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Article

The Making of Transformative Teacher-Intellectuals: Implications for Indigenous People Education

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Abstract

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), through CMO #2 s.2019, encouraged Higher Education Institutions to establish a program on Indigenous Studies/Education. This paper maintained that long before CHED introduced the policy, the College of Education of the University of the Philippines has contributed to the study of Indigenous Education. The College, through its Educational Foundations courses and its doctorate program on Anthropology and Sociology of Education, has been involved in instruction, research, and extension work among indigenous communities. This paper describes how students become socialized into the program through participation in service-learning activities and ethnographic research. It maintains that IP education scholars must hold on to a dynamic and processual view of culture and identity. They should also be aware of the critical pedagogy to resist being reduced to specialized technicians instead of being transformative intellectuals attuned to unequal power relations in schools.

Keywords

Indigenous People Education, Critical Pedagogy, Educational Foundations, Anthropology, and Sociology of Education

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Introduction

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) proposed to include IP Studies/Education in higher education curricula through CMO# 2 s. 2019. This proposal addresses the needs of indigenous people (IP) communities based on Republic Act 10908, an Act Mandating the Integration of Filipino-Muslim and Indigenous Peoples History, Culture, and Identity in the Study of Philippine History in Basic and Higher Education, and RA 8371, Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). This discipline has counterparts in other universities abroad: Native American Studies in the United States, Aboriginal Studies in Australia, and First Nations Studies in Canada. These programs are interdisciplinary since they combine anthropology, history, law, science, sociology, and the wisdom of indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Anthropologists like George Spindler, Margaret Mead, Herve Varenne, and Social Studies educators like Solon Kimball introduced Educational Anthropology (EA) in the United States in the 1950s. The first EA conference happened when the US court ruled that racial segregation in schools would be forever prohibited. The lingering effects of the civil rights movement, the coming of migrants from all around the globe, and the movement on the liberation of women were part of the social context which influenced the growth of AE (De Marrais, Armstrong, & Preissle, 2011).

To support CMO 2 s.2019, CHED organized forums to showcase various exemplars and studies on IP Studies/Education. In its first national orientation, CHED invited Dr. Benjamin Abadiano to present the Culture-Based Tertiary Education Courses taught at the Pamulaan Center for Indigenous People Education of the University of Southern Philippines at Davao City. In the same event, Dr. Marilyn Ngales of Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU) described the university's outreach and service-learning program among the hunter-gatherer IP communities of Batak, Agta, and Ayta. The outreach and service-learning initiatives gave birth to teacher education programs of LPU - Master in Indigenous Studies and MA Education major in Indigenous Education program.

CMO no. 2, s. 2019 highlights the IP Studies/ Education objective to train teachers and scholars who will help respond to the needs of the IP communities on poverty, human rights abuses, claims for ancestral domains, self-governance, and empowerment. The CMO implies that teachers in IP Education are not just concerned about knowledge transfer but be involved in social transformation. Henry Giroux (1985), a critical pedagogy expert, wrote that teachers should resist becoming mere specialized technicians; they should aim to be transformative intellectuals who combine scholarly reflection and practice in the service of educating students to be thoughtful, active citizens.

UP-CED's Educational Anthropology

One case of a higher education initiative on Indigenous Education that supports CMO no.2 s.2019 is the educational foundation course of the University of the Philippines College of Education (UP-CED). The area offers a Ph.D. Program in Anthropology and Sociology of Education (ASE) and at the same time teaches service courses such as Socio-Cultural Foundations of Education, Educational Anthropology, and Educational Sociology. In addition, the Anthro-Ethnography in Education and Education in Plural Societies are elective subjects.

The Ph.D. in Anthropology and Sociology of Education provides the following to its students:

- knowledge of major theories and ways of understanding culture and social forces and their influence on education
- critical and contextual view of the content, process, and outcomes of education based on anthropological and sociological concepts; and
- research experience that contributes to the development of a grounded theory of Philippine education

This paper seeks to describe the kind of socialization that students experience through the Anthropology and Sociology of Education (ASE), an area of the College of Education. It also traces the program history, specific contributions, challenges, and prospects. The data are interviews with alumni, students, and faculty of the College. In addition, I incorporated in this paper my narratives as a graduate student of the ASE program and an instructor of Socio-Cultural Foundations Education. Finally, this paper answers the question, what are the perspectives and practices taught to develop transformative intellectuals who can participate in indigenous education?

