

Sakdalistas and the Cabuyeno youth: Connecting local history and students in classrooms

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Abstract:History education in the Philippines focuses on discussions of Philippine history, Asian History, and World History. The Philippine history focuses on historical accounts and events that influenced and shaped the nation as a whole. Although some local historical accounts are known through celebrations and commemorations, other significant events and figures that shaped a specific town are oftentimes lost in the classroom setting. This has been reflected in the student's grasps of their local heroes and their local history. This study focused on the local history education in the town of Cabuyao as seen by its student scholars, particularly, the accounts of the Sakdalistas. The study also explored how these students see themselves participating in creating awareness and propagating knowledge about the Sakdalistas. Key findings revealed that students knew the Sakdalistas based on what they physically see in the landmarks dedicated to them and as the main focus of the annual commemoration ritual in the community. The study concluded with the description of the state of local history's inclusion in classroom history education and the students' different perspectives in local history knowledge and its relevance.

Keywords : local history education, youth and local history, connecting national history and local history

1.Introduction

Local history takes place when people are socializing about particular places which will in turn make a distinction of that place. Local history also has something to do with how the communities shaped their particular places and become stimuli in promoting local community interaction.

Studies mention means of preserving local history through specialized centers that combine library and archives museum. The main purpose of these centers is to preserve the knowledge, history, culture, practices, and studies about a certain locality that is defined in all dimensions. These contain a wide range of historical accounts and artifacts. These provide a transformative mechanism in the fields of history, culture, and heritage in the Philippines (Perez, 2012). Also these record and books showcase collected traditions as a means to preserve a specific historical accounts' existence and for scholars to ensure its propagation (Villanueva, 2013)

History classes also provide a critical role in local history preservation. Ouzhan (2015) argued that history teaching allows students to gain first-hand experience through improved awareness of history. Students who actively communicates with their neighborhood learn about themselves and their past, which provides them with words and concepts about the past which they can easily connect between history and other disciplines. This develops historical empathy in students.

In the Philippines, education is expected to play an important role in preserving historical information and promoting national and local consciousness which is achieved through introduction of these information to students in their history classes. Inocian (2014) shared that even teachers who are tasked to teach the subject are given specific trainings on how to handle teaching history in classrooms. In the case of Cabuyao City, Laguna, local history also brings to light a significant movement in history that also adhered to fighting for rights and freedom from oppression. It is known as the *Sakdalista* Movement.

The study's was conducted to explore how local history and students are connected in classroom setting. The objective was focused on 1) describing the context of history class in *Cabuyao* based on its students; 2) determining the value of local history to its students; and 3) exploration of how students see themselves as part of local history preservation

This study would benefit both the local government of *Cabuyao* and the educational institutions of *Cabuyao* as it will define what students need in terms of knowledge in local history, and how students perceive efforts in preserving local history.

2.Materials and Method

This case study explored the local history education through the experiences of its participants. This provided a practical approach of describing local history teaching practices and other information mechanisms that support classroom discussions.

Cabuyao is a City of Laguna, Philippines dubbed as the business town in Laguna. It is part of the 2nd district of the province characterized by premier science parks occupied by well-known international industries. Similar to it neighbouring city, Calamba, it experienced a rapid economic transformation. It is also one of the areas that witnessed a significant event helmed by the *Sakdalistas* that is immortalized in the grounds of its local parish church.

The primary data was all gathered through key informant interview and participant interview. The participants of the researchers for the study were purposively selected scholars of Cabuyao City. A total of five participants agreed to become part of the study. The researchers also conducted a participant observation wherein they joined the *Sakdalista* Commemoration event. Journal logs were also kept by the researchers to record their thoughts all throughout data gathering process.

The researchers collected secondary information about the *Sakdalistas* through existing documents at the local government tourism office and the Philippine archives. These data were compared to establish trustworthiness of sources and integrity of content.

Themes were derived from the gathered data. Themes were identified based on the emerging thoughts and concepts and were used to address the objectives of the study. The researchers separated their assumptions through the process of bracketing to be able to unearth the prevailing thoughts embedded in the data.

3.Results and Discussion

The Sakdalista in the Local History of Cabuyao, Laguna

The group of the Sakdal Movement or the *Sakdalistas/ Sakdalista* was active in Central and Southern Luzon and was headed by Benigno Ramos. *Sakdalistas* are as an alliance made by the Filipinos to fight for their rights and to remind the Spanish government of their existence and their willingness to die for the country. In 1935, the *Sakdalistas* were able to control Santa Cruz and Sta. Rosa towns but only for a day when they rose in open rebellion in some Laguna towns. A group of *Sakdalistas* from Cavite went to Cabuyao, Laguna when they learned that the Spanish Government was pressuring the locals to leave the town (Castro, 2016).

A rock was erected on May 3, 2001 at the St. Polycarp Church in Cabuyao as a monumental piece for the 56 Sakdalistas who died on that area by the hands of the foreigner-ruled government forces during their armed struggle for the independence and economic liberation in the Philippines.

