

Teacher-Intellectuals and the Counter-Discourses on Environmental Care

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Introduction

Greenpeace (2009) claimed that the Philippines is among the most vulnerable and least prepared to deal with ravages brought by climate change as indicated by the destruction brought by extreme weather conditions in 2009. According to Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, "if we want to halt and ultimately reverse global warming we need a radical change in the ways we think and act" (Matsuura, 2009). The required radical change on people's mind and action implies that education is touted to be the key to deliverance from total environmental collapse, a possibility that haunts not only the Philippines but the whole global landscape (Beck, 1995).

This article draws on an ethnographic research on a local community that inculcated environmental care values and practices on its people. All their efforts resulted in reviving their dying river and successfully implementing waste management practices like segregation, composting, and recycling. Their achievements qualified them to be one of the winners in the first National Search for Model Barangay in Ecological Solid Waste Management (ESWM) in 2004. Environmental care initiatives were catalyzed by Eco-Care, a group composed of community leaders and high school teachers.

The construct of *discourse* was used as a tool of analysis as it is examined through the lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA). This makes this paper unique since it departs from the usual naturalistic examination of the environmental care and situates the phenomenon into its broad social structures.

The term "discourse" has come to mean both the *expressions* of the language

and the *meanings* of the expressions that are embedded in the concept (Shreiber & Moring, 2001; emphasis mine). In addition to meanings, a discourse can also refer to "representations, images, stories and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events." (Burr, 1995, 48). A mix of discourses can act together to construct people's identity. Such discursively constructed identity would have implications on what people can do and should do. For example, discourses on femininity paint women as a feeler, vulnerable to hormonal change and nurturing. This set boundaries on what they can be -- that they remain at home and take care of their children and not to aim for high-risk top management type of work (Burr, 1995). Such representations are a product of *styles of thinking* that are reproduced through texts in a process marked by struggles and meanings between groups with corresponding access to authority and power (Peterson, 1999). Burr (1995) wrote that discourses that construct people's identity reflect the broader societal structure and practice. These are being lived out daily receiving a "stamp of truth" by certain interest groups.

The styles of thinking or rules that shape intent and purpose resulting to action are often described as "opaque" or not so clear. They can also be something that look so ordinary and natural since they are repeated daily and therefore can be taken for granted. The task of critical educators is to make visible the opaque and "denaturalize" or question those that are taken for granted (Popkewitz, 1999). For example, the discourse on "accreditation" that has been linked to "globally competitive" has been embraced by many. They are often found in the vision/mission statement of schools that are plastered on the walls of their buildings.

However, a closer critical look reveals that such discourse of being globally competitive and accredited has created a compulsion among learning institutions to conform to a set of checklist of international standards of systems and procedures that are translated into corresponding teacher manuals.

Being a good teacher then has become equivalent to the ability to comply to this set of standards and perform according to a manual. The purpose of all these is to produce workers or professionals who meet standards required for international market and competition. McLaren (2003), a leading Critical Pedagogy theoretician said that such "fetish" for compliance to certain international standards of systems and procedures has set aside the pedagogical task of nurturing critical citizens. This has resulted to the so called "deskilling of teachers" in which they become mere implementers and not part of the conceptualization, theory building and planning processes. In this dominant model, a teacher becomes a mere compliant technician or white-collar clerk.

A discourse becomes powerful dominant or hegemonic when it is deemed to be the official version by the so called experts and powerful institutions like the government. The task of critical educators is to find ruptures in existing dominant, mainstream and official discourses by identifying or creating alternative meanings or what is known to be counter-discourses. The ideal is a "proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, to prefer multiplicity to unity, difference to identity, and to enter into the fluxes and moveable arrangements to the detriment of systems" (Santaella, 2000). Creating counter-discourses is a way to "depresentify" existing discourse and to "conjure up their rich, heavy immediate plenitude..." (Foucault 2007, 52).

These imperatives imply that teachers who are mediators of learning do not take the identity as technicians or mere transmitters of knowledge, but they are tasked to reflect and take part in critiquing knowledge, especially those that have taken a privileged position and have not been made questionable or problematic. This stance to be taken by teachers would make them transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988). The idea of a transformative intellectual is, in fact, an example of a counter-discourse to the dominant model of a teacher-technician. She or he is one who does not see the school as a store or factory that supplies labor inputs to international markets, but as a democratic

public sphere where learners are given the dignity to learn critical mindset and self-determination in order to prepare them to Be "active citizens in a democratic society" (Giroux, 1988).

