

INSIGHTS, CHALLENGES AND ASPIRATIONS OF NATIVE TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the insights, challenges, and aspirations of native teachers. Drawing on qualitative phenomenological research methods, data were gathered through interviews with teachers to explore their aspirations, the challenges they face, and their insights into the education Indigenous communities. Findings reveal that The teachers shared insights are described in themes such as opportunities, respect to indigenous culture and community, and cultural preservation. The participants of the study face challenge in facilitating learning; and in dealing with the community such as lack of teaching learning resources; dealing with people in the community; and negative attitude towards school and education. The teachers' aspirations towards learning, are articulated in themes such as better education, social and cultural cohesion, and successful life.

Keywords: *Insights, Challenges, Aspirations of Indigenous People, Mindanao, Philippines, Qualitative Study*

INTRODUCTION

Native people are acknowledged in different communities in the Philippines. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, also known as Republic Act 8371, was approved by the Philippine government in 1997 and acknowledges and defends the rights of indigenous groups. However, there are still issues concerning their participation and integration in the mainstream. The Human Rights Education in Asian Schools report raises concern over the unfair labeling of indigenous students as slow learners due to their slower acquisition of literacy skills. This highlights discrimination in education systems against certain groups, such as indigenous populations, based on cultural differences.

Teaching that indigenous traditions are inferior leads students to disrespect their elders, contributing to the misuse of cultural practices and the decline of indigenous knowledge systems. This breakdown in intergenerational relationships hinders the transmission of cultural wisdom to future generations. The report emphasizes the need to preserve and respect indigenous traditions in education to repair these ties and ensure the continuation of valuable cultural heritage (Human Rights Education in Asian Schools, n.d).

This study explored the aspirations of native teachers. It particularly reveal their hopes and dreams in the community, how they would like to be represented in the community; and how they would be treated.

FRAMEWORK

This research adhered to the theoretical orientations of the qualitative phenomenology research method. Phenomenological research is a qualitative approach focused on understanding the universal essence of human phenomena through the lived experiences of individuals. It suspends preconceived assumptions, allowing researchers to explore without bias. By uncovering underlying meanings and essences, phenomenological research provides valuable insights into subjective experiences, emphasizing openness and sensitivity in the research process. This approach is a qualitative methodology that aims to capture the lived experiences of individuals and describe the meanings of such experiences from an insider perspective (Husserl, 2013).

Researchers conducting such studies intentionally suspend their biases and preconceived notions about the phenomenon, a process known as bracketing. This enables them to approach the study with a fresh perspective, free from personal judgments. By doing so, researchers can perceive the pure essence of the experience as described by participants, leading to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Overall, a transcendental phenomenological study seeks to uncover the essence of a phenomenon by examining its textural and structural aspects while suspending personal biases (Creswell, 2013).

METHOD

Research Design

The study utilized the descriptive phenomenology qualitative research as this aims to describe the aspirations of the native teachers. The goal of qualitative descriptive studies is a comprehensive summarization, in everyday terms, of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals (Lambert, 2012).

Participants

The native teachers in the Municipality of Magpet were the participants of this study which were selected using the purposive sampling technique.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis was used to describe the aspirations of the IP teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Insights of Teachers

The teachers shared insights which are described in themes such as opportunities, support to indigenous culture and community, and cultural preservation and respect.

Opportunities. The participants of the study having shared that they are immersed in the community of native people as they are teaching in the school, have shared their insights on the need to offer additional opportunities. These opportunities include the opportunity for education instead of being neglected. As pointed out by one of the participants:

Opportunity for teachers and young learners should not be neglected and should be given worth. IDI-1

On a similar note, the teachers have high regard on the education of the children as they have noticed that these children are eager to learn and savor every opportunity given to them but with the situation that they have, there are those who choose to stop from studying.

I don't blame them all but some of them are poor especially when it comes to education. at a young age some stops studying and works for the family. Sometimes others, even at young age, are already married. IDI-7

The school administration, teachers, and the community should ensure that learners' right to quality education is protected and supported. IDI-11

They are cheerful. they are content with what they have. even though life is difficult, they continue to fight fairly. In the education of their young people, their perspective is positive. IDI-11

Aside from education, they also need opportunities for them to have better life.

Develop services that helps them improve their living and way of life. IDI-13

Giving them enough help to improve their lifestyle. Meet the traditions they have. Spread education among them without leaving their culture. IDI-14

To be educated so they will not be easily driven by words of other people. IDI-4

It is also interesting to note that they want to learn more as observed by the teacher-participants.

