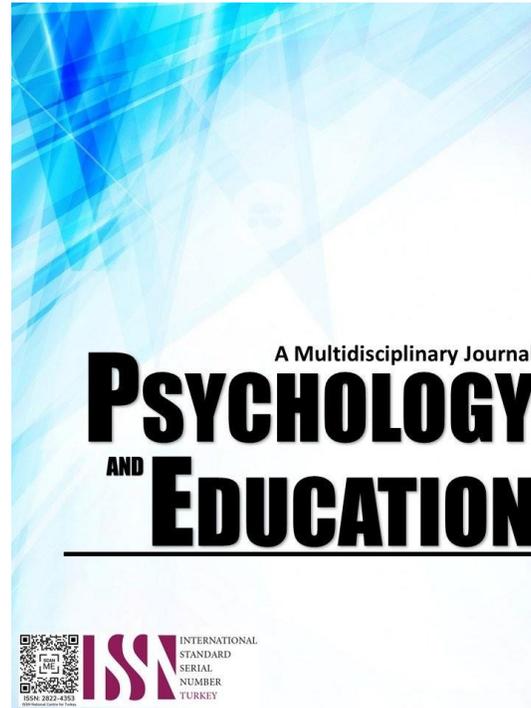


BREAKING BARRIERS: THE JOURNEY OF NON-IP TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS IMPLEMENTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES EDUCATION PROGRAM



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Breaking Barriers: The Journey of Non-IP Teachers in Schools Implementing Indigenous Peoples Education Program

Eureka Kris T. Nazarita,* Lily Grace M. Morales
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the challenges faced by non-IP teachers in IPed-implementing schools. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight non-IP teachers and analyzed thematically to uncover significant challenges including language, geographical, and learner engagement barriers. In the language barrier, the teachers are unable to speak and understand the native dialect and they have difficulty in delivering of lessons in indigenous language. Geographic barrier causes teachers to struggle in reaching the schools and face risky roads and pathways. While in learner-engagement barrier, teachers observe that learners are less participative and commit habitual absences. These challenges collectively obstruct effective education delivery in IPED contexts. Coping mechanisms of non-IP teachers include learning the native language, navigating distance for school punctuality, and involving sense of empathy and understanding unique backgrounds of the learners. Further, an intervention plan was formulated that may assist non-IP teachers in enriching the educational experiences of Indigenous learners and strengthen community partnerships.

Keywords: *non-IP teachers, IPed implementing schools, challenges*

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right. Reaching out to individuals from all areas of life worldwide is necessary. As an educator exposed to indigenous people (IP) communities for several years already, the researcher acknowledges their different issues which have to be given much interest and attention. There are certain rights that these IP communities been wanting to raise and fight for. One of these rights is the access to quality education which hoped to integrate indigenous practices into the curriculum. This right is open to all individuals irrespective of their economic status, language preferences, religious affiliations, race or ethnicity, or political ideologies (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021).

In the Philippines, the rights of the indigenous cultural communities for the preservation of their cultures, traditions, and institutions were established in the 1987 Constitution that the State should encourage excellent education among its citizens at all levels and that it is available to everyone. Thus, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, also known as Republic Act No. 8371, was made for indigenous peoples.

This is basically the reason why the DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 or National Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education Policy Framework was adopted. However, implementing programs that respect indigenous peoples' beliefs, culture, and tradition can face challenges including inhibiting factors like Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices protocols, exclusion, discrimination, English teaching materials, living conditions, gender issues, funding, recruitment of locally trained teachers, and the use of mother tongue in the classroom (Ocampo et al., 2021; Ancheta & Casem, 2024; Mercado, 2021; Villaruz & Perez, 2020; Romero, 2020).

In the Division of Sarangani, every municipality in the province has Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) program implementers. This reference line has been a big influence in the researcher's keen decision to pursue this research with a specific focus in the municipality of Maitum. Through this study, it was hoped that the researcher can be able to exhibit or reveal a truthful picture of the experiences of non-IP teachers based on how they saw, acted upon, and felt about the implementation of the IPed.

Research Questions

The initial phase of the process in this descriptive qualitative research begins with acknowledging that there is a need to understand a phenomenon and discover its meaning. Hence, this study aimed to explore the challenges faced by non-IP teachers assigned in IPed implementing schools in Maitum District for school year 2022-2023. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges encountered by the non-IP teachers teaching in IPed implementing schools?
2. What coping mechanisms do the non-IP teachers employ?
3. What intervention plan may be designed to assist non-IP teachers?

Literature Review

Indigenous People Education

Indigenous education is one of the most crucial components in achieving access to quality education especially in the basic education. The teaching and learning processes under this indigenous education is beyond the conventional approach, the teachers have to explore

many ways on how they could engage their learners. Since learners have unique cultural background, teachers need to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences. The learning tasks must align with the daily activities of the learners so that they can appreciate the value of learning different tasks. Thus, indigenous education requires teachers to be adaptable to what is essential to the needs of their learners (See et al., 2020).

The implementation of the indigenous education promotes inclusive approach to teaching and learning. Every child in the classroom is learner with profound rights to equal and quality education. The policies and programs for effective implementation of indigenous education must well monitored as well as evaluated for its sustainability. Besides, the government must be serious and committed for its success. In support to the Sustainable Development Goals, the government is also working closely with the indigenous communities and leaders for making the curriculum culturally-responsive. Despite the numerous initiatives, it cannot be denied that barriers are still present and inevitable.

Looking ahead, most of the educators believe that there is a lot of things to do as far as Indigenous Peoples Education is concerned. It is a huge endeavor that requires strong collaboration among schools, government, civil society, and indigenous communities. Through right-based and community-driven ways of serving the indigenous peoples learners, there is no reason cultural preservation, empowerment, and social transformation cannot be achieved. Thus, the efforts to promote Indigenous Education have amplified the need to hire more dedicated teachers to serve the indigenous communities. These communities are commonly situated in remote areas which requires teachers to be flexible, culturally responsive, and willing to be in a challenging work environment (See et al., 2020).

Challenges of Teachers Teaching in IPEd Implementing Schools

As mentioned in the previous topic on indigenous education, its implementation was clearly considered exceptionally tough. This part of my research explores and discusses studies and literature of several obstacles and barriers experienced by teachers who are assigned to handle IPEd-implementing schools. The struggles are highlighted as well as the possible interventions that are necessary to assist the teachers in delivering meaningful and culturally relevant education to indigenous peoples learners (IP).

The primary and most significant issue revolves around the placement of non-indigenous teachers within Indigenous communities, where they often find themselves as outsiders. They are outsiders in the sense that they have limited knowledge and awareness about the cultural practices of indigenous communities. They are just brought to the community to teach without even considering how far they could deal with a different environment (Conrad, 2022). Conversely, a substantial body of research and empirical evidence suggests that non-indigenous teachers in different parts of the world frequently lack the requisite knowledge and understanding to effectively educate Indigenous students. Despite their earnest efforts, many teachers lack a sufficient understanding of effective pedagogical methods and the intricacies of Indigenous cultures, knowledge systems, and identities (Allison et al., 2024; Couch et al., 2024; Francis-Cracknell et al., 2023; & Gannaway, 2020). Apart from that, most of the teachers who are assigned to teach in indigenous communities have issues in the language used by the people, geographical location, and learner engagement (Stacey, 2024; DeMatthews et al., 2021; David-Chavez et al., 2020; Adams & Farnsworth, 2020; Denston et al., 2022).

