

Redefining Note-taking in Social Studies Through Students' Construction of Historical Meaning

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Abstract

This study explored how students construct historical meaning through note-taking in History classes. Anchored in Constructivist Learning Theory and Historical Thinking Theory, the research reconceptualized note-taking not merely as a mechanical activity but as an active meaning-making process aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education. A qualitative descriptive-interpretive design was employed to capture the lived experiences of first-year college students enrolled in Readings in Philippine History. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analysis of students' notes using purposive sampling and informed consent procedures. Thematic analysis revealed four major themes: (1) note-taking as a tool for retention and understanding, (2) personalized note-taking strategies enhance learning, (3) challenges and difficulties in note-taking during discussions, and (4) collaborative and adaptive learning through note-taking. Findings showed that students viewed note-taking as essential in organizing historical information, improving comprehension, strengthening memory retention, and increasing confidence during recitations and discussions. Learners utilized diverse and personalized strategies such as timelines, color coding, flashcards, diagrams, abbreviations, and digital note-taking to simplify and interpret complex historical concepts. However, students also encountered challenges including fast-paced discussions, incomplete notes, and misinterpretation of information, prompting them to adapt through peer collaboration, online resources, and visual documentation. The findings further highlighted that note-taking practices are socially influenced and continuously shaped by classroom experiences and peer interaction. Overall, the study demonstrates that note-taking in Social Studies functions as a dynamic and interpretive learning process that supports historical understanding and critical thinking. The study recommends the integration of flexible, student-centered, and meaning-oriented note-taking approaches in History instruction to improve learner engagement and comprehension.

Keywords: Social Studies Education; readings in Philippine history; purposive sampling; historical thinking; note-taking strategies

1. Introduction

Note-taking has long been recognized as an important learning strategy that helps students organize information, improve comprehension, and retain knowledge across different academic disciplines. Globally, educators continue to examine how note-taking practices influence students' critical thinking and meaning-making, especially in subjects that require analysis and interpretation such as Social Studies (Miller, 2021). In the Philippine educational context, note-taking remains a common classroom practice; however, many learners still rely on passive copying of information rather than constructing historical understanding from lessons (Dela Cruz, 2022). This challenge limits students' ability to connect historical events, analyze perspectives, and develop deeper engagement with historical content in Social Studies classes. Hence, assessing how students redefine note-taking through their construction of historical meaning is necessary in order to identify more meaningful and learner-centered approaches in teaching Social Studies.

Existing studies describe note-taking as an active learning strategy that improves comprehension, retention, and cognitive engagement when students summarize, organize, and transform information rather than merely copy it (Fiorella & Mayer, 2022; Morehead et al., 2019). Research in history education also emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when students analyze evidence, connect events, and construct interpretations instead of memorizing isolated facts (Endacott & Brooks, 2021; Lévesque & Clark, 2019). Furthermore, alternative note-taking approaches such as concept mapping, guided notes, and reflective note-taking have been found to enhance students' engagement and deeper understanding of historical content (Schroeder et al., 2021; Torrance et al., 2020). Despite these findings, many classrooms still practice traditional note-taking methods that encourage passive copying and surface-level learning, particularly in content-heavy subjects like Social Studies (Luo et al., 2021; Martell & Stevens, 2022). Moreover, limited studies have explored students' lived experiences and perspectives on how note-taking helps them construct historical meaning, creating a gap that the present study seeks to address.

This study aimed to explore how students use note-taking in constructing historical meaning in Social Studies classes in Tacloban City during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it aimed to: (1) describe students' experiences with note-taking in Social Studies classes; (2) determine how students utilize their notes to understand and interpret historical content; (3) identify the challenges students encounter in note-taking during History lessons; and (4) propose interventions to improve note-taking practices based on the findings of the study.

