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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultivating Historical Consciousness and Civic Engagement through Social Sciences Education among Senior High School Learners of Eastern Potia National High School: A Rural Philippine Public School Perspective

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Abstract

Historical consciousness and civic engagement are essential components of Social Sciences education that enable learners to understand the past, critically analyze contemporary social issues, and actively participate in democratic processes. In rural educational contexts, Social Sciences instruction plays a significant role in fostering learners' awareness of local history, cultural identity, citizenship responsibilities, and community participation. This study examined how Social Sciences education cultivates historical consciousness and civic engagement among Senior High School learners at Eastern Potia National High School, Alfonso Lista District II, Ifugao, Philippines. Using a qualitative case study design, the study involved fifteen (15) Senior High School learners, five (5) Social Sciences teachers, and three (3) school administrators selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed five major themes: (1) Understanding Historical Events Shapes Learners' Perspectives, (2) Local History Strengthens Cultural Identity and Sense of Belonging, (3) Critical Reflection Encourages Civic Awareness, (4) Community-Based Learning Enhances Civic Participation, and (5) Social Sciences Teachers as Catalysts of Democratic Engagement. Findings indicate that contextualized Social Sciences instruction significantly contributes to learners' historical understanding, critical thinking skills, civic responsibility, and active participation in community affairs. The study highlights the importance of integrating local historical narratives and experiential civic learning into Social Sciences curricula to strengthen democratic citizenship among rural Filipino learners.

Keywords: *historical consciousness, civic engagement, Social Sciences education, rural education, citizenship education, Philippine public schools, senior high school learners*

Introduction

Education serves as a powerful mechanism for developing informed, responsible, and engaged citizens. Within the Philippine educational system, Social Sciences education plays a vital role in helping learners understand historical events, appreciate cultural heritage, develop critical perspectives, and actively participate in democratic processes. Historical consciousness refers to an individual's understanding of the relationship between the past, present, and future, while civic engagement involves active participation in activities that contribute to community improvement and democratic governance.

In rural communities such as Alfonso Lista, Ifugao, Social Sciences education provides opportunities for learners to explore both national and local histories while understanding their responsibilities as members of society. As the Philippines continues to address issues related to democratic participation, historical misinformation, and cultural preservation, schools are increasingly expected to develop learners who possess historical literacy and civic competence.

Eastern Potia National High School serves a diverse population of learners whose experiences are shaped by indigenous traditions, agricultural livelihoods, and community-based cultural practices. Through Social Sciences education, learners are exposed to historical narratives, social issues, governance structures, and citizenship concepts that influence their understanding of society and their role within it. However, limited research has explored how Social Sciences instruction in rural Philippine public schools contributes to the development of historical consciousness and civic engagement among Senior High School learners.

This study sought to examine the experiences and perceptions of learners, teachers, and school administrators regarding the role of Social Sciences education in cultivating historical awareness and civic participation. By understanding these experiences, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on citizenship education, historical learning, and rural educational practices in the Philippines.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore how Social Sciences education cultivates historical consciousness and civic engagement among Senior High School learners at Eastern Potia National High School.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. Examine learners' understanding of historical events and their relevance to contemporary society.
2. Explore how Social Sciences education contributes to the development of cultural identity and historical consciousness.
3. Investigate the role of Social Sciences instruction in promoting civic awareness and responsibility.
4. Determine how community-based learning experiences influence civic engagement among learners.
5. Identify educational practices that strengthen democratic participation and citizenship development.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Jörn Rüsen's Theory of Historical Consciousness and John Dewey's Theory of Democratic Education.

Rüsen posited that historical consciousness enables individuals to interpret the past and use historical understanding to guide present actions and future decisions. Through historical inquiry and reflection, learners develop the ability to connect historical events with contemporary realities.

Dewey emphasized that education serves as a foundation for democratic participation. Schools function as miniature democratic communities where learners acquire knowledge, values, and experiences necessary for active citizenship. Civic engagement develops when learners participate in meaningful social experiences and community activities.

Together, these frameworks explain how Social Sciences education promotes both historical understanding and civic participation among learners.

Methodology

The study utilized a qualitative case study research design to explore the role of Social Sciences education in cultivating historical consciousness and civic engagement among Senior High School learners at Eastern Potia National High School. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding historical learning and civic participation.

