

Contextualized task-based exercises for Pre-Kindergarten 2 learners

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ABSTRACT

This study developed and validated Contextualized Task-Based Exercises (CTE) for Pre-Kindergarten 2 (Pre-K2) learners in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, employing a descriptive research design. It aimed to support Child Development Workers (CDWs) by addressing competencies from the National Early Learning Curriculum (NELC) identified as requiring contextualization. Specifically, it identified key developmental competencies needing contextualized activities, described challenges CDWs encountered in teaching these competencies, and validated the developed CTE for instructional use. The study involved 53 CDWs from Child Development Centers (CDCs) across five districts in Laoag City, selected through purposive sampling based on their experience and engagement in early childhood education. Data collection tools included a researcher-made survey checklist to identify competencies, and a validation instrument adapted from the MMSU-Instructional Material Development Office. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage, while expert validation was interpreted through mean scores based on a five-point Likert scale. Findings revealed 15 competencies in need of contextualized instruction, particularly in fine motor development, self-help skills, and early literacy. The study recommends the use of the validated CTE as a practical instructional resource to support CDWs in delivering meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and context-based learning experiences that promote the holistic development of Pre-K2 learners.

Keywords: contextualized task-based exercises, pre-kindergarten 2, NELC competencies, child development workers, early childhood education.

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INTRODUCTION

The section presents a concise overview of the study, incorporating a brief background, a clear articulation of the problem and its significance, a short review of related literature, and the research objectives.

Early childhood education (ECE) is widely recognized by global organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF and governments and educational bodies worldwide as a foundational stage in a child's development. It lays the groundwork for future academic achievement, emotional stability, and social integration. The years before formal schooling are especially critical as children establish thinking, interaction, and behavior patterns that shape their lifelong learning journey. Consequently, the global education agenda, including Sustainable Development Goal 4.2, highlights the importance of ensuring all children have access to inclusive and quality early childhood development and pre-primary education.

There has been a growing emphasis on inclusive education as a guiding principle for equitable learning in recent years. ECE promotes the participation and understanding of all children, regardless of ability, background, or socioeconomic status, within a typical educational setting. It requires curriculum modifications, responsive pedagogical strategies, and learning materials that are developmentally appropriate and sensitive to the diverse needs of young learners. More than physical integration, inclusion in the early years demands environments where every child is valued, respected, and supported to thrive academically and socially (Rangel-Pacheco & Witte, 2023).

Inclusive education in the context of ECE refers to integrating children of all abilities and backgrounds into shared learning environments where each child is valued and supported to achieve their full potential. This approach goes beyond physical integration, focusing on creating responsive, adaptive, and culturally relevant learning experiences that meet every learner's diverse developmental, cognitive, social, and emotional needs (Rangel-Pacheco & Witte, 2023).

Globally, inclusive ECE is recognized as a driver of social equity and long-term educational success. According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2022), over 175 million children worldwide are not enrolled in pre-primary education, with marginalized and vulnerable groups disproportionately affected. In many contexts, children with disabilities, those from minority backgrounds, and those living in poverty face significant barriers to participation in quality ECE programs. At the national and local levels, these disparities are often exacerbated by systemic challenges, including limited teacher preparation, insufficient resources, and rigid curricula that fail to accommodate diverse learning needs (Ackah-Jnr & Fluckiger, 2021).

In the Philippines, the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Learning Resource Package 6 (LRP6) provides a standardized curriculum for pre-kindergarten learners. However, its one-size-fits-all approach often overlooks individual learners' unique socio-cultural and developmental contexts, limiting its effectiveness in diverse and inclusive classroom settings. Moreover, ECE programs are committed to ensuring inclusive and equitable education for all children despite facing numerous political, socioeconomic, and demographic challenges (Bustos-Orosa, 2021). Central to this mission is recognizing kindergarten as a crucial stage in a child's holistic development, as mandated by Republic Act 10157, commonly called the Kindergarten Education Law. This legislation guarantees universal access to kindergarten education for all five-

year-old children, highlighting the importance of early education. Early childhood curriculum development is constantly evolving, blending theory and practice to support children's growth. Therefore, educators need a firm grasp of different curriculum models to design compelling learning experiences.