This study is anchored in Constructivist Learning Theory, Cognitive Information Processing Theory, and Historical Thinking Theory, which collectively explain how students actively construct understanding through meaningful learning experiences. Constructivist Learning Theory emphasizes that learners build knowledge by connecting new information with prior experiences, making learning a process of interpretation and meaning-making rather than simple memorization (Piaget, 1970; Romdhon et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Cognitive Information Processing Theory explains that learning becomes more effective when students actively organize, summarize, and process information, which supports deeper comprehension and

retention of historical concepts (Mayer, 2020; Fiorella & Mayer, 2022). Historical Thinking Theory further highlights the importance of analyzing evidence, contextualizing events, and forming interpretations to develop a deeper understanding of history rather than viewing it as a collection of facts (Lévesque & Clark, 2019; McGrew et al., 2019). From the researcher's perspective, these theories support the idea that note-taking should not only serve as a classroom routine but also function as a meaningful strategy that helps students engage critically with historical content and construct their own understanding of the past. 1292

This study is significant because it examines how note-taking functions as a meaningful learning strategy that helps students construct historical understanding in Social Studies classes. The study is grounded on the idea that note-taking should not be viewed merely as copying information, but as a cognitive and reflective process that supports comprehension, interpretation, and engagement with historical content. The findings may benefit students by helping them develop more purposeful note-taking practices that enhance critical thinking and retention of historical concepts, while teachers may gain insights into instructional strategies that encourage active and meaningful learning. In addition, the study may provide useful information for curriculum developers and future researchers in improving learner-centered approaches and expanding research on note-taking and historical meaning-making within the Philippine educational context. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the improvement of Social Studies education by promoting deeper historical understanding beyond memorization of facts.

2. Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in the study. It outlines the research design, participants, research locale, sampling technique, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, pilot testing, and ethical considerations. The chapter explains how the qualitative approach is used to examine first-year college students' note-taking experiences and how these practices influence their understanding and engagement in learning Philippine history.

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive–interpretive research design to explore how first-year college students construct historical meaning through their note-taking practices in Readings in Philippine History. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study focused on understanding students' experiences, perspectives, and meaning-making processes rather than measuring outcomes quantitatively (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Specifically, the descriptive–interpretive design allowed the researcher to describe students' experiences while interpreting the meanings they attached to their note-taking practices and engagement with historical content (Doyle et al., 2020). This design also aligns with constructivist perspectives which emphasize that learning occurs through active interpretation, reflection, and interaction with knowledge and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Therefore, the chosen research design was suitable for capturing the depth and complexity of students' learning experiences and understanding how note-taking functions as a tool for historical meaning-making.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in a higher education institution in Tacloban City offering the General Education subject Readings in Philippine History. The research locale was selected because the course is required for first-year college students across different academic programs, providing an appropriate context for examining students' note-taking practices and historical meaning-making. The institution also offers a structured learning environment where students engage with historical content through lectures, readings, and classroom discussions. Conducting the study within this setting allowed the researcher to observe note-taking practices in an authentic Social Studies learning environment, thereby increasing the contextual relevance of the findings. Furthermore, data gathering was conducted through individual interviews in a private and conducive setting to ensure participants' confidentiality, comfort, and freedom in sharing their experiences.

2.3 Research Participants

The participants of this study consisted of approximately 10–15 first-year college students enrolled in the General Education subject Readings in Philippine History from two selected class sections in a higher education institution in Tacloban City. Participants were purposively selected because first-year students are still developing learning strategies such as note-taking, making their experiences relevant to the study of historical meaning-making. The inclusion criteria required participants to be at least 18 years old, currently enrolled in the selected class sections, actively practicing handwritten note-taking during lessons on *The First Voyage* and *The Customs of the Tagalogs*, and willing to voluntarily participate in the study through informed consent. Meanwhile, students were excluded if they were not first-year college students, not enrolled in the identified course and sections, did not engage in handwritten note-taking, or chose not to participate or withdraw from the study. The selected participants and class sections provided an appropriate context for exploring students' note-taking experiences within authentic history-learning situations while ensuring the feasibility and depth of qualitative inquiry.