The people in my community are thirsty of the knowledge. They are quick to get carried away by words and believe anything. They need someone who knows who can teach them what is right. IDI-3

In a more elaborate manner, participant 2 also explained how and why the opportunities should be visible.

The community should deal in a manner that respects our rights, culture, and well-being. The community should involve us in development initiatives, promote relevant education, and support the provision of support services. These actions can help create a more inclusive and supportive environment for us and our community. IDI-2

Based on the results, teachers have generally shared an insight regarding the importance of offering them with opportunities for education and for better life ahead. They see education as an important aspect of life. They also believed that they should be educated in order for them to gain more learning about their life, and culture. For Indigenous adults with low levels of literacy there are limitations to modelling the benefits of literacy to children in the home and engaging with children's schooling and this can have intergenerational impact (Ratcliffe & Boughton 2019).

Respect. The teachers also expressed their insights on the need to support the indigenous culture and community by showing them respect. For the teachers, the culture should always be taken into consideration.

The community can support us by recognizing and respecting our diverse cultures, histories, and traditions. IDI-9

Respect is also seen by participants to be very relevant since they may have different culture, their practices may be also different. They have the community which identified their group, and so like all other cultures and ethnicity, respect should be accorded to them.

The school administration, teachers, and the community should ensure that learners' right to quality education is protected and supported. This includes providing a culturally sensitive and respectful learning environment that takes into account their heritage, history, and language. IDI-11

For the participants, they demand building public awareness and educate the general population about their rights and needs. This can help create a more supportive environment in their community.

Many people may not be fully aware of the historical injustices, cultural richness, and contemporary challenges faced by Indigenous communities. By providing education and raising awareness, misconceptions and stereotypes can be challenged, leading to a better understanding of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and struggles. IDI-13

For the benefit of the learners and the community, there is a need also to be culturally sensitive as the teachers deal with them.

Learners should be treated with respect and sensitivity, and education should be relevant to our culture and context. Teachers and the community should foster an inclusive learning environment that respects our identity and priorities. IDI-4

Similarly, teachers also plea for respect as part of cultural diversity.

The community can support by recognizing and respecting their diverse cultures, histories, and traditions. IDI-9

They must be treated with respect. The community should treat them with kindness and respect especially in their beliefs and traditions because We cannot change them of what they will be. IDI-8

Let the community see that they are not different, that they are accepted by the community and above all there is no discrimination in any field. IDI-11

It can be gleaned from the results that teachers in the communities believe how important respect is. Respect for native people is crucial in fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Ultimately, by prioritizing respect, teachers play a vital role in advancing the broader goal of building a more inclusive and equitable society where all individuals are treated with dignity and fairness. Even as educational changes aim to benefit the community, it is essential to do so while respecting the cultural identity of the Ips (Dolatre & Ortiz-Luis, 2019). Creating an open and dynamic environment where teachers and students learn from each other is crucial.

Cultural Preservation. The teacher participants also shared the insights on safeguarding and promoting the cultural heritage and traditions of communities and this labelled by the term cultural preservations. For the teachers, while there are struggles that the communities are facing, it is but very necessary that education, cultural preservation, and the likes be given priority.

The life of people in our community is often characterized by various challenges and struggles. Some of the key aspects of our lives include Education, Cultural Preservation, and Public Awareness. We often face barriers to receiving a quality education relevant to our culture. The education offered by the state may not align with our communal ways of life and may not teach relevant survival and work skills suitable for Indigenous economies. The preservation of our IP's culture, skills practices and values is crucial for our well-being. IDI-2

Preserving the culture is also evident in the utterances of other participants who explained that people should also understand each other. Cultural preservation may not take place when done by only one person. Culture is regarded by the participants as important in their lives, hence, should also be given respect and the culture should also be preserved.

By embracing cultural responsiveness and preservation, educators and institutions not only honor the rights and identities of Indigenous Peoples but also contribute to creating more inclusive, equitable, and enriching learning environments for all students. IDI-9

I hope the government can give them enough help to improve their lifestyle. Meet the traditions they have. Spread education among them without leaving their culture. IDI-14

Moreover, one of the participants suggests ways on how to ensure cultural preservation.

Help them by joining activities in the community which involve supporting indigenous people, recognize their role conversation, explaining how important and special they are, promote cultural events, donate money, and encourage the state to fulfil wider rights for them. IDI-10

Community help by supporting their needs, help protects their cultures and traditions. IDI-5

Based on the results, the participants believed that native people should be given their space in the community and should be given the avenue to preserve their culture. For the teachers, the culture is rich and so these should be preserved even if they have been influenced by other cultures. By supporting the communities in their efforts to preserve and revitalize their cultural heritage, this has contribution also on the preservation of cultural diversity and the promotion of social justice and better relationships. Preservation ensures that cultural practices, traditions, languages, and knowledge systems are transmitted across generations, maintaining continuity and cohesion within communities.

