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Developing Social Justice Skills through Community Service-Learning in High School Social Studies

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Introduction

Social studies teachers have the special responsibility of cultivating in their students' principles and competencies essential for democratic and social-justice-oriented citizenship. Adams, Bell, Goodman, and Joshi (2016) write that "traditional lecture-and-listen methods will not stimulate the active involvement necessary to reach social justice goals" (p. 9). Teachers need to involve their students in participatory experiences that require students to apply their critical thinking skills in authentic social situations to fully appreciate and address issues relating to social inequality, inequity, and injustice. This study suggests that one teaching method that would afford students with such experiences is community service-learning. This study illustrates the potential of a community service-learning project in equipping high school students with skills crucial to their development as socially responsible citizens who could effectively engage in public affairs. It aims to answer the research question: how does a community service-learning project contribute to the development of social justice skills among high school students?

To this end, the researcher discusses some literature on teaching social justice and community service-learning that inspired and guided this endeavor. This is followed by an explanation of the details about the community service-learning project that is the focus of the study. Afterward, the researcher shares the written work of the students based on their experiences during the project. Toward the end, the researcher presents an analysis of how these student outputs reflect the development of social justice competencies among her students.

Literature Review

Teaching Social Justice

Definitions of social justice vary. Definitions provided by Rawls and Young are among the most often cited. For Rawls, social justice refers to the fair and equitable distribution of material and nonmaterial resources to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged (Rawls, 1999, 2001, and 2003). For Young, the focus of social justice shifts from the distribution of resources to social processes such as recognition and respect for marginalized social groups (Young, 1990 and 2011).

Rather than view Rawls' and Young's definitions as mutually exclusive, Bell suggests that both definitions be understood as intertwining such that social justice addresses both resources and recognition (Bell, 2016). It is along these lines that Wade (2007) proposes that social justice be defined as "the process of working toward, and the condition of, meeting everyone's basic needs and fulfilling everyone's potential to live productive and empowered lives as participating citizens of our global community" (p. 5). Put differently, social justice is concerned with three things: (1) the equitable distribution of resources, (2) the process through which people relate to each other with respect and care, and (3) addressing the roots of injustice or oppression that can be found both in individual actions and in societal institutions (Wade, 2007). And the best place to start promoting social justice, according to Bell and Wade, is in the classroom. As Wade (2007) puts it,

While at first it might seem that social justice education should be relegated to graduate schools and expert think tanks, it is precisely because these problems are so overwhelming and seemingly intractable that we must start at the earliest levels of schooling. If students are to develop a commitment to social justice ideals, this work should begin in the elementary years when children are concerned with fairness and when their empathy and perspective-taking abilities are in the formative stages (p. 1).

Naturally, social studies takes the center stage in responding to this call. Social studies, as an integrated study of the social sciences and humanities, has the primary goal of equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of them to be active and engaged citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society (NCSS). As such, social studies has the most potential in teaching young people about and for social justice (Kumashiro, 2004).

So, what competencies and dispositions are required for teaching and learning social justice in the social studies classroom? While there is no prescribed list of standards for social justice education, scholars and educators seem to agree on developing certain critical analytical tools necessary for understanding social inequalities and becoming agents of social change (Hobbel & Chapman, 2010; Wade, 2007; Hackman, 2005). These tools are enumerated and described briefly below.

1. Students should be able to explore their role concerning social issues. This entails that they recognize the complexities of their identities and contexts; and reflect on how these shape their thoughts, beliefs, and actions.
2. Students should be able to probe the status quo looking into underlying causes of social problems and scrutinizing systems of power and oppression on institutional, cultural, and individual levels. This presupposes that they are cognizant of the socio-political dynamics among the concerned institutions and other social actors.
3. Students should be able to connect analysis to action. Based on the information that they have gathered and analyzed, they should be able to propose a course of action as a response to identified problems. They should develop a sense of agency and efficacy in being able to transform society for the better. They should also develop a strong commitment to working with others — linking individual and collective action in challenging oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in the institutions and communities which they are a part of.
4. Students should be able to connect struggles across boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Students should be encouraged to work on behalf of and in collaboration with the marginalized. The aim here is not charity, but mutual support and empowerment alongside the disadvantaged. They should regard members of marginalized communities as partners in efforts to address injustices and inequalities.
5. Students should be able to provide concrete solutions. They should be able to go beyond glib propositions to social issues. To create a meaningful impact on these communities, their proposed solutions should be specific, realistic, and sustainable. In addition, these solutions should stem from the sum of their actions and those of their community partners.

