

# EMBRACING CULTURAL CONNECTION: AN IN-DEPTH APPRAISAL OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

This study critically assesses the implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Education Program (IPEd) in elementary schools located within West Butuan District III of the Butuan City Division. The evaluation centers on three pivotal dimensions: literacy rates, the availability of educational resources, and teacher training. Moreover, it delves into the perspectives of learners, teachers, and school administrators regarding the program's level of execution, in addition to identifying challenges faced by participants. A quantitative research design, employing statistical measures like frequency counts, means, and analysis of variance, was utilized to analyze the data collected via a comprehensive survey questionnaire. The findings reveal a moderate level of IPEd program implementation concerning literacy rates, the availability of learning materials, and the quality of teacher training. The assessment, as perceived by participants, indicates an overall moderate level of implementation, with no significant disparities observed between different participant groups. Challenges identified throughout this study encompass the necessity for a more profound understanding of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and culture, issues of inadequate learning materials, instances of discrimination, and an absence of instructional supervision. In response to these challenges, the study proposes an Action Plan on IPEd Program Implementation (APIPI), which underscores active involvement, collaboration, and partnerships with Indigenous Peoples' Elders or community representatives. The plan underscores the significance of continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of the program.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Peoples Education Program, Implementation Assessment, Elementary Schools, Literacy Rate, Learning Materials, Teacher Training, Challenges, Action Plan.

## INTRODUCTION

Indigenous Peoples encompass unique social and cultural groups deeply rooted in their ancestral lands. According to the United Nations, there are over 370 million Indigenous people residing in more than 90 countries. In the Philippines, Indigenous communities make up a significant portion of the population, ranging from 12.5% to 17.8%, highlighting the importance of their inclusion in the broader social fabric. Despite their relatively small global population representation, Indigenous communities account for a disproportionate 15% of the world's extremely poor, frequently ranking at the bottom of the human well-being index (Cosentino, World Economic Forum, 2017). A critical contributing factor to this disparity is the lack of equitable access to quality education.

The education systems too often fail to respect the diverse cultures and languages of Indigenous Peoples. This study focuses on three primary concerns related to the implementation of Indigenous education programs (IPEd) in primary schools: literacy rates, the limited availability of learning materials, and the readiness of teachers who have undergone specialized training.

Despite numerous international instruments proclaiming the universal right to education, Indigenous Peoples continue to face disparities in access to quality education, which is a critical issue on a global scale (Education for Indigenous People, 2019). A blog published by the World Bank on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples in 2019 underscored the disparities in access to and the quality of education experienced by Indigenous communities.

The limited access to and quality of education for Indigenous Peoples places them at risk, leading to issues such as illiteracy and unemployment. Studies have consistently shown that Indigenous Peoples, due to their lack of access to quality education, experience higher rates of poverty, landlessness, malnutrition, internal displacement, and, in many cases, higher rates of incarceration. The right to education is internationally recognized as a catalyst for societal and individual transformation (Mandela; United Nations, 2017). It is a right that should be accessible to all, irrespective of language, religion, race, socioeconomic status, or any other factors that might otherwise limit it. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sponsored the Convention against Discrimination in Education in December 1960 with the goal of eliminating and preventing discrimination in education.

The Philippines acknowledges the importance of preventing discrimination in education and recognizes the pressing need to provide quality education to Indigenous Peoples. The country was one of the first in Asia to pass a law recognizing the specific needs of its Indigenous population (IP). In 1997, the Indigenous People's Rights Act was enacted to ensure that IPs have access to basic health and education. However, there is still much work to be done in its effective implementation, even after more than two decades.

The Department of Education is committed to providing Indigenous Peoples with education that is culturally rooted and responsive. With DepEd Order 62, s. 2011, or the National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework, the department officially initiated the institutionalization of the IP Education Program in 2011. The policy adopts a rights-based approach and directs the implementation of education that is grounded in the social and cultural context of IP learners.

"IPEd program is DepEd's response to the right of Indigenous communities and learners to an education that is responsive to their context. It respects their identities, values, knowledge systems, competencies, and the aspects of their heritage," shared Maria Lourie Victor, Senior Technical Assistant and head of the IPsEO, during a DepEd Teaches episode. The department is serving 2.529 million IP learners in 42,176 public schools across the Philippines in the first decade of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program, according to the agency's Indigenous Peoples Education Office (IPsEO).

The success of the IPEd Program appears to be closely tied to factors such as adequate funding, contextualized learning materials, trained teachers who are knowledgeable about the IP's native language and culture, the use of local languages for teaching, the engagement of elders as teachers and mentors, and the utilization of ancestral domains as classrooms. Initiatives such as contextualized lesson plans and the establishment of IPEd Senior High Schools are also enhancing the program.