2.4 Research Instrument

The study utilized a semi-structured interview guide, document analysis, and reflective prompts to gather data on students' note-taking practices and construction of historical meaning in Readings in Philippine History. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that explored students' perceptions, strategies, challenges, and experiences in note-taking. Document analysis of students' handwritten notes examined how they organized, interpreted, and emphasized historical information, while reflective prompts provided additional insights into the role of note-taking in learning. To ensure validity and clarity, the interview guide was reviewed by two Social Studies experts and one Language expert, and their recommendations were incorporated into the final instrument. Interviews were conducted with participants' informed consent and were supported by audio recordings and field notes to ensure the accuracy, completeness, and confidentiality of the data collected.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure was conducted from January to May 2026, following a series of ethical and administrative steps to ensure proper research protocol. The study first secured ethical clearance and approval from the Research Ethics Office (REO) to ensure that all procedures complied with established ethical standards for research involving human participants. After REO approval, formal permissions were obtained sequentially from the Office of the Graduate School, the College of Education Dean, and the Vice President for Student Development and Services, followed by coordination with the subject instructor to facilitate classroom access and participant identification. Once institutional permissions were granted, the researcher approached eligible participants, explained the purpose and procedures of the study, and secured informed consent from those who voluntarily agreed to participate, emphasizing that participation was entirely voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time without penalty. Data collection was then conducted in April 2026 through individual semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, complemented by the examination of participants' handwritten notes on selected topics in Readings in Philippine History, allowing for triangulation of data to strengthen the credibility and depth of findings. All interview transcripts and document data were securely stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher. Finally, data analysis and interpretation were carried out in May 2026, where interview transcripts and document data were systematically reviewed to identify patterns related to students' note-taking practices and meaning-making processes. Following the completion of the study, research records will be retained for the required period and securely deleted thereafter, and the findings may be presented in academic conferences or published in scholarly journals while maintaining participant confidentiality.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedure

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). Interview transcripts will be systematically reviewed and coded to identify patterns and themes related to meaning-making, engagement, and learning strategies. The analysis followed the established phases of familiarization, initial coding, theme development, and interpretation to ensure rigor, transparency, and credibility. All data were handled confidentially, with no information that could directly or indirectly identify participants disclosed. After analysis, the emerging themes and interpretations were shared with participants to verify the accuracy of findings and ensure their experiences are represented correctly. The researcher also exercised reflexivity throughout the study to ensure that personal interpretations, assumptions, or biases do not influence the analysis and presentation of the findings, thereby preserving the integrity and credibility of the research outcomes.

2.7 Ethical Consideration

This study adheres to strict ethical standards for research involving human participants and obtained prior approval from the University's Research Ethics Office to ensure compliance with institutional and ethical guidelines. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all participants before data collection, with full disclosure of the study's purpose, procedures, possible risks and benefits, and participants' rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The informed consent process was carefully implemented by providing participants with both printed and optional soft copies of the Informed Consent Form, which was personally explained by the researcher to ensure clear understanding; participants were also given sufficient time to decide, ask questions, and consult others before agreeing to participate. The study involves minimal risk, although participants may experience slight discomfort when reflecting on their academic experiences, which was addressed by allowing them to skip questions or discontinue the interview at any point, conducted in a private and respectful setting to ensure comfort and confidentiality. While there are no direct academic benefits, participants may gain personal insight into their note-taking practices, and the study may contribute to improving Social Studies instruction and learning experiences; no monetary incentives were provided, but a small snack was given as a token of appreciation after the interview. In the unlikely event of distress, the researcher will pause the interview and provide appropriate referrals to university support services, ensuring that participant well-being remains the highest priority throughout the research process.

2.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study refers to the rigor, credibility, and ethical soundness of the research process and findings, ensuring that participants' experiences are accurately and transparently represented (Noble & Smith, 2019). It is established through systematic research procedures, ethical safeguards, and reflexive practices, including the use of validated instruments, audio-recorded interviews with consent, and organized documentation of all research decisions to ensure transparency and consistency throughout the study. Dependability is ensured through the consistent application of a semi-structured interview guide and a clearly documented process of data collection and analysis, supported by an audit trail consisting of transcripts, interview protocols, and field notes to demonstrate methodological stability (Kyrngäs et al., 2020). Confirmability is strengthened through reflexive journaling, verbatim transcription of interviews, and the use of direct participant quotations to ensure that findings are grounded in the actual data rather than researcher bias, with audio recordings and written notes serving as verifiable evidence (Nowell et al., 2019). Lastly, transferability is supported through thick descriptions of the research setting, participants, and the Readings in Philippine History course, allowing readers to determine the relevance of the findings to similar educational contexts (Polit & Beck, 2021).