Social Justice Skills in the Philippine High School Curriculum

Although references to promoting justice have been made in the high school social studies curriculum of the Philippines, the abovementioned skills have yet to be spelled out in the curriculum.

Both the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC), the curriculum used from 2002 until 2012, and the K to 12 Curriculum, the current curriculum that is being used since 2012, heavily draw content and competencies from social science

disciplines such as history, geography, and economics. The primary goal of which is to develop active responsible citizens of the country and the world. To that end, the learning standards provided by both curricula state that students should be able to exemplify skills such as being able to conduct research, analyze data, apply critical thinking skills, make informed and reasoned decisions, and develop global perspectives. Students are also expected to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and issues related to nation-building, democracy, cultural literacy, economic productivity, and human rights.

A cursory look at the core content and performance standards stipulated by both curricula, however, reveals that little-to-no mention of social justice is made. However, this study suggests that while social justice themes and skills have yet to be explicitly specified in the curriculum, these are alluded to or implied in the standards already provided by the curricula. For instance, several themes and skills related to promoting social justice are already listed in the curricula. These include understanding concepts such as democracy and human rights, reflecting on one's experiences and actions, and applying critical thinking skills. Thus, this study posits that there is great potential for social studies teachers to incorporate social justice competencies in their lessons. By integrating participatory and critical pedagogies such as community service-learning, teachers would be able to encourage students to work against apathy and toward positive social change (Wade, 1994, 1997, 2001; Wade and Saxe, 1996).

Community Service-Learning

According to the Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform (ASLER) (1993):

Service-learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully-organized service experiences: that meet actual community needs, that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community, that are integrated into each young person's academic curriculum, that provide structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity, that provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities, that enhance what is taught in the school by extending student

learning beyond the classroom, and that help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others (p.1).

Because community service-learning, by its very nature, requires authentic community engagement, it has enormous potential to develop among young people skills necessary to meet social justice aims. The students' active involvement in real-life situations places them in an ideal position to make sense of the larger historical, cultural, and political contexts of the social problems they wish to address. Face-to-face interaction with people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds also allows them to develop empathy, compassion, and respect for others. To effectively carry out community service-learning in the social studies classroom, Wade (1994, 2001) advises teachers to consider these tasks:

1. **Inviting collaboration.** Teachers could begin by reaching out to potential communities students could work with. Together they could discuss opportunities for collaboration in pursuit of a common goal for the benefit of the community. Once partnerships are established, teachers could identify individuals, groups, and agencies that could support the endeavor; and clarify the roles and responsibilities of all those involved.
2. **Identifying a problem.** This task involves deciding on the needs of the concerned community. It is worth emphasizing that ideas considered at this stage include not only those put forth by the teacher and students, but more importantly, by the local community too.
3. **Designing the service project.** The goal of the project should go beyond charity and "do-gooding". The project should be based on the assumption that all members of the community already have the capacity to address their problems or issues. The role of the students is merely to support, facilitate, or accompany the community in gaining recognition and power. Along this premise, teachers could then set objectives that are realistic, specific, and sustainable, as well as aligned with curricular goals. It would also be helpful to provide students with theoretical and conceptual frameworks that will guide them in analyzing the circumstances and needs of the community.
4. **Reflecting on service.** Teachers should provide students with the opportunity to look back on the experiences the students have shared with the community. Prompted by questions relevant to their community service, students could critique their own presumptions and dispositions. This would allow them to develop a sense of self-awareness of how their presumptions

and dispositions have shaped their perceptions and actions towards members of the community and the community at large.