In the Butuan City Division, where the implementation of the IPEd Program is ongoing, there is a growing commitment to address the needs of Indigenous learners. This study aims to evaluate the IPEd program after a decade of implementation, specifically focusing on literacy rates, the availability of learning materials, and the readiness of teachers who have undergone IP-related training. The study assessed the level of implementation at each school and identified the challenges encountered, with the goal of proposing a localized intervention program to enhance the implementation of the IPEd program in Butuan City, particularly in the two elementary schools implementing IPEd in West III District, Kinamlutan Elementary School, and La Trinidad Integrated School.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Culture-Based Education (CBE) theory is the main theoretical frame of the study. It reflects and validates a community's culture by promoting its values, perception of the world, and language. Applying cultural values in education has a positive effect on several elements. It nurtures the sense of belonging, and identity, and strengthens community participation; it also promotes appreciation and understanding of history and cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is not only about old things but also about new objects, practices, and places that hold cultural value for recent generations. The crucial role of the community's culture carriers in the teaching and learning process is maintained. A sense of responsibility in valuing, developing, and protecting the environment is inculcated in children. Students develop competencies and cultural skills which are required for interacting with people around the world. The culture instills a sense of national pride and develops an individual's identity as a nation. Preserving the cultural memory will lead to a greater understanding of the nation's destiny in the global society and community of nations (The Significance of Culture-based Education in the Philippines, 2022).

In addition, CBE promotes the use of learning materials and rubrics for measuring performance that are inherently intertwined with the learners' cultural orientation and social experiences in their ancestral domains. It focuses on the issues of identity, motivation, Indigenous knowledge, and self-worth as important dimensions in designing a teaching-learning plan for the Indigenous minority (Eduardo and Gabriel, 2021).

Another theory that this study anchored on is the Theory of Human Capital. It was developed by Theodore Schultz (1961) who proposed the idea of educational capital (education) as part of the concept of human capital, which is primarily concerned with the investments made in education. He believed that human capital was like any other capital; it could be invested in education and training and increase the benefits that would bring improvement in quality and production level. Shultz (1961) explained that investments in

human capital for the advancement of knowledge are a source of wealth and income. According to him, the decisive factor is the improvement of population quality whilst indicating progress in knowledge. Schultz's theory as cited by Omoniyi, 2013 that education is indispensable to economic development and poverty eradication. No economic development is possible without education. A balanced education system promotes not only economic development, but productivity, and generates individual income per capita. Its influence is noticeable at the micro level of an individual family whose combination makes up the nation.

Furthermore, this study can also be anchored to the Republic Act 8371, known as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997. Section 2, Clause D, specifically explained that the State shall guarantee that members of the ICCs/IPs regardless of sex, shall equally enjoy the full measure of human rights and freedoms without distinction or discrimination.

Realizing the importance of giving a formal quality education to the IPs, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order 62 with the hopes of providing the IP learners a responsive education that helps promote and preserve their language, ancestral domain, and culture through contextualized learning materials. In response to the call for inclusivity, the department recognizes the Indigenous People learners as part of the human capital of a country thus, strengthening the IPEd Program.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Indigenous People**

Researchers describe the IPs as those living in far-flung, hard-to-reach areas. They are considered the most deprived, underprivileged people in terms of the delivery of government and non-government basic services like quality education. In the Philippines, among these community groups are those residing in the highlands of Mindanao. They are collectively called the Lumads. (Villaplaza, 2021). Over the decades, the next generation of IPs are confronted with exclusion, discrimination, and encroachments on their ancestral domains which have resulted in social and economic disadvantages. An obvious case in point is the lack of sympathetic and affirmative policy directives for the culture-based education of indigenous children and youth. (Ocampo, Rufino, and Gonzales, 2021).

Based on the statements above, IPs are considered one of the most deprived of quality education. A few of the basic concerns regarding the implementation are the literacy rate, availability of learning materials, and the readiness of teachers assigned to the IPEd Program through the training attended. In October 1997, then President Fidel V. Ramos signed into law Republic Act 8371 otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples' Act (IPRA). This law lays down the legal framework for addressing indigenous peoples' poverty. The IPRA law also serves as the basis for the establishment of indigenous schools. However, even with this recent legislation on indigenous peoples and indigenous rights, there remain very few indigenous schools in the country (Abejuela, 2017).

According to the United Nations, 5% of the world's population belongs to the Indigenous People group and they account 15% of the poorest. However, 40% of indigenous people are at risk of disappearing which might jeopardize the culture and knowledge systems where they belong. The United Nations also highlights the importance of revitalizing and preserving the Indigenous languages and showcasing their rich contribution to cultural and knowledge diversity. The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that quality education for Indigenous People means "education that is well resourced, culturally sensitive, respectful of heritage and that takes into account history, cultural security, and integrity, encompasses human rights, community, and individual development." This has unfortunately rarely been the case. Education policies and systems have often been used to 'assimilate' Indigenous Peoples into broader society at the risk of destroying their culture, languages, identity, and rights. Policies and curricula were rarely developed with Indigenous Peoples' participation or consent. (Consentino & Wodon, 2019).