This study has taken the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Critical discourse analysis is concerned with examining both the opaque as well as the transparent relations, with particular focus on how power and control are manifested through language (Wodak, 2001). Van Dijk (2001, 96) describes CDA not a method, but "a critical perspective of doing scholarship... it focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination." At the same time, scholars using CDA will listen to the experiences and the opinions of dominated groups, and study the most effective ways of resistance and dissent (Van Dijk, 2000).

Having departed from conventional ethnography into an inclusion of CDA makes this study a critical ethnography. This method goes beyond the conventional thick description of a local phenomenon into an analysis of the dialectical relationship of an event or people and how they are socially constructed in the context of broader social structures. Its goal is towards emancipation or negation of repressive influences by empowering and "giving more authority to the subjects' voice" (Thomas, 1993).

I chose this method of inquiry after my initial interactions with the research participants. I found that their narrations would often veer towards tensions and struggles with the polluters in their community. I found that that critical ethnography would be the best tool to explore the socio-cultural texture of such tensions and struggles.

The research questions that this paper addressed were the following:

1. What was the dominant environmental discourse in the community?
2. What counter-discourses on environmental care existed?
3. In what ways were such environmental care discourses enacted and inculcated?
4. What representations of identity did each discourse generate?

Chosen to be the site of the study was Barangay Bued of Calasiao, Pangasinan. A friend recommended that Barangay Bued could provide a good case for my study. I also heard from several sources that the barangay is known for its distinct cleanliness. At that time, I was looking for an existing practice in community education, especially one that intersects with the life of the school. I was advised to see Mrs. Janet Albano, one of the leaders of the environmental care program in the community, who gave me a list of people to interview.

Purposeful sampling was employed which selected information-rich cases that yielded insights and in-depth understanding (Patton, 2002). Intensive data gathering was done between 2003 and 2004. In the years that followed until the present, constant contact with key informants through phone calls and occasional visits has been maintained. I was a participant observer during the time the community was preparing for Nationwide Search for Model Barangay's. The period was indeed information-rich since it required the community leaders to dig through their records, compile relevant documents, and reconstruct their story. I helped the group enhance their supporting documents for their entry in the contest by supplying extra pieces of information I gathered from my interviews and personal research. I also provided some technical help in organizing their data and in choosing appropriate technology to present their output.

To construct a corpus, data elicitation instruments included direct participant observation, individual and group interviews, and document analysis. Observation notes were made during critical events like garbage collection time, school sponsored tree planting event, school Christmas program, and ESWM council planning sessions. Documentation was done through carefully written notes and the use of a digital camera. Collected data had to be continually pieced together and subjected to constant critical analysis using the inductive method. This involved crafting a dense and holistic description and identifying emerging and recurring themes and categories.

Using the principles of critical ethnography, I deliberately strived to stay visible and self-reflexive in my narratives and analysis. This explains the use of first person point of view throughout the whole text of the report. Also, in the spirit of critical ethnography, I veered away from the convention of an academic treatise which requires the use of a formal stilted prose that is devoid of life in order to give an appearance of "objectivity." Critical ethnography advocates that knowledge should be emancipator, therefore, academic reports should not come across as expert knowledge to be consumed only by an elite group, but something that can be engaging and comprehensible to many (Madison, 2005).

The following account starts by describing the broader context of environmentalism from a broader global and national scope to its localized picture taken from Barangay Bued. It is followed by a brief description of the dominant environmental discourse to be juxtaposed with the multiple discourses on environmental care espoused by the teacher-environmentalists in Barangay Bued. Each environmental discourse is described conceptually and elaborated and situated through texts from the participants. The education process or manner of inculcation corresponding to each discourse is described, and the bearing of each discourse on people's collective identity is analyzed.

Environmentalism from global, national to local

Literature on environmental care discourse points to the publication of marine biologist Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" in 1962 that ushered the first wave of environmentalism. Carson warned on the harmful consequences of the use of pesticides and other industrial inputs. In the Philippines, Malayang (2000) wrote that the contemporary brand of organized environmentalism in the Philippines began earlier in 1961 when the Kappa Phi Sigma-Conservation Development Society was organized in the campus of the University of the Philippines at Los Baños (UPLB).

From the 1960s to the late 1970s, organized local groups emerged to advocate for environmental protection. Later, the critical role of the local community in managing the environment became embedded in a number of environmental laws like the Clean Air Act of 1999, the Clean Water Act of 2004, and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

The journey of Barangay Bued into environmental care began with a dream to revive a dying river. The barangay is located in a town known for its *puto* (rice cupcake), a favorite *pasalubong* (take home gift) among travelers in the area and tourists from other parts of the country. The main road by the plaza has a long line of commercial stalls displaying huge mounds of its own brand of rice cupcake.