2.9 Reflexivity

Reflexivity in this study is observed through the researcher's continuous awareness and critical reflection on how their background as a Social Studies teacher may influence data collection, interpretation, and analysis. To minimize potential bias, the researcher will engage in ongoing self-reflection, use neutral and open-ended interview questions, and ensure that interpretations are consistently grounded in participants' actual responses rather than preconceived assumptions. This reflexive practice is maintained throughout the research process to safeguard the authenticity of participants' perspectives and strengthen the credibility of the findings. In addition, strict confidentiality measures are observed, where all collected data such as interview recordings, transcripts, and field notes are securely stored in password-protected devices and

accessed only by the researcher. Anonymity is also ensured through the use of pseudonyms or identification codes, with all identifiable information removed or generalized to protect participants' identities and prevent any form of disclosure in the final report and dissemination of findings.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study based on the thematic analysis of the data gathered from the participants. The presentation of results is organized according to the research objectives: (1) students' lived experiences of note-taking in Social Studies-History classes, (2) students' utilization of note-taking in History classes, (3) students' challenges in note-taking during History lessons, and (4) proposed interventions to improve note-taking practices based on the findings. Through these objectives, the study explores how students use note-taking to understand, organize, and construct historical meaning within the context of Social Studies instruction.

Students' Lived Experiences of Note-taking in Social Studies- History Classes

Analysis of the participants' experiences revealed three interconnected themes: note-taking as a tool for retention and understanding, selective note-taking for focused learning, and note-taking as a source of academic confidence and preparedness.

Theme 1: Tool for Retention and Understanding

Participants consistently described note-taking as an important strategy for retaining and understanding historical information discussed in class. Given the numerous dates, events, personalities, and concepts in Philippine History, students use notes to organize information, reduce confusion, and support lesson review. They explained that writing down key details helps them connect historical events and improve their understanding of the subject matter.

The findings indicate that note-taking serves as both a cognitive and organizational tool that supports meaningful learning. Salame et al. (2023) noted that note-taking enhances memory retention, comprehension, and information retrieval, while Morehead et al. (2019) emphasized its role in promoting active processing and long-term retention of learning materials. Consistent with these perspectives, participants viewed note-taking as a useful means of structuring information, improving recall, and strengthening their understanding of historical lessons.

Significant Response 1: *"By taking down notes, I could avoid confusions and it's easy to track down especially if the dates were organize"* (P₆, L₄₉₈₋₄₉₉)

Significant Response 2: *"I think note taking has a very important part on that, because, when you understand and at the same time you write it down, it really is in your mind, it gets on your schema. You can really remember what the lesson is all about and you also understand it and you also remember the dates that are related to it."* (P₇, L₅₆₉₋₅₇₂)

Significant Response 3: *"Taking notes really helps me especially in history because if I am taking notes, it is easier for me to understanding, for example, a meaning of a concept and also, it helps me organize the events and see how they are connected to each other."* (P₈, L₆₇₇₋₆₈₀)

Theme 2: Selective Note-Taking for Focused Understanding

Participants highlighted that selective note-taking helps them focus on the most important ideas discussed during History lessons. By identifying key concepts and relevant details, students simplify complex information and improve their understanding of historical content. This practice enables learners to organize information effectively without copying everything presented in class.

According to Chen (2021), key point selection is an effective note-taking strategy that enhances comprehension and organization of lecture content. Similarly, Morehead et al. (2019) found that effective note-taking involves processing and selecting relevant information rather than recording content verbatim. Consistent with these perspectives, participants reported prioritizing essential ideas, instructor insights, and information they considered most relevant to understanding the lesson. They also noted that excessive writing can be overwhelming and less useful for review, leading them to adopt more concise and organized note-taking practices.

Significant Response 1: *"My usual note taking usually done by listening first to the discussion and writing down only the main ideas"* (P₈, L₆₈₆₋₆₈₇)

Significant Response 2: *"The ideas that cannot be found in any handouts, textbooks, or any other reading materials, which I think is important, I am writing it down"* (P₁, L₁₉₋₂₁)

Significant Response 3: *"I am not used to writing everything because it discourages me to read, I write down those that I think matters."* (P₉, L₈₈₇₋₈₈₉)

Theme 3: Academic Confidence Dependence

Participants shared that failing to take notes during History lessons often reduces their confidence, particularly during surprise recitations and quizzes. Without notes to review, students feel less prepared to recall important historical details such as names, dates, events, and concepts discussed in class. As a result, they experience uncertainty and become more hesitant to participate in classroom activities.