Language Barrier. As mentioned in one of the related studies, non-indigenous teachers lack a deeper understanding about the background of their students. They do not go beyond knowing who their students are before engaging them into various learning processes. The background may include family issues, behavior, and the capability for learning achievement (Couch et al., 2024). This challenging issue may lead to creating ineffective solutions and unsuccessful instructional practices. Thus, meeting the learning needs of the indigenous learners is unrealistic and irrelevant (Bishop & Vass, 2021).

One of the needs of the indigenous learners is on how teachers can be able to communicate with them using their native language. This is one of way of making them feel safe and free to express themselves. It is also one way to build rapport so that productive teaching and learning process could possibly transpire in classroom instruction. With language barrier, teachers normally find hard to engage parents and learners to school matters because they have a lot of apprehensions building relationships. When there is a strained home-school relationship among teachers and indigenous families, it would be hard for the teachers to bring the indigenous learners closer to learning success. To sustain a robust school-home collaboration can be very challenging too. It is crucial to cultivate informal social networks among parent, learners, and teachers outside the school setting, where trust-based relationships can flourish through the use of indigenous language (Gower et al., 2021; Denston et al., 2022; McCarty, 2021).

In general, teachers have the capacity to provide meaningful experiences for learners to have favourable leaning impact that could create enormously positive life. However, the moment teachers have fix impression about the behavior of their indigenous learners and the difficulty in learning their language, teaching and learning process can be a mess. Furthermore, this urges a danger to the conservancy of Indigenous worldviews and traditional practices. (Chiblow & Meighan, 2022). This could result to low school engagement level among the indigenous learners. There are tendencies that they will leave the school and never return (Bishop & Durksen, 2020). Moreover, teachers may not be aware that indigenous peoples are not a culturally homogeneous group; their cultures and languages are diverse. They can be intricate influences based on their geographical location and interactions whether within their ancestral lands or beyond (Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2022).

Geographical Barrier. Over the years, remote schools have been striving to secure not only quality teaching but also highly trained and devoted teachers. They are continuously aiming to have teachers who are willing to work, engage, and attend to schools which are

situated at far-flung areas in order to serve less-privileged indigenous communities. Teacher effectiveness within education systems heavily relies on their competence as well as their dedication no matter where they will be positioned to. Over time, several investigations have delved into different aspects of teacher competence and dedication, assessing how they influence both student learning achievements and the overall quality of education. Regardless of the distance of the school, these aspects also recognize the importance of the ability of the teachers to connect with and immerse themselves in the community that can create effective classroom engagement with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds (Bishop & Durksen, 2020; Guenther et al., 2024; Lembit & Burgess, 2024).

In some part of the Philippines, particularly in South Cotabato, the inaccessible location of schools serving indigenous learners has become one of the cumbersome challenges confronted by teachers (Felongco et al., 2022). They have to walk through slippery and muddy roads and deal with lack of access to any mode of transportation (Paniza & Catolin, 2024). Additionally, 65% of the teachers teaching in far-flung schools in Sarangani Province, wanted to transfer in lowland schools due to too much stress, fear, and disappointment. These teachers could not cope up with the working conditions (Lariosa et al., 2022). Teachers from Negros Islands also experienced challenges teaching in far-flung areas such as difficulty in getting transportation, electricity, and internet connection. They revealed that these challenging factors directly affect their performance (Ucag et al., 2024; Fabillar et al., 2024). Therefore, the distance of the school has been a detrimental factor to effective teaching performance (Basister Jr. & Motus, 2023).

School heads in these isolated schools have been thriving to make the learning environment inviting and motivating for the learners. However, year after year, challenges are getting tougher such as lack of classrooms, the absence of instructional technology, and lack of qualified teachers. These factors contributed to the learners' lack of interest in attending school. Thus, the distance and poor learning environment in far flung schools could also trigger learner engagement barrier (Alcontin & Concepcion, 2024; Peteros et al., 2022).

Learner Engagement Barrier. When the learning environment is unwelcoming, the learners will not be motivated to do their tasks. They will not be engaged of which attending school activities could be insignificant for them. Disengagement of these indigenous learners is prevalent because teachers do not use their first language when they teach. The learners could hardly relate to the learning activities. The teachers may have difficulty in making the theory social integration put into real-life applications (Mokibelo, 2023). In addition, a contributor to disengaged learners is the distance of their homes to school. Thus, these learners need to ask for public transport assistance.

Serving this marginalized group of learners is also challenging due to poverty. Poverty is a hindrance, leaving the learners not willing to go to school especially when they have nothing to eat (Riddle et al., 2024). Indigenous learners also struggle academically due to lack of educational resilience and they have issues with teacher-learner relationships (Martin et al., 2022). Disengagement may also mean that the indigenous learners experience bullying and racism. Teachers missed the opportunity to look into this concern. Teachers only think of the learners' lack of interest and they do not aim to discover the real causes of disengaged behavior (Kruger & Vass, 2025).

Teachers in indigenous communities find themselves alone in educating the learners. They do not receive any support from the parents. Teachers found the parents naïve about what their children should be accomplishing in school (Baxter & Toe, 2024). Parents only care about how to feed themselves. This is another instance where indigenous people live in economic instability. They have worries about sustaining the education of the children (Enteria & Tagyam, 2020). Parents also feel that they are being mistreated. They unintentionally feel discrimination upon seeing how teachers conduct classes with their children. The parents could not merge their practices with what their children learn from school. These parents feel that there is an erosion of their cultural knowledge because teachers are thriving the hardest way on how to integrate the cultural aspect in the curriculum (Sianturi et al., 2023; Soujah, 2020).

As teachers navigate the indigenous education curriculum, they are also concern about maintaining a good relationship with parents to ensure that learning can be achieved among their children. This is crucial. However, there are teachers who continue to do their advocacy. While some are having worries on how they positively connect with the learners and parents, others feel that they cannot survive the situation. Thus, teacher competence is essential when a particular teacher is assigned to handle indigenous education and it is seen in various angles in research, identifying three key dimensions such as pedagogical competence, content expertise, and relational skills which places indigenous learners' interests and learning preferences as most important areas to be taught in Teacher Education (Woodroffe, 2020).

Pedagogical competence encompasses strategies for instruction, classroom management, and engaging students. Content expertise pertains to the teacher's mastery of the subjects they teach. Relational skills involve adopting positive teacher-student connections and cultivating an environment conducive to learning. These three dimensions are interconnected as they promote effective and purposeful teaching. In rural areas where majority of the learners are indigenous, effective teaching is evident when the teacher integrates cultural practices and systems of the community. The indigenous learners can learn better that way. Teachers can make use of the different approaches which can be respectful, relational, and conciliatory (Funk & Woodroffe, 2024). This is one of the several issues that most of the non-teachers try to carry on while immersed in indigenous education. Teachers' lack of indigenous perspectives may hinder the development of indigenous knowledge and processes which could have a positive contributory action to the learners' progress (Swan & Weenie, 2024).