Studies highlight the importance of contextually relevant and flexible learning materials in supporting inclusive ECE. Integrated curricula, which weave together various subject areas through unifying themes, have been shown to enhance student engagement, facilitate deeper learning, and promote the development of critical thinking skills (Kreijkes & Greateorex, 2024). Thematic and experiential learning approaches, which connect classroom content to real-life experiences and local cultures, efficiently make learning accessible and meaningful for young children (Peralta, 2023; Gerodias, 2023). Moreover, contextualization and localization of instructional materials are widely recognized as best practices in inclusive education. By embedding lessons within familiar cultural, social, and environmental contexts, educators can foster greater relevance, motivation, and understanding among learners (Cejas, 2022). Furthermore, research indicates that students exposed to contextualized and localized lessons demonstrate higher academic gains and greater motivation than those taught using generic materials (Flores, 2020; Garcia et al., 2021, as cited in Peralta, 2023).

Despite the benefits of ECE, many programs struggle with inadequate teacher preparation, limited resources, and a lack of context-specific curricula, which hinder inclusive education and thematic integration (Ackah-Jnr & Fluckiger, 2021). By incorporating culturally relevant themes and flexible learning tasks, the contextualized exercises can better address the diverse cognitive, social, and emotional needs of all learners, including those with developmental delays or disabilities, supporting the holistic and adaptable goals emphasized in the Philippines' National Early Learning Curriculum and ECCD frameworks. Teachers encounter numerous challenges in implementing inclusive practices in many early childhood centers in the Philippines, especially those in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

Emerging literature suggests developing contextualized and task-based materials as a viable solution to the gaps in inclusive ECE practices. Such resources can improve instructional alignment with children's learning contexts, promote active learning, and foster inclusive participation. Specifically, CTE could help address accessibility, engagement, and individual learning differences while enhancing early literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Soukakou et al. (2024) and Rangel-Pacheco and Witte (2023) advocate for learning environments emphasizing social interaction, collaboration, and respect for diversity. Incorporating localized tasks into ECE programs also allows learners to relate abstract concepts to real-life situations, facilitating deeper comprehension and meaningful learning experiences.

The results of this study could provide developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant instructional materials that would improve teaching and learning experiences in pre-kindergarten. The CTE for Pre-K2 developed in this research could respond to the pressing need for inclusive, flexible, and engaging learning tools that reflect local realities and support holistic development. The outcomes of this study could benefit several stakeholders, namely Pre-K2 learners, CDWs, center administrators, curriculum and instructional developers, and future researchers.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to develop contextualized task-based exercises for pre-kindergarten 2 (Pre-K2) learners. Specifically, it sought to determine the competencies in the NELC can be contextualized. It also sought to develop contextualized task-based exercises for Pre-K2 learners. Furthermore, the study identified the validity of the developed task-based exercises.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, geographical context, population and sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data-gathering process, statistical treatment, and ethical considerations.

The study employed a descriptive research design using researcher-developed survey checklists to determine competencies that can be contextualized. Competencies meeting at least a 50% frequency were considered for inclusion in the development of Contextualized Task-Based Exercises (CTE). This analysis identified key areas requiring contextualization to meet learner needs.

During the planning stage, an extensive review of literature established the guidelines and objectives for the CTE. Following this, a competency checklist was administered to Child Development Workers (CDWs) in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, identifying relevant competencies and developmental needs of Pre-K2 learners. These findings guided the contextualization and activity planning. In the development stage, data from the needs assessment informed the creation of CTE, ensuring alignment with competencies that are developmentally appropriate and responsive to learner needs. In the final stage, the CTE was revised based on validator feedback and finalized for implementation in Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings.

The study was conducted in five CDC districts in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte: Poblacion 1 (17 CDCs), Poblacion 2 (21), Northwest (20), East (20), and South (20). These districts were categorized by location and distance to provide a comprehensive context. CDCs, supervised by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), are key in delivering ECE services.

Laoag City's high population density, diverse demographics, and varied socioeconomic backgrounds made it an ideal setting for studying CDWs' roles and practices in inclusive education. The city's available resources and professional development support provided a meaningful backdrop for examining the effectiveness of contextualized ECE interventions.

The study involved two respondent groups: 53 CDWs from the five Laoag districts who met the inclusion criteria, and five expert validators in ECE who evaluated the CTE content.

A purposive sampling technique was used. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), purposive sampling involves selecting participants with specific traits. CDWs were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) employed in Laoag City as CDWs; (2) at least two years of CDW experience; and (3) willing to participate. Similarly, purposive sampling was used to select the validators: two ECE specialists, one DSWD department head, one instructional development specialist, and one child development teacher.