The participants consisted of fifteen (15) Senior High School learners, five (5) Social Sciences teachers, and three (3) school administrators selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on their direct involvement in Social Sciences instruction and civic-related school activities.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews explored participants' experiences in learning and teaching history, citizenship, governance, and community engagement. Classroom observations focused on instructional practices, learner participation, and classroom discussions related to historical and civic topics. Relevant instructional materials, lesson plans, and school documents were also analyzed to support data triangulation.

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. Coding procedures identified recurring patterns and themes that reflected participants' experiences and perceptions regarding historical consciousness and civic engagement.

Findings and Discussion

Theme 1: Understanding Historical Events Shapes Learners' Perspectives

A dominant theme that emerged from the study was the role of historical learning in shaping learners' understanding of contemporary social realities. Participants consistently reported that studying historical events enabled them to gain deeper insights into present-day societal issues and appreciate the significance of past experiences in shaping current conditions. Through the analysis of historical events, learners developed a broader perspective regarding political developments, social inequalities, cultural transformations, and national identity.

One learner explained:

"Kapag pinag-aaralan namin ang kasaysayan, mas naiintindihan namin kung bakit may mga problema at pagbabago sa lipunan ngayon."

Another learner shared:

"Natututo kaming huwag ulitin ang mga pagkakamali ng nakaraan."

Several participants indicated that historical discussions encouraged them to analyze events beyond memorizing dates and personalities. Instead, they began examining causes, consequences, and lessons derived from historical experiences. Teachers observed that learners became more reflective and analytical when discussing topics such as colonization, governance, social movements, and national development.

One teacher noted:

"Mas nagiging kritikal ang pag-iisip nila kapag pinag-uusapan namin ang mga pangyayari sa kasaysayan at iniuugnay ito sa mga kasalukuyang isyu sa bansa."

The findings suggest that historical learning contributes significantly to the development of critical thinking and historical consciousness. Learners learn to recognize patterns, evaluate evidence, and understand how past decisions continue to influence present realities. These findings support the work of Jörn Rüsen, who argued that historical consciousness develops when individuals connect past experiences with present circumstances and

future possibilities. Through historical understanding, learners become more capable of interpreting social realities and making informed judgments about contemporary issues.

Theme 2: Local History Strengthens Cultural Identity and Sense of Belonging

Another significant theme that emerged was the importance of local history and indigenous heritage in strengthening learners' cultural identity and sense of belonging. Participants expressed that learning about the history of their community, local leaders, indigenous traditions, and ancestral practices deepened their appreciation of their cultural roots and enhanced their connection to their community.

One learner stated:

“Mas naging proud ako sa aming kultura nang malaman ko ang kasaysayan ng aming komunidad.”

Another participant remarked:

“Mas naiintindihan ko kung paano nabuo ang aming lugar at ang papel ng aming mga ninuno.”

Teachers observed that learners became more engaged whenever local historical narratives and indigenous perspectives were incorporated into classroom discussions. Lessons that highlighted community experiences, local heroes, and cultural traditions generated greater interest and participation compared to purely textbook-based instruction.

One teacher explained:

“Kapag tungkol sa kasaysayan ng aming lugar ang pinag-uusapan, mas interesado silang makinig at magbahagi ng kanilang sariling karanasan.”

The findings indicate that local history serves as a powerful tool for promoting cultural awareness and identity formation. Through exposure to local narratives, learners develop a stronger appreciation of their heritage while recognizing the contributions of previous generations to community development. These findings are consistent with culturally responsive education literature, which emphasizes that connecting instruction to learners' cultural backgrounds enhances engagement, identity development, and academic achievement. By understanding their historical roots, learners cultivate a stronger sense of belonging and responsibility toward preserving their cultural heritage.

Theme 3: Critical Reflection Encourages Civic Awareness

The study revealed that critical reflection facilitated through Social Sciences education significantly contributed to learners' civic awareness. Classroom discussions, debates, reflective activities, and analyses of social issues encouraged learners to think critically about their roles as citizens and their responsibilities within society.

One learner shared:

“Dahil sa Social Sciences, mas naiisip namin ang aming mga karapatan at responsibilidad bilang mamamayan.”

Another participant explained:

“Natutunan naming suriin ang mga balita at mga isyung panlipunan bago maniwala agad.”

Teachers reported that learners became more aware of issues related to governance, public accountability, social justice, environmental sustainability, and community welfare. Discussions involving current events encouraged learners to examine multiple perspectives and develop informed opinions regarding societal concerns.