The learners' engagement barrier may also happen when teachers have lack of understanding of the local context. This has produced several factors such as shortage of indigenous teachers who are supposedly representing the community. Another factor is the negligence of the policy makers to include and intensify the implementation of indigenous education. It may be written in various policies, however, the way it is being carried out is unclear and disorganized (da Silva et al., 2024). Moreover, most of the teachers handling the indigenous learners come from urban areas, thus, they seldom appreciate and recognize the diversity among their indigenous learners especially on socioeconomic facet. There is a tendency that these teachers could not logically and practically respond to the authentic concerns of indigenous population and it is important for teachers to reconcile their own beliefs and values with that of their indigenous learners to build an openhearted and a non-discriminating learning environment (Nesterova & Jackson, 2022). Hence, in order for teachers to positively face the adversities as they implement indigenous education may need further support from the school administration. Teachers may be sent to training sessions and other professional development programs so that they can be able to establish their own strategies in coping with the challenges in implementing the indigenous education and persistent adjustments and initiatives (Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2022; Felongco et al., 2022).

To sum up, the challenges namely, language barrier, geographical constraints, and learner engagement difficulties are basically the complexities while implementing the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd). Additionally, these challenges affected the learners in some ways. For language barrier, it affected the comprehension and communication skills development among the IP learners. Geographical constraints hinders teachers' creativity due to lack of school facilities and school distance makes the learning environment less inviting and motivating for the learners. This situation also leads to learner disengagement. By recognizing and addressing these difficulties, people behind the implementation of the IPEd must be in the right position to work together towards creating an inclusive school environment where the cultural heritage of the IP learners are greatly well-looked-after.

The Coping Mechanisms of Teachers in Teaching

In every struggle regardless of the cause, people should not be merely reactive but become highly proactive. Being reactive in tremendous situation may not help solve the cause of the problem. It can even worsen the situation. Whereas, being proactive can do miracles and help solve and resolve helpless situations. This kind of attitude towards deciphering complex puzzles of life or any given challenging circumstances can develop and maintain resilience, innovation, and growth. This mentality allows every individual navigate the struggles with self-assurance and power of control rather than be trapped by unwanted conditions. Thus, people should learn to build and establish different coping mechanisms (Algorani & Gupta, 2023).

Coping mechanisms represent essential strategies that individuals utilize to effectively handle the stresses and adversities encountered in their lives. These coping strategies exhibit a wide range of effectiveness and exert a significant influence on both mental health and overall well-being. Extensive research in this field has illuminated the diverse coping strategies people employ in response to stressors (Algorani & Gupta, 2023). Implementing the indigenous education can cause some stress among non-indigenous, however, there may be strategies that they can employ to lessen the feeling being burdened about it. Teachers can self-reflect and find ways to indigenize the teaching approaches and adopt practices such as understanding multicultural education, learning the native language, implementing culturally responsive teaching, and building local community relationships and embracing cultural practices.

Learning the Native Language. Learning the language is part of understanding the Multicultural Education which stands as a contemporary pedagogical approach aimed at combating segregation and inequality within Inclusive Education. Its objective is to create a conducive and effective learning environment while promoting maximal learning outcomes. It also talks about equity and justice to address social issues. In multicultural education, teachers have to understand that learners must be informed about global citizenship and the relevance of interconnection (Hunduma & Mekuria, 2024). Implementing this multicultural education through deep understanding and learning the language can create a lot challenges, however, if teachers are serious about being able to connect and establish real passion for teaching the indigenous learners, they have to begin to realize its value and relevance. Learning the language can be one the considerations for professional development for teachers. Language-friendly instructional strategies can eradicate language barrier, thus, learners will be engaged in the learning process (Abacioglu et al., 2022; Cummins, 2021).

In Indonesia, Civic Education teachers play a significant role in implementing multicultural education. They do not want to their nation to be divided. It was suggested that these teachers have to understand clearly that in the classroom, they need to inculcate and practice tolerance and respect among themselves and with their learners through native language use. Essentially, they also need to understand that multicultural education may solve social problems. They need to recognize diversity in the classroom and avoid discrimination. Equity and equality shall prevail inside the learning space (Rachmadtullah et al., 2020; Chiblow & Meighan, 2022). Besides, understanding the multicultural values, beliefs, and language of communities would mean that teachers value their existence. There is mutual respect. If this happens, collaboration may develop within communities especially in dealing with the indigenous learners and parents, thus, realizing peaceful and harmonious lives (Jayadi et al., 2022; Orcales-Tabile, 2024). Through native language use, peaceful and harmonious lives can extend up to creating a positive school environment and educational equity (Gorski, 2023; Chiblow & Meighan, 2022; Le Pichon-Vorstman et al., 2021) which are applicable to implementing a culturally-responsive teaching.

Implementing Culturally-Responsive Teaching. Culturally-responsive teaching comes in different forms. The strategies being used by the teachers would depend on the composition of the class. It encompasses language, beliefs, values, and ethnic practices of the learners. The level of awareness must be high that teachers are able to come up with an instructional design that caters the academic

needs of the learners without setting aside their own ethnic beliefs and practices. For instance, the use of native language in the class may develop sense of belongingness on the part of the learner (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Teachers practicing culturally-responsive teaching have developed socio-political consciousness and cultural competence. The teachers deeply understand the mechanisms within the community and willingly embrace the cultural practices (Ladson-Billings, 2023).

In order to adapt the cultural practices of the community, teachers may use contribution, enrichment, transformation, and problem-based learning strategies which can begin at early childhood stage. These strategies are carefully planned to ensure that teachers as well as the learners recognize diversity in the classroom and the importance of character-building. Through clear vision and goals in facilitating the culturally-responsive teachers, teachers have to recognize the uniqueness of each learner (Suri & Chandra, 2021). Consequently, the use of culturally-responsive instruction attempts to provide impartial learning opportunities for all learners and it also addresses the increasing diversity in the classrooms. Public school teachers observed that there is academic disparity among minority learners, thus, the demand to enhance indigenous pedagogical skills is in a loud cue. Incorporating culturally responsive teaching methods can build a stronger tie between the teachers and learners which means the ethnically and racially diverse learners are able to sustain and persevere school demands (Khalifa, 2020).

Building Local Community Relationships and Embracing Community Cultural Practices. Teaching is just beyond passion and commitment. It is a mission. It is a call. When a teacher is called to serve in the community, he or she has to accept it wholeheartedly and do what it takes to gain elated success and sustainability with a community which is dominantly occupied by indigenous people. It takes sincerity, bravery, and resilience to reach this far. Teachers have to apply personal connection to build meaningful engagement with the community. The utilization of place-based learning or exploring local ecosystem can also be effective in establishing relevant and practical educational routines for the teachers and learners (Conrad, 2022).

Building meaningful engagement within the community is a concept related to relationality. It gives emphasis to the essentiality of creating relationships and mutuality. Teachers are capable of developing a sense of unity within communities if they profoundly understand oneself and the culturally-rooted practices of the indigenous people. Teachers possess a great sense of responsibility, acknowledging the idea they have responsibility to others, communities, and the whole country (Lembit & Burgess, 2024).