The findings suggest that note-taking serves not only as a learning tool but also as a source of academic confidence and preparedness. Salame et al. (2023) noted that note-taking enhances information retention and retrieval, enabling students to feel more prepared for academic tasks. Likewise, Chen (2021) emphasized that effective note-taking supports learners' understanding and organization of information, which can strengthen their confidence in engaging with classroom activities.

Consistent with these findings, participants viewed their notes as an important resource that helps them feel prepared and confident during recitations, discussions, and assessments. 1295

Significant Response 1: *"I feel like I lack information and I felt left behind from the discussion if I don't have my notes."* (P₁, L₅₀₋₅₁)

Significant Response 2: *"One time during our recitation and I failed to take notes the previous lesson, it affects me because I almost fail to answer the question."* (P₃, L₂₃₆₋₂₃₈)

Students' Challenges in Note-Taking during History Lessons

The findings revealed that students encounter several challenges when taking notes during History lessons. These difficulties primarily stem from the fast-paced delivery of discussions, problems in maintaining clear and organized notes, and issues related to recording accurate information. Such challenges affect students' ability to capture, review, and understand historical content effectively.

Theme 1: Capturing Fast-Paced History Lectures

Students frequently experience difficulty keeping pace with History discussions due to the volume of information, numerous dates and names, and the rapid delivery of lectures. When discussions move quickly, learners struggle to simultaneously listen, process information, and record important details. Previous studies suggest that the speed of lecture delivery can hinder students' ability to capture essential information and negatively affect note quality and comprehension (Morehead et al., 2019; Jansen et al., 2020). The responses indicate that students struggle to record information effectively when History lessons are delivered at a rapid pace. The simultaneous demands of listening, processing, and writing often result in incomplete notes, missed information, and difficulty keeping up with classroom discussions.

Significant Response 1: *"Sometimes when our instructor discusses too fast, I cannot keep up with writing the important terms, and my handwriting becomes distorted because I am rushing."* (P₂, L₁₁₈₋₁₂₂)

Significant Response 2: *"One of the challenges is when the PowerPoint slides are changed too quickly before I can finish writing my notes."* (P₄, L₁₄₃₋₁₄₅)

Significant Response 3: *"When discussions become extremely fast-paced, I feel overwhelmed because I am trying to understand the lesson while also taking notes at the same time."* (P₇, L₁₅₆₋₁₅₉)

Theme 2: Limitations in Maintaining Clarity

Students also encounter difficulties in maintaining the clarity, organization, and readability of their notes. Rushed writing, disorganized layouts, and inconsistent note-taking formats often make it difficult for learners to review and understand their own notes after class. Research shows that note organization and legibility play an important role in supporting effective review and information retention (Kiewra et al., 2021; Kobayashi, 2021). The responses demonstrate that students face challenges in maintaining clear and organized notes during History lessons. Poor handwriting, overcrowded notes, and inconsistent organization reduce the usefulness of notes during review and can hinder comprehension of historical content.

Significant Response 1: *"When I write too fast, my handwriting becomes messy and later I cannot understand what I wrote."* (P₂, L₁₂₃₋₁₂₆)

Significant Response 2: *"Sometimes my notes become mixed up because I am trying to write everything quickly, and when I review them later, I become confused."* (P₈, L₁₃₅₋₁₃₉)

Significant Response 3: *"I want to improve my note-taking because after discussions, I often find it difficult to understand my own notes and have to decipher them again."* (P₇, L₂₀₅₋₂₀₈)

Theme 3: Difficulties in Ensuring Accuracy

Another challenge experienced by students is ensuring that the information they record is accurate. Learners reported instances of mishearing names, dates, and events, particularly during discussions containing unfamiliar historical concepts. To address these concerns, students often verify information through classmates, books, instructors, and other learning resources. According to Kobayashi (2021), note-taking accuracy may be affected when learners must simultaneously listen, process, and record information, especially in content-heavy learning environments where cognitive demands are high. The responses reveal that students experience difficulties in accurately recording historical information during note-taking. Misheard details, conflicting information, and uncertainty regarding dates and events can affect the reliability of notes. As a result, students often engage in verification practices to ensure the accuracy of the information they record.

