

**EXPLORING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' EDUCATION PROGRAM (IPEd): INPUTS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT****Reyna Reyes-Hijastro**Teacher III, Bunga Integrated School  
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**ABSTRACT**

This study explored teachers and school heads' perceptions on the implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education Program (IPEd) among the selected schools in the Philippines. The study also explored the challenges encountered by teachers and school heads as they implement IPEd. Lastly, the study also created inputs for local policy development for strengthening the implementation of IPEd program in their locale. It utilized a phenomenological research design which was participated by teachers and school heads where their assigned schools offered IPEd. Results showed that IPEd offered culturally responsive instruction, adaptive and creative teaching and learning process and cultural preservation and protection. However, challenges encountered by teachers and school heads in the implementation of IPEd were: (1) scarcity of culturally relevant materials, (2) cultural misunderstanding and (3) inadequate assessment tools. Hence, inputs for policy development were proposed in order to strengthen the implementation of IPEd.

**Keywords:**

Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples Education, Program, culturally-relevant, material, challenges, preservation, protection

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**INTRODUCTION**

Philippines is an archipelagic country which is also known for its unique culture. The geographical location of the Philippines caused the existence of different culture covering the majority and minority groups. One of the most enduring cultural characteristics of the Philippines is the presence and existence of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples. The country is comprised by different indigenous cultural communities who serve as the country's bearer of precolonial culture. Indigenous communities are also known for its nature-based living where they have a strong regard and valuation to preserving the nature. In fact, indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines are significantly regarded as environment stewards because of their significant and consistent actions that tend to preserve and conserve the nature. While indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples are exposed to natural environmental conditions, they are also accorded with different rights. One of the bundle of rights that have been accorded to the Philippines' indigenous cultural communities is their right to own, possess and cultivate their ancestral domains/ancestral lands. It is clearly stated under the 1987 Philippine Constitution that indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples shall have rights to their ancestral lands where they can cultivate and make a living exclusively by harnessing the blessings and wonders found in their ancestral lands.

In addition, the government has given an extensive and proper attention to the rights of indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines by crafting and implementing an enabling law behind the legal intent of Republic Act No. 8371 or otherwise known as the "Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997." This landmark statute provides significant safeguard of the indigenous peoples' rights. The presence and existence of

indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines and their communal living with the majority groups have long been put into the core of debate and concerns because members of indigenous cultural communities are commonly subjected to discrimination and disrespect. In addition to this, members of indigenous cultural communities are also afraid to interact with other majority groups precisely because on the discrimination they have felt. But this does not perpetuate the condition when the government through the Department of Education (DepEd) has formulated the Indigenous Peoples Education Program or IPEd. Under the Department Order No. 22 s. 2016, is the department's response to the right of indigenous peoples (IP) to basic education that is responsive to their context, respects their identities and promotes the value of their indigenous knowledge.

The formulation and implementation of IPEd among regions and provinces which hold indigenous cultural communities become an alternative mechanism to ensure the continued preservation of their indigenous language, traditions, norms and practices. Contextually, the program makes the curriculum culturally responsive to the specific context of indigenous peoples' community, build the capacity of teachers, school heads and other concerned personnel at different levels of governance, support the development of culturally appropriate learning resources, strengthen the policy environment supportive of IPEd and address the learning needs of indigenous peoples learners who lack access to basic education services.

Consequently, in the study of Bastida et al. (2023) shows that IPEd teachers commonly struggled with enhancing learners' viewing skills and digital literacy, developing reading comprehension, improving writing skills, contextualizing lesson, following spiral progression language and teaching orthography and grammar. The implementation of the Philippine policies on the rights to education as reflected on the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 is more of tokenism, the enjoyment of the right to education of Indigenous Peoples is hindered mainly by poverty and English remains the widely used medium of instruction in most of Indigenous Peoples curricula (Eduardo and Gabriel, 2021). Pedagogy and methodology and indigenous knowledge systems and practices got an average rating while curriculum content and planning, language of instruction, teachers' training, materials and evaluation obtained below average scale (Villaplaza, 2021). In addition, Indigenous Peoples' Education fostered an effective educational interventions that resonate with the unique cultural context of indigenous communities (Ancheta & Casem, 2024).