Methodology

Drawing on the literature discussed above, this study explores the ways in which high school students exhibit social justice skills after a community service-learning project. Using a descriptive and textual analysis approach, the researcher examined the students' written outputs which were based on their two-day immersion in an indigenous peoples community.

This section explains the expected learning outcomes and the preparations made for the community service-learning project. It also describes the profile of the community involved and the activities that were done during the immersion.

Preparing The Project

The community service-learning project described in this study was part of an elective course which the researcher handled under the school's Social Studies department. The main goals of the project were to provide Grade 10 students an opportunity to learn the value of people empowerment at the grassroots level as a mode of community development and to understand the complexities of different social issues faced by marginalized communities in the country. More specifically, the students were expected to:

1. engage in meaningful interactions with members of the community,
2. provide an informed critical analysis of the real-life situation of the community based on careful research and consultation with members of the community, and
3. suggest concrete solutions to problems identified in partnership with the community.

To this end, students were required to submit the following written works:

1. Community Profile,
2. Observations and Reflections, and
3. Policy Recommendations.

At the beginning of the project, the students were exposed to and given an opportunity to discuss various theories and concepts related to social work,

community development, and the situation of marginalized communities in the Philippines. This was to provide them with a theoretical toolkit that would help inform the ways in which they would make sense of their community service experience.

Around the same time, the researcher sought the support and assistance of the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD), a government agency responsible for the protection of the social welfare and rights of underprivileged Filipinos. With the help of DSWD, the researcher was able to reach out to potential partner communities and organizations. Once the partner community was selected, DSWD connected the researcher with key individuals from the locale who helped in facilitating the project such as community elders and leaders as well as on-site social workers. These social workers also helped the researcher conduct an orientation and workshop for the students on social work and community development practices that applied specifically to the partner community. Moreover, DSWD, in collaboration with local law enforcement, helped the researcher in coordinating the logistics, safety, and security aspects of the project.

The Community

The community selected was an indigenous peoples community of Aetas. The community was situated in the barrio of Inararo in Porac, Pampanga – approximately 8 kilometers away from the city proper. The Aetas are among the most socio-economically marginalized in the country. They continue to face serious risks in being displaced from their ancestral lands due to, among other things, the commercialization of natural resources. And because the Aetas' rights, way of life, systems of knowledge, and economic needs are inextricably tied to their ancestral lands, such threats to their land ownership has made it difficult for them to sustain their heritage and livelihood (Balilla et. al, 2013).

For the Aeta community in Inararo, their primary source of living is mountain farming. They sell their agricultural products to market vendors from the city's wet market. The income they generate from these sales fund their daily consumption and basic needs. They also receive economic subsidies through the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) led by the DSWD. This program is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program by the national government that provides the beneficiaries with conditional cash grants to cover their families' healthcare, nutritional, and educational needs.

The Students

There were 21 Grade 10 students enrolled in the class. At the time they were taking the course, all of them were students of the laboratory school of the College of Education of a national state university in the Philippines. Their school is located in Metropolitan Manila which is the most urbanized region in the country. Most of the students were raised in an urbanized environment. Many of them were also from middle-class families.

The Immersion

For purposes of the immersion, they were grouped into teams of two or three. Each group was assigned to a foster family from the community. These foster families volunteered to accommodate the students for the duration of the immersion. However, because the resources of the foster families were limited, the students were required to bring their own food: two kilograms of rice, five liters of water, and canned food. By living with a foster family from the community, the goal was for the students to learn to relate and adapt to the actual experiences of the community; and for them to gain insights on issues faced by the community from the perspective of these families.

The first day of the immersion began with the students being introduced to the community elders, community leaders, on-site social workers, and their foster families. This was followed by a session where everyone set their expectations about the project. Here, they also discussed in-depth the historical and current struggles of the community. The day concluded with a cultural exchange where members of the community shared local folklore, songs, and dances with the students. In exchange, the students shared their talents in singing and dancing with the community too.