Significant Response 1: *"There are times when I mishear the name of a historical figure and write down the wrong information, so I have to ask my classmates for clarification."* (P₃, L₉₆₋₁₀₀)

Significant Response 2: *"When different dates appeared in our notes, we compared them with books and consulted our instructor to determine which one was correct."* (P₃, L₁₄₇₋₁₅₂)

Significant Response 3: *"Sometimes there is information in the second discussion that was not included in my previous notes, and I later discover that it came from a different source, which causes confusion."* (P₈, L₁₂₀₋₁₂₄)

Students' Utilization of Note-Taking in History Classes

Analysis of the participants' experiences revealed three themes: the use of visual-structural strategies, flexible note-

taking practices for better comprehension, and peer-assisted learning. These themes demonstrate the different ways students utilize note-taking to support their learning in History classes. Through various note-taking approaches and interactions with peers, students are able to organize information, enhance understanding, and engage more effectively with historical content. 1296

Theme 1: Use of Visual-Structural Strategies

Participants utilized various visual and structural strategies to organize historical information and improve understanding. These included timelines, color-coding, highlighting, diagrams, flashcards, and chronological arrangements of events. Such strategies enabled students to simplify complex historical content and strengthen memory retention. According to Chen (2021), visual and organizational note-taking techniques enhance comprehension by helping learners structure information meaningfully. Similarly, Luo et al. (2022) found that visual note-taking supports information processing and recall by promoting active engagement with learning materials.

Significant Response 1: *"In my notes, for example in Voyage, I am writing the topic and then the timeline with events and dates."* (P₂, L₉₁₋₉₃)

Significant Response 2: *"I have this color coding using highlighters. I use color green if I understood the topic and red or blue for topics that needs more time to study or review."* (P₆, L₄₉₁₋₄₉₂)

Significant Response 3: *"I had to do diagramming so I had to make a sort of a family tree, in Customs of the Tagalogs, to understand it more."* (P₇, L₅₈₇₋₅₈₈)

Theme 2: Flexible Practices for Better Comprehension

Participants demonstrated flexibility in their note-taking practices by adapting their methods according to the lesson and their learning preferences. Students simplified information, used their own interpretations, rewrote notes into flashcards, and translated unfamiliar concepts into more understandable terms. These practices helped them process complex historical content more effectively. According to van der Meer (2019), effective note-taking involves actively transforming information rather than merely copying content. Likewise, Salame et al. (2023) emphasized that personalized note-taking strategies promote deeper understanding and meaningful learning.

Significant Response 1: *"I usually find another solution like magsearch po ako hin libro online tas sometimes it mga libro po kasi online is naka pdf so it akon solution po is igprint ito na pdf then after printing I will read it again and then I'll write it on my notes and I would write my own interpretation."* (P₄, L₃₂₀₋₃₂₄)

Significant Response 2: *"I am rewriting my notes in a 1/4 index card, I make it as a flashcard."* (P₃, L₁₇₄₋₁₇₅)

Significant Response 3: *"Like mutiny dire ak maaram kun ano ito like maaram la ako han date so han ak pagnotes ginbutang ko mutiny then parenthesis pag aaklas."* (P₈, L₇₂₈₋₇₃₀)

Theme 3: Peer-Assisted Learning

Participants also utilized note-taking through interactions with classmates. They compared notes, shared strategies, exchanged information, and collaborated during study sessions to improve understanding and fill information gaps. These interactions enabled learners to validate information and learn alternative note-taking approaches. According to Leighton et al. (2021), collaborative learning activities support deeper understanding by allowing students to construct knowledge through discussion and shared experiences. Similarly, Zhang and Zou (2022) noted that peer support enhances learning engagement and promotes the exchange of effective learning strategies.