Barriers to education for indigenous students include stigmatization of indigenous identity and low self-esteem of indigenous learners; discriminatory and racist attitudes in the school environment, including in textbooks and materials and among non-indigenous students and teachers; language barriers between indigenous learners and teachers; inadequate resources and low prioritization of education for indigenous peoples, reflected in poorly trained teachers as well as lack of textbooks and resources. Many regions of the world lack the disaggregated data that could reveal the accurate situation of discrimination and marginalization of indigenous peoples. However, where data exist, they show consistent and persistent disparities between the indigenous and the non-indigenous populations in terms of educational access, retention, and achievement, in all regions of the world (Donlon, 2016).

### **Indigenous People Education Implementation**

The Department of Education (DepEd), pursuant to Philippine Republic Act No. 10533 known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, has given emphasis to indigenous education. Supporting this, DepEd issued Order No. 62, series 2011 which presents the adoption of the National Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Policy Framework for the regions that implement the IPEd Program. The program is a long-awaited dream of the IPs, the provision of a culture-sensitive curriculum that responds to their well-being. However, despite the efforts exerted to intensify the IPEd implementation in the DepEd schools for the realization of IP aspirations, several problems and challenges are still experienced by administrators, teachers, parents, and even students. While there are laws and mandates from the DepEd in the adoption of IP education in the curriculum, it is relevant to evaluate the implementation of the IPEd in the present educational system.

In addition, the framework emphasizes the desire of IP communities to provide educational opportunities that respond to their contexts, respect their identities, and promote the value of their traditional knowledge, skills, and other cultural heritage aspects (Education Department, 2011b). To address this concern, the DepEd promised, in its policy statements, "through the integration of indigenous knowledge systems and

practices (IKSPs), to adopt an adequate and culturally suitable learning resources and environment for IP learners, and strengthen the hiring, deployment, and continuous development of teachers and learning facilitators in the implementation of its IP Education Program” (Mercado, 2022).

### **Literacy Rate of IPEd Implementing Schools**

Since the COVID-19 global outbreak early this year, a billion children and youth have been affected by school closures across the world. At the front of further inequality in education amid the crisis are the vulnerable groups including the IP learners. Thus, aside from finding a solution to how education can be reshaped, there is a further need to look at how it could be made inclusive for the many marginalized IP learners. Cahapay (2021) reported that IP learners have a low literacy rate due to restricted access to education.

Moreover, in a discussion that is published by Fajardo et. al (2019), the programs focus on teaching indigenous knowledge, models, methods, and content within formal and non-formal educational systems, with the goal of educating the ethnic group about basic educational knowledge, skills, and values without losing their sense of cultural identity. Badjao learners manifest commonalities with other elementary learners but display weakness in diligence and respect for elders necessitating better integration of these values in the IPEd program.

### **Availability of Learning Materials in IPEd**

In a blog that was published in World Bank Blogs on Education for Global Development, various points were made to improve the education outcome for Indigenous People. First, educational materials should have socio-cultural relevance. Second, language nests should be present. Third, is the inclusive curriculum, and lastly, bilingual education. However, these approaches can only work with consultation and participation of Indigenous Peoples themselves.

Some of the continuing initiatives for IP learners to experience culture-responsive education are the contextualization of lesson plans, use of the local language for teaching, having elders as teachers and mentors, using the ancestral domain as a classroom, establishing IPEd Senior High School, hiring more teachers who know the knowledge and the culture, and delivering more facilities. To sustain IPEd in schools in School Year 2021-2022, the Department aims to have additional Program Support Funds (PSF) to ensure learning continuity through continued contextualization of learning resources and COVID-related materials, orientation of new teachers and school heads assigned to schools in IP communities, and enhancement learning delivery modalities. (DepEd Press Release, 2021).

Furthermore, DepEd plans to support long-term community development through education initiatives that can promote responsive and pandemic-relevant indigenous community knowledge, like indigenous farming and health systems, through rural farm schools, senior high school offerings, and similar initiatives. The IPEd Program also seeks to align with the call of UNESCO that all curricula have education for sustainable development as its core by 2025. (DepEd Press Release, 2021).

## METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive-correlational approach, which combines descriptive research for systematically describing the research problem's facets and correlational research to measure the relationship between different variables. The primary objective is to investigate the relationship between literacy rates and the implementation of the Indigenous People Education (IPEd) program in the Butuan City Division. The study was conducted in two public elementary schools within the West III District of Butuan City, chosen for their active involvement in the IPEd Program. Butuan City, located in the northeastern part of the Agusan Valley in Mindanao, was the chosen locale, given its relevance to the research context. The study's participants included Indigenous Peoples (IP) learners, teachers, and school heads from these schools, totaling 127 IP learners from grade 1 to grade 6, according to the recent consolidated report on IP learner enrollment. Sampling techniques included convenience sampling for IP learners, considering accessibility, and purposive sampling for teachers and school heads, encompassing all relevant individuals. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire adapted from the Department of Education's (DepEd) monitoring tool for the IPEd Program, and this instrument was validated and demonstrated high reliability. The data collection process consisted of three stages, including securing permissions, distributing questionnaires, and analyzing documents, with all data treated confidentially. Various statistical methods, such as Average Weighted Mean, Frequency Counts, Percentage, Weighted Mean, and Standard Deviation, were employed to interpret the data effectively. Furthermore, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine any significant differences in the perception of IPEd Program implementation among participants. This comprehensive research design and methodology were meticulously structured to facilitate a comprehensive investigation into the implementation and effectiveness of the IPEd Program in Butuan City.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Status of the Implementation of IPEd Program

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the status of the implementation of the IPEd program in terms of learners' literacy rate, as assessed using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Assessment Tool. The literacy rates of the indigenous learners were classified into four categories: Independent, Instructional, Frustrated, and Non-Reader.

**Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Status of the Implementation of IPEd Program in Terms of Learners' Literacy Rate**

Literacy Rate	Percentage
Independent	31.25
Instructional	35.42
Frustrated	29.12
Non – Reader	4.21

The percentage distribution shows that 31.25% of the learners were categorized as independent readers, which means that they can read fluently and comprehend well without the need for guidance or support. 35.42% of the learners were categorized as Instructional readers, which means that they can read and comprehend with some guidance or support. 29.12% of the learners were categorized as frustrated readers, which means that they can read with difficulty and comprehend minimally even with guidance or support. Finally, 4.21% of the learners were categorized as Non-Readers, which means that they cannot read at all.

These findings have important implications for the implementation of the IPEd program. The high percentage of learners categorized as Instructional and Frustrated readers indicates that there is a need for more support and guidance in reading instruction. This can be addressed by providing more teacher training and resources, such as appropriate reading materials and strategies, that are responsive to the context and needs of indigenous learners. Additionally, the low percentage of learners categorized as independent readers suggests that there may be a need for more targeted interventions to improve reading fluency and comprehension.

It is worth noting that the Phil-IRI Assessment Tool has been used in various studies to assess the reading proficiency of learners, including indigenous learners, in the Philippines (e.g., De Jesus, 2018; Llanto & Fajardo, 2018; Tan, 2019). These studies have highlighted the importance of assessing learners' reading proficiency to inform instructional decisions and improve reading outcomes.

Table 2 shows the status of the implementation of the Indigenous People's Education (IPEd) Program in terms of teacher training. The mean score for each item ranges from 2.46 to 3.57, indicating a "fair" rating overall. Positive developments include the use of responsive and experiential teaching methods and materials, involvement of indigenous communities, and some training in bilingual teaching methods. However, there is room for improvement in continuous assessment and training.

**Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Status of the Implementation of IPEd Program in Terms of Teacher Training**

Teacher's Training	Mean	Description
<i>The teachers...</i>		
1. Are familiar with indigenous culture as well as the national culture.	2.96	Fair
2. Are familiar with the indigenous language as well as the national language.	3.22	Fair
3. Are respectful to indigenous concepts and values regarding education.	2.46	Satisfactory
4. Are using and creating responsive and experiential teaching methods in cooperation and consultation with the indigenous community.	3.02	Fair
5. Are using and creating responsive and experiential teaching materials in cooperation and consultation with the indigenous zcommunity?	3.11	Fair
6. Are open to continuous assessment of their work.	2.89	Fair
7. Are trained in teacher-training programs organized in cooperation with indigenous people' organizations and communities.	3.04	Fair
8. Are trained in teacher-training facilities organized in cooperation with indigenous peoples' organizations and communities.	3.22	Fair



9. Are open to continuous assessment of their teaching practices.	2.85	Fair
10. Are trained in bilingual teaching methods.	3.57	Fair
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>Fair</b>

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 Needs Improvement; 3.50 – 4.50 Poor; 2.50 – 3.49 Fair; 1.50 – 2.49 Satisfactory; 1.00 – 1.49 Very Satisfactory

A study by Mendoza, et al. (2019) evaluated the implementation of the program in terms of teachers' training, finding that while there have been some positive developments, there is still room for improvement in terms of continuous assessment and training. The study suggests that the involvement of indigenous communities in the development of training programs and materials, as well as the use of bilingual teaching methods, could lead to further improvements in the implementation of the IPEd Program.

Another study by Buendia, et al. (2018) looked at the impact of the IPEd Program on the literacy rates of indigenous learners. The study found that the program has had a positive impact on learners' literacy rates, particularly those who were previously classified as frustrated or non-readers. The study highlights the importance of culturally responsive education in improving the academic outcomes of indigenous learners.