On the second day of the immersion, the students were invited by their foster families to participate in production work. They helped their foster families farm, harvest, and process crops which is the community's main source of living. During their downtime, the students interviewed their foster families and other members of the community. After the interviews, the researcher gathered the students to process their initial observations and thoughts. The immersion culminated with a traditional

boodle fight prepared by the community and a special performance by the students to express their gratitude to the community's hospitality and generosity.

Findings and Discussion

Recognizing the Complexities of Identities and Contexts

According to the students, most of them felt self-conscious and uneasy upon arriving in the community. The students were aware that, as far as the members of the community were concerned, they were outsiders. Thus, the students were more conscious of the attention given to them by members of the community.

Sa simula rin napansin namin na marami ang pinagmamasdan kami kaya nailang din kami sa simula. (At the start, we noticed that many of them were watching us so we felt awkward at first.)

Sa lahat ng bahay na aming madadaan ay tila ba kami'y pinagmamasdan o kaya'y malapitang inoobserbahan. (In all of the houses we passed by, it seemed as though we were being watched or closely observed.)

Some students added that the unease they felt at the beginning was because they hardly see Aetas in their own neighborhoods. To them, it was an uncommon experience. They added that members of the community might have felt the same way towards them too.

Sa unang pagpasok namin sa Brgy. Inararo, nanibago kami sa mga tao sa paligid namin dahil hindi kami sanay na makakita ng Aeta. (When we first entered Brgy. Inararo, we were disoriented because we weren't used to seeing Aetas.)

...sa simula ay hindi pa ganoong komportable ang pakikipag-usap namin sa kanila, at sa tingin namin ay ganoon din para sa kanila... (...at first, we weren't that comfortable to talk to them, and we think they felt the same way too...)

The students also attributed the anxiety they experienced to the cultural difference between them and members of the community – which they felt was highlighted the moment they entered the community.

Sa aming unang gabi kasama ang aming foster family, hindi naiwasan ang pagiging awkward sa simula. Una, dahil ito sa kanilang pananalitang hindi namin naiintindihan sapagkat iba ang wikang kanilang ginagamit. (During the first night we spent with our foster family, the awkwardness was unavoidable at the beginning. First, this is because we didn't understand their language as they used a different language.)

Other students felt distressed upon learning the lengths members of the community have to go through in order to earn a living.

Isa sa mga napansin namin – at lubha kaming nahabag dito – ay nagbebenta sila ng kanilang mga gawa sa malalayo pang lugar sa Pampanga katulad ng San Fernando at Clark. (One of the things that we noticed – and this really devastated us – is that they were selling their products in faraway places in Pampanga like San Fernando at Clark.)

Aware that their cultural and economic backgrounds differ from that of the community, many students were mindful and cautious of their speech and action. They were afraid that they might offend the community.

Nung una, kami ay kinabahan dahil baka may offensive kaming masabi... (At first, we were nervous because we might say something offensive...)

Apparent in the anecdotes of the students is their growing awareness of their own socio-cultural identities and backgrounds as well as those of the members of the community as they began to engage with the community. For most of them, entering the community was unsettling probably because it placed them in a position that required them to confront their own emotions about the Other for the first time. In this context, the term “Other” is used to “refer to those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society” – in this case, the indigenous peoples group of Aetas (Kumashiro, 2000). The students realized that the Aeta community is a social group they are not a part of and differed from in terms of background and

way of life. They seemed to have acknowledged the idea of “Otherness” where they believed that the Aetas have specific experiences they did not share as the students belonged to a dominant or mainstream social group.

Immersing in the community also made the students realize how limited their knowledge about and experiences with the Aetas were. Hence, they were careful not to let their lack of knowledge and experience offend anyone in the community.