Critiquing the colonial and mechanistic system of education

The first scholars of the UP College of Education who studied educational anthropology as part of their graduate program were Priscila Manalang, Josefina Cortes, and Julian Abuso, who learned from the pioneers of Educational Anthropology at Stanford University (see UPEAA 2011; Zamora, 1976). They came back to the Philippines during a period of student activism and Martial Law when scholars were asserting for filipinization and nationalism of the academia. Manalang and Abuso transformed Educational Anthropology from an elective course for graduate students into a Ph.D. program. In addition, the trained educational anthropologists promoted a contextualized and critical view of education and introduced a novel approach in academic research called ethnography.

Their publications have become a vital resource for students of Philippine education. For example, Dr. Priscila Manalang's (1970) "A Philippine Rural School: Its Cultural Dimension" highlighted the discontinuities of the school and the life of the barrio. She critiqued the mechanical transmission of the knowledge with certainty, like the table of multiplication and the names of historical personalities. Manalang said that education should expose children to diverse ideas and opinions and provoke critical thought.

Manalang also wrote that future teachers should not simply learn about the historical and "disembodied" educational philosophies from Comenius to John Dewey. Instead, they should know the people's vision of their society and learn how to educate the society's children so they can participate critically and constructively in realizing that vision (Manalang, 1986).

Dr. Josefina Cortes' writings became the primary texts in educational leadership. Cortes wrote that educated and acculturated in the American way of life…Filipino educators [Filipino scholars or pensionados] have wittingly or unwittingly made the Philippine school system extremely hospitable and receptive to educational theories and practices originating from the United States. Cortes detailed the continuing American colonization of the Philippine education through the language of instruction, and American authored textbooks and curricula (Cortes, 1987). In another paper, Cortes (1990)

identified that paradoxes facing the Filipino teachers: 1) the teacher as a professional vs. the teacher as the implementer of prescribed curricula using mandated textbooks and instructional materials; 2) the teacher as a creative and innovative expert vs. the teacher bound by bureaucratic rules; and 3) the teacher as a nationalist vs. the teacher in a school system dependent on Western theories of learning and technology.

Viewing culture beyond a listing of artifacts and practices

Students enrolled in the ASE courses often undergo service-learning experiences and produce papers that study the educational experiences of Filipino learners, especially among the marginalized sectors. In addition, the faculty members, often in partnership with students, direct their extension work on indigenous education in the form of teachers training, materials production, and program development. They also write conference papers, publishable articles, and books. Specific examples of these works are in the succeeding sections.

Dr. Julian Abuso wrote articles and reports that provided perspectives on how teachers should view culture and education. He critiqued the "pseudo attempts to unite culture and education." These attempts include listing cultural practices and artifacts in the curriculum and deleting content offensive to IP groups. Instead of presenting the culture as something static or a laundry list of clothes, food, and festivals, Dr. Abuso proposed that teachers represent culture as a dynamic process as lived and learned by members of society. He also pointed out that schools should be concerned with cultural maintenance and participate in social change. In other words, schools have to accept that cultural knowledge or practices are not all good. For example, there is a need to change and transform cultural practices that tolerate physical and emotional abuse against women and children.

Finally, the school should recognize that education is a cultural process that various socializing forces participate in (Abuso, 1996). One ASE student described these forces in her ethnography on school attrition among children in a school at Ifugao (Capili,1992). The study, a dissertation in Anthropology and Sociology of Education, revealed that the children in the village undergo various forms of education. The life curriculum or informal learning experienced by the children outside the school as they explored their environment became more compelling than the formal school curriculum given by uninterested teachers.

During his classes, Dr. Abuso would always alert his students' use of the term education, especially when they meant schooling or formal education. He would emphasize that learning happens outside the school. Nonformal education, when energized by the thoughts of Paulo Freire, can lead to social change.

Dr. Abuso participated in forums and conferences on indigenous education organized by government agencies and NGOs like Ugnayang Pang-Aghamtao (UGAT) and Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples. In addition, he was a part of group research on literacy practices entitled "Learning from Life: An Ethnographic Study of Functional Literacy in Marginal Philippine Communities" (1994). Finally, he led a team of researchers that produced a handbook, "Culture-Responsive Curriculum for Indigenous People." This initiative was part of the Third Elementary Education Project of the Department of Education.

"Pamatay na Ethnography"

The former students of Dr. Abuso recalled that the highlight of their life in graduate school was their experience in ethnographic research. Ethnography is qualitative research often utilized by anthropologists and other social scientists. Ethnographers immerse themselves in an area and conduct participant observation, interviews, and documentary and artifact analysis. They also analyzed data from the insider's (emic) and outsider's (etic) points of view.

