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Framing Reform, Shaping Futures: A Critical Policy Discourse Analysis of the Matatag Curriculum

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Abstract

Introduction: The MATATAG Curriculum represents a major policy reform in Philippine basic education, aimed at addressing curriculum congestion and improving foundational learning outcomes. While existing studies focus on implementation challenges and stakeholder experiences, there remains limited inquiry into how policy language itself constructs educational problems, legitimizes reform, and shapes power relations.

Objectives: This study aimed to critically examine the discourse of DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2024 by analyzing how educational problems are represented, what linguistic and discursive strategies are employed, how key stakeholders are positioned, and what ideological assumptions underpin the MATATAG Curriculum policy.

Methods: A qualitative research design grounded in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (3D model) was employed, supported by Bacchi's WPR approach, van Leeuwen's social actor representation, and van Dijk's ideological square. Data were derived primarily from the MATATAG policy document, complemented by interpretive analysis of stakeholder positioning. The analysis followed three levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice.

Results: Findings reveal that educational problems are predominantly framed as technical issues of curriculum design, particularly curriculum overload and misalignment. The policy employs authoritative modality, crisis framing, and a combination of technocratic and moral legitimation strategies to justify reform. Stakeholders are positioned within a hierarchical structure, where the state assumes primary authority, teachers function as regulated implementers despite symbolic recognition, and learners are constructed mainly as beneficiaries rather than active agents. Ideologically, the policy reflects a hybrid formation of technocracy, neoliberal competitiveness, and developmental nationalism, reinforcing centralized governance and managerial accountability.

Conclusion: The MATATAG Curriculum policy operates not only as a reform initiative but also as a discourse of governance that shapes educational realities. While it promotes inclusivity and learner-centeredness, it simultaneously reinforces top-down control and technocratic management. These findings highlight the need for more participatory, context-sensitive, and critically informed approaches to policy design and implementation.

Keywords: *MATATAG Curriculum; Critical Discourse Analysis; Education Policy; Ideology; Governance; Philippines*

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Embedding Peace in Text: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Peace Education in Selected Deped Learning Modules

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Abstract

Introduction: Education is essential for promoting social cohesion and peace in environments characterized by social tensions, inequality, and localized conflicts. In the Philippines, such as DepEd Memorandum No. 469, s. 2008 and Executive Order No. 570, the integration of peace education across curricula is mandated by policy, but its application in learning modules is still uneven and frequently prioritizes moral compliance over critical engagement with structural and social justice issues. This study addresses the gap by examining how peace education shape language and embedded in DepEd learning modules at the textual and discursive level.

Objectives: This study aimed to examine how peace education is constructed in selected DepEd Araling Panlipunan and Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao/GMRC/Values Education modules for Grades 1 to 10, focusing on on three levels of Critical Discourse Analysis: the textual level, analyzing linguistic strategies and rhetorical choices; the discursive level, examining thematic emphases and how learners and teachers are positioned; and the socio-political level, considering the broader social and institutional contexts reflected in the modules.

Methods: A qualitative research design employing Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough's three-dimensional model) was used. Data were drawn from Quarter 1 to Quarter 4 modules, analyzed at textual, discursive, and social practice levels to identify recurring themes, discursive strategies, and ideological orientations.

Results: Findings indicate that peace is primarily framed through moral and relational lenses, emphasizing forgiveness, fairness, compassion, respect for authority, and community participation. Positive peace elements, including equity and attention to marginalized groups, are present but structural and systemic dimensions of peace remain limited. Learners are positioned as morally guided actors, and teachers as authoritative facilitators, reflecting a tension between ethical behavior and transformative, justice-oriented agency.

Conclusion: The study highlights that while DepEd learning modules effectively promote relational and moral dimensions of peace, they provide limited opportunities for learners to engage critically with structural inequities or systemic injustice. Strengthening the integration of justice-oriented, transformative peace education can help learners develop both ethical awareness and critical agency, supporting holistic peacebuilding in Philippine classrooms.

Keywords: *Peace Education; Critical Discourse Analysis; DepEd Learning Modules; Philippines; Curriculum; Social Justice*

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Disciplining The Student Body: A Critical Discourse Analysis Of Student Handbooks In Private Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Introduction: Student handbooks in contemporary schools serve not only as administrative documents but also as tools of discipline, governance, and identity formation. Grounded in Foucauldian theory, they act as mechanisms of power that regulate behavior, construct norms, and shape student subjectivities through discourse. Despite extensive international research, a gap remains in the Philippine context, particularly in private institutions, which this study addresses by analyzing student handbooks in Private Higher Education Institutions.