Responsibility comes in when teachers are concern about the learning experiences and well-being of the learners. Teachers have a clear structure in mind that learners' progress should be locally defined through consistent goal setting and continuous feedback. The indigenous practices and perspectives must be integrated in the daily lessons. Teachers must have accuracy and optimism as learning occurs using desired and appropriate resources. Having these attributes, the non-indigenous teachers in northern Saskatchewan have already embraced community-mindedness (O'Connor, 2020).

Challenges are certain. They can always happen each day especially when there is an implemented program that deviates from established norms or standard practices. In schools where challenges are inevitable, teachers may do their own coping mechanisms. Aside from that, they may conduct evaluation process and come up with an intervention plan. With the implementation of the IPed in the Philippine Education System, it is just appropriate to review the policies or conduct some research to know and discover the challenges met by the implementers and find new ways on improving or enhancing the program through intervention initiatives (Nataño, 2023; da Silva et al., 2024; Kilag et al., 2024).

To conclude, while implementing the IPed remains extremely difficult despite numerous initiatives, the coping mechanisms can somehow lessen the burdens and complexities. It is just important for teachers to persist the circumstances they are in and make a difference. As elaborated in most of the studies, collaboration, training, institutional support, policy improvements, and other intervention plans can advance the implementation of the indigenous education (Nataño, 2023; da Silva et al., 2024; Kilag et al., 2024).

Intervention Initiatives

The various coping mechanisms employed by the schools, teachers, and indigenous communities in implementing the indigenous education may be effective. However, there is no far better than initiating a well-crafted intervention plans for making sure that the challenges such as language barrier, geographical constraints, and learner disengagement may be slowly scrapped in the education system. These intervention plans can be conducted in different forms and shall be staged across various platforms. In the succeeding paragraphs, numerous initiatives from research enthusiasts are presented. Thus, these studies would greatly help the current study coming up with a uniquely designed framework to address the challenges in the implementation of the IPed.

Indigenous education presents challenges both in local and international scenes. Numerous schools have established certain plans and programs to address the challenges (Esfahani, 2023; Stehle Wallace et al., 2022; Edwards et al., 2022; Van der Linde, 2021). The intervention plan for language barrier could be through language and culture workshops, peer learning circles, and development of customized learning materials (Esfahani, 2023; Stehle Wallace et al., 2022). While for geographical barrier that can cause worse work conditions, intervention initiatives may be through transportation support, on-site accommodations, and time management awareness (Ucag et al., 2024). In addressing the learner-engagement barrier, teachers may collaborate with the community leaders and consult them as to what cultural practices may be integrated in the curriculum and use culturally responsive teaching approaches (Mokibelo, 2023).

In Australia, indigenous families have been advocating for quality language learning and cultural programs. Thus, schools need to narrow down barriers such as discrimination which could pave the way to have a greater access to quality and fair education through promoting the cultural knowledge and allowing the cultural practices to be integrated in the curriculum (Lowe et al., 2021). As part of the intervention plan, successful integration of the curriculum can be achieved through collaboration (Griniuk, 2024).

Apart from letting the teachers integrate the indigenous practices in the curriculum, school heads need to prepare them for effective implementation of the indigenous education program which require a long term process. They should be properly oriented about the learning environment of which teachers may be conditioned on the possibility to be assigned in a remote or far flung area. It is important for teachers to be relevant, culturally-responsive, and sustaining (Carter Andrews, 2021). To keep the learners engaged in the teaching and learning process, schools have been keenly observing culturally-responsive approaches. They integrate these approaches in their plans and make sure these plans are carried out properly and their implementation have to be coupled with regular training and consultation processes (Bishop & Vass, 2021).

Schools can be creative in addressing the challenges experienced by teachers who are assigned to teaching indigenous learners and implement effectively the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd). Although teachers are trying to remain resilient and composed by applying different coping strategies, it is better to make schools produce ways to assist and support the teachers which could somehow unburden them with a lot of struggles and discomforts. This will help the teachers gain hope in every hard and challenging situation (Pozo-Rico et al., 2023).

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative study that intends to explore and understand the difficulties and coping mechanisms of the non-IP teachers who have been teaching IP learners. This method strives to create in-depth and illustrated data to understand the different elements of the problem being studied. As a result, qualitative research is a non-quantifiable in nature (Hirose & Creswell, 2023). The more fundamental significance of events and behaviors can be, the more they require deep understanding thus, they can be clarified through qualitative (Burney et al., 2023). To be more specific, this study utilized descriptive qualitative research design.

A descriptive qualitative study is appropriate when the research aims to explain a phenomenon using human experiences. In-depth analysis of a situation's intricacies is a strength of qualitative research (Lim, 2024). It gives a brief summary and looks for patterns in what could appear like chaotic or unpredictable life situations. It is similar, in some respects, to looking for fractal patterns in people, places, and conversations. Therefore, the descriptive qualitative approach is suited for this study since it aimed to look at non-IP teachers' actual challenges. Relational exploration would be more helpful in assessing the respondents' daily lives consequently (Brennan et al., 2021).

More so, the descriptive phenomenology used in this study seeks for unadulterated self-expression from the teachers without the researcher's involvement. In my study, the teachers revealed their challenges. These challenges are considered essential and valuable data which can be the bases for crafting an intervention plan. Further, the research design was able to illustrate the actual experiences of the teachers as they navigate the Indigenous Peoples Education. The information gathered via writing and interviewing would be crucial to comprehending the teachers' actual experiences handling the program.

Respondents

In this study, the researcher involved eight non-Indigenous People (non-IP) teachers from the Municipality of Maitum. They are all teaching in Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) schools of which most of the learners belong to indigenous communities. Since the researcher cannot reveal the true identity of the participants, the researcher assigned them codes as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8.

Instrument

The researcher constructed an interview guide questionnaire and requested the assistance of experts for validation. The interview guide is consisted of two parts: the challenges faced by non-IP teachers assigned in IPEd implementing schools, and the coping mechanisms that the non-IP teachers employ.

Procedure

In the data collection of the study, the researcher followed certain steps such as preparation before the conduct of the study, actual implementation of the interview process, and the post activities.

Data Analysis

approach emphasizes on examining and comprehending the participants' actual experiences and this strategy followed seven procedural steps namely familiarizing the texts, identifying significant statements, organizing ideas into cluster themes, developing exhaustive description, producing fundamental structure, and validating the findings.

In familiarizing the texts or responses of the participants, the researcher begun by carefully reviewing and rereading several times each

transcript or interview result of the eight participants. The researcher became familiar with the data by going over them and understanding the key concepts of the teacher participants' experiences particularly the challenges they encountered in implementing the IPed program. Then she extracted specific ideas, thoughts, emotions, or sensations that relate to the phenomenon under investigation. This enabled the researcher to establish meaningful statements and perspectives that reflect the experiences and journey of the participants.

The formulated themes as findings were then forwarded to the participants for validation. The researcher offered the participants time read, review, and reflect on the findings and also requested them to openly make or share their comments if they felt there were statements did not precisely reflect their perspectives or were not enunciated as they expected. This process allowed the researcher to produce truthful findings.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher made certain that all ethical considerations were followed as mandated by Holy Trinity College to avoid engaging in practices that may implicitly or explicitly abuse or exploit those with whom she sought to conduct research with.