In their Anthro-Ethnography class, Dr. Abuso would give spirited lectures-detailing the processes of data collection, analysis, and the writing of "thick description." An ethnography was a required undertaking that entailed finding an "alien" research site. Some samples of the site chosen were a cockpit, barbeque stall, jeepney terminal, a rescue center for trafficked women, and city jail. For rural-based ethnography, Dr. Abuso also brought his classes for immersion in an Ayta community at Loob Bunga, Botolan, Zambales.

As a thesis/dissertation adviser, Abuso was described as thorough, focused (*matutok*), patient, and relentless. He would pore through the manuscript line by line, scrutinizing both the content and form. Abuso had a feeling when an ethnography was complete and when themes were adequately developed, otherwise he would say, "hindi pa yan hinog…maghintay ka pa." The "ripening" process can sometimes require several revisions. A student reported:

> *Sabi nila papawisan ka ng dugo. Hindi ka matutulog….Kung tapos ang isang chapter hindi pa yun talaga tapos kasi babalikan pa nya…sasabihin, syanga pala may nakalimutan ako…pabalik-balik kaya naka pitong revisions ako. I once asked him how many have already graduated, he said in my 20 years , you are the 10th..paano pamatay yung dissertation!*

The long and tedious advising process also became the opportunity for a mentoring relationship. It was customary for Dr. Abuso to talk lengthily about his experiences during class hours and informal conversations. One graduate remarked:

> *My Ph.D. studies helped me how to review (magbusisi) the papers to determine what to publish. I learned a lot from Dr. Abuso's patience and also from his administrative experience (especially now that I am an administrator myself). Sir would talk about his concerns as a principal and how he dealt with concerns that came up… He talked about taking a non-confrontational stance to achieve objectives… minsan kung may isyu sa amin, iniisip ko ano nga ba ginagawa ni sir sa ganitong pagkakataon?*

The introduction and assertion of ethnography as a research approach had to confront the prevailing positivistic quantitative research methods.

> *The research tradition has been dominated by positivism, i.e., research is research only if it adopts certain measures, defines and manipulates variables, and tests hypotheses…The strong grip of positivism…originates primarily from the long-term dominance of*

> *psychology and quantitative sociology over education as applied psychology (Abuso, 1996).*

Through time, ethnography became recognized as a credible and rigorous research approach. As a result, several ethnographic works on indigenous issues received outstanding thesis/dissertations awards. These are the "Community and School-Based Knowledge of Environment in a Fishing and Cultural Barangay" (Silao, 2001) and "Identity Construction and Culture Reproduction among Iraya Mangyans: Educational Cultural Process" (Bawagan, 2008).

Indigenous People's Pedagogy of Liberation

The paper of Gerardo Lanuza, "The Struggle for Cultural and Ethnic Justice in the Age of Neoliberal Capitalism: The Case of Indigenous Education Among the Aetas of Botolan, Zambales," peered into the experiences of Ayta children when the department of education started regulating the indigenous school in the area. Lanuza (2007) analyzed such intervention as a form of "audit culture," a practice that requires schools to constantly produce evidence to prove that they are doing things the right way based on world-class standards, which are capitalist.

Lanuza took note of the experiences of discrimination transmitted through generations. He wrote:

> *The education of Aeta children is purchased at the cost of the pains of discrimination of the past. Discrimination does not only burrow itself deeply in the memories of the victims and survivors. It is also mnemonically etched in their bodies —in their skin color, hair, and physique. Discrimination is alive among the present generation of native children, and it remains in the memories of the older generation. The power of memory fortifies some members of this older generation to fight on behalf of the new generation. And there is no doubt that the new generation will do the same for the succeeding generations (p. 320).*

The teachers and administrators in Loob Bunga designed the indigenous school curriculum to preserve the people's rich cultural heritage. Upon consultation with the elders, the curriculum embeds local traditions, dances, stories, and folklores, in the curriculum. However, Lanuza argued that such initiatives in indigenous education are not enough:

> *The Aetas, as a community, are one in asserting and recovering their own indigenous tradition. However, what is missing in this culturalist reading is the other parallax view that would show how this diversity is ultimately configured by the neoliberal capitalist culture industry. The drive for indigenization and asserting cultural autonomy is itself tolerated by neoliberal capitalist-driven multiculturalism: preserve cultural differences, yes! Celebrate exotic ways of life, yes! But do not touch economic inequalities! The struggle for cultural and ethnic justice, to be effective, must be linked with the class struggle. To separate the two is to succumb to the neoliberal capitalist logic of separating the sphere of culture from the economic structure (p.322).*

In the end, Lanuza remarked that the school at Loob Bunga, along with community elders, should pursue together a "pedagogy of liberation." The school, with its limitations, can only do so much. The community elders should raise consciousness to enable the students to challenge the existing capitalist system that seeks to oppress and dehumanize them.