One teacher stated:

“Hindi lang sila basta tumatanggap ng impormasyon. Natututo silang magtanong, magsuri, at magbigay ng sariling pananaw.”

The findings suggest that reflective learning experiences cultivate informed citizenship by encouraging learners to evaluate information critically and participate thoughtfully in democratic processes. These findings support citizenship education research which argues that critical reflection enhances civic competence, democratic engagement, and responsible citizenship. Through reflective inquiry, learners become more aware of societal issues and develop the capacity to contribute meaningfully to public discourse and community development.

Theme 4: Community-Based Learning Enhances Civic Participation

Community-based learning emerged as an important mechanism for promoting civic engagement among learners. Participants emphasized that participation in community activities enabled them to apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations and develop a stronger commitment to community welfare.

One learner remarked:

“Kapag sumasali kami sa clean-up drive at community projects, mas nararamdaman naming bahagi kami ng komunidad.”

Another learner stated:

“Mas naiintindihan namin ang kahalagahan ng pagtutulungan kapag kasama kami sa mga gawain para sa barangay.”

Teachers observed that service-learning activities, environmental campaigns, outreach programs, and community development projects provided learners with practical opportunities to exercise leadership, teamwork, and social responsibility.

One teacher explained:

“Mas natututo sila kapag nakikita nila mismo ang epekto ng kanilang mga ginagawa sa komunidad.”

These experiences fostered civic values by allowing learners to actively contribute to solving local problems and addressing community needs. Community-based learning strengthened learners’ understanding of citizenship by moving beyond theoretical discussions toward actual participation in civic activities. Consistent with experiential learning theory, the findings demonstrate that meaningful community engagement enhances learners’ sense of social responsibility, leadership skills, and commitment to community development.

Theme 5: Social Sciences Teachers as Catalysts of Democratic Engagement

The final theme highlighted the crucial role of Social Sciences teachers as facilitators of democratic learning and civic development. Participants consistently recognized teachers as influential figures who guide learners in understanding historical events, analyzing social issues, and practicing democratic values.

One teacher shared:

“Hindi lang namin itinuturo ang kasaysayan. Tinuturuan din namin silang maging responsableng mamamayan.”

Another teacher noted:

“Mahalaga na makita ng mga estudyante na may kaugnayan ang kanilang natututuhan sa kanilang buhay at komunidad.”

Learners likewise acknowledged the influence of their teachers in encouraging open discussions, respectful dialogue, and active participation during classroom activities.

One learner stated:

“Hinahayaan kami ng guro na magbigay ng opinyon at makinig sa pananaw ng iba.”

Teachers intentionally created learning environments that encouraged critical inquiry, democratic participation, and respectful exchange of ideas. Through discussions, debates, collaborative activities, and community engagement projects, teachers modeled democratic values while fostering learners' confidence to express their views responsibly.

The findings support previous research indicating that teachers play a central role in promoting civic engagement and democratic dispositions among young people. Effective Social Sciences teachers do not merely transmit historical knowledge; they facilitate the development of informed, reflective, and socially responsible citizens. Their guidance helps learners understand the relevance of historical and civic education in addressing contemporary societal challenges and participating meaningfully in democratic life.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Social Sciences education at Eastern Potia National High School significantly contributes to the development of historical consciousness and civic engagement among Senior High School learners. Through the integration of historical inquiry, local history, critical reflection, and community-based learning experiences, learners develop a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage, societal issues, and responsibilities as citizens. The findings demonstrate that contextualized and participatory Social Sciences instruction fosters not only historical literacy but also democratic values, civic awareness, and community involvement. As such, Social Sciences education serves as an essential platform for preparing rural Filipino learners to become informed, responsible, and actively engaged members of society.

Implications of the Study

1. Social Sciences curricula should incorporate local historical narratives and indigenous knowledge systems.
2. Schools should strengthen community-based learning and service-learning initiatives.
3. Teachers should utilize inquiry-based and reflective pedagogies that promote civic awareness.
4. Educational leaders should support programs that encourage youth participation in community affairs.
5. Citizenship education should be integrated across disciplines to strengthen democratic engagement.

Recommendations

1. Develop localized Social Sciences instructional materials highlighting local history and culture.
2. Increase opportunities for learner participation in civic and community projects.
3. Conduct teacher training on historical inquiry and civic education strategies.
4. Establish partnerships between schools and local government units to support civic learning activities.
5. Undertake further studies examining the long-term impact of Social Sciences education on civic participation and democratic engagement among Filipino youth.

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