Before she conducted the interview process, she had to secure an informed consent. In the informed consent, the voluntary participation statement is included. The researcher emphasized that the involvement of the participants is purely voluntary. The participant was aware that they can anytime decline the request to participate in the interview process. They were all engaged in the process with the assurance that data privacy was also observed. The researcher ensured confidentiality, integrity, and proper utilization of the data. She safeguarded the responses that she was able to gather from the participants and their identities were never exposed. She also practiced transparency in this aspect. The information or data files were protected at all times to make sure that they were not left unsecured. For gender sensitivity, the researcher took into consideration any gender-related variations in the experiences of non-IP teachers in IPed settings and provided a special attention to the inclusion and amplification of varied voices and experiences, especially those of women and gender minorities in non-IP teaching. In cultural sensitivity, the researcher was aware about diversity and respect. She pledged to protect the autonomy of the participants and made sure that the study did not take advantage of people's vulnerabilities. The researcher prioritized the amplification of indigenous voices and views in the study and participated in culturally-responsive research procedures.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents challenges faced by the non-IP teachers with the major themes, core ideas, and frequency of responses. From their responses, there were three themes formulated under the first grand question what are the challenges faced by non-IP teachers assigned in IPed implementing schools. The challenges faced by non-Indigenous Peoples (IP) teachers in schools that are implementing Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPed) program encompass a diverse range of obstacles and complexities due to their integral involvement in the education of the Indigenous communities. Three major themes were identified based on the participants' responses on the challenges they encountered being assigned in schools implementing the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) program. They are differences in language proficiency, geographical aspect, and learner engagement. They pose significant barriers to the efficient provision of education. They present a daunting triad of obstacles for non-IP teachers assigned in IPed-implementing schools.

Table 1. *Challenges Faced by Non-IP Teachers Assigned in IPed Implementing Schools*

<i>Major Themes</i>	<i>Core Ideas</i>	<i>Frequency of Responses</i>
Language Barrier	Unable to Speak and Understand Native Dialect	General
	Difficulty in Delivering of Lessons in Indigenous Language	Typical
Geographical Barrier	Struggling in Reaching the Schools	Typical
	Facing Risky Roads and Pathways	Typical
Learner Engagement Barrier	Less Participative Learners Habitual Absences of Learners	Typical

Language Barrier

The first main theme is the language barrier. This has become an issue because majority of the teachers are non-IPs. They lack cultural understanding specifically; they cannot speak the native language. The teachers are having difficulty in establishing clear communication with the learners in particular since they are the main receiver of the teaching and learning process. For non-IP teachers working in IPed-implementing schools, they expressed that the language barrier presents significant challenges and increases the possibility of educational inequality growing. Since most of them hardly speak the native language, they have difficulty in understanding it and cannot use it as a means to deliver the lessons. Teachers shared that it was hard for them to translate the content of the lesson material into their learners' language. In this case, the researcher found out that teachers did not take an extra mile to reach out to parents and communities leaders to help them deal with the language barrier.

Unable to Speak and Understand Native Language. Non-IP teachers in IPed-implementing schools face challenges in effective communication with Indigenous Peoples (IP) learners due to their inability to speak or understand the native language. The participants felt that language barrier hinders classroom dynamics and creates barriers beyond the classroom which prevent them to collaborate with local communities and understand cultural nuances. The teachers are also convinced that in order to address these challenges, the

provision of language training or cultural sensitivity workshops are necessary for them to enhance their effectiveness as facilitators of learning within IPEd schools. They also value the idea of establishing better relationships and improving educational outcomes for all learners.

The result implies that several situations and conditions might lead to inability to speak and comprehend one's local dialect because teachers are not that interested to explore the language or they are no opportunities of learning it. Also, teachers may have lack empathy which could affect their understanding and purpose of being part of the indigenous community.

In addressing the language barrier, teachers have to begin collaborating with the local communities and building relationships with parents of their learners. Teachers without language proficiency may struggle to fully understand and respect the cultural nuances and perspectives of the communities they serve. To overcome these obstacles, providing language training and cultural sensitivity workshops for non-IP teachers could enhance their ability to connect with learners and integrate effectively into IPEd schools.

Building bridges through language and cultural understanding is essential for creating inclusive and successful educational environments in IP communities. Intentional efforts, such as looking for learning materials, practicing with native speakers, and fully immersing oneself in the language and culture, are frequently necessary to re-establish a connection with one's home tongue. The process of re-establishing a relationship with one's original tongue can be gratifying and satisfying, despite the difficulties (Stewart, 2023). Further, language barriers faced by non-Indigenous teachers in Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) implementing schools have significant implications for Indigenous communities. These barriers can affect the quality of education, academic support, and the establishment of meaningful relationships between teachers and Indigenous learners (Buenafior, 2023).

Difficulty in Delivering of Lessons in Indigenous Language. As the researcher continued the conversation with the participants, she tried to dig deeper how this language affected the delivery of their lessons. The participants said that the language limitations became a major cause of ineffective delivery of course materials and concepts to Indigenous learners. They revealed further that language barrier could cause miscommunication and impair the learning process as a whole. As observed, the participants were firm by saying that these two causes prevent their learners from actively participating in class discussions with the topics. They are quite guilty because learners do not something from them which means they are ineffective teachers. They felt that this struggle lessens the learners' motivation to learn. The teachers see these factors as hindrance towards learning progress. They even emphasized that in IPEd settings, language competency and culturally sensitive teaching strategies are critical, as this lack of involvement can negatively affect the motivation and academic achievement of their learners. They also believe that to effectively help them in providing high-quality education to Indigenous learners, addressing the difficulty in the delivery of lessons using the native language calls for focused assistance such as workshops on cultural sensitivity and language instruction.

This implies that the participants are not totally equipped in the aspect of language usage. This concern has been ignored for the longest time. The teachers who will be assigned supposedly to indigenous communities should be trained first or at least know how to speak the native language of the learners. This could be one of the criteria when hiring teachers who will be assigned in far-flung areas.

For Indigenous learners to understand the instructional content clearly, the native dialect is essential. In Indigenous communities, language competency is crucial for successful teaching and learning activities. Language limitations cause the difficulty to communicate lesson information effectively which increases the risk of misconceptions and disruption to the learning process. In the context of Indigenous education, addressing language hurdles with focused assistance and resources is crucial to improving language competency and promoting culturally relevant teaching methods (Eduardo, 2021). In the researcher's journey seeking for deeper understanding of the situation experienced by the non- IP teachers, she also heard that they complain about the distance of the school.

Geographical Barrier

The second main theme is the geographical barrier which also has two core ideas such as struggling in reaching the schools and facing risky roads and pathways.

Struggling in Reaching the Schools. The participants are all assigned in IPEd-implementing schools located in remote mountainous or rural areas and long distances between schools and communities. These non-IP teachers often face long and arduous commute through motorcycles only requiring them to navigate unpaved roads. The participants narrated that the long and challenging commutes resulted in fatigue which made them too tired. This situation further negatively impacts their physical health and mental well-being. They also stressed that prolonged travel times can reduce their time available for lesson preparation, grading, and engaging with the community, leading to less effective teaching and reduced job satisfaction.