Two research tools were utilized: a researcher-made survey checklist and a content validation rating scale. These instruments were used to gather data necessary for developing and validating the CTE for Pre-K2 learners.

The survey checklist, validated by a panel, had three sections: (1) CDW profile, (2) competencies for 4-year-olds that can be addressed through CTE, and (3) insights from CDWs. Respondents marked applicable competencies, and those with a frequency of at least 50% were selected for development. The content validation tool, adapted from the MMSU-Instructional Material Development Office, evaluated the CTE using five indicators: objectives, content, activities, instructional design, and assessment. Data collection followed ethical protocols. Approval was obtained from the MMSU University Research Ethics Review Board (URERB) to ensure respondent rights and adherence to ethical standards. A request letter was submitted to the Laoag City Mayor through the CSWDO before initiating the needs-assessment survey. Participants were informed they could decline or skip any questions. Data were organized, printed, securely stored, and analyzed. At the end of the study, all data were responsibly disposed of or permanently deleted, consistent with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Data from the checklist were analyzed using frequency (f) and percentage (%) to identify competencies that can be contextualized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the data gathered from the study, which involved Child Development Workers (CDWs) as respondents. Using a descriptive–developmental research design, data were collected through a validated survey instrument to determine which learning competencies in the National Early Learning Curriculum (NELC) for four-year-old learners can be contextualized and to guide the development and validation of the Contextualized Task-based Exercises (CTE) for Pre-Kindergarten 2 learners. The respondents’ perceptions provided the empirical basis for identifying priority competencies and informed the design of contextualized, culturally responsive instructional materials. The data gathered were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and expert validation ratings, allowing for a holistic interpretation of early childhood learning needs and instructional quality.

Competencies in the National Early Learning Curriculum that can be contextualized

The data reveal that several learning competencies in the NELC were consistently identified by CDWs as highly suitable for contextualization, with only those competencies receiving at least 50% of the total responses included in the analysis. In the domain of physical health, well-being, and motor development, a strong emphasis was placed on fine motor and self-help skills. The competency “develop fine motor skills in independently lacing worn or unworn shoes” obtained the highest frequency of 40 responses, corresponding to 75.47%, followed by “practice fine motor skills in tying and untying appropriate strings or ropes” with 35 responses or 66.04%. Daily self-care routines such as practicing cleanliness and personal hygiene were also identified as essential, with 31 respondents or 58.49% highlighting this competency. Similarly, independently developing basic self-help skills such as washing hands, brushing teeth, and dressing up, as well as initiating appropriate games, both garnered 27 responses or 50.94%, indicating that independence-building tasks remain central in early childhood education.

In the area of social-emotional development and character and values development, CDWs underscored the importance of decision-making and rule-following behaviors. The competency focused on developing flexibility, inventiveness, and interest in problem-solving through making

choices was identified by 36 respondents, representing 67.92% of the total responses. Additionally, initiating assigned activities by following group rules, procedures, and directions was selected by 28 respondents or 52.83%, reflecting the need to cultivate self-regulation and cooperative behavior at an early age.

The cognitive, intellectual, and language development domain toward early literacy emerged as a particularly critical area for contextualization. Competencies related to reasoning, phonological awareness, and early reading skills received consistently high responses. The ability to follow the logic of events and draw accurate conclusions by evaluating presented facts was identified by 39 respondents or 73.58%. Recognizing rhyming words and composing a self-made three- to five-page storybook using self-drawn pictures were both highlighted by 38 and 40 respondents, respectively, with the latter reaching 75.47%, the highest percentage within the literacy domain. Other competencies, such as identifying letter names and sounds, distinguishing one- to three-syllable words, demonstrating interest in reading storybooks, and retelling stories from different types of storybooks, all surpassed the 50% threshold, reinforcing the central role of early literacy development in Pre-K2 education.

Collectively, these findings reveal critical insights into the competencies deemed most essential by CDWs, underscoring the importance of early educational interventions that are both developmentally appropriate and contextually grounded. The results align with Kelemen's (2020) assertion that early childhood education must holistically address physical, cognitive, language, and socio-emotional development. The identified competencies suggest a strong consensus among CDWs regarding the need for instructional materials that support fine motor development, independence, problem-solving, and early literacy skills. Moreover, the perceived need for improvement in early literacy competencies reflects challenges in providing sufficient language exposure, phonological awareness activities, and storytelling opportunities. This finding is consistent with Fauzi et al. (2025), who emphasized that limitations in early literacy experiences hinder children's reading interest and language development. Addressing these gaps through well-designed contextualized task-based exercises is therefore essential in optimizing learning opportunities and supporting children's overall development and well-being.