Objectives: This study aims to critically examine how student handbooks construct and regulate student behavior through discourse. It specifically analyzes the discursive construction of the "ideal student," identifies linguistic strategies used to enforce discipline, and explores how authority, control, rights, and responsibilities are represented. It also seeks to uncover underlying ideologies and compare governance discourse across selected private schools.

Methods: The study uses a qualitative research design through Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It analyzes student handbooks collected from selected private schools with permission to use them as primary data for the study. Data are examined through close reading, coding of themes, and interpretation using Foucauldian concepts such as surveillance, normalization, and subject formation.

Results: Findings reveal that the "ideal student" is constructed as morally upright, self-disciplined, and institutionally compliant, often grounded in religious and moral values. The handbooks use strong modality, prohibitive language, moral discourse, and legal-bureaucratic structures to enforce compliance and distribute authority across institutional systems. Rights are present but conditional, while responsibilities are emphasized, reflecting a dominant ideology of moral discipline, religious governance, and self-regulation.

Conclusion: The study concludes that student handbooks function as discursive technologies of governance that produce disciplined student identities. Through moral, legal, and institutional language, they normalize compliance, legitimize authority, and encourage self-regulation aligned with Foucauldian concepts of power. These findings highlight the role of handbooks as tools of educational management that shape both behavior and identity while calling for more balanced and reflective policy development.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Student Handbooks, Private Higher Education Institutions, Foucauldian Theory, Governmentality, Surveillance, Normalization*

Cite as: Demegillo, J. B. B., Ravelo, A. F., & Obenza, B. N. (2026). Disciplining the student body: A critical discourse analysis of student handbooks in private higher education institutions. International Research Conference on Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Social Sciences. https://doi.org/10.70847/738457

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"Sana" from the Comment Sections: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Filipino Teachers' Expressions of Hope and Voice in Facebook Responses to the Department of Education

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Abstract

Introduction: In the Philippines, Facebook comment sections served as spaces where teachers critiqued DepEd policies, expressed frustrations with underfunding and bureaucracy, and asserted care for learners. Their use of expressions like "sana" and "sana all" reflected how hope, critique, and professional identity intersected in online discourse.

Objectives: This study aimed to investigate how DepEd teachers use social media to express, negotiate, and construct professional identities, perspectives, and power relations in relation to education policies and governance in the Philippines.

Methods: This study used a qualitative design guided by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how Filipino teachers express experiences and negotiate power through Facebook comments on DepEd-related issues. A total of 515 publicly accessible comments from self-identified teachers were purposively sampled for relevance. The data provided authentic insights into teachers' perspectives, and ethical standards were ensured through strict anonymization of all identifying information.

Results: The findings reveal that teachers' social media discourse exposes gaps between policy and implementation, particularly in underfunded reforms, heavy workload, and unmet promises. Teachers position themselves as knowledgeable professionals and advocates for learners, using strategies like imperatives and sarcasm to challenge official narratives. DepEd is portrayed as a powerful yet inconsistent authority, while learners serve as the moral basis of critique, reflecting tensions between policy rhetoric and lived realities.

Conclusion: Teachers' social media discourse serves as a space where policy gaps, identities, and power relations are negotiated. They assert experiential and moral authority while challenging institutional assumptions and normalized burdens, revealing that policies are actively interpreted in practice and require concrete and responsive support.

Keywords: *DepEd policies, Teachers' social media, Professional identity, Critical Discourse Analysis, Policy implementation, Power relations, Philippines*

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Framing Education Reform: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Speeches on the Philippine Education System

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Abstract

Introduction: Education reform in the Philippines remains a critical concern amid persistent systemic challenges. While reforms are widely discussed, limited attention has been given to how political discourse constructs and legitimizes these reforms, particularly within the context of EDCOM II.

Objectives: This study aimed to analyze how education reform is framed in political speeches by identifying dominant narratives, examining linguistic and rhetorical strategies, exploring representations of social actors, and uncovering underlying ideological assumptions and power relations.