However, despite the positive impact of the IPEd Program, indigenous learners still face several challenges in accessing education. A study by Ilagan and Cruz (2021) found that indigenous learners face discrimination and marginalization in the education system, including lack of access to culturally responsive education, inadequate infrastructure and resources, and limited opportunities for higher education. The study emphasizes the need for policies and programs that address these systemic issues and promote the right to education for indigenous communities.

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the status of the implementation of the Indigenous People's Education (IPEd) Program in terms of the availability of teaching materials. The overall mean of 3.20 indicates a fair status in this aspect. The IPEd Program emphasizes the use of innovative and culturally adequate teaching materials based on indigenous and Western educational concepts that promote an interactive learning-teaching process and provide an accurate picture and fair information on indigenous cultures and ways of life. The materials should be based on respect for cultural values, specific relationships with nature, and the participation and consent of indigenous communities, teachers, and learners. The program also calls for the development of visual, sensual, and practical materials for non-verbal communication and materials in indigenous languages that incorporate indigenous knowledge.

**Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Status of the Implementation of the IPEd Program in Terms of the Availability of Teaching Materials**

Availability of Teaching Materials	Mean	Description
<i>The school makes use of and produces innovative and culturally adequate teaching material based on indigenous and Western educational concepts, including:</i>	3.20	Fair
1. Material based on respect for the cultural values and specific relationship with nature and indigenous communities.	3.07	Fair
2. Visual, sensual, and practical materials for non-verbal communication.	3.07	Fair
3. Material in indigenous languages and incorporating indigenous knowledge produces with the participation and consent of indigenous communities, teachers and learners.	3.15	Fair
4. Material that promotes an interactive learning-teaching process.	3.15	Fair
5. Material that provides an accurate picture and fair information on indigenous cultures and ways of life.	3.13	Fair
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>Fair</b>

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 Needs Improvement; 3.50 – 4.50 Poor; 2.50 – 3.49 Fair; 1.50 – 2.49 Satisfactory; 1.00 – 1.49 Very Satisfactory

The availability of culturally appropriate teaching materials is crucial in the IPEd Program, as it allows for a more effective and relevant learning experience for indigenous learners. Research has shown that the use of culturally responsive teaching materials can enhance students' academic performance, self-esteem, and cultural identity (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Moreover, the production and use of such materials can promote the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge and culture (Henderson & Hawthorne, 2019). However, it is important to note that the development of culturally appropriate teaching materials requires a collaborative effort among indigenous communities, educators, and curriculum developers (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

The fair status of the availability of teaching materials in the IPEd Program, as indicated in Table 3, highlights the need for continuous efforts in the development and use of culturally responsive and relevant teaching materials that promote the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge and culture. Collaboration among stakeholders, including indigenous communities, educators, and curriculum developers, is essential in ensuring that the materials are based on respect for cultural values and are tailored to meet the needs and context of indigenous learners.

### **The Level of Implementation of the IPEd Program as Assessed by Learners, Teachers, and School Heads**

Table 4 presents the mean distribution of the level of implementation of the IPEd Program as assessed by the learners. The mean score of the teaching-learning process experience is 2.76, which is categorized as fair. It indicates that there are still areas for improvement in terms of the learners' experience in the IPEd program. The lowest mean score is for item 6, which refers to the happiness that learners feel when they have

lessons about their IP culture. The higher mean score is for item 1, which pertains to the understandability of the lessons. These results suggest that while the lessons are generally understandable, there is still room for improvement in making the learners more engaged and excited about learning their IP culture.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on indigenous education, which highlights the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge and culture in the curriculum to enhance the learners' learning experience and engagement (Battiste, 2018; Hampton & Richardson, 2020).

**Table 4: Mean Distribution of the Level of Implementation of the IPEd Program as Assessed by Learners**

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. The lessons are understandable.	3.02	Fair
2. We have lessons about our IP Culture.	2.96	Fair
3. The teachers use our own native language in teaching.	2.92	Fair
4. The teachers teach in a manner that is easy to understand.	2.75	Fair
5. I understand the lesson more when an IP Elder teaches us.	2.75	Fair
6. It makes me happy every time we have a lesson about our IP Culture.	2.50	Fair
7. Learning under IPEd Program is very easy.	2.69	Fair
8. The teacher is very familiar with our IP Culture.	2.44	Satisfactory
9. The teachers used relatable experiences and examples in teaching.	2.94	Fair
10. The teacher teaches in a manner that respects my IP Culture.	2.62	Fair
<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>Fair</b>

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 Needs Improvement; 3.50 – 4.50 Poor; 2.50 – 3.49 Fair; 1.50 – 2.49 Satisfactory; 1.00 – 1.49 Very Satisfactory

Additionally, the study also supports the idea that the use of native languages in teaching can improve learners' academic performance and cultural identity (Lloyd, 2018; Manthey & McCarty, 2018). These findings underscore the importance of promoting culturally responsive teaching practices that honor and incorporate the learners' cultural heritage.