Contextualized task-based exercises for Pre-kindergarten 2 learners

Guided by the competencies identified and the feedback gathered from CDWs, the Contextualized Task-based Exercises were developed as an instructional resource grounded in the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). Central to the design of the CTE is the "I GOT IT" framework, which stands for Ideas, Goals and Objectives, Tools and Implementation, and Tasks. This framework ensures that each activity is anchored in real-life experiences and community contexts, allowing young learners to construct meaning through familiar and relevant situations. The CTE was intentionally designed to address the developmental needs of children aged 4 to 4.11 years, ensuring alignment with established early childhood education frameworks.

A defining feature of the CTE is its emphasis on cultural and developmental appropriateness. The exercises are adaptable and can be implemented using the children's mother tongues, thereby enhancing comprehension and accessibility for diverse learners. This flexibility supports inclusivity and reflects CTL's principle that learning becomes more meaningful when it connects to learners' lived experiences. The activities also function as practical guides for CDWs,

requiring minimal preparation and enabling educators to focus on individualized instruction. In addition, the CTE is designed to be parent-friendly, encouraging active parental involvement and strengthening home–school partnerships.

The use of familiar contexts and situated learning is evident throughout the CTE. By embedding activities in everyday scenarios and culturally grounded experiences, the exercises support situated learning theory, which emphasizes knowledge construction through authentic interactions. This approach aligns with Abu-Rasheed et al. (2023), who highlighted that learning is most effective when rooted in meaningful, real-life contexts. The alignment of the CTE with developmental competencies further strengthens its instructional value. Research by Cheng and Cheng (2023) confirms that curricula aligned with developmental milestones significantly enhance children’s cognitive, language, and socio-emotional outcomes, reinforcing the importance of developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education.

Play-based learning is another foundational element of the CTE. The activities integrate play as a primary pedagogical strategy, promoting engagement, collaboration, and hands-on exploration. Empirical evidence supports this approach, with Niyibizi et al. (2024) demonstrating that play-based learning enhances problem-solving skills, creativity, and intrinsic motivation. Blyth (2023) further emphasized that pretend play and social interaction contribute to language development and early literacy by fostering communication skills and the internalization of social norms. Through play-based and contextualized tasks, the CTE encourages meaningful learning experiences that are both enjoyable and educational.

Cultural responsiveness is deeply embedded in the design of the CTE. By incorporating local customs, traditions, and community practices, the exercises affirm children’s cultural identities and promote inclusive learning environments. Slater (2023) emphasized that integrating children’s cultural backgrounds into early childhood pedagogy supports social development and self-confidence, while Knox et al. (2025) highlighted that culturally responsive teaching empowers learners by validating their experiences. This cultural grounding enhances engagement and supports equitable learning opportunities for all children.

Practicality and accessibility for CDWs were also prioritized in the development of the CTE. The use of simple materials, clear instructions, and structured activities ensures that the exercises can be effectively implemented even in resource-limited settings. Luzano et al. (2024) found that accessible instructional materials significantly enhance CDWs’ teaching competence and professional growth, supporting the design choices made for the CTE. Furthermore, the inclusion of parental involvement components reinforces the role of home–school collaboration in early childhood education. Research by Wildmon et al. (2024) and Nurfadilah et al. (2025) confirms that strong parental engagement positively influences children’s academic, socio-emotional, and behavioral outcomes.

Overall, the CTE offers a robust, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate approach to early childhood education. By integrating real-life contexts, aligning with developmental milestones, and emphasizing cultural responsiveness and parental involvement, the CTE effectively addresses the diverse learning needs of Pre-K2 learners and enhances the quality of early learning experiences.

Validity of the contextualized task-based exercises for Pre-Kindergarten 2 learners

The validity of the CTE was established through expert evaluation involving a panel composed of early childhood education specialists, instructional material developers, a City Social Welfare and Development officer, and a child development teacher. Using a standardized five-point Likert scale, the experts evaluated the CTE across five domains: objectives, content, activities, instructional design, and assessment. The overall mean rating of 4.70 classified the CTE as highly valid, indicating strong alignment with developmental competencies and curriculum standards.