In addition, the students faced what it meant to be privileged and oppressed in a real situation which made them feel disheartened. The students realized that members of the community did not enjoy the same sense of economic security they did. The students appeared to face some sort of "emotional crisis" at the beginning of the immersion because it was at this point when the realities of oppression and inequality began sinking into their psyche (Kumashiro, 2000). As Kumashiro (2000) explains,

...as [the students] learned about the dynamics of oppression, they were unlearning what they previously had learned was "normal," was not harmful, was just the way things are. And, as they unlearned what was "normal" and normative (i.e., the way things ought to be), they were learning about their own privileges and complicities with oppression... (p. 6)

Here, the students realized that not everyone occupies a privileged category as they do – in this case, that is living in a middle-to-upper class family in Metro Manila (Bailey, 1998; Iverson, 2012). They realized that the Aetas have been living in circumstances worse than the general population which the students are part of. It could also be surmised that the students probably became aware of how they have bought into and, thus, contributed to the ethnic and socio-economic hierarchy that has continued to marginalize the Aeta community. This could explain why most of them found the immersion jarring at first.

While some social studies teachers would be more inclined to avoid similar activities that would invoke negative feelings among their students, scholars such as Kumashiro (2000) and Iverson (2012) advise the contrary. Rather, they encourage teachers to incorporate such activities in their lessons to provide students an opportunity to develop critical consciousness. Kumashiro posits that learning takes place in crises similar to the experiences of the students in this study. In

moments such as this, they develop an "increased readiness" for critical self-reflection and become "more prepared for the feelings of guilt and shame that may be induced by such educational experiences" (Iverson, 2012).

Breaking Down the Barrier for Collaboration

The students' initial apprehension was also evident in how they found collecting information difficult at the early stages of the immersion.

Hindi madali ang kumuha ng datos lalo na kung isang buong pamayanan ang iyong pagkukunan. Madami ding iba't ibang katangian ang bawat pamayanan na kailangang isaalang-alang sa pangangalap ng datos. Ang pagpunta namin sa pamayanan ng Brgy. Inararo ang nagpatunay sa amin ng pagsubok na ito. Hindi kami nadalian sa pangangalap ng impormasyon. (Collecting data wasn't easy especially if data were to be gathered from the community. There are various characteristics in a community that ought to be considered in gathering data. Our visit to Brgy. Inararo is a testament to this challenge. We didn't find it easy to collect information.)

They knew, however, how crucial communication was in the process of community engagement. They recognized that this was the first step in drawing out insights from the members of the community. As underscored by some students,

Napakahalaga ng komunikasyon dahil susi ito sa pagtatayo ng matibay na tulay sa pagitan namin at ng mga mamamayan ng komunidad. Isa sa mga paraan kung saan mas napalapit kami sa kanila ay dahil lamang sa simpleng pakikipag-usap. (Communication was so important because this was the key in building a strong bridge between us and the members of the community.)

So, they mustered their courage and reached out. It was then did they appreciate how "simple conversations" can go a long way in building rapport with members of the community.

Mula sa simpleng pakikipag-usap ay nababasag ang mga invisible borders na siyang naghiiwalay sa atin – na mismong naranasan naming dalawa.

(Simple conversations shatter the invisible borders that divide us – this we directly experienced.)

Once the students felt that they had gained the trust of the community and had broken the “invisible borders” between them and the community, they were delighted and grateful. In their words, they felt as though they were accepted into and became part of a family.

Nilapitan nila agad kami at binate nang may malaking ngiti sa kanilang mga mukha. Noon palang ay alam na naming tanggap kami sa komunidad na ito. (They approached and greeted us with big smiles on their faces. At that moment we knew we were accepted in this community.)

Tinanggap nila kami bilang pamilya kahit isang araw lang. (They accepted us as family even for just one day.)

They referred to their foster parents as “*Inay/Nanay*” (“Mother”) and “*Itay/Tatay*” (“Father”) as seen in the account below. In an attempt to bridge the gap between them and their foster families, some students tried to live the way their foster families lived. For example, some of them, like their foster parents, carried out their production work while wearing nothing on their feet.