The results of Table 7 indicate that the overall level of implementation of the IPEd program as assessed by teachers is fair (mean = 2.76). Although most items received fair ratings, some items like "The teacher is very familiar with our IP culture" (item 18) and "The teacher teaches in a manner that respects my IP culture" (item 20) received lower ratings, indicating the need for improvement in these areas. This finding is consistent with the literature, which highlights the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge and practices into the education system and the need for teachers to be knowledgeable about indigenous cultures (Battiste, 2018; Hampton et al., 2019).

**Table 5: Mean Distribution of the Level of Implementation of the IPEd Program as Assessed by Teachers**

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. The lessons are understandable.	3.02	Fair
2. We have lessons about our IP Culture.	2.96	Fair
3. The teachers use our own native language in teaching.	2.92	Fair
4. The teachers teach in a manner that is easy to understand.	2.75	Fair
5. I understand the lesson more when an IP Elder teaches us.	2.75	Fair
6. It makes me happy every time we have a lesson about our IP Culture.	2.50	Fair
7. Learning under IPEd Program is very easy.	2.69	Fair
8. The teacher is very familiar with our IP Culture.	2.44	Satisfactory
9. The teachers used relatable experiences and examples in teaching.	2.94	Fair
10. The teacher teaches in a manner that respects my IP Culture.	2.62	Fair
<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>Fair</b>

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 Needs Improvement; 3.50 – 4.50 Poor; 2.50 – 3.49 Fair; 1.50 – 2.49 Satisfactory; 1.00 – 1.49 Very Satisfactory

The fair ratings on items related to the teaching-learning process experience from the perspective of teachers (Table 5) suggest that there is still room for improvement in the implementation of the IPEd program. These findings suggest that teachers may need more training on how to incorporate indigenous knowledge and practices into the curriculum in a way that is culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of Indigenous learners. Furthermore, teachers may need to be provided with more resources to support the development of appropriate teaching materials and instructional approaches (Hampton et al., 2019).

The results from Table 6 indicate that school heads have a fair level of implementation of the IPEd Program. The mean score of 3.14 indicates that while there is still room for improvement, there are some positive aspects of the implementation of the program.

**Table 6: Mean Distribution of the level of implementation of the IPEd Program as assessed by school heads**

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. As a School Head, I am familiar with the various DepEd Memos/Orders in relation to the IPEd Program.	3.00	Fair
2. The DepEd Memo/Order regarding the IPEd Program is very helpful in the implementation.	2.50	Fair
3. As a School Head, I conduct instructional supervision on IP Program implementation.	3.50	Fair
4. The PSDS conducts monitoring to IPEd Program consistently.	3.50	Fair
5. our school conducts LAC Sessions as to give instructional supervision regarding the implementation of IPEd Program.	3.00	Fair
6. during our LAC Sessions, our school invites IP Elders/Representative to discuss topics that is helpful for the implementation of IPEd Program.	3.50	Fair

7.	The IP Elders/Representative are very supportive in the implementation of IPEd Program.	3.00	Fair
8.	The school formed a Consultative and Advisory Body (CAB) for IPEd Program Implementation.	4.00	Fair
9.	As a School Head, I include IPEd Program in our SIP.	2.50	Fair
10.	As a School Head, we tap the help of the IP Elders/Representative in recognizing the IP Learners of the community.	3.00	Fair
11.	Our school applies the contextualization of the curriculum.	3.00	Fair
<b>Mean</b>		<b>3.14</b>	<b>Fair</b>

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 Needs Improvement; 3.50 – 4.50 Poor; 2.50 – 3.49 Fair; 1.50 – 2.49 Satisfactory; 1.00 – 1.49 Very Satisfactory

School heads were found to be familiar with the various DepEd Memos/Orders in relation to the IPEd Program (mean score of 3.00) and were able to conduct instructional supervision on IPEd Program implementation (mean score of 3.50). The formation of a Consultative and Advisory Body (CAB) for IPEd Program Implementation also suggests that the school is taking steps to ensure that the program is being implemented effectively (mean score of 4.00).

However, there were areas in which the implementation could be improved. For instance, school heads had a mean score of 2.50 in terms of including the IPEd Program in the school's SIP, which suggests that the program may not be given as much attention as other aspects of the school's curriculum. Additionally, the mean score of 2.50 regarding the helpfulness of DepEd Memo/Order regarding the IPEd Program indicates that there may be a need for better guidelines to ensure successful implementation.

The results indicate that while the IPEd Program is being implemented in schools, there is still room for improvement in certain areas. School heads and administrators may benefit from additional training and resources to ensure effective implementation of the program.

### Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the IPEd Program

Table 7 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of challenges encountered by learners in the implementation of the IPEd program. The top two challenges are related to understanding and relating to the lesson on IP culture, both of which were reported by 50% of the learners. This suggests that there may be a need to improve the pedagogy used in teaching IP education to make it more accessible and relevant to learners. Other challenges include difficulty in understanding the lesson materials, discrimination, and unfair treatment based on ethnicity, and misalignment or disrespect towards IP culture in some lessons.

**Table 7: Frequency and percentage distribution of the challenges encountered by the learners in the implementation of the IPEd Program**

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
1. I cannot understand the lesson about IP Culture.	24	50.00
2. I cannot relate to the examples given by the teacher during our discussion.	24	50.00
3. I cannot understand the book/lesson materials that are given to me.	21	43.75
4. I sometimes get discriminated against because of my ethnicity.	23	47.92
5. I am treated unfairly because of my ethnicity.	20	41.67
6. Sometimes, our lesson is not aligned with our IP Culture.	11	22.92
7. Sometimes, our lesson disrespects my IP Culture.	14	29.17

These challenges are consistent with previous studies on the implementation of IP education in the Philippines, which have identified various issues related to curriculum, pedagogy, teacher training, and cultural sensitivity. For example, a study by Fajardo et al. (2018) noted that some teachers have limited knowledge and skills in teaching IP education, which can affect the quality of instruction and engagement of learners.

The teachers involved in the IPEd Program also faced several challenges, as shown in Table 10. The most common difficulty encountered was the lack of knowledge on IP culture (60.87%), followed by the lack of training and seminars for teachers assigned in IP-implementing schools (63.04%). These findings are consistent with the literature, which highlights the importance of providing appropriate training and professional development opportunities for teachers to effectively implement IP education programs (Amante, 2018)

**Table 8: Frequency and percentage distribution of the challenges encountered by the teachers in the implementation of the IPEd Program**

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
1. Lack of knowledge of IP Culture.	28	60.87
2. Not enough training/seminars for teachers assigned in IP-implementing schools.	29	63.04
3. Difficulty in understanding the language used by IP Learners.	34	73.91
4. Books/Learning Materials are limited.	32	69.57
5. No contextualized books/learning materials.	34	73.91
6. Not enough instructional supervision.	21	45.65
7. Poor learning outcomes.	10	21.74
8. Disengaged teachers	9	19.57

Another significant challenge encountered by the teachers was difficulty in understanding the language used by IP learners (73.91%). This finding highlights the importance of considering language barriers when implementing IP education programs and ensuring that teaching materials and approaches are tailored to the linguistic needs of the learners (Amante, 2018).

The lack of contextualized books and learning materials (73.91%) and limited availability of books and learning materials (69.57%) were also major challenges encountered by the teachers. This highlights the need for policymakers and education providers to ensure that appropriate learning resources are available and accessible to both teachers and learners in IP communities (Mirasol, et al, 2021).

Additionally, the low frequency of instructional supervision (45.65%) and poor learning outcomes (21.74%) are also important concerns that need to be addressed. The limited instructional supervision highlights the importance of providing teachers with appropriate support and feedback, while the poor learning outcomes may indicate the need for additional interventions to improve the quality of education in IP communities (Amante, 2018).

These findings emphasize the need for continued efforts to improve the implementation of IP education programs, with particular attention to addressing the challenges faced by both learners and teachers. This may require a combination of policy changes, teacher training and support, and investments in appropriate learning resources and infrastructure to ensure that IP learners have access to high-quality education.

Based on Table 11, the challenges encountered by school heads in the implementation of the IPEd program include a lack of knowledge of IP culture, insufficient training and seminars, limited learning materials, poor learning outcomes, disengaged teachers, unsupportive IP elders/representatives, and lack of infrastructure for IP learning.

The lack of knowledge on IP culture among school heads is a concern, as they play a crucial role in implementing the program and ensuring that it aligns with the IP culture. This finding is consistent with the importance of school leaders' cultural competence in supporting Indigenous education programs, as highlighted in the literature (e.g., Dobia, 2015).

**Table 9: Frequency and Distribution of the Challenges Encountered by the School heads in the Implementation of the IPEd Program**

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
1. Lack of knowledge of IP Culture.	2	100.00
2. Not enough training/seminars for school heads assigned in IP implementing schools.	2	100.00
3. Books/Learning Materials are limited.	2	100.00
4. No contextualized books/learning materials.	1	50.00
5. Not enough instructional supervision.	1	50.00
6. Poor learning outcomes.	2	100.00
7. Disengaged teachers.	1	50.00
8. Unsupportive IP Elders/Representative.	1	50.00
9. Lack of Infrastructure for IP Learning.	1	50.00

The insufficient training and seminars for school heads assigned to IP-implementing schools is also a significant challenge, as it can affect their ability to effectively implement the program. This highlights the need for professional development opportunities for

school heads and staff in IP education (Amante & Galindez, 2019). The limited learning materials and lack of contextualized books/learning materials are also concerns, as they can impact the quality of teaching and learning. This highlights the need for the development of culturally relevant and contextually appropriate learning materials (Cabilogan & Andrada, 2019). Poor learning outcomes and disengaged teachers are also critical issues that need to be addressed to ensure the success of the IPEd program. The importance of teacher engagement and involvement in Indigenous education has been highlighted in the literature (e.g., Harrison & Sellwood, 2016).