The *Sakdalistas* is a crucial part of the *Cabuyao*'s rich local history as it identifies an actual contribution of the town in the revolutions and movements that occurred in the Philippines. It also creates a caricature of thoughts of awakened consciousness that at some point, prevailed in *Cabuyao*. It also leads to possibilities that other unsung heroes, that has not been documented, exist.

Part of the Local government's effort is to implement programs that ensure the revival and survival of the *Sakdalista* as part of *Cabuyao*'s local history. In its efforts, it involved student scholars to spearhead the commemoration activities. Being students, they are expected to be knowledgeable of local history as it was also assumed to have been discussed in classrooms. Thus, the study set out to explore their context in terms of local history as it is introduced and nurtured in classrooms.

Context of Local History in Cabuyao

The Practice of local history teaching

Memorization of dates, years, and names. Students narrate that they were, most of the time, bombarded by facts of events that happened on a National level. What is presented to them is well known acts of heroics that contributed to either the freedom or a birth of a sense of consciousness among the Filipinos. Dates are deemed to be significant because it marks the existence of that event in history and names give the event an agent or an origin.

Focus on National History. Even with National History providing a background without connecting it to the local historical events, makes the topics harder to grasp. Participants also believe that local history establishes where they (the Cabuyenos) are in the National history. Since it suggests that they were also directly reacting to the movements and events happening nationally.

Lack of engagement with students. Participants shared that there is a need to explore other approaches in teaching History :

“...kailangan may - iba’t – ibang strategies or method para mas maunawaan nila yung lessons na hindi naman medyo boring.”

(...there should be other strategies or approaches for students to understand better lessons which are not boring.)

- Participant 1

Students believe that there are other strategies that exist apart from the normal lecture delivery happening in their classroom. But students emphasize on the delivery and not actually the process or content. They still seek other sources to get enough information and to help them improve their understanding of historical events. Deligero-Badilles (2017) highlighted that students find history interesting when they are coupled with stories shared by teachers. Although the participants believe the importance of History, they still search for creative means of helping them learn.

Connection of the past and the current

“...magandang pagaralan yung mga contemporary issues na nagaganap sa Pilipinas ngayon.”

(...it is good to study contemporary issues that is happening in the Philippines today)

The participants believe that the National historical events should be connected to their local history. Current events, both local and national, are a crucial piece of information that participants believe to be useful in further assessing and understanding current issues. This signifies the participants’ drive to become an active audience in the deciphering events occurring locally.

Sources of Local history

The participants identified major sources of local information: External, outside of the classroom, and other historians and studies.

External, outside of the classroom. One of the participants stated that the first time he heard about the *Sakdalistas* was in a seminar held by the Mayor's office. As scholars of the municipal head, they were compelled to attend the said seminar. The speaker in the seminar focused on information regarding the *Sakdalistas* and why a memorial was being erected to commemorate them. It also served as a briefing on what their role in the said event was going to be. That was when they realized the existence of a historical figure in their town.

"Literally, wala talaga akong alam sa St. Polycarp. Nalaman ko lang, at hind ko rin alam - alam kung nasaan siya, nalaman ko nga lang nung sa meeting ng Sakdalista, yun nga nung, yung simbahan tas dun nga sa may harap dun sa may Sakdalista."

(Literally, I had no idea about St Polycarp (Sadalista). I just learned about it during the first Sakdalista event meeting. That's where I found out about the memorial in front of the church, of the Sakdalistas)

-Participant 3

Other studies and history enthusiasts. Other historians were a major source of information about the Sakdalistas. These historians, both of which are Manila-based, are quite familiar with the events surrounding the Sakdalistas. The students, during a study that they conducted, came across these history enthusiasts who introduced them to the Sakdalistas. During their data gathering, also for the same study, they were able to look into some documents containing accounts of the Sakdalistas.

Stories from the Family. One of the participants reiterated that his own grandfather knew about the story of the Sakdalistas. He even has his own detail of the historical account :

"... central, sa bayan sa, Cabuyao, so, may nakukuwento siya na, talaga daw parang planado yon, planadong planado na paglusob yun nga lang, parang, syempre mga history nga natin, mga history that time, ah, sinasabi na binertray daw sila nung ibang miyembro, kumbaga parang, alam na nila dito yung lugar, pero, parang, binenta sila kaya sila maraming namatay."

(...my grandfather was still in elementary then, somebody told him that the attack on the *Sakdalistas* were

planned, our history states that they were betrayed by the other members. They already knew where they would be that's why many of the members died)
-Participant 5

This narration also proves that the stories lived through families and generations. Also, the youth are still receptive of past accounts. They pay attention to stories shared by someone in the family.

History teacher. One of the participants cited a history teacher who told students about *Sakdalistas*. She even encouraged students to learn more about the Movement and the people behind them. Even with the different history teachers that they encountered, only one was mentioned as a significant source about the existence of the *Sakdalistas*.

Relevance and Value of Local history

Legacy. For the participants, learning should first happen in their hometown. They see the value of learning first from what happened in their own place in order to understand what is happening in the national, regional, and global scene. They also emphasized on starting from childhood. Knowledge and understanding of local history should start in the early years.