Challenges of Native Teachers

As a teacher in the community, the participants of the study face challenge in facilitating learning; in dealing with the community. The themes to describe the challenges they have faced include lack of teaching learning resources; dealing with people in the community; and negative attitude towards school and education.

Lack of teaching learning resources. The lack of teaching and learning resources presents a significant challenge as revealed by the teachers. They have

expressed concerns on the resources which are supposed for used to reenforce learning among learners. As elaborated by participant 2:

The problems that I encountered in dealing with my learners are the lack of resources which can hinder the quality of education provided to students and cultural differences, in which the teacher may struggle to bridge the gap between their cultural background and that of the students, leading to difficulties in communication and understanding. IDI-2

The same story of challenges is also accounted by other participants.

I have encountered various problems such as difficulties in implementing the curriculum and insufficient various materials. Lack of Resources: Some IP students lack access to study resources such as gadgets and internet connection, hindering their learning. IDI-8

Teacher, lack of relevant training for teachers, dearth of teaching and learning materials, and the need for more research and collaboration. IDI-10

In another instance, the participants have expressed concern on the challenges they have encountered.

A lack of engaging and interactive learning resources can lead to decreased student motivation, participation, and academic achievement, as students may struggle to connect with the material and retain information. IDI-5

The result shows that lack of resources is among the challenges that the teachers face. When the teacher may lack access to essential teaching materials such as textbooks, workbooks, manipulatives, and supplementary resources. This limits their ability to provide diverse and engaging learning experiences for students. Addressing the challenge of resource scarcity requires a prioritization of professional development opportunities for teachers, and advocacy for policies that promote equitable access to resources for all students and educators.

Dealing with people in the community. Dealing with people is another barrier faced by the teachers. Teacher participants of this study navigate relationships with various stakeholders who may have differing perspectives, expectations, and needs. For instance, participant 14 expressed that:

With regard to the people in the community, you can't really expect them all to participate in school activities, even in the non-IP community that's inevitable. IDI-14

The low participation of the parents to school is also evident in the narration of the participants.

Some problems I experience that originate from the community include lack of parental involvement, inadequate resources and funding, and social issue such as poverty. IDI-10

For teachers, it is also a challenge for them when they noticed that some community members show disrespect to the culture.

As a teacher, some of the challenges encountered include a lack of respect for diverse cultures, a shortage of teachers who speak Indigenous languages, and a lack of educational materials that provide accurate and fair information on Indigenous peoples and their ways of life. IDI-8

Teacher participants also revealed that they have struggles in dealing with people in the community. These people are struggling to survive.

The problem that I encounter is that, it is so painful seeing them struggling in their daily needs to survive and the only thing I can do is teach them to read and write. This has a big impact to me as a teacher. IDI-6.

Similar problem is also noted by another participant.

Difficulties in life that often hinder them from going to school. Sometimes they arrive at school without food, without clothes and many other things. IDI-5

I have encountered many challenges. One of them is that children are going to school with no rice for lunch, not being able to get dressed and the others not having bathed yet. IDI-6

Another situation they face in the community is also narrated by other participants.

The challenges that I encountered in dealing with the people in the community were cultural differences, language barriers, and limited resources. Building trust within the community, navigating historical sensitivities, and addressing unique educational needs are also common hurdles. It's crucial for teachers to engage in ongoing communication and

collaboration with community members to overcome these challenges. IDI-2

Meanwhile, as stated by one of the participants:

As teachers, we cannot please anyone. Some parents are not participative, yet, it helps me become motivated to do so on my choose field. IDI-1

The results of this study serve as an eye-opener for people dealing with learners and other people in the community. The findings show that teachers are facing different situations with their learners and the community. They also face challenging situations with other people's treatment towards them. Indeed, situations are varied as people are diverse. Treating them well and educating them are best ways to address these challenges. Effectively teaching learners requires a deep understanding of their worldview and perspective. Learning becomes meaningful and enduring when educators establish connections between new information and the child's existing way of life. Even as educational changes aim to benefit the community, it is essential to do so while respecting the cultural identity of the Ips (Dolatre & Ortiz-Luis, 2019).

Negative attitude towards school and education. As teachers, dealing with people who have negative attitude towards school and education as a whole is challenging for them. Teachers may need to collaborate closely with parents, guardians, or other stakeholders to address students' negative attitudes towards school. This situation is narrated by participant 1 this way:

As teacher, every learners are unique. Their family back affected their studies. Esp. Going to the classroom without breakfast. Coming late due to the distance of school to their home and parents' attitude towards education. Some students are not responsive and interactive due to the reasons mentioned above. IDI-1

For the teachers, lack of interest is also shown by the parents due to their personal situations.