It implies that the location of schools significantly affects access to education and the overall teaching and learning experience. Long distances can lead to transportation barriers, increased travel time, and costs. It can also lead to chronic lateness, absenteeism, and reduced instructional time. Teachers may also experience physical exhaustion from their commutes, which can affect their ability to teach effectively.

Overtime, the long distance of schools to the communities that leads to long travel time can contribute to burnout among non-IP teachers, as the demands of the job may outweigh the rewards. The quality of education in remote Indigenous communities may suffer if teachers struggle to overcome the challenges posed by distance (Khine, 2023). Further, the exhaustion from daily travel can also

increase the risk of burnout, thereby affecting teacher retention in these remote schools (Gonzales & Mayuga, 2021). Thus, the participants have to look for ways on how they could reach their respective schools, despite the possible hazards they may encounter along the way.

Facing Risky Roads and Pathways. The implementation of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) in schools presents logistical hurdles for non-Indigenous teachers in terms of transportation, scheduling, and geographic restrictions that make it difficult to ensure school timeliness. They are desperately been wanting to have more accessible and safer roads so that they could their schools ahead of time. The long travel time is tremendously challenging for them. The participants clearly said that long travel time affects their efficiency and efficacy. However, these teachers employ in proactive adaptation and strategic strategies to overcome the obstacles just to reach the schools.

These non-Indigenous teachers have to cross the river. Taking the risks just to reach their schools, as observed, is a sign of deep concern to the needs of their learners. The right timing when crossing the river is the first consideration. Teachers have to make sure that the river is calm and still so it would be easier for them to cross it. When it rains, they just cannot consider it as a means to reach their schools. This is just the same with hiking and climbing steep pathways. The muddy pathways are quite risky. That is why the teachers have to consider riding a motorcycle bike. They further narrated that using a motorcycle bike can still be dangerous if not properly handled. It should be handled by an experienced driver. The driver should also be familiar with the area. Moreover, as teachers need to reach the schools safely, they need to secure the instructional materials and other important school reports.

This scenario implies that logistical obstacles including transportation and geographic barriers may affect the timeliness of classroom teaching in isolated or rural regions. Non-IP teachers must adapt proactively, and strategically, comprehend local dynamics, collaborate with community stakeholders, and put creative solutions into practice to overcome these obstacles. They may maximize class time, improve punctuality, and establish a nurturing learning atmosphere for Indigenous learners by successfully crossing the river and conquering the steep roads and pathways.

Studies highlight that teachers and learners in remote areas often adjust their schedules, including starting earlier or finding alternative routes to account for delays caused by damaged or absent bridges. This approach helps mitigate the risk of missing valuable instruction time. It is important to recognize that strategies like efficient time management are vital for reducing stress and maintaining consistent school attendance. This underscores the significance of addressing logistical issues for educational success. Schools and communities can collaborate to find sustainable solutions, such as infrastructure improvements or flexible scheduling to overcome challenges posed by transportation and ensure that learning continues without unnecessary interruptions to avoid learner engagement barrier (Balian, 2020).

Learners' Engagement Barrier

The third main theme is learners' engagement barrier. Non-IP teachers assigned in an IPEd-implementing school often encounter significant challenges related to engaging students in the learning process. Two critical aspects of these engagement barriers are having less participative learners and their habitual absences.

Less Participative Learners. The participants really find hard time to engage their learners. The learners are so quiet and reserved. They seldom raise their hands to ask questions regarding the lesson of the day. They cannot interact well with their teachers and peers due to communication gap between them. The participants admittedly have struggles speaking the native language. No one in the school who can translate what they discuss in the classroom. They also observed that learners struggle to communicate with them because they are unable to understand or express themselves in the language their teachers use. Besides, less participation of the learners is due to poverty. The teachers notice that they go to school with empty stomachs. Most of them come to school without breakfast. Teachers sometimes prepare food for them so that they can actively engage in class. However, this is inconsistent because teachers have limited resources too.

If this situation continues, the learners could not be able to finish school. The teachers as well will constantly feel the difficulty reaching out to their learners. This issue can profoundly affect the educational experience and outcome for learners as well the effectiveness and job satisfaction of teachers. Poverty is a hindrance, leaving the learners not willing to go to school especially when they have nothing to eat (Riddle et al., 2024). Aside from less participation among the learners, the teachers also encounter having learners with habitual absences.

Habitual Absences of Learners. The participants are also concerned about the attendance of their learners. Habitual absenteeism is a common issue in their schools. They identified certain factors that contribute to this challenge, including the need of children to contribute to household or community labor, and occasional lack of understanding of the importance of regular attendance. As the participants continue to battle with the habitual absences of the learners, they acknowledge the fact that this is also due to lack of parental support. The parents ignore the importance of schooling. They allow their children to look for food to eat rather than telling them to go to school and study.

It implies that habitual absences can severely disrupt the learning process, leading to gaps in knowledge, lower academic performance, and decreased learner motivation. When learners are frequently absent, teachers are often forced to repeat lessons, slowing down the

progress of the entire class. This can be frustrating for teachers, who may feel that their efforts to deliver quality education are being undermined. Additionally, lack of parental support can exacerbate the challenges of engaging learners, as learners may not receive the reinforcement needed at home to value education or complete homework. Teachers in indigenous communities find themselves alone in educating the learners. They do not receive any support from the parents. Teachers found the parents naïve about what their children should be accomplishing in school.

Habitual absences is a crucial factor in learner success. Non-IP teachers struggle to gain parental support due to various reasons, such as cultural differences, parent's own negative experiences with formal education, and economic pressures that prioritize work over schooling. Additionally, some parents may view the curriculum as disconnected from the cultural values and daily realities, leading to ambivalence or resistance to supporting their children's education. Thus, this leads to lack of involvement in their children's learning progress (Baxter & Toe, 2024; Enteria & Tagyam, 2020). Eventually, persistent absenteeism can also diminish teachers' morale and sense of efficacy leading to burn out. Moreover, absenteeism among the students can be part of a collective exhaustion experienced by the teachers (Mijakoshi et al., 2022). Consequently, the participants have been trying very hard to come up with strategies that they need to employ to fight the draining challenges that they constantly experience.

Coping Mechanisms of the Non-IP Teachers Employed

Presented in Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 are the major themes, core ideas, and frequency of responses. From the responses of non-IP teachers, there were three themes formulated under the second grand question as to how they cope with the challenges namely learning the native language, navigating distance for school punctuality, and involving sense of empathy and understanding unique backgrounds of the learners. The coping strategies used by non-IP teachers in their positions within the context of teaching Indigenous Peoples indicate their dedication to overcoming obstacles and establishing a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all learners.

Table 2.1 presents the coping mechanisms employed by non-IP teachers on language barrier namely parental translation support and contextualization of learning materials.