The barangay has an area of 158.3 hectares and a population of 5,500 as of 2000. According to an estimate, by year 2010, the population would reach 7,123 with a density of 45 individuals per hectare (Barangay Bued Experience, 2004). Though it occupies only 2.9% of the total land area of the municipality, Barangay Bued is known to be the third most populated and fourth densest barangay. It is linguistically homogenous since 94.8% of its population speaks the local language (Land Use Plan, 2000). There are two main streets in the village and they are lined with tightly clustered houses. Landmarks in the community include an elementary and a high school, several printing presses, a large hotel-restaurant, and several small shops. Perpendicular to the major thoroughfares are some tiny alleys that lead to some more houses. A river and some vast farm lots can be found deeper into the alleys.

One prominent structure in the community is a multinational beverage plant. Going north, it stands at the left side of the road, a few meters from the Barangay's boundary. The plant displays two giant softdrink can models, about the same height as the building adjacent to it. For travelers, the sight of softdrink can models signals that one has reached Barangay Bued.

It was a well-known joke among travelers that even in pitch darkness or with eyes closed, they knew they were passing by Barangay Bued because of the foul smell being emitted by the river. A resident called it as the Barangay's signature smell. A newspaper article reported, "Even those aboard air-conditioned vehicles still complained of the odor that emanated from the river" (Fuertes, 2000).

In 1997, armed with laboratory test result attesting to the toxicity of the river, a group of local residents and environmentalists met together to plan to create awareness about the dying river. It was during this time that Kapitan Carlito Dion, the newly elected barangay chairman, brought some barangay officers to start the cleaning of the river using their bare hands, shovels, sticks, and other crude implements. One participant of the river clean-up said: "The water was really stinking. You had to wash yourself with alcohol for a week to remove the smell." Janet Albano, a Bued resident and a science high school teacher mobilized support for the cleaning project. Every weekend, she would take along her high school students to help clean the river. To clean the river thoroughly, some men dived into the water to extract the debris lodged underneath. Aside from common kitchen waste matter, they also found broken glass, diapers, animal carcasses, bulky and broken down materials like a sofa and a refrigerator.

After three months of work, the river was finally cleared but only to be polluted again by sludge emanating from a nearby company. Residents living around the river also continued dumping their waste into the river. The barangay council and local residents showed their protest against the beverage company and successfully pressured them to manage their waste. As a result, in 2000, the company spent 37 million pesos to upgrade their waste treatment plant.

To deal with household waste, the local leaders decided to implement waste segregation and collection. During that time, Kapitan Dion and Janet formed a community based organization called Eco-Care. Many of

its active members like Janet, Cely, Lynn, and Bernadette were school teachers. They also organized a student organization called Earth Savers Club. Unable to gather enough people to attend organized seminars for waste management, Eco-Care and Earth Savers members went house-to-house, like itinerant preachers.

A few years after, when their work extended from the barangay to the whole municipality, the teachers were tapped by the municipal government to help. The local government arranged that teachers be given reduced load so they can perform information education and communication (IEC) services for waste management. The schools involved also participated and won consistently in the search for outstanding community-based project sponsored by the Department of Education. Calasiao Integrated School (where Janet teaches) showcased their solid waste management program in the community and their own materials recovery facility (MRF) in the campus. The municipality also won awards given by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) like the *Likas Yaman* Award of 2003 and the first National Search for Model Barangay in Ecological Solid Waste Management in 2004.

The dominance of techno-managerial discourse on environmentalism

In the Barangay Bued experience, what served as the central focus of the first series of meetings among the community leaders was the official report from the state university regarding the water quality of the Parongking River. The lab test results confirmed their long-held suspicion that the river's water was indeed polluted. In contrast, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) previously claimed that the water sample from Parongking was within the tolerable level—something that was met with disbelief by the locals. Some barangay officials visited the beverage plant to present the results to its managers so that they could remedy the problem. The group was directed to the pollution control officer, an engineer, who

explained to them in highly technical terms how their processes do not pollute the river. One of the barangay officials described what happened, "*Kung anu-ano ang sinabi nila, napaka-technical, hindi namin maintindihan. Hindi naman kami chemical engineer* (What they said sounded gibberish, it was all very technical-sounding; we could not understand it since we are not chemical engineers)."

The technical language or technicist discourse as used in this report refers to a kind of talk that is understood only by specialists and not by the common lay person. In this respect, techno-managerial discourse becomes a discourse of power and privilege.