Parents lack education so they do not have interest to their children education. Their lack of knowledge about things, some could not read, others don't really want to help. because they have the mentality that it's okay, the important thing is to know how to read and write. IDI-7

Here is another reason contributing to lack of interest.

One of the most problematic situation I encountered as a teacher is the absenteeism of the learners. IDI-9

Poverty is one of the reasons why other learners are not interested based on the result.

Difficulties in life that often hinder them from going to school. Sometimes they arrive at school without food, without clothes and many other things. IDI-5

The results manifest that teachers are facing the challenge when they need to talk to the parents, they need to demand for better performance or learners and other situations. In one of the studies, this result can also be gleaned from Obligar and Caraballe (2022) who posited that teachers in the indigenous community may also face different problems with their learners. conducted a study that revealed indigenous learners' struggles with reading, both silently and orally. They identified that the difficulties these indigenous learners faced in reading comprehension stemmed from their limited vocabulary and poor usage and understanding of the target language.

Aspirations of Teachers

The teachers' aspirations towards learning, towards the community and the life of people are articulated in themes such as better education, social and cultural cohesion, and decent life. The teachers aspire to empower their communities by providing quality education that is culturally relevant, inclusive, and affirming of Indigenous identities and perspectives.

Social and cultural cohesion. For the participants, they aspire to instill pride in Indigenous heritage and promote self-determination and resilience among learners and the community.

As a teacher, my aspirations for my learners are to achieve several goals including Cultural Understanding and respect, historical awareness, and community engagement. I want to foster a deep understanding and respect for the rich cultural heritage, traditions values of indigenous communities to my learners and provide a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the historical experiences of indigenous peoples, addressing both the challenges they have faced and the resilience they have demonstrated. I also encourage my students to engage with Indigenous communities in meaningful ways, fostering partnerships and mutual understanding. IDI-2

Like the rest of the participants, they dream of having a community whose people are free from discrimination.

As a teacher, I am visualizing that the significant inequality and exclusion they face may be addressed very soon as long they work for it. IDI-8

Cultural preservation is also highlighted as part of the cohesive community- a community with people who are supporting each other. The teachers value building strong relationships with their students, families, and communities. They aspire to create inclusive and supportive learning environments where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to learn. They also seek to collaborate with community members and stakeholders to address the unique needs and aspirations of Indigenous learners.

My aspirations for the community is that they continue preserve our culture and I hope for the community to support inclusive and equitable education for learners. IDI-9

The community that supports each other . The community that is active and willing to take all the chances just to create a positive environment. IDI-11

A Community that aspires success and respect each other's differences . Value and support each other. IDI-1

They also aspire the same for the school where this aspiration of social cohesion can be facilitated.

My aspiration for the school involves creating an inclusive and respectful educational environment that acknowledges and honors the contributions of indigenous peoples while promoting cultural understanding among students and staff. IDI-2

It can be gleaned from the results that the teachers aspire to have a community showing support with each other while preserving their culture and heritage. Teachers recognize the importance of building strong relationships and fostering a sense of community among the people. They aspire to create inclusive and supportive environments where individuals feel valued, respected, and supported by one another. This sense of community support is essential for promoting social cohesion, resilience, and collective well-being within Indigenous communities.

The result of the study support the idea that: the ultimate aspirations in life among the native people as reflected in many literature is self-determination-self-determination that is grounded in human rights law and which calls both for the autonomy and the participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes that affect them (Cambuo, 2019). For Corntassel as cited by Reed, Brunet, and Natcher (2020), self-determination as both an individual and community-driven process that ensures indigenous livelihoods, food security, community governance, relationships to homelands and the natural world, and ceremonial life can be practiced today locally and regionally, thus enabling the transmission of these traditions and practices to future generations.

Better Education. Teacher expressed that they aspire for better education of the IP learners. Improving education for the people is crucial for promoting their empowerment, well-being, and socio-economic development as noted by the participants

of this study. For them, education is one of the ways to gain more knowledge and develop themselves.

I want my learners to develop a love for learning and to cultivate their natural curiosity. I want them to go farther. I want them to be able to understand that what they are learning has relevance in their lives and is necessary for them. IDI-1

Teacher aspire for better education not only for the learners but for the parents as well.

Like other teachers and parents, I want them to finish their education so that the next generation will set an example. IDI-14

As accounted by the participants, they aspire to have a better school to offer better education for them.

