promoted engagement through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. Because it emphasized actual experiences and offers information that can be immediately used to enhance instructional strategies and student involvement in Araling Panlipunan, this method was useful for a school-based study.

Participants

This study involved thirty (30) intermediate learners from Grades 4 to 6 of Niogan Elementary School, First Congressional District of Lemery, Batangas, during School Year 2025–2026. Participants were chosen through simple random sampling, ensuring equal opportunity regardless of section, gender, or academic standing. As Hassan (2024) explains, this probability sampling method gives each member of the population an equal chance of selection, making it one of the most straightforward and unbiased techniques. The learners engaged in podcast-integrated Araling Panlipunan lessons and provided feedback through evaluations, offering insights into how podcasts enhance engagement, meaning, and enjoyment in the subject.

Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made questionnaire as the main tool for gathering data. It was designed to collect information about the experiences, perceptions, and challenges of both teachers and learners in using podcasts as digital learning tools in teaching Araling Panlipunan for the intermediate grades. The questionnaire included statements about the effectiveness, engagement, comprehension, advantages, and limitations of using podcasts in the classroom. Two four-point Likert scales were used: one ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1), and another from Very Great Extent (4) to Low Extent (1), depending on the nature of the question.

Data Collection Procedure

Pretest data were collected before implementing the intervention. Over four weeks, parents received mobile-based coaching modules via video tutorials, downloadable guides, and real-time messaging support. A posttest survey was administered afterward to assess changes.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were used to This study examined the effectiveness of podcasts as digital learning resources in teaching Araling Panlipunan to intermediate learners at Niogan Elementary School using a quantitative approach. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, and a 4-point Likert-scale survey assessing perceptions, engagement, and challenges. Learners' performance was analyzed with descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, mean percentage score), while a t-test for dependent samples determined significant differences between pre- and post-test results. Findings showed improved comprehension and higher post-test scores, indicating positive effects of podcast-based instruction. Survey responses, analyzed through weighted means, further highlighted instructional clarity, pedagogical relevance, benefits, limitations, and learner engagement.

Results

Section 1: Instructional Features of Podcast Integration in Araling Panlipunan

The study found that podcasts significantly enhanced students' learning experiences in Araling Panlipunan. The highest-rated aspects were accessibility (3.9), frequent use (3.9), and lesson comprehension (3.8), reflecting students' appreciation for flexible learning anytime and anywhere. Their motivation and improved comprehension highlight the potential of podcasts to make lessons clearer and more engaging. Conversely, lower ratings were observed in suitable duration (3.5), active listening strategies such as note-taking (3.6), and teacher guidance (3.7). Some students preferred shorter episodes, emphasized the need for structured listening support, and noted that teacher involvement remains essential for maximizing podcast-based learning.

Section 2: Learners' Perceptions on the Pedagogical Relevance of Podcasts

Students viewed podcasts as effective tools for making Araling Panlipunan lessons more relatable and easier to understand. Mean scores ranging from 3.6 to 3.8 indicated improvements in comprehension, memory, and application compared with traditional methods. High ratings for comprehension, connecting lessons to prior knowledge, and recalling details reflected the benefits of repeated listening and flexible, self-paced learning. Students also noted that podcasts helped them focus on key points and apply lessons in real contexts. Overall, results suggest that podcasts enhance understanding, retention, and practical application in Araling Panlipunan.

Section 3: Extent of Podcast-Based Instruction in Improving Learners'

A. Academic Performance in Araling Panlipunan

The study revealed that podcast-based instruction had a significant positive impact on students' learning outcomes in Araling Panlipunan. The highest-rated aspects were enjoyment and engagement (3.8), lesson meaningfulness (3.7), and attention and focus (3.6), showing that podcasts made lessons more interactive and helped sustain concentration. Students also reported that podcasts allowed them to connect new information with prior knowledge, deepening their understanding of the subject. Lower ratings were observed in collaboration (3.4), listening skills (3.5), and active participation (3.6), suggesting the need for complementary strategies such as group activities, teacher guidance, and scaffolded listening. Overall, podcast-based instruction proved highly effective, especially when paired with approaches that enhance collaboration and active engagement.

B. Engagement in Araling Panlipunan

The study found that podcast-based instruction significantly increased students' engagement in Araling Panlipunan, with mean scores ranging from 3.4 to 3.8. The highest ratings were for making lessons interactive and enjoyable (3.8), sparking curiosity (3.7), and sustaining focus (3.6). Lower scores in collaboration (3.4), embedded activities (3.5), and active participation (3.6) suggest the need for structured scaffolding to strengthen these areas. Overall, podcasts were viewed very positively, particularly for enjoyment, curiosity, and focus, while guided prompts and collaborative tasks may further enhance participation and deeper learning.

C. Learners' Comprehension in Araling Panlipunan

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Section 4: Challenges and Barriers in Using Podcasts in Araling Panlipunan

The study found that while most students viewed podcasts as beneficial for learning in Araling Panlipunan, several manageable obstacles were identified, with mean scores ranging from 2.5 to 2.9. The most common issues were lack of personal devices (2.9) and unreliable internet connection (2.8). Other challenges included adapting to the podcast format (2.7), technical skills (2.8), difficulty following activities (2.6), and distractions or limited access to platforms (2.5). Despite these limitations, the moderate ratings indicate that drawbacks did not outweigh the benefits. Overall, students remained satisfied and found podcasts engaging and

helpful, showing that they can serve as valuable instructional tools when supported with proper materials, scaffolding, and access.

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Discussion

The findings support the hypothesis that podcast-based instruction can significantly enhance student engagement, comprehension, and academic performance in Araling Panlipunan. This aligns with broader evidence that digital audio tools, when designed to be accessible and culturally relevant, foster interactive and meaningful learning experiences. For example, Salamida (2023) demonstrated that educational podcasts enriched listening comprehension among Grade 4 learners, while Errabo, Dela Rosa, and Gonzales (2024) found that differentiated podcasts promoted self-regulation, engagement, and performance in asynchronous learning. Similarly, Pascual (2023) highlighted that student-created podcasts improved communication skills and collaborative learning outcomes.

The identified challenges highlight the importance of ensuring equitable access and structured support. Issues such as limited devices, unreliable internet, and reliance on audio alone reinforce the need for complementary strategies, including offline resources, teacher guidance, and scaffolded listening activities. These measures ensure that podcasts remain inclusive and effective across diverse learning contexts, echoing findings from Salamida (2023) that accessibility and clear content are critical to podcast effectiveness.

The improvement in comprehension, retention, and motivation among learners suggests that podcasts are a viable, low-cost alternative to traditional instruction. Their flexibility allows students to learn at their own pace while promoting deeper connections between lessons and prior knowledge. This is consistent with Pascual (2023), who emphasized the interactive benefits of podcast production, and Errabo et al. (2024), who confirmed that podcasts enhance self-efficacy and performance. However, further studies with larger samples and extended implementation periods are recommended to validate these outcomes and explore scalability within the Philippine educational system.

Conclusion

The study showed that podcasts improved the clarity, interest, and comprehension of Araling Panlipunan lessons, allowing students to learn at their own pace with accessible and culturally relevant content. Learners perceived podcasts as enjoyable and effective tools that enhanced understanding, retention, motivation, and focus, while moderate challenges such as limited device access, internet connectivity, and reliance on audio alone were noted. Overall, podcast-based instruction strengthened engagement, comprehension, and academic performance, making lessons more interactive and meaningful. Despite technical limitations, podcasts served as a valuable, student-centered approach that fosters deeper learning when supported with teacher guidance, active listening strategies, and accessible resources.