When I phoned the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) office to inquire about their water-testing processes, the person at the other end of the line said that I should talk to their chemist and study the literature found in their office. She said, "*Sila lang ang puwedeng mag-explain* (they are the only ones who could explain the process)." In the same breath she said that I would find it hard to understand the concept if I am not a chemist. "*Mahirap intindihin ito* (This is hard to understand)," she remarked.

The concept of environmental care from a technicist point of view is rooted on the perspective that the environment has to be constantly tested to ensure that it meets certain acceptable quality standards. Concerning rivers and other bodies of water, environmental care means ensuring that toxic materials in the water do not go beyond the threshold level. To ensure that such standard is sustained, constant monitoring of water samples is done.

Monitoring the health of rivers and other bodies of water is done by subjecting water samples into various kinds of tests. Results of these tests show whether a certain river is clean or free from harmful bacteria and chemicals. According to an official in the Provincial Environmental Office, the monitoring of waste materials that flow into the river coming from factories is done by

the quality division of the EMB regional office located at a nearby province, about two hour travel from Barangay Bued. The Bureau gathers water samples to test for pollution levels, especially when there is a complaint. This process of testing water quality is something that requires specialized training. The Philippine National Standards for Drinking Water (1993) details the long and careful process of both bacteriological and chemical/physical analysis involved in water testing.

From narrations of people of Barangay Bued, there was no doubt to them that their river was polluted. Its signature smell was known not only to them but also to strangers who pass by their area. Their description of the water was murky, fetid, and full of floating debris and bluish grease-like substance. They could not harvest any fish or other kinds of seafood from the river as they used to. And no one dared to swim in the river or wash their clothes in it.

Nonetheless, their observations on the river's disrepute and its being the subject of many complaint letters did not make any difference on how the river was perceived by the authorities and "experts". The beverage plant showed them highly-technical and unintelligible water test results to attest that the river was not actually polluted. This attestation was quietly supported by the government agency as manifested by their inaction. When the community began to stop the beverage company from polluting the river, a regional official of the DENR discouraged the group by saying that they were up against a giant company.

"*Wala kayong laban diyan* (you cannot fight them)", the official said. Janet related, "*Ang softdrink company naging kaaway namin dahil ayaw aminin na pollutant* (The beverage company became our enemy because it did not want to admit that they were a pollutant)." The barangay council made a written petition asking the beverage company to stop polluting the river. The company ignored their demand and instead, indicated that they would ask their lawyers to deal with the issue in the courtroom.

The drift towards acceptance of whatever the authorities and experts view as the real state of things was dramatically reversed when the people were able to show the test result done by Pangasinan State University. It confirmed what the residents knew all along—that the river's water was polluted. It was only then that it became an official fact that the river was polluted. This certain awareness of the state of their environment galvanized various interest groups, including government agencies, to work together in cleaning the Parongking River. Consequently, the beverage plant had to expand their wastewater treatment plant.

The life-changing discourse of eco-spirituality

The discourse on environmentalism that the teachers and community leaders adopted is often couched in spiritual and communitarian terms. Interviews with Kapitan Dion and the Eco-Care teachers indeed revealed that their great concern for the environment was integrated in their spiritual belief. Environmental care would sometimes sound like it has become their religion. Janet, the leader among the Eco-Care teachers, organized and led several Bible sharing groups. At the beginning of every Barangay Bued's standard seminar presentation on solid waste management, Janet would discuss about the biblical foundation of environmental care. The main message was that God created the world and everything in it including the bacteria.

God placed the earth under humanity's charge for them to protect and nurture the rest of his creation. Janet said, "We are the only ones who include a biblical basis in our IEC (Information, Education, & Communication)." She said that her involvement in environmental advocacy has deepened her faith. She has even tried to reconcile the theory of evolution to the story of Creation in the book of Genesis. These ideas were important to Janet since she was a Science teacher.

She described her reflections:

As I studied the process of composting, I came to appreciate better the purpose of God's creation. It was God who made the (Parongking) river and he surely had a purpose. The river replenishes the water table. It is a plus, it is for our advantage.

The group's faith in God that engendered environmental concern has been manifested in their lifestyle. Their efforts to improve the condition of the environment were not viewed as mere official functions done during their official duty. Janet was known by her students for preferring class projects that made use of recycled materials. "If your project is something recycled then you would get better grades," said one student. Her propensity to use scratch papers for schoolwork was also known. In one event, while we were working on the documentation of the Barangay's experience, Janet decided to go to the store to buy a brown envelope. As she was walking away from our meeting place, she suddenly stopped in her tracks and walked back. She remembered that she had many used envelopes in school that she could reuse. She quipped, "I think I have forgotten how it is like to have something unused."