The objectives of the CTE obtained a composite mean of 4.70, categorized as highly valid. Experts noted that the objectives were clear, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with early childhood education standards. The specificity and clarity of the objectives received particularly high ratings, reflecting their precision and ease of implementation for CDWs. The attainability and teachability of the objectives further indicated that they were realistic and appropriate for four-year-old learners, consistent with Nurani and Pratiwi's (2020) emphasis on age-appropriate learning goals. Minor feedback regarding clarity and phrasing suggested opportunities for refinement, particularly in enhancing measurability and consistency, but these did not detract from the overall strength of the objectives.

The content of the CTE achieved a composite mean of 4.56, also categorized as highly valid. Experts perceived the content as up-to-date, relevant, engaging, and aligned with developmental competencies. While most criteria received highly valid ratings, slightly lower but still acceptable ratings were noted in areas related to cultural specificity, freedom from bias, and writing mechanics. These findings suggest that the content could be further enhanced by incorporating more localized examples and refining technical aspects. Nevertheless, the results align with Aguelo (2024), Dinoy (2024), and Kelemen (2020), who emphasized that developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant content significantly enhances learning engagement and outcomes in early childhood education.

The activities component of the CTE received a composite mean of 4.65, classified as highly valid. Experts recognized the activities as learner-centered, authentic, and aligned with developmental outcomes. The strong ratings confirm that the activities effectively bridge theoretical foundations and practical application, enabling children to connect learning tasks with their everyday experiences and cultural backgrounds. Although metacognitive elements received slightly lower ratings, the overall findings indicate that the activities are well-designed and have strong potential to foster meaningful learning and skill development.

The instructional design of the CTE demonstrated exceptional validity, with a composite mean of 4.84. All criteria were rated as highly valid, reflecting a logical, organized, and learner-centered structure. The instructional design effectively supports interaction, comprehension, and transfer of learning, aligning with best practices in early childhood education. These findings are consistent with Fauzi et al. (2025), who emphasized the importance of interactive and engaging instructional materials in promoting active learning and cognitive growth among young learners.

Similarly, the assessment component of the CTE obtained a composite mean of 4.77, categorized as highly valid. Experts affirmed that the assessment tools were authentic, engaging, and aligned with learning objectives and activities. The uniform high ratings across all criteria underscore the assessments' reliability, developmental appropriateness, and practical applicability. These results support Aguelo's (2024) and Dinoy's (2024) assertions that effective early childhood assessments must be engaging, purpose-driven, and aligned with developmental goals.

In summary, the expert evaluation confirmed that the CTE is a highly valid instructional resource across all five domains. The strong validation and constructive feedback highlight the CTE's capacity to support holistic child development while remaining culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate. With minor refinements in clarity and localization, the CTE stands as a valuable and adaptable tool for CDWs, capable of enhancing early childhood learning experiences and strengthening instructional quality in diverse educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

The study identified fifteen competencies that can be contextualized. Furthermore, the CTE for pre-k2 learners was valid based on expert evaluation. The overall mean rating was 4.70, which corresponds to the highly valid interpretation. These ratings fall within the descriptive category of highly valid.

These results indicate that the developed CTE is valid and would be a valuable tool for teaching the essential competencies of four-year-old children. Based on the study's findings, the CTE developed for pre-k2 learners is a valid instructional material for supporting the holistic development of four-year-old children. Expert validation showed high ratings across all five critical domains, objectives, content, activities, instructional design, and assessment, demonstrating the material's contextual relevance, developmental appropriateness, and instructional quality.

Furthermore, the CTE aligns with the principles of CTL, which emphasize integrating academic content with real-life, meaningful experiences that are culturally and developmentally appropriate. CTL asserts that learning is most effective when rooted in learners' local context, background knowledge, and everyday situations. By embedding local culture, values, and practices into the activities, the CTE could promote learning experiences that are relevant, engaging, and responsive to the needs of both learners and educators.

As supported by the framework of CTL, the CTE materials offer hands-on, theme-based tasks that promote active participation and knowledge construction. These tasks help learners connect learning to their lives, deepening understanding and retention. This could empower CDWs to create meaningful and inclusive learning environments tailored to the children's unique backgrounds and developmental stages.

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