Significant Response 1: *"We are having group study with my friends which are also my classmates, and we are asking questions to one another using our notes."* (P₁, L₆₄₋₆₆)

Significant Response 2: *"The one na color coding po na highlight I actually learned it from one of my classmates."* (P₆, L₅₃₈₋₅₃₉)

Significant Response 3: *"There was one classmate who wrote down only shortcut words... it looks fun so I put that into myself and I just wanted to write things down based on history."* (P₅, L₄₅₃₋₄₅₉)

Propose Intervention to Improve Note-Taking Practices in History Instruction

Based on the findings of the study, an intervention program may be proposed to improve students' note-taking practices in History instruction by promoting organized, adaptive, and collaborative note-taking strategies. History instructors may provide short orientations or workshops on effective note-taking techniques such as selective note-taking, timeline creation, diagramming, color-coding, and the use of flashcards to help students better organize historical information. Teachers may also consider pacing classroom discussions appropriately, emphasizing key concepts during lectures, and providing brief pauses that allow students enough time to process and record important details accurately. These practices may help reduce difficulties related to fast-paced discussions, unclear notes, and missed information during lectures. In addition, collaborative learning activities such as peer note comparison, group review sessions, and guided classroom discussions may be integrated into History instruction to strengthen students' understanding and validation of historical information. Since participants revealed that peer interaction helps improve the accuracy and completeness of notes, encouraging collaborative review may enhance both academic confidence and comprehension among learners. Furthermore, integrating digital tools and visual note-taking strategies may support students with different learning preferences and improve engagement during discussions. Through these interventions, students may develop more effective, accurate, and meaningful note-taking practices that support learning and participation in History classes.

These findings show that note-taking is socially influenced and evolves through peer learning and adaptation.

Overall, the findings show that note-taking is not a mechanical activity but a meaning-making process shaped by individual strategies, peer influence, and classroom demands. Students use notes to organize, interpret, and retain historical knowledge, while also adapting strategies to overcome challenges. These results suggest the need for instructional approaches that promote flexible, student-centered, and meaning-oriented note-taking practices in Social Studies. 1297

4. Conclusion

This study explored how students use note-taking to construct historical meaning in Social Studies classes in Tacloban City during the School Year 2025–2026. The findings revealed that students perceive note-taking as an essential learning strategy that supports retention, understanding, organization, and interpretation of historical lessons. The themes identified in the study showed that students use note-taking as a tool for retention and understanding, practice selective note-taking for focused learning, and depend on notes to build academic confidence and participation during classroom activities. Participants also demonstrated the use of visual and structural note-taking strategies such as timelines, diagrams, flashcards, highlighting, and color coding to simplify and organize complex historical information according to their personal learning preferences. Despite challenges in capturing accurate notes during fast-paced discussions, students developed adaptive coping strategies and relied on collaborative peer interaction to validate and enhance the accuracy of their notes.

The findings conclude that note-taking is not merely a passive act of recording information but an active and meaningful learning process that helps students construct historical understanding. The experiences of the participants reflect the principles of Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes that learners actively create meaning through personal experiences, interaction, and reflection. The findings also support Historical Thinking Theory, as students demonstrated efforts to connect events, organize historical sequences, interpret concepts, and validate information through discussion and collaboration. Furthermore, the study aligns with Cognitive Information Processing Theory, which explains that strategies such as organizing, simplifying, coding, and reviewing information help learners process and retain knowledge more effectively. Overall, the study highlights the importance of learner-centered and adaptive note-taking practices in promoting comprehension, engagement, critical thinking, and meaningful learning experiences in History instruction.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that Social Studies teachers adopt learner-centered and meaning-based note-taking approaches that encourage students to actively organize, interpret, and reflect on historical lessons rather than mechanically copying information. Strategies such as guided note-taking, timelines, concept mapping, visual note-taking, and reflective activities may help improve learners' comprehension, engagement, and retention of historical content. Students are also encouraged to continue developing personalized note-taking strategies, including the use of flashcards, color coding, diagrams, abbreviations, and peer collaboration, to support their individual learning preferences and study habits. Educational institutions and curriculum developers may further support these practices by providing workshops, academic support programs, and flexible learning activities that strengthen note-taking skills, critical thinking, collaboration, and historical understanding in alignment with learner-centered education. Furthermore, future researchers may conduct related studies involving larger participant groups, different academic settings, or digital note-taking practices to further examine the role of note-taking in academic performance, motivation, and meaningful learning.

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About the Author

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