Table 2.1. Coping Mechanisms Employed by Non-IP Teachers on Language Barrier

<i>Major Themes</i>	<i>Core Ideas</i>	<i>Frequency of Responses</i>
Learning the Native Language	Parental Translation Support	Typical
	Contextualization of Learning Materials	Typical

Learning the Native Language

For the first theme, learning the native language, the participants revealed the following coping mechanisms: parental translation support and contextualization of learning materials. The participants of the study narrated that in order to build lasting rapport and relationship with the learners; they need to learn the native language of the learners. They can only do this through collaborating with the parents. At first, the teachers were hesitant. Eventually, they were able to build relationship with the parents. Teachers asked assistance of the parents in translating their conversations as well as in contextualizing the content of the lessons. The teachers believe that they can work better if they will engage the parents as they learn their native language.

Parental Translation Support. The participants confirmed that they started to collaborate with the parents. They have been identifying parents who can help them in translating their discussion to the native language. They consider this initiative as a priceless coping strategy. The participants also reiterated that they are also trying to address the classroom diversity. They want their learners to see and appreciate having a conducive learning environment.

In this case, the participants ask the parents to come to school before they discuss a particular lesson. They present the content of the lesson and ask the parents on how they could explain the topic using the native language. The participants said that it is not easy to be doing this constantly because sometimes, the parents that they ask to translate are unavailable. However, the determination to be consistent is steady.

This implies that teachers can close language gaps by utilizing the language abilities of the parents. Through the integration of the community's language and cultural expertise, this partnership not only improves communication but also enhances the educational process. Additionally, this tactic strengthens the bond between the family and the school by increasing parents' involvement in their children's educational journey. Parents become involved participants in their children's learning environment by helping to translate instructional materials and educational content, which fosters a collaborative and supportive attitude.

Non-Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) settings, parental translation support greatly improves student learning. It promotes efficient communication and offer instruction that is easily understood. This is particularly crucial in educational settings where learners might not speak the language of instruction well and where conventional teaching techniques might not be enough. They are reports stating that instructors who employ parental translation assistance increased student involvement and understanding. Additionally, it makes people feel more connected to their community and more included in the educational system. By actively participating in the translation process, parents empower instructors and foster a sense of pride and responsibility over their children's education. They also function as cultural bridges between the community and the schools. Furthermore, parental translation assistance helps to preserve linguistic



and cultural legacy by unintentionally transmitting cultural values and linguistic subtleties that could otherwise be lost in translation (Eduardo, 2021; Han, 2023). To sustain the strategy, the translation support from the parents was also used when the participants contextualized the instructional or learning materials.

Contextualization of Learning Materials. By modifying content to fit learners' linguistic, cultural, and experience backgrounds, the participants are contextualizing the learning materials. They believe that it is an essential educational strategy that improves comprehension and engagement of the learners. The process of contextualization requires willingness to be immersed in the community. One participant said that she had to assess the needs of the learners to figure out how she can make learning relevant and applicable. Further, the participants had to incorporate hands-on activities for learners to be actively engaged in the learning process. Moreover, the participants also had to meet regularly with the other teachers to discuss possible teaching strategies that they can adopt such as storytelling, role playing, and interactive games using indigenous resources. Before implementing the contextualized materials, the participants needed to ask the local community members to validate the contents. This is to ensure accuracy and appropriateness.

The participants believe that contextualizing the materials facilitates enhanced understanding and retention by bridging the gap between theoretical ideas and applied knowledge. They are also confirming that this can encourage learners to participate actively in the learning process. Moreover, contextualizing addresses a range of needs and experiences as learners from diverse backgrounds share their distinct identities and points of view. It also promotes cultural responsiveness and respect for the learners. Additionally, it facilitates differentiated education which enables the participants to successfully cater the unique learning preferences of each learner. As noticed by the participants, contextualizing the learning materials ultimately results in more meaningful educational experiences and improved academic performance.

This implies that contextualized examples and settings from real-world situations to learning materials improve relevance, comprehension, and learner engagement. Learners can apply their knowledge to real-world challenges which develops their critical thinking abilities. In addition to accommodating a range of backgrounds, experiences, and learning preferences, contextualizing educational materials supports equality and inclusion in education. The teachers would also have better relationship with the learners. The learners may regularly attend classes because their needs and preferences are already met.

When learners see how academic topics relate to their communities and lives, they are motivated and engaged in their studies. This method promotes cultural sensitivity which creates more effective teaching and learning experiences while enabling learners to excel academically and apply their knowledge in real-world contexts (Mebert, 2020).

Table 2.2 presents the coping mechanisms employed by non-IP teachers on geographical barrier.

Table 2.2. *Coping Mechanisms Employed by Non-IP Teachers on Geographical Barrier*

<i>Major Themes</i>	<i>Core Ideas</i>	<i>Frequency of Responses</i>
Navigating Distance for School Punctuality	Adapting to Transportation Challenges Building Local Community Relationships	Typical Typical

Navigating Distance to School for School Punctuality

For the second theme, navigating distance for school functionality, it has two core ideas such as adapting to transportation challenges and building local community relationships. As teachers, the participants are very much aware of their responsibility. One of their responsibilities is to report to school on time. Time efficiency can be challenging for the teachers due to the distance from their homes to school. They have been very flexible and adaptable to this situation. The teachers had to plan ahead all the day's routine and observe time management. Navigating the distance to school requires foreseeing unexpected delays. So, therefore these teachers had to determine how much time needed to spend for preparing their things, eating breakfast, and commuting in going to school. Most importantly, they learn how to adapt to the transportation challenges and build local community relationships.

Adapting to Transportation Challenges. Non-IP teachers cope with transportation challenges by adjusting their daily schedules to accommodate potential delays caused by geographical barriers. This involved starting the days earlier to account for potential delays due to poor roads and broken bridges. Also, the participants just maximize the available transportation means such as motorcycle bikes. If motorcycles are not accessible, they simply take the risk to hike and sometimes climb the steep pathways. They are learning to adapt the transportation challenges. Meaning, they no more time to complaining. They feel that I will not help them solve the situation.

This implies that time management demonstrates a teacher's commitment to their responsibilities and helps maintain the continuity of learning for their learners. The adaptation of non-IP teachers to transportation challenges in remote areas has important implication for education. By adjusting their schedules and practicing proactive time management, these teachers demonstrate resilience and commitment, ensuring consistent school attendance and preserving valuable instructional time. Their dedication helps maintain continuity in student learning, even in resource-limited environments which is crucial for educational equity.

Studies have shown that teachers in the remote areas often start their day earlier or plan alternative routes to ensure timely arrival at school, despite difficult terrain or poor damaged infrastructure. Additionally, employing time management strategies can reduce stress and tardiness which ensure timely arrival at school and maximize instructional time for learners (Baliyan, 2020). As the researcher



listened to the responses of the participants, they underscored that building a strong relationship with local community members is an essential factor in facing transportation challenges.

Building Local Community Relationships. Establishing strong relationship with the local indigenous community is essential for non-IP teachers to overcome geographical barriers and feel more integrated into their teaching environment. Attending and participating in community events and rituals builds trust and rapport with indigenous community members. Teachers gain insights into their values and way of life. The participants were also saying that if they have strong relationship with the community members, they would feel safe and secured. More so, this community integration helps them understand the unique needs of the learners and adjust their teaching methods accordingly. Besides, P8 decided to stay in the community so that it would be easier for her to reach the school. This arrangement would also reduce travel time, eliminating the need for her to frequently hike or climb because for P8 hiking and climbing every now and then can only make her too exhausted. It can be tired already when reaching the school. Thus, she can no longer teach well.