Bernadette, a young teacher in her 20's and who has just joined the Eco-Care that year, observed that all of the members of Eco-Care have a deep sense of spirituality. She observed:

They do their tasks for service, not for promotion. This means that it is hard to join their group if you are not a believer. Their services demand so much, they come home late at night. And in exchange for what? We do not know the outcome of our services. We just leave everything to God.

The issue of faith has always been brought up in many of the group's conversations that I was able to witness. During my second meeting with Kapitan Dion,

out of the blue, he said:

God gave me the courage to do all these. The task of managing our waste problem was difficult for me. I didn't have an assurance whether it would work. God knew that I did all these for him. He gave me the courage, that's why I went ahead.

In many occasions, Kapitan Dion acknowledged that it was God who was guiding his undertakings. Before they embarked in cleaning the river, Kapitan Dion heard people say that it was futile to clear the river because it was already dead. They should instead add more filler to reclaim the land and build their houses on it. Kapitan Dion related, "When I heard that, I felt challenged. I believe that the river is given by God and so why should we let it die?"

Kapitan Dion is an active member of Marriage Encounter, a Catholic community that helps couples enhance their marriage. He is also an active member of the church choir. He said that he does not intend to run for another term as barangay chairman so that he could devote more time in serving through the church choir. Aside from Marriage Encounter, Kapitan Dion also joined various seminars sponsored by Circles for Christ, a local Catholic community that was founded in the province and one that specializes in studying and teaching the Bible in the community.

The coupling of environmentalism and spirituality is found in a concept called Eco-Spirituality. It is an orthodox Christian belief which is sometimes called Environmental Stewardship (Jacobs, 2000). McDonagh (1994) detailed how environment care permeates the whole scriptures from the creation story to the prophets, psalms and wisdom, gospels, and the rest of the New Testament. The lives of the first fathers provide examples for environmental concern.

The teachers' view of the environment, along with Kapitan Dion's, resonates "environmental stewardship" which is a pervasive view of eco-spirituality. This refers

Judeo-Christian concept of human beings who are representatives of God. They are entrusted to care for the creation with mercy, love, and real concern. However, this view is criticized due to its implication of a distant and absent God (MacDonagh, 1994).

Through the years, the Catholic church has not been aggressive in engaging with the issue of environmental degradation. One possible reason is the false sense of security offered by science and technology. Another is the traditional anthropocentric view of environmentalism emanating from the Genesis command to "...fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of the heaven and all the living animals on the earth" (1:28). This teaching was perceived by many as a license to exploit the environment.

Furthermore, the Church has been wary to being associated to earth religion that promotes pantheism which believes that God is not transcendent but confined within his physical creation (MacDonagh, 1994). Ravin (1994) argued that such wariness towards mystic religions drove early Christian believers to exterminate villages of so-called witches and pagans. What the Church needs to revitalize in eco-spirituality is a re-visioning of God who dwells but also transcends his creation. This would provide the right context for environmental stewardship to flourish. Another imperative is to move from anthropocentric towards eco-centric ethics (MacDonagh, 1994).

The galvanizing power of environmental-communitarian discourse

The stories about caring for the environment, as told by the residents of Barangay Bued, were often about their collective activities. Those who were born earlier had the chance to see the river in its pristine form.

Kagawad Basa, an old man in his late 60s, related:

When we were young, we used to play at all times in the river. It was clean then. After going to church, we would immediately proceed to the river. We would not play along the way; we would wait until we reached the river. The water was deep in the morning and it became shallow in the afternoon. We would get our food there. Crabs, frogs, and bangus were abundant then, especially after the occurrence of a flood in the 1950s. There were also shrimps and carps... It was in 1965 when the river started to get dirty--the time when a beverage factory was built.

Once polluted, the river was abandoned as a recreation center. But when the river was rehabilitated, vegetables plots and other plants were found around the area. In one spot at the riverbank, I found a nipa hut that served as a gathering place and a picnic area. A group of men and women were seated on bamboo benches and were leisurely chatting. One woman was carrying a newborn baby in her arms. There was a gentle breeze blowing. Looking at the river, it was hard to imagine that it used to be a waste receptacle.

A nipa hut was also erected right at the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). The barangay moved to its third MRF as part of their compliance to the rules for the Search for Model Barangay in ESWM. Kapitan Dion had the road to the MRF bulldozed and an area was land-filled to elevate it from the ground level as a precautionary measure against constant flooding.

