

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN COOKERY INSTRUCTION FOR FILIPINO LEARNERS

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Cookery instruction has become an important component of the Philippine education system, particularly within the framework of the K to 12 Curriculum under Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) tracks. As part of Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) subjects in junior high school and specialized strands in senior high school, cookery is not merely a subject about food preparation but also a training ground for life skills, employability, and entrepreneurship. Through cookery, learners are exposed to practical knowledge that combines technical expertise, cultural appreciation, and creative expression. However, the delivery of cookery instruction in the Philippines comes with numerous challenges that stem from limitations in resources, teacher training, and infrastructure. At the same time, it presents significant opportunities to prepare students for future careers in the hospitality and culinary industries, promote local food heritage, and empower learners with practical skills for self-reliance. Understanding these challenges and opportunities provides a clearer perspective on the importance of strengthening cookery education in the country.

One of the foremost challenges in cookery instruction for Filipino learners is the lack of adequate facilities and resources. Many public schools, particularly those in rural areas, face difficulties in providing fully equipped laboratories with functional kitchens, cooking equipment, and proper storage. In some schools, classes are conducted in makeshift cooking areas or multipurpose rooms that limit learners' hands-on experiences. Without access to basic tools such as stoves, ovens, and proper utensils, students are unable to practice essential culinary techniques, which are vital to skill mastery.

According to Manalo (2019), resource constraints in technical-vocational education hinder the acquisition of practical competencies, reducing the effectiveness of skills training. While some schools have received support through partnerships with local government units or non-governmental organizations, the disparity in access to resources remains a persistent issue that limits the quality of cookery instruction.

Another pressing challenge lies in teacher preparedness and professional development. Cookery teachers are expected to balance theoretical instruction with practical training, requiring expertise in both pedagogy and culinary arts. However, not all teachers assigned to cookery classes have formal training in hospitality or culinary management. Some are reassigned from other disciplines and must adapt to the requirements of technical-vocational instruction. The lack of continuous professional development opportunities further compounds this challenge, as teachers may not always be updated on industry trends, food safety standards, or innovative cooking techniques. This gap between educational practice and industry demands creates a mismatch between what learners acquire in school and the competencies required in the workplace. As Flores and Atienza (2021) emphasize, teachers in TVL tracks must undergo regular training and industry immersion to ensure that instruction remains relevant, practical, and aligned with labor market needs.

The socio-economic background of learners also contributes to difficulties in cookery instruction. Some students come from families with limited financial resources, which restricts their ability to purchase ingredients, uniforms, or additional materials for practical lessons. Teachers often find themselves having to modify activities or source affordable alternatives to accommodate students' needs. In some cases, learners are unable to bring required materials, which affects their participation and overall performance. This issue reflects broader inequities in the Philippine education system, where learners' access to quality instruction is influenced by socio-economic factors. Addressing such inequities requires collaborative solutions between schools,

communities, and policymakers to ensure that no learner is left behind in gaining essential life skills.

Despite these challenges, cookery instruction in the Philippines presents immense opportunities for both learners and the broader community. One of the most significant opportunities is the development of employable skills that prepare students for entry into the culinary and hospitality industries. The Philippines has a growing demand for skilled workers in hotels, restaurants, catering services, and food production companies, both domestically and internationally. Cookery instruction equips learners with practical skills such as food preparation, sanitation, menu planning, and cost control, which are highly valued in these industries. Graduates of cookery-related programs can pursue careers as chefs, kitchen staff, or even entrepreneurs in small-scale food businesses. As highlighted by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA, 2020), technical-vocational education programs, including cookery, provide learners with direct pathways to employment and livelihood opportunities.

Another important opportunity lies in the promotion of cultural identity through food heritage. Cookery instruction offers a platform to introduce learners to traditional Filipino dishes, regional cuisines, and indigenous cooking practices. By incorporating local recipes and food history into lessons, teachers can foster appreciation for Filipino culinary heritage while encouraging innovation in food preparation. This not only strengthens national identity but also positions learners to contribute to the preservation and modernization of local cuisines. The global rise of interest in diverse food cultures further underscores the potential of Filipino learners to showcase their culinary traditions on the international stage.

Furthermore, cookery instruction nurtures essential life skills that go beyond professional applications. Learning how to cook empowers students with the ability to prepare nutritious meals for themselves and their families, contributing to better health and well-being. It also instills values of discipline, teamwork, time management, and

creativity. For young learners, these experiences are formative in shaping independence and responsibility. Even for students who may not pursue careers in the culinary field, cookery lessons provide practical knowledge that enhances their daily lives and personal growth.

The integration of technology into cookery instruction also opens new opportunities for innovation. Online tutorials, video demonstrations, and digital recipe platforms can supplement traditional classroom instruction, especially in situations where access to facilities is limited. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many educators turned to virtual learning methods to continue cookery lessons, highlighting the adaptability of the subject. Moving forward, blended approaches that combine face-to-face practice with digital resources can enhance the effectiveness of cookery instruction. These innovations also allow for exposure to global culinary practices, broadening learners' perspectives beyond their immediate environment.

#### References:

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