Furthermore, the lack of support from IP elders/representatives and infrastructure for IP learning are also significant challenges that need to be addressed. The involvement of the local community and stakeholders in the development and implementation of Indigenous education programs has been emphasized in the literature (e.g., Harrison & Sellwood, 2016).

### The Significant difference in the Level of Implementation of the IPEd Program

Table 10 presents the results of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the level of implementation of the IPEd Program. The table shows the sum of squares, degrees of freedom, mean square, F-statistic, and significance level between groups and within groups. The between-groups factor is the different levels of implementation of the IPEd Program, while the within-groups factor is the individual responses of the teachers and school heads.

**Table 10: One-Way Analysis of Variance on the level of the implementation of the IPEd Program**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.307	2	1.153	2.215	.115
Within Groups	48.436	93	.521		
Total	50.743	95			

The F-statistic for between groups is 2.215, which is not significant at the 0.05 level ( $p = 0.115$ ). This suggests that there is no significant difference in the level of implementation of the IPEd Program between the different groups. The within-group mean square is 0.521, indicating that the variance within the groups is much larger than the variance between the groups.

This result implies that while there may be some variation in the level of implementation of the IPEd Program among the teachers and school heads, it is not significant enough to indicate that one group is implementing the program significantly better or worse than the other. The findings are consistent with a study conducted by Alik et al. (2019), which also found that there was no significant difference in the level of implementation of IPEd Program among different groups of stakeholders.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study's findings, several key conclusions can be drawn. First and foremost, the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) program, after over a decade of



implementation, remains active and shows signs of resilience, though opportunities for improvement exist. The literacy rates of learners, particularly the high percentage classified as Instructional and Frustrated readers, underscore the necessity for enhanced support and guidance in reading instruction.

The fair status of teaching material availability within the IPEd program highlights the ongoing need for the development of culturally responsive and relevant educational resources that facilitate the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge and culture. Continuous teacher seminars and training are imperative to address the limited readiness of educators in effectively handling classes with Indigenous Peoples (IP) learners, ultimately enhancing the teaching-learning experience.

The overall assessment of the program's implementation by learners, teachers, and school heads yields a fair result, suggesting a mix of positive aspects and areas for further improvement. Notably, a common challenge emerges, centered on the need for a better understanding of IP culture, particularly concerning teachers and schools. While this can be addressed through initiatives like School Learning Action Cells (SLAC) and training, it underscores that learners may feel less understood.

Furthermore, the study indicates that any variations in the level of IPEd Program implementation among teachers and school heads are not significant enough to imply that one group is markedly more or less effective in implementing the program. These findings underscore the program's continued importance and its potential for refinement in promoting inclusive and culturally sensitive education for Indigenous Peoples.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following are recommended and forwarded for consideration:

1. Continuous implementation of the IPEd Program would be a good action by the program administrators and implementers to reach more IP Learners.
2. There must be regular monitoring of the implementation of the IPEd Program and giving of technical assistance to the concerned individuals.
3. It is desirable for program administrators and implementers to focus on seminars/trainings that are more on contextualizing and indigenizing lesson plans and learning materials and even give demonstration teachings.
4. There must be regular monitoring of the literacy rate specifically for IP Learners.
5. It is desirable that National Indigenous Peoples Day be celebrated in school among other regular celebrations. This way the IP learners will feel more accepted and understood. Additionally, this leads to IP Culture awareness.
6. It will be a good practice for schools to invest in cultivating strong collaboration and partnership with the IP Elders/Representatives of the community.

7. The challenges encountered in the implementation of the IPEd Program were a lack of knowledge of IP culture, no training/seminars, limited books/learning materials, not enough instructional supervision, poor learning outcomes, disengaged teachers, unsupportive IP Elders/Representative, and lack of IP Infrastructure. Thus, a consultative meeting among program administrators and implementers together with IP Elders/Representatives is suggested.
8. The proposed localized intervention program named Action Plan on IPEd Program Implementation (APIPI), may be evaluated and carried out by the DepEd – Butuan City Division in order to assess its efficacy in addressing the challenges in the implementation of the IPEd Program.
9. Further research is recommended to be carried out in another district of Butuan City Division to see whether there are similarities or differences in the status of implementation, level of implementation and challenges met in the implementation of the IPEd Program. In addition, one could also explore other factors such as assessing IPEd Program's relationship or efficacy in academic performance and unemployment among the IP community, etc. It is also recommended to conduct a follow-up study to assess the result of the study and conduct further studies.

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