During my first visit to the MRF, Kapitan Dion pointed to the direction of the Uria Creek and said he had to widen the creek to help bring more water to the farms. He also imagined that the creek would provide water to clean the sando bags.

"*Basta mabawasan ang residual at wala nang magsunog* (It should reduce the residual)." He pointed to an excavated area which supplied the filler to elevate the place and said they came up with a bright idea to convert the large hole into a fishpond. In the elevated part of the MRF was a hammermill and two large composter drums. A hammermill is an electric-operated machine that grinds waste materials into smaller bits, a process to hasten the decomposition process. The grounded materials are then transferred to the rotating giant composting drums.

When the new barangay Material Recovery Facility (MRF) was established, the first activity to be conducted was a tree planting-event participated by student members of Earth Savers Club coming from two nearby public high schools. This event was initiated by two teachers—Janet and Lynn. The assembly time was around 3 o'clock in the afternoon after classes. When our hired jeepney came, the students rushed in and seated themselves. There was non-stop talking and laughing with the word 'environment' punctuating their conversations. Someone threw a banana peeling in the middle of the jeepney, obviously to tease their teacher. The rowdiest student, a lanky fair-skinned boy, stooped and ceremoniously said, "*May malasakit ako sa environment kaya pupulutin ko ito* (I will pick this up because I have a concern for the environment)."

Upon alighting from the jeepney, each one, without any prodding, dutifully went to the area where saplings were stacked and picked up one piece. The group seemed very familiar to the whole tree-planting process. They went in small groups to find their own spot. A boy would dig a small hole and a girl would place the sapling in it. Kapitan Dion was giving detailed instructions to the group: "*Be careful in removing the sapling from the plastic bag to make sure that the plant will live.*" The planting was done after about 30 minutes and the students began to explore the place.

Some were more daring and went down to the creek. Somebody in the group exclaimed, "*Ang saya-saya!* (This is so much fun)." After a few more minutes, somebody signalled that it was time to go. Group pictures were taken. Lynn, pointing to a small plant on the ground, said: "You see that third plant? I was the one who planted it." On our way back, the group gave their contribution for their jeepney fare. Janet said that she asked each one to contribute five pesos. She explained, "*I asked the students to pay five pesos, it was not all free so that they would feel that this is an investment.*"

The environment in a communitarian discourse is constituted as a nurturing place, a convivial rendezvous where people gather to celebrate their collective identity as a family and neighbors and talk about their collective past. The nurturing is a two-way process. The high school student's words "*May malasakit ako sa environment* (I have a deep concern for the environment)" expresses the communitarian discourse on environmentalism. It also points to a distinct Filipino value. Jocano (2001, 129) described "malasakit" as to look intently - to be genuinely, selflessly, and deeply anxious over one's sufferings. It is also "dedication or devotion to duties and responsibilities in the pursuit of genuine service.... it is the underlying sentiment of identity, pride, and commitment to the goal of the community." The term *malasakit* can be the Filipino eco-centric expression of his eco-spirituality. In this view, the environment is viewed not as a mere inert material to be readily exploited by humans, but an animated member of the community, capable of suffering and receiving acts of "malasakit."

Education first – inculcating environmentalism in school and community

When another community was starting its own ESWM program, Kapitan Dion advised them that an educational campaign should be the first major task. "*Yun ang unang-una. Mag-educational campaign muna kayo.*"

When asked later when to buy equipment for the MRF, he emphasized, "*Mag-educational campaign muna kayo, tsaka na yun. Madali lang yun. Ang mahirap ay kung paano turuan ang mga tao* (You first conduct an educational campaign. The MRF will come later. Setting it up is easy." What is crucial is how you would teach the people to develop the right habits)."

During a meeting for ESWM in the province, it was mentioned that there was a great need for people to learn ecological values. One city environment officer said in his opening remarks that ESWM essentially required "culture change." An ESWM coordinator in another municipality said that their greatest task was "changing the people." It was admitted by a DENR official that the foremost reason why an ESWM program failed was its weak information education and communication (IEC) aspect. The house-to-house garbage collection of a major city in her jurisdiction stopped because people failed to learn how to segregate their waste. In her experience in working with various municipalities, people would comply with waste segregation for only six months. Sustaining the habit of waste segregation at the household level was the most challenging aspect.

The eco-spiritual discourse on environmental care likened the education process to a "conversion experience." It included taking in a new set of belief system that would permeate one's life. "*Gusto naming mag-environment ang mga tao* (We want people to be pro-environment)." Kapitan Dion meant that he wanted people to manage their waste, and specifically, to reduce their waste.