My aspirations for our school is that, our school is one of IPed implementing school because 95% are belong to the young learners. I want our school to be able to produce a student that are ready to enter a secondary level that with respect, kind, god-fearing, knowledgeable and knows how to love the people around him/her. IDI-8

A school helps to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of indigenous communities. A school that contributes to a more accurate understanding of history and Educational needs of the IPs. IDI-P10

To also facilitate better education, the teachers aspire to have a school with enough resources for learning.

I aspire a school that has a complete resources that caters the needs of these individuals. IDI-11

A school that is providing a quality education, best trainings for IP teachers and providing materials for teaching that suits to the curriculum. IDI-12

And as whole, they dream to have a school that is conducive for learning.

A school that is organized, motivated, build interest in the needs of learners, positive environment , conducive environment for learners and a school that improve it quality in terms of dealing with the native individuals. IDI-15

Based on the result, the teachers aspire for better education of the learners and the whole community. The aspiration of the teachers for better education of learners and the entire community reflects their commitment to promoting cultural resilience, empowerment, and self-determination among Indigenous Peoples. Through their dedication and leadership, IP teachers play a vital role in advancing the well-being and success of Indigenous communities now and for generations to come. Perez, Perez and Illasca (2021) also conducted to determine the Indigenous people's education, career aspirations, career choice, and challenges among senior high school students in rural communities in Palawan. Results showed that As for the parents and learners' career aspirations, they have the same response to finish their studies and improve their living conditions. Parents and learners had a mutual understanding about the career choice of the learners.

Successful life. The participants of the study shared that they aspire for successful life among their learners and their families. For them, success are manifested in different ways and they aspire these to their fellow. These accounts presented below articulate how they aspire for better and successful life for the learners and the community.

I want to see them become like others who are successful. the one who thinks not only of today but of tomorrow. IDI-7

They also want to see their learners reach their goals in life.

My aspirations for my young learners is that, I want them to finish there studies. I will be always here rooting for them, guiding and givings some advices that make them achieve there goals in life. IDI-8

As a teacher, my aspirations for my learners are to foster a sense of self, encourage curiosity, promote responsible leadership, and develop confidence. IDI-9

The teachers also visualize that their learners will become professionals and they will become successful in their career.

I want to see my learners becoming successful in the field of education and in their lives. IDI-11

To see them becoming professionals someday. IDI-12

Seeing them having skills and confidence to explore and venture out into the world to play and learn. To achieve and

be successful to the best of their abilities in areas that were required of them within their occupational roles. IDI-15

Furthermore, the teachers also aspire for better people in the community. They would like to meet future members who have clearer visions for their community and who work hard for their families.

An individual that stimulates motivations and make movement to create success. IDI-11

I would like to visualize the life as native to the area as one with pride and respect. . I aspire to see a world where they continue to share their knowledge and experiences with others, contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society. IDI-9

It is also very interesting to note, that the teachers would like their fellow people to be like them.

My aspirations for the community where there are natives like me is that, We don't lose hope especially in achieving our goals in life because there are so many ways on how to achieve our goals in life when we are interested to become successful in life. IDI-8

It can be deduced from the responses of the teachers that indeed, they visualize a better future for the people whom they would like to have successful life, career and community. They aim for a life where they can share their success to their fellow individuals. The aspirations of teachers for their students to lead successful lives, careers, and communities are deeply rooted in their commitment to empowering and uplifting Indigenous communities. Learning becomes meaningful and enduring when educators establish connections between new information and the child's existing way of life.

Even as educational changes aim to benefit the community, it is essential to do so while respecting the cultural identity of the native people (Dolatre & Ortiz-Luis, 2019). Interestingly, Robiños, and Mendoza (2020) concluded that to transform the school culture, it is essential to establish professional learning communities focused on enhancing teacher competence, overall well-being, and their impact on student learning.

IMPLICATIONS

It is reflected in the study that understanding the aspirations, challenges, and insights of native teachers and the implications for their communities and education systems is really very important. The findings articulated the importance of studying aspirations within the specific cultural, social, and historical contexts of Indigenous communities.

The study also acknowledges the challenges faced by teachers, such as inadequate resources, systemic barriers, discrimination, and socio-economic disparities. The findings underscore the importance of addressing the challenges while supporting the aspirations of native teachers.

Despite these challenges, the teachers remain positive and determined to facilitate the aspirations of their students. The aspirations among teachers, range from the desire for better education and social cohesion to the dream of a successful life for their learners and communities. However, amidst these aspirations, they also encountered challenges that threaten to impede these aspirations. Based on the responses, teachers are very positive that they will be able to facilitate the children's aspiration .

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