In accordance to the provision of aforesaid department order, the researchers find it necessary to explore the implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education Program from the perspectives of teachers who are under this program. The researchers find this study a significant leap on the basis that there are less published studies that are concentrated in exploring henceforth, navigating the implementation of IPEd in the country's indigenous cultural context. This study specifically adhered to the Sustainable Development Goals 11.4 which most particularly focused on the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the study was to explore teachers and school heads' perceptions on the implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education Program (IPEd) among the selected schools in the Philippines. The study also explored the challenges encountered by teachers and school heads as they implement IPEd. Lastly, the study also created inputs for local policy development for strengthening the implementation of IPEd program in their locale.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized a phenomenological research design as the study explored teachers and school heads' perceptions in the implementation of Indigenous Peoples Education Program (IPEd). The participants were selected through random sampling technique. They were selected and involved in the study because they offered and implemented IPEd in their respective schools. Apparently, the researchers used developed guide questions for Focus-Group Discussion. The developed guide questions were arranged using deductive method. Before the actual data gathering, the researchers sought the expertise of professionals to validate the instrument. Experts consisted of Doctorate degree holders in Educational Management and Supervision, Public Administration and Indigenous Studies. In addition, experts expressed "Excellent" remark for each question. This signified that the questions are precise, concise, clear and parallel to the research objectives of the study. Meanwhile, the researcher conducted an actual Focus Group Discussion through Zoom Teleconferencing whereas the researchers provided specific schedules for the administration of the discussion based on the participants' time availability and convenience. The participants were given a total of 15 minutes to express their perceptions, views and insights relative to the implementation of IPEd. In addition, the participants were informed that their responses would be recorded. Thus, the researcher used thematic analysis through coding-decoding schemes.

Application of commonality of responses was used in order to extract participants' perceptions in the implementation of IPEd. Based from the participants actual responses, the researcher extracted meanings and formulated the major themes and subthemes .

Major Themes	Subthemes
<i>Culturally Responsive Instruction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of indigenous practices and norms</li> <li>• Revitalization of indigenous language incorporated in the curriculum</li> </ul>
<i>Adaptive and creative teaching and learning process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of creative approaches for teaching</li> <li>• Consistent integration of indigenous culture, knowledge and norms</li> </ul>
<i>Cultural Preservation and Protection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preservation of indigenous language</li> <li>• Intergenerational transmission of indigenous culture</li> </ul>