The term "*mag-environment*" means a concern for the environment that was translated into action. When they say "*nag-environment ako*", they were referring to some sort of conversion from lack of concern to an active concern. Another word that has been often used among the leaders was "internalize." Kapitan Dion once said,

"We are successful because people have internalized the value of waste segregation."

The word "internalize" was to describe a state when people fully understood the value of waste segregation and practice it dutifully. "*Gusto kong magtrabaho sa puso nila* (I want it to do its work in their hearts)." This was Janet's explanation why she included biblical basis in the usual training program they provided. Letters to residents about new management system had to be translated into Pangasinan language to ensure that they would be understood.

In the eco-spiritual discourse, the corresponding inculcation process was through the exemplary behavior of the teacher. It was also incarnational - or going where the people are - and exercised with evangelistic fervor. The Eco-Care group described their ideal educational campaign as "tutok" (focused), "dire-diretso" (non-stop), going where the people are (as contrasted to getting them to come attend classes), informal, "*parang usap-usap lang*" (like casual chatting), and combined with actual demonstrations. Janet related how they organized and went about their educational campaign:

Kapitan Dion and I formed the Eco-Care group which includes teachers, barangay health workers, civic and youth organizations. We taught the core group through lectures on environmental problems. We talked about global warming and its relation to segregation. We did it by zones through the Kagawad assigned in that area. For the first zone, we went house to house. Then I felt that it was too much for me. And so I formed small groups. The councilman gathered the group and I would teach them under a tree.

Later, Janet realized that teaching a small group was preferable to instructing a big one. The reason was not simply because it was more difficult to organize a big meeting.

She explained,

I do not like a big audience. I want a small group. Isn't it that people would take the chance to ask question if you are close to them? And if the speaker stands on a stage, he is greatly separated from his audience.

In imparting knowledge about the ecosystem and inculcating environmental care to her students, Janet found that doing fieldwork outside the school like tree-planting, participating in information campaign, or house-to-house monitoring in the community, were indispensable. She believed that such learning experiences were more effective in instilling environmental values than classroom-bound type of instruction. One reason for its effectiveness was that the students and teachers who were in an informal situation were not compelled to speak in English (the prescribed language of instruction for Science).

Unfortunately, her efforts were not always appreciated by her superiors and co-teachers. One time, she organized a fieldtrip for more than 200 students. At 5:30 in the morning, they were assembled and ready to leave when her superior suddenly withdrew her approval of the trip. The criticisms Janet received from her colleagues imply that they perceived the students' outdoor activities to be of little value. It was reflective of formal education's perspective of learning as something that takes place only in the classroom, directed by a teacher, and usually measured by written tests.

Below are the objectives of environmental education provided by the Department of Education (1999) to schoolteachers to serve as their guide in formulating the curriculum and instructional materials:

- Awareness to environment and its attendant problems
- Knowledge of how environment functions and how people interact with the environment

- Develop a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment
- Skills to identify, investigate, and contribute to the resolution of environmental problems
- Participation in all levels of resolution of environmental problems

Judging from the students' responses and behavior, especially the results of their efforts to inculcate waste segregation in households, they have exceeded what was expected of them in terms of environmental education.

The education aspect in a communitarian discourse was enacted through collective and cultural activities in the community like community clean-up day, tree-planting events and celebrations like the fiesta. Since 1999, when the community began their environmental concern endeavors, the fiestas that were planned by the Eco-Care group started to revolve around the theme of environmental concern. The following records a firsthand account of fiestas in 2002 and 2003:

When villagers in Barangay Bued celebrated their fiesta last week, they displayed on the streets several floats bedecked with recycled garbage...What was supposed to be a simple celebration turned out to be an advocacy for an effective waste management program. After days of preparation, some 400 villagers, including children and teenagers, showcased their skills in recycling through 17 floats that went around the village roads. The floats were bedecked with scraps, plastic papers, tin cans, glass bottles, and other waste materials. Residents displayed home decors from plastic cups and flowers. Some came up with a backdrop made of biodegradable materials such as dry leaves and kitchen refuse...This was the third year that Barangay Bued's fiesta was focused on environment protection. Dion said the move was intended to get the people's cooperation in keeping the village clean and green (Fuertes, 2002).

While Barangay Bued equates environmentalism to learning a new set of values and cultural practices, technicist-oriented environmental groups thought otherwise. This is manifested in their discourse of "implementation."