Recent developments

After the retirement of Dr. Abuso, Dr. Eufracio Abaya, a seasoned anthropologist from the College of Social Science Department, took over the ASE program until 2019. Dr. Abaya compelled the education students who continuously took ASE courses to converse with social scientists, both foreign and local. His students would remember the piles of articles and books written by social scientists and educationists that they read and critiqued. He set high standards for academic discourse, and some of the papers produced from his classes were published or presented in local and international conferences. I benefitted from his supervision, and I published several articles as a result (see Arzadon, 2016; 2017a; 2017b; Arzadon et al., 2020).

Like his predecessor, Dr. Abaya would often remind his students to be aware of their unquestioned assumptions-- one of which is privileging psychology as the only basis for teaching and learning. He demonstrated that a grounding in anthropology and sociology could provide teachers with a broader set of lenses to understand the unequal power relations in schools that privilege some learners and marginalize others. Culture is continuously enacted through power and contestations rather than bounded, reified-ahistorical and static. Thus, identity should be viewed more as identification, an ongoing process.

Dr. Abaya foregrounded the notion of teacher agency, which focuses on the teacher's freedom and capacity to resist or talk back to powerful discourses (promoted by the state and the market) reproduced by the school. As a result, the teacher agency became the theme of the UP-CED's International Conference on Teacher Education in 2016. In the promotional blurb of the conference are the following words:

> *ICTED 2016 foregrounds the theme of teacher agency, defined as the exercise of the individual and collective power of teachers in the midst of challenging situations. It aims to create a forum for educationists, social scientists, policy-makers, and students to discuss the central question: In what ways can educational reforms support or constrain teacher agency, for what purpose, under what conditions, and with what consequences?*

Dr. Abaya challenged his students to assert their identity as ethical and critical teacher-intellectuals and resist being subjects of neoliberal education that seeks to make teachers mere technicians or what he called "curriculum dispensers."

One of Dr. Abaya's first initiatives to strengthen the ASE program was forming the education anthropology network. In 2017, the group became duly registered as Society for Strategic Education Studies (S4SES). In addition, the group has organized an exhibition on the works of Isabelo de los Reyes, considered the first Filipino anthropologist and folklorist. Unlike Rizal, del Pilar, and other ilustrados, Delos Reyes identified himself as "the brother of the jungle dwellers, the Aeta, the Igorots, and the Tinguians" (Aguilar, 2005).

The S4SES also conducted forums and seminars on contextualization in education (in various subject areas), action research, educational ethnography, music improvisation, and music education research.

Dr. Abaya wrote a research handbook for teachers entitled "Teachers as Ethnographers" used in a seminar for teachers in IP communities in Region 2. Working with faculty members from the Special Education (SPED) area, Dr. Abaya led a research project that explored how selected IP communities conceptualize disability. SPED students have long been psychologized and subjected to an oppressive bio-medical view of disability (Goodley, 2011). The study on IP/Muslim disability found that IP families and caregivers demonstrate the value of compassion, and they "provide the conditions that will enable the child with a disability (CWD) to perform their skills and capacities, however 'slow'" (Abaya et al., 2014).

Dr. Abaya also joined CHED's teacher education panel that developed the Bachelor of Culture and Arts Education degree program. The program aims "to produce highly motivated, creative, and reflexive teachers in basic education equipped with knowledge, skills, and values in culture and arts education." Graduates of the program can also take positions in the tourism offices of the local government units and oversee the management of local museums and art galleries.

Conclusion

This paper detailed the historical unfolding of the Educational Foundations-Anthropology and Sociology of Education that produced teachers, educationists, and researchers who contributed to the practice and knowledge production in Indigenous Education. It highlighted only some initiatives of the EDFD-ASE area and did not list down recent programs. For example, one produces mother-tongue storybooks among IP communities through service-learning (see Arzadon et al., 2020). Their experiences provide some lessons to Teacher Education Institutions that wish to offer Indigenous Education as an area of study. From the UP-CED's experience, IP Education, to be completely transformative, would need to be grounded on Critical Pedagogy. Giroux (2010) wrote:

> *"Critical pedagogy, unlike dominant modes of teaching, insists that one of the fundamental tasks of educators is to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which the discourses of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to alter, as part of a broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived (p.717)."*

Setting up a course or a program on Indigenous Education informed by Critical Pedagogy might be disruptive. It can cause tensions, but it can also stir a productive dialogue that will interrogate long-held propositions about the meaning and end of education and the process of knowledge production and research.

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