

Suee San: Reimagining the Path from Local Wisdom to Systematic Inquiry

Myo Myint Maung Maung and Khin Yadana Kyaw

Abstract

In the vexatious uncertainty of Myanmar, communities possess significant contextual knowledge regarding existential challenges. But who listens? Their stories remain simply stories. While they are powerful, they go unheard. It is highly unlikely that policy-makers will take their local wisdom into account. This paper explores how Suee San, a community-based research educational initiative of Parami University students in Southern Shan State, seeks to bridge this gap by helping youth transform local wisdom and lived experiences into systematic inquiry.

This study investigates how local, culturally-grounded research education can shape young people's sense of civic agency and comprehension of social issues. It queries how participants may translate their everyday experiences into research evidence, and how their use of Burmese short novels may help them investigate structural challenges such as migration, weak governance, and drug infestation.

Employing an oral history qualitative approach, this study draws on semi-structured interviews with former Suee San participants. These interviews are subjected to thematic analysis. Findings suggest a paradigm shift in participants' perception of knowledge production, which is no longer regarded as the exclusive domain of academics, external experts, and formal institutions. Instead, participants increasingly recognize that their communities are repositories of valuable knowledge. Suee San youth come to see themselves as active contributors to meaningful social inquiry. They can claim ownership over knowledge production. This strengthens their collective responses to the challenges facing their communities. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on community-based education, youth civic engagement, and locally-grounded approaches to social transformation.