*Table 1. Major Themes and Subthemes*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education Program (IPEd).** The study revealed that major themes extracted were: (1) culturally responsive instruction with subthemes: integration of indigenous practices and norms, revitalization of indigenous language incorporated in the curriculum, (2) adaptive and creative teaching and learning process with subthemes development of creative approaches for teaching and consistent integration of indigenous culture, knowledge and norms and (3) cultural preservation and protection with subthemes: preservation of indigenous language and intergenerational transmission of indigenous culture. As to the culturally responsive instruction, implementation of IPEd emphasized the importance of recognizing and integrating the diverse cultural backgrounds of learners into the educational process. Under the integration of IP practices and norms, the program involved an immense and consistent integration and use of local histories, oral traditions and community involvement in the plan, design and implementation of lessons. On the other hand, the revitalization of indigenous language is incorporated in the curriculum showed that indigenous language as a core component of culture. By implementing IPEd, teachers, school heads and stakeholders could be able to help preserve and protect indigenous languages and promote their cultural heritage. Meanwhile, as to the adaptive and creative teaching and learning process employed by teachers under the IPEd program significantly put essential opportunities that enable their indigenous peoples' learners meet the diverse needs in a multicultural educational landscape. It was found that the use of creative and adaptive instructional designs enabled the realization of educational thrusts to which rights to education of indigenous peoples is immensely upheld. Under this major theme, it contained the development of creative approaches for teaching where teachers fostered creativity and innovation while preserving indigenous culture. Under similar theme, there was also a consistent integration of indigenous culture, knowledge and norm by which IPEd program through its teachers were able to integrate and inform local indigenous culture and customs. It was a holistic approach that reinforced the relevance and significant of indigenous knowledge and customs in the locality. Lastly, as to the cultural preservation and protection, the study revealed that teachers and school heads under the program significantly contributed to the preservation and protection of indigenous culture which may have been lost or negatively influenced by the dominant culture. Under this theme, preservation of indigenous language meant that language preservation was very critical for the protection of indigenous culture. Preservation of indigenous language under the program encompassed the use of linguistic resources and the involvement of elders or chieftain in the language instruction under the IPEd. Further, there was also intergenerational transmission of knowledge as extracted from the responses of teachers and school heads under the IPEd. Such transmission of indigenous culture was a paramount aspect which ensure that the same would last and live by the younger

generations. IPEd was a bridging program that helped harmonize education and culture in one founded cultural contexts. The results of the study supported the study of Cucio and Roldan. (2020) which discussed that education was an integral aspect to achieving sustainable development and that was also beneficial help the preservation of cultural life and indigeneity of Filipino learners. Similar study also discussed that inclusive education such as the IPEd program became an effective way of addressing the needs of learners belonging to the marginalized or isolated groups in the community and in society in general.

**Challenges Faced by Teachers and School Heads in the Implementation of IPEd.** The study showed that there were several encountered by teachers and school heads in the implementation of IPEd which included: (1) scarcity of culturally relevant materials, (2) cultural misunderstanding and (3) inadequate assessment tools. On the scarcity of culturally relevant material, teachers and school heads often confronted with the scarcity of relevant culturally-embedded instructional materials which should have helped their indigenous learners to better grasp and acquire learning process. This lack of resources may hinder the optimum instruction that may be provided to the indigenous communities. Second, there was also cultural misunderstanding because there were numbers of who handle IPEd were non-IP. This caused most often a cultural misinterpretation thereby, led to cultural misunderstanding. Lastly, as to inadequate assessment tools was also one of the major challenges encountered by teachers and school heads. Traditional assessment methods may not adequately capture the learning and understanding of indigenous knowledge and practices. The results supported the study of Oxtero (2022) which concluded that problems encountered by teachers in the implementation of IPEd was more on the absence of culture-based learning materials and teacher have no expertise in indigenizing the lesson. In addition, similar study showed that there was a need to address the various problems encountered by the implementers of IPEd program.

**Inputs for Policy Development.** Following were inputs for policy development towards a more effective and efficient implementation of IPEd: (1) instructional material design and development standards for indigenous cultural communities, (2) program work text, coffee table book creation and textbook creation to harmonize culture and education, (3) dialogue and consultative discussion between implementers and elders of indigenous cultural communities. These inputs may be used for the development and formulation of localized school policies concerning the implementation of IPEd.

### CONCLUSION

Preserving and protecting indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples culture was a matter of preserving and conserving the very identities of Filipinos embodying vivid culture. The implementation of IPEd offered culturally responsive instruction, adaptive and creative teaching and learning process and cultural preservation and protection. However, challenges encountered by teachers and school heads in the implementation of IPEd were: (1) scarcity of culturally relevant materials, (2) cultural misunderstanding and (3) inadequate assessment tools. The study proposed inputs for policy development which included: (1) instructional material design and development standards for indigenous cultural communities, (2) program work text, coffee table book creation and textbook creation to harmonize culture and education, (3) dialogue and consultative discussion between implementers and elders of indigenous cultural communities.

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