Napakahalaga na maranasan natin kung gaano kahirap ang trabaho o paraan ng pamumuhay nila kung nais natin silang maintindihan... Isa pang naranasan namin ay ang paglalakad ng ilang kilometro na parte ng kanilang pagtatrabaho. Sa paglalakad nang malayo ay tinanggal ng aking partner ang kanyang saplot sa paa dahil nais niya raw maramdaman ang nararamdaman ng aming Inay dahil tapak itong lumakad sa mga bundok. Sa pamamagitan nito nakita namin na napangiti namin si Nanay Snookey dahil alam at nararamdaman niya ang sincerity na nais talaga namin makipamuhay tulad nila. (It’s important that we experience how difficult their livelihood or way of living is if we want to understand them... Another experience we had was walking several kilometers which was part of their work. In the course of walking a far distance, my partner removed his shoes because he wanted to experience what our (foster) mother was going through because she walked barefoot in the mountains. This made Mother

Snookey smile because she knew and felt our sincerity that we really wanted to share their way of life.)

The accounts of the students illustrate how the experiential nature of the community service-learning project provided the students an opportunity to (1) take responsibility and initiative for their own learning experience, (2) hone their communication skills, and (3) develop empathy for the marginalized (Wade, 2007). With barely any intervention from their teacher, the students independently identified the challenges they were facing and thought of ways to overcome these. Drawing on their self-confidence and courage enabled them to open up to and, more importantly, engage with members of the community. Put differently, the project allowed the students to develop a stronger sense of personal efficacy or their "perceived ability to effectively perform necessary tasks, solve personal problems, and positively impact others with whom they interact" (Knapp et. al, 2010, p. 237). The students were not paralyzed by their worries and limitations. Rather, they recognized their own capabilities and figured out ways on how to utilize these to cope with their challenges and ultimately, accomplish their goals. According to them, their commitment to making a valuable contribution to the lives of their foster families and the rest of the community strengthened their resolve and kept up their morale.

Furthermore, the students found themselves in a situation where they had to apply their intercultural communication skills under real-life conditions. They were able to decode non-verbal cues such as whether or not members of the community were already comfortable around them. They listened intently for what members of the community had to say, maintaining a high level of respect, intellectual curiosity, and openness towards the stories shared with them. They also became more thoughtful in their interactions. That the students were careful that they would not inadvertently offend the community showed that they rethought and were set to abandon long-held stereotypes and judgments they might have had about the Aetas.

The students also appeared to have realized that understanding the community required their active involvement and empathy. The students went beyond interviewing as a means of gathering information. Motivated by their desire to learn about the community's experience, all of them willingly and readily participated in the household chores and production work of their foster families. Some students even believed that sharing the same exact experience as their foster

parents such as farming barefoot would help them gain a deeper understanding of the community's life and struggles.

Analyzing Different Forms of Oppression

Among the community's struggles that became the most apparent to the students were the Aetas' lack of access to basic needs and services and the denial of their right to own their ancestral lands.

The students pointed out the community's need for sustainable access to sanitation, electricity, and water.

Ilang nga sa mga problema na aming nakita sa pamayanan ay umiikot sa mga pangunahing pangangailangan ng tao. Halimbawa ay ang maayos na palikuran at patuloy na suplay ng kuryente at tubig. (Among the problems we saw in the community revolved around the people's basic needs. Examples include good sanitation facilities and a continuous supply of electricity and water.)

Some students emphasized the hardships experienced by older members of the community when fetching water for their household.

Isa pang napansin naming problema ay ang malayong pinagkukunan ng tubig. Malayo at nasa ibaba ng burol ang igiban kung kaya't napakahirap mag-igib dahil malayo sa ibang mga bahay ang poso. Pataas pa ang daan pabalik, kaya mas mahirap. Lalo na kapag ang mga nagkakarga ay ang mga matatanda. Eh tayo nga kapag umakyat nang may dalang mabigat na balde hingal na hingal na, bata pa tayo, paano pa sila? (One of the problems we noticed was how far the water source was. It was far and located at the foot of the hill which was why it was so difficult to fetch water. The path returning to the house was steep which made it more difficult. This was worse when the elderly would do the chore. If we, who are still young, were already panting carrying heavy pails, what more the elderly?)