Methods: A qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed. The corpus included official transcripts of selected EDCOM II-related speeches delivered by key political figures from July 2025 to January 2026. Data were analyzed through textual, discursive, and social practice levels. Trustworthiness was ensured using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Results: Findings showed that education reform is framed as a national crisis requiring urgent, expert-led intervention. Dominant narratives include crisis framing, diagnostic reform, and education as national investment. Linguistic strategies such as modality, enumeration, and metaphor construct urgency and legitimacy. Learners and teachers are portrayed as important yet politically constrained, while authority remains centralized. The discourse reflects technocratic, developmental, and managerial ideologies.

Conclusion: Political discourse shapes reform as centralized and technocratic, highlighting the need for more participatory and context-responsive approaches.

Keywords: *Education Reform; Critical Discourse Analysis; Political Discourse; EDCOM II; Philippine Education*

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Policy, Power, and Education Reform: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Philippine Congressional Hearings

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Abstract

Introduction: Education reform in the Philippines has become a central policy concern due to persistent challenges such as inequitable learning outcomes, classroom shortages, teacher professionalization gaps, and governance inefficiencies. While existing studies focus on policy documents and implementation, limited attention has been given to the language used in legislative processes. Congressional hearings serve as critical arenas where education problems, policy priorities, and institutional responsibilities are constructed and negotiated through discourse. This study addresses this gap by examining how language shapes education reform in Philippine legislative settings.

Objectives: This study examines how education problems are discursively constructed in congressional hearings, the linguistic strategies used to legitimize reforms, the representation of key actors, and the underlying ideological assumptions.

Methods: A qualitative design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) guided by Fairclough's framework was employed. Data from four Philippine Senate and House hearing transcripts (2025–2026) were analyzed across textual, discursive, and social dimensions using systematic coding and thematic analysis.

Results: Education issues are framed as urgent national crises, transforming deficits into moral and governance concerns that justify reform. Discourse relies on crisis language, high modality, repetition, and quantitative evidence. Social actors are hierarchically positioned, while the discourse reflects technocratic governance, accountability, developmental nationalism, and state-managed public-private collaboration.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates that legislative discourse plays a crucial role in shaping education reform by constructing problems, legitimizing solutions, and organizing actor roles. Language functions not merely as a tool for communication but as a mechanism of power that influences governance and policy direction. The findings highlight the need for more reflective and inclusive policy communication to ensure that education reforms are responsive, equitable, and contextually grounded.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Education Reform, Philippine Congress, Policy Discourse, Governance, Ideology, Legislative Hearings*

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Framing the Future of Education: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the National Education Plan (NatPlan) 2026-2035 of EDCOM II

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Abstract

Introduction: Education policy today is closely tied to national development, shaping not only learning systems but also future citizens and workforce identities. In the Philippines, the EDCOM II National Education Plan (NatPlan) 2026–2035 presents reforms that go beyond technical solutions by constructing a vision of what Filipino learners should become. However, policies are not neutral—they use language to define problems, justify reforms, and assign roles to actors. Despite existing studies on education reform, limited attention has been given to how policy discourse shapes meaning and identity. This study addresses that gap by examining how the NatPlan frames education, constructs learners, and reflects broader national and global priorities.

Objectives: This study aims to examine how the National Education Plan (NatPlan) 2026–2035 constructs education and the identity of Filipino learners through policy discourse. Specifically, it analyzes how educational problems are discursively framed, identifies the linguistic and rhetorical strategies used to legitimize proposed reforms, and explores how key actors such as learners, teachers, and institutions are represented in the text. It also seeks to uncover the underlying ideological assumptions embedded in the policy and to understand how education is positioned in relation to economic development and national competitiveness.

Methods: The study used a qualitative design through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), examining the NatPlan 2026–2035 as the primary data source selected via purposive sampling. Guided by Fairclough's framework, Bacchi's WPR, and van Leeuwen's theory, data were analyzed through close reading, coding, and thematic analysis to identify patterns in language, representation, and ideology.

Results: The findings show that the NatPlan frames education as a "learning crisis," emphasizing deficits in skills, system gaps, and teacher deployment issues. These are presented as urgent and measurable problems requiring technical solutions, supported by crisis framing, future projections, and data-driven language that make reforms appear necessary and inevitable. Learners are positioned as future human capital, teachers as implementers, and government agencies as key drivers, with communities and industries in structured roles. Overall, the policy reflects a human capital and technocratic approach, linking education to employability, productivity, and national competitiveness.