“... ang bata matututo mismo sa lugar talaga kung saan sila nakatira.”

(the children should learn from their hometown)

-participant 1

They also cited that one reason why there is a need to study local history is because it will help an individual to learn who they are, what they are, where they come from, and what people have invested in the past. They view local history as a means to learn about the sociological and cultural foundations of themselves that grew from historical events. It will also help them identify their core value and what constitutes being part of their hometown. Local history will also give them a deeper understanding of their town's context and the meanings that people who live and lived there, shared. The past would also tell them their ancestor's contribution to the nation as a whole. This fosters an attitude of looking first within more than seeking answers outside of oneself.

Another concept that emerged is their view that the *Sakdalistas* is one foundation of what makes them a *Cabuyeno*, a child of Cabuyao and what makes Cabuyao City a progressive town. Their local history is a source of pride for the participants as it serves as an identifier of their lineage.

Lessons from the past. More than a source of pride and a means of recognition, the participants also emphasized on the values that their local history uphold, as stated by Participant 5 :

“Oo, talagang pag sinabing Sakdalista, talagang kahit anong oras may pwedeng pumatay sa kanila, nandun parin yung courage nila na, ipagtanggol yung Cabuyao and buong Pilipinas.”

(Yes, If one is a Sakdalista, even in the possibility of getting killed, one still has the courage to fight for Cabuyao, for the Philippines)

They admired the extent of patriotism that the Sakdalistas have. They also spoke strongly about selflessness and they wish to embody the same in their individual institutions and organizations.

“gusto ko lang mangyari, sana lahat ng gagawin, tama at para sa bayan; hindi lang dapat na sarili, iniisip.”

(I want that whatever happens, in everything one does, should be what is right for the country. One should not just think of one's self)

-Participant 4

“...ano ang pinagsimulan ng Sakdalistas, ano yung pinaglalaman ng Sakdalistas, at ano ang Sakdalistas sa panahon na tatahakin natin sa susunod na araw.”

(how did the Sakdalistas begin, what they fought for, and what the Sakdalista's are in our journey today and tomorrow)

-Participant 5

The participants also believe that the *Sakdalistas* represented what it meant to always consider the good of the nation. That what they want to see is a positive change in attitude towards how people make decisions or choose an action, that they always consider how it affects the nation as a whole. *Sakdalistas* are also considered as a significant component of the *Cabuyenos'* future.

Students in the propagation of Local History

When asked about how they could contribute to the propagation of local history, the participant 2 answered :

“...pagpapakilala at pagsisimula ng kung ano ang nagawa ng Sakdalistas. Hindi lang, tignan kung ano ang kasaysayan ng Sakdalistas”

(to introduce and initiate what the *Sakdalistas* were able to accomplish, not just to look at their history)

The participants believe that they have the capacity to introduce who the *Sakdalistas* are and what they have accomplished. They will start with information dissemination but

they will also conduct a thorough study of other information about their local history before they'd be able to introduce it properly to others. The second means to propagate local history knowledge that they mentioned is to initiate what the *Sakdalistas* were able to accomplish. In the context of *Cabuyao*, it would be to maintain love and respect for the local history and to give due recognition to the *Sakdalistas* by safeguarding freedom of the town.

Participants understand that knowing one's local history is more than knowing information about them. It has to be connected to individual action and collective sense of pride in one's hometown. If people continued to live without looking at their actions and its effects on Cabuyao, then it is simply passive. Knowledge and action should go hand in hand.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Healy (2012) two main points of the significance of local history. First, it "*reflect the social reality that our lives are lived out in particular localities: our place in the geography of the world is a major determinant of our lives in that world. Second, local studies allow a degree of depth that simply isn't possible in more wide-ranging studies.*" Similarly, Fredriksson and Hoskins (2007) also mentioned that people are more disposed to study something is within their reach, something they can easily grasp, and attach a personal and individual meaning to. Local history provides tangible concepts that people can relate to. Beyond locality, it offers the components of that *locality*, its people. These people are linked by common thoughts and meanings shared through community interactions and passed on from generation to generation through established social institutions that enforce these acts of transfer. One of which is the school.

In the conduct of this study, it was able to describe the context of local history teaching in classrooms. It is mainly a lecture that emphasizes on landmarking features – dates, places, persons – that favored a national perspective. Although there is the concept of localization in history teaching, based on the participant's responses, it was unable to build a definite concept of the *Sakdalista's* history.

On the other hand, students were still able to see the value of local history preservation. They perceive it as an important aspect of their identity. Local history is also about them and what they stand for. In the process of connecting classroom discussion of history and the students, the mechanism lies within the active participation of students to seek out information and to share that information to others.

In the course of building local history knowledge, it is recommended that LGU and educational institutions collaborate to create a more consistent knowledge sharing process. They should coordinate with each other to establish a continuous learning process for the students which would be composed of activities that promote local history and knowledge building of local history.

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