When some government officials and so called ESWM experts asked a barangay official the oft-repeated question, "*Na-implement na ba?*" (a question to ask whether ESWM was implemented), I found out that what they were referring to as "implementation" was the establishment of an MRF or any waste processing facility with tangible structures and equipment.

This valuing for ESWM technology was felt in the contest for Model Barangay. In the self-rating form, the "Engineering" aspect of ESWM counts for 25% of a barangay's total score. Under this section, a barangay can potentially earn a maximum score of 40 points if they have MRF machines and chemical enhancers.

However, if Bued's "education first" paradigm would be taken seriously, it could lead to a scenario where no equipment or waste processing facility would be needed. There existed a few barangays like Bgy. Linomot (another Model Barangay) that have done away with a centralized waste processing facility and have no need for any machine or chemicals since all households have learned to practice recycling and composting in their own backyard.

This scenario was extolled by Kapitan Dion to be the *ideal* ESWM implementation. Janet later acceded that having equipment like hammermill and rotary drums became an obstacle in their education efforts with the leaders of neighboring communities. She said that it was so hard to make the leaders understand the real meaning of ESWM. "*Akala nila, bibili kaagad ng machine! Ang importante ay matuto ang mga taong mag-segregate* (They thought that ESWM means having to buy machines right away. What was important was that people learn to segregate their waste)."

Environmental care discourses and formation of identity

One major feature of discourse is its power to create and recreate identities and new ways of being. Configuring environmental care through the dominant techno-managerial discourse bears on the identity of people in local communities as deficient and needy. In this context, environmental protection exclusively belongs to experts. The community does not have enough local resources to meet the standard requirements of quality environmental care, especially those imposed by International Organization for Standardization (ISO). They need to acquire the expensive services of an expert along with the expensive technologies and equipment he would prescribe. The expert and the technology often come from outside their community. If the community is not able to acquire these expert services and their expensive technology, they are to be blamed and criminalized for the degradation of the environment. Such technicist also casts the environment as an objectified helpless captive to be subjected to endless testing and analysis.

The teachers, along with other environmental advocates in the community, resisted the dominance of technicist discourse care by creating alternative meanings and representations of environmental care. They diversified the essentialist discourse on environmentalism and constructed environmental discourses that were spiritual and communitarian in nature. They enacted these discourses in their lives and group processes, and inculcated them to their students and to the whole community.

The formation of identity from an eco-spiritual discourse was rooted on the imagery of environmental activism as a holy war. The discourse of war or battle was felt strongly in the way people constructed their experiences on environmental concerns. One of Barangay Bued's fiestas was entitled "War on waste

turns into Anti-war Protest." The name of a coalition for the clean-up of the river was *Kalikasang Vigilantes* (environmental vigilantes).

It is worthwhile to ask, against whom were they battling? Through their stories, three "enemies" were identified. They included the beverage plant that was polluting the river, a number of indifferent and obstinate residents, and political forces that hindered their efforts. Janet mentioned, "*Ang softdrink company naging kaaway namin dahil ayaw amining sila ang pollutant* (The beverage company became our enemy because it did not want to admit that they were a pollutant)." In the discourse of environmentalism as a holy war, the teachers were represented as strong, powerful warriors and protectors. In such discourse, teachers took the identity of an exemplar, advocate, and value formator.

The communitarian discourse of environmental care casts the community as inherently capable and adequate in caring for its environment. It portrays the community as able to organize itself and develop its own means and systems to adapt to its environment. The communitarian discourse depicted its leaders as heroic that would galvanize the community towards a common good. In this context, the teachers became teachers not only in school but also in the community. They took the role of community organizer/mobilizer and non-formal/informal educator. In this context, the environment is constructed as one with the people, one that is able to give and nurture.

Conclusion and implication

This study showed that school teachers were able to resist dominant discourses through generating counter-discourses of environmental care as eco-spirituality and communitarianism. In such contexts, teachers as advocates for the environment functioned as exemplars, value formators, community organizers and

mobilizers, and non-formal and informal educators.

The idea that education took a very crucial role in implementing environmental care programs indicates the crucial role teachers have toward environmental deliverance. This implies that teacher education and development programs should equip teachers towards such role.

Education as a concept and function should be expanded beyond school gates towards the social and environmental concerns of the broader community. The tasks of exposing and interrogating dominating discourses and generating counter-discourses would mean that teachers are not to function as mere educational technocrats or like cogs of machinery that blindly transmit knowledge and information that are handed to them. They are to be intellectuals who nurture critical modes of thinking and take an active role in promoting reflective and transformative action.

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