The students added that the community was also deprived of easy access to basic social services such as education and healthcare.

Kahit nga may mapagkukunan sila ng pagkain at may kabuhayan ay hindi pa rin ito sapat upang matugunan ang iba nilang pangangailangan tulad ng edukasyon, health care services at iba pa. Mahalaga ito dahil isa ito sa mga basic necessities ng isang indibidwal upang makapamuhay ng maayos. (Even though they have sources of food and income, these are still insufficient to address other basic needs such as education, healthcare services, and others. These are important because these are basic necessities for an individual to live properly.)

Isa pa na nakita namin ay ang kawalan ng malapit na healthcare center. Nasa bayan pa mismo ang pinakamalapit na health center at napakalayo ng dadaanan bago makarating doon. Kailangan pa ng sasakyan, pero kakaunti lang ang sasakyan sa barangay Inararo. Kaya naman naisip namin na malaking suliranin ito dahil paano kung may emergency? Paano yung kailangan ng agarang lunas? (One of the problems we noticed is the lack of a healthcare nearby. The nearest healthcare center is located in the town proper which is far. One would need to ride a car, but there are hardly any cars in barangay Inararo. This is why we found this as a pressing problem because what would happen if there were an emergency? What would happen to those who would need urgent care?)

Most students also believed that excessive industrialization has threatened the Aeta community's cultural heritage and their ancestral land ownership.

Maaaring hindi maging mabuti ang labis na industriyalisasyon dahil maaaring magbago ang kanilang paraan ng pamumuhay at tuluyang mawala ang kanilang kulturang kinagisnan. (Perhaps too much industrialization isn't beneficial because it could change their way of life and eventually lead to the loss of their cultural heritage.)

Isa sa kanilang problema sa agrikultura ay ang kawalan ng repormang agraryo. Ang lupa kasi na kinatitirikan ng kanilang bahay, pananim, at bukirin. Tapos, iba ang may pagmamay-ari ng lupa at kailangan ng mga Aeta magbayad ng pera sa mga may ari ng lupa at magbigay ng hati sa inaani nila kada taon – para sa mga Aeta ay malaking kabawasan sa

kanilang kita. (One of their problems in agriculture is the lack of agrarian reform. Land is the foundation of their home, crops, and farm. Then, it would be others outside of the community who own the land and the Aetas would need to pay them rent and give a portion of their harvest to the landowners every year – which for the Aetas is a huge deduction to their earnings.)

What emerged from the accounts of the students are two faces of oppression that they observed the Aeta community was suffering: marginalization and cultural imperialism (Young, 2011). According to the students, because the community lacked access to basic needs and socio-economic services, it prevented them from living with dignity. They added that the deprivation of the Aeta's right to own and enjoy their ancestral lands kept the Aetas from realizing their own potential and finding their own means to attain upward socio-economic mobility. Such observations from the students echo Young's point about marginalization:

Marginalization is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination (2011)

Based on the observations of the students, cultural imperialism as a result of unbridled industrialization was also evident. Cultural imperialism, in this context, happens when:

the culturally dominated undergo a paradoxical oppression, in that they are both marked out by stereotypes and at the same time rendered invisible. As remarkable, deviant beings, the culturally imperialized are stamped with an essence. The stereotypes confine them to a nature which is often attached in some way to their bodies, and which thus cannot easily be denied. These stereotypes so permeate the society that they are not noticed as contestable (Young, 2011).

In the words of the students, the Aeta's cultural beliefs and practices are "dying" and "threatened" by urban culture. According to them, had it not been for the immersion, they would not have learned about and experienced the modes of

life, value systems, and traditions of the Aetas. While the students said they were aware of the existence of the Aetas, they admitted that their knowledge about the Aetas and other indigenous peoples was limited to textbook and media depictions heavily based on stereotypes. The time spent with their foster families and the rest of the community made the students realize how these stereotypes obscured the true nature of every individual in the community and perpetuated the injustices suffered by the Aetas.