Conclusion: The NatPlan 2026–2035 constructs education as a crisis-driven and technocratic system focused on measurable reforms and economic outcomes. It shapes how problems are understood, how actors are positioned, and what goals are prioritized. While it promotes inclusion and improvement, its dominant focus on efficiency, data, and employability narrows the broader purpose of education. Overall, the policy not only proposes reforms but also defines the role of education in shaping future Filipino citizens within a global competitive context.

Keywords: *Education policy, critical discourse analysis (CDA), learner identity, social constructivism, national development, policy discourse, Philippines*

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Constructing Professional Advancement: A Policy Discourse Analysis of DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025 on the Expanded Career Progression System for Teachers and School Heads

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Abstract

Introduction: For decades, Filipino teachers have been trapped in a stagnant career ladder, frequently being driven into advancement for growth. While DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025 institutionalizes the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) system; it introduces new complexities of documentary exhaustion.

Objectives: This study deconstructed the discursive construction of professional advancement within the order to determine if it truly empowers educators or merely formalizes administrative compliance.

Methods: Utilizing Qualitative Policy Discourse Analysis, the study employed a Triangulated Model integrating Fairclough's CDA, Bacchi's WPR, and Van Leeuwen's Social Actor Representation. The primary corpus is the official text of DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2025, which is systematically deconstructed as a system of meaning-production to uncover the discursive strategies used to legitimize the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) system.

Results: Findings revealed that career progression is constructed as a regulated journey of professional becoming, framed as an institutional necessity through a strategic blend of legal intertextuality and an obligation-heavy modality. Teacher legitimacy is increasingly linked to documentary exhaustion, effectively producing a neo-performative educator whose professional worth is defined by measurable outputs rather than pedagogical mastery. Furthermore, the policy's rigid criteria replace traditional professionality with a measured professionality optimized primarily for institutional metrics and technocratic surveillance. Ultimately, the Expanded Career Progression (ECP) system binds educators to an entrepreneurial pursuit of credentials, where the promise of advancement functions within a framework of standardized excellence and administrative control.

Conclusion: To ensure the ECP system achieves its developmental intent, the Department of Education must simplify Means of Verification (MOV) and move beyond the myth of neutral meritocracy. Ultimately, the system must decide if its goal is to cultivate visionary educators or merely to perfect an auditable paper trail.

Keywords: *Expanded Career Progression, Policy Discourse Analysis , DO 24 s. 2025, Neo-performativity, Technocratic Surveillance*

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Institutionalizing Advancement Amid Learning Gaps: A Critical Discourse Analysis of DepEd Policies on Student Promotion and Proficiency

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Abstract

Introduction: The Philippine education system faces ongoing challenges with foundational learning gaps, prompting a closer look at the policies governing student advancement. Understanding the language and administrative priorities embedded within these policies is crucial for addressing the root causes of this educational crisis.

Objectives: This study critically examines how student promotion and proficiency are discursively constructed within Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) policy texts amid persistent learning gaps.

Methods: Using a qualitative research design grounded in Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, the study analyzes key national education laws and DepEd Orders issued between 2013 and 2023, including policies on classroom assessment, remediation, monitoring frameworks, interim grading guidelines, and the National Learning Recovery Program.

Results: The findings reveal that promotion is constructed less as evidence of academic mastery and more as a flexible administrative flow sustained through mechanisms such as grade transmutation, procedural remediation, and compassionate leniency. Proficiency is framed as a managerial output, often aggregated into key performance indicators (KPIs) such as promotion and completion rates, thereby redefining quality as statistical advancement rather than demonstrated cognitive competence. Three dominant and interacting discourses emerge: (1) Quality Assurance, (2) Compassionate Promotion, and (3) Performative Accountability, with remediation functioning as a procedural safety valve.

Conclusion: Collectively, these discourses reflect institutional priorities privileging system efficiency, political legitimacy, and compliance culture over deep learning effectiveness. By situating Philippine policy texts within global accountability regimes and learning recovery narratives, the study contributes to discourse-oriented education policy scholarship and illuminates how governance priorities are embedded in language. The findings call for recalibrating promotion policies toward measurable learning gains to prevent the normalization of advancement amid unresolved foundational skill deficits.

Keywords: *Expanded Career Progression, Policy Discourse Analysis , DO 24 s. 2025, Neo-performativity, Technocratic Surveillance*

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