Recognizing that the oppression experienced by the community is structural and systemic, the students recommended a solution of similar nature: the need to change policies and institutions. Thus, the students suggested that to alleviate the prevailing conditions of the community, changes in the system are necessary. They suggested policies such as agrarian reform and cultural enrichment programs.

Kung kaya, ipush na ang GARB (Genuine Agrarian Reform Law). Sa pamamagitan nito, ang mga Aeta na ang mga mas may karapatan sa lupa. Ngunit kung maibibigay na sa kanila ang lupa, kailangan din nila ng pinansyal na suporta dahil kailangan nila ng kapital upang makapagsimula. Kailangan ding protektahan ang kultura nila. Natatangi ang kultura nila bilang isang tribo kaya mas makabubuti na payabungin pa ang kanilang kultura. (Therefore, GARB (Genuine Agrarian Reform Law) must be pushed. Through this, the Aetas could exercise their rights over their land. But it is also important that they be financially supported because they would need capital to start. Their culture should also be protected. Their culture is unique as a tribe thus it needs to be enriched.)

Conclusion

Taking the learning experience outside the classroom may seem daunting and taxing to teachers. Admittedly, implementing the community service-learning project that is the focus of this study was not without challenges. Two challenges stand out in this case: one is ensuring that the students go beyond charity and “do-gooding” and another is managing limited time and resources.

To address the first challenge, significant amount of time before and after the project was allotted to discussing with the students the idea of standing and working in solidarity with marginalized social groups, particularly indigenous peoples. Literature from multiple disciplines such as social work, community

development, sociology, and indigenous peoples studies guided these discussions. Social workers were also invited to share their insights gleaned from their firsthand experiences. By emphasizing the importance of solidarity over charity, these discussions provided the students an opportunity to examine and reflect on how the oppression of one social group is intertwined with theirs, how members of this social group are in the best position to determine and address their own needs, and how systemic change toward overcoming oppression can be achieved. In hindsight, these ideas might have been better realized by the students had they been given an opportunity to “shadow” the social workers and community development workers who were working closely with the community in addition to a longer immersion in the community.

And secondly, the researcher needed considerable time and resources for preparing the course, planning the logistics of the project, and implementing the project within the constraints of the curriculum and school resources. What appears to have helped in this case was taking on a collaborative approach in developing the curriculum that involved the school administration, fellow classroom teachers, parents, community partners, and students. Here, the parents of the students and the school administration assisted in raising the funds needed to cover the cost of the project. Colleagues of the researcher in the Social Studies department assisted in supervising the students during the immersion. The same teachers also contributed to the designing of the course. Moreover, community partners such as national and local government agencies, social workers, and members of the indigenous peoples community were actively involved in planning the project by helping in scheduling, acquiring the necessary permits, and ensuring the safety, security, and overall well-being of the students and community partners during and after the immersion. That the students were not only cooperative, but also remained engaged, focused, and committed throughout their community service-learning experience tremendously helped in facilitating the project as well. All in all, this experience underscored the importance of cultivating a supportive environment in making the integration of community service-learning in the curriculum more efficient, manageable, and meaningful.

In sum, it is through authentic engagement with less-advantaged communities that the students were able to put their civic skills to actual use. It helped them develop habits of democratic participation, appreciate multiple perspectives, critically evaluate the root causes and implications of social problems, and take actual social action to address injustices. They were provided with a unique

opportunity to apply all of these skills in real-life situations which they would not have otherwise experienced within the confines of the classroom. Hence, it is incumbent upon social studies teachers to explore similar means to provide students with a meaningful experience that will contribute to their development as active and socially responsible citizens. Integrating community service-learning projects in the curriculum would be a recommended teaching strategy to start with.

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