This implies that active engagement in community activities, events and rituals is a crucial coping mechanism for non-IP teachers because it could build positive interaction and deep understanding. When teachers feel at home within the community, they are more likely to decide to stay for extended periods. In that way, it can reduce their travel time.

Research highlights that when teachers participate in local customs, and traditions, attend gatherings and learn local languages they developed stronger bonds with the community, resulting in greater support and trust (Khine, 2023). Community integration allows teachers to understand the cultural context of the learners, leading to more effective and culturally responsive teaching practices (Buenafior, 2023). Teachers who successfully integrate into community may receive informal support such as accommodation offers or transportation assistance and easing logical challenges. Non-IP teachers immersed in the culture of the community are likely to feel more connected and experience reduced feelings of isolation which positively impact their job satisfaction and effectiveness (Khine, 2023) leading to increased learner engagement in school activities. This is a demonstration of deep commitment and willingness to adapt to the uncomfortable situations among the teachers.

Table 2.3 presents the coping mechanisms employed by non-IP teachers on learner engagement barrier.

Table 2.3. Coping Mechanisms Employed by Non-IP Teachers on Learner Engagement Barrier

<i>Major Themes</i>	<i>Core Ideas</i>	<i>Frequency of Responses</i>
Involving Sense of Empathy and Understanding the Unique Backgrounds of the Learners	Culturally Responsive Teaching Understanding the Background of the Learners for Effective Teaching	Typical Typical

Involving Sense of Empathy and Understanding the Unique Backgrounds of the Learners

For the third major theme, involving the sense of empathy and understanding the unique backgrounds of the learners has two core ideas namely culturally responsive teaching and understanding the background of the learners for effective teaching.

As participants carried their day-to-day responsibilities with the learners, they learned to establish a deeper understanding with their learners. They knew very well that these learners need much attention to engage in the teaching and learning process. The participants also believe that building a strong relationship through empathy can help the learners improve their school performance. Thus, these teachers also recognize the importance of practicing culturally-responsive teaching and understanding the learners’ background for effective teaching.

Culturally Responsive Teaching. Culturally responsive education is a revolutionary method that actively engages learners' histories, customs, and viewpoints to advance inclusion and equity in the classroom. The participants admittedly shared that they are still in the stage of learning the different culturally-responsive teaching strategies. Although they have been attending training and workshop, they experience difficulty in applying them. However, they firmly believe that they can get through with it for as long as long as the support system of the school together with the indigenous communities are intact.

The participants also stressed that culturally-responsive teaching improves the learning process by establishing connections and understanding in addition to acknowledging the differences and preferences of their learners. As much as possible the teachers try to customize learning to fit each learner's specific requirements and learning style. They observe that customizing learning promotes a warm and inclusive environment where their learners feel appreciated and respected. The teachers are also able to increase learner engagement and motivation by introducing culturally relevant information and practices into the learners’ daily learning activities. The participants truly value cultural diversity as they help their learners traverse various cultures and make constructive contributions to a more inclusive and interconnected interactions inside and outside the classroom.

This implies that culturally responsive teaching is a transformative approach that emphasizes building meaningful connections through diversity in educational settings. It involves actively engaging with learners' backgrounds, traditions, and perspectives to establish rapport and understanding, enhancing the learning experience. This approach promotes inclusivity and equity in education by creating a welcoming environment where all learners feel important and respected. It also promotes a sense of belonging among diverse learner

population and supports academic success by tailoring instruction to meet the unique needs and learning styles of each learner. By incorporating culturally relevant content and practices into the curriculum, teachers empower learners to see themselves reflected in their learning experiences, positively impacting their engagement and motivation. Culturally responsive teaching also contributes to the development of essential life skills such as empathy, open-mindedness, and intercultural communication. Teachers who embrace cultural diversity serve as role models for learners. It shows that teachers demonstrate the willingness to embrace and value differences, thus, aiming to understand learners' backgrounds for effective teaching (Haniko et al., 2024).

Understanding Learner's Backgrounds for Effective Teaching. The participants are very much aware how important it is to know and understand the histories of their learners for effective teaching since it enables them to modify and contextualize their lessons to fit each learner's requirements and experiences. The participants also said that they need to establish a welcoming and stimulating learning atmosphere by having a thorough awareness of the personal interests, family relationships, and cultural backgrounds of their learners. By exhibiting empathy and respect for each learner's unique identity, this greater knowledge also strengthens the bonds between the participants and their learners. They also notice that their learners slowly showing interest in attending their classes. Further, the participants saw that learners like to participate when they employ active learning approaches.

This implies that promoting inclusion, fairness, and cultural responsiveness in educational environments requires an understanding of the backgrounds of learners. It increases motivation, engagement, and a feeling of belonging by creating a welcoming and respectful learning environment for all learners. Better academic results can also be achieved. Furthermore, it enhances the bond between teachers and learners, thus, promoting efficient correspondence and tailored assistance.

By highlighting the social-emotional development and cultural identity and embracing the learners' backgrounds in teaching techniques, they enhance the educational process and promote holistic development. Teachers may create a meaningful and memorable learning experience that recognizes and celebrates each student's unique background by incorporating cultural insights into their instruction (Norman, 2020; Azano et al., 2020).

As stressed by the participants, the coping mechanisms namely learning the native language, navigating distance for school punctuality, and involving sense of empathy and understanding unique backgrounds of the learners could somehow lessen the challenges they encounter in their respective schools where most of their learners are indigenous. They have been trying to love the place and the people as well, though the location is very far. For non-IP teachers to sustain their engagement with the local communities, it is important to make some adjustments aside from having individual coping techniques. As a researcher, she was bound to craft an intervention plan to assist the non-IP teachers with the challenges they encounter each day as they journey with the learners, parents, indigenous community members, and the school condition itself.

Proposed Intervention Plan to Assist Non-IP Teachers

In the 21st century learning, cultural awareness and inclusive education are highly emphasized. Teachers taught and trained under the old teacher education curriculum may not have had explicit exposure to concepts and principles of diversity and inclusivity, especially in the context of indigenous communities. To address this gap, an intervention plan may highlight enhancing cultural awareness and equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to develop and maintain inclusive learning environment. This plan is divided into three areas of concern namely language barrier, geographical barrier, and learner-engagement barrier. Based on the findings of the study, there will be specific activities to be conducted for each quarter with corresponding persons involved.

The first quarter to third quarter focus on activities that address language barrier. The goal is to equip the teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge that lead to assisting them to learn speak the native language. In assisting the teachers, there will be language and culture workshops, peer learning circles, development of customized learning materials, language mentorship program, and immersion activities. These activities are expected to be finished by the end of the first quarter. These would require collaboration so that teachers can be able to practice speaking the native language. The school heads may ask the assistance of the community leaders, elders, and parents. Teachers and school heads may use role plays, simulations, and dialogues as ways to assist the teachers learn the language. Learning the language will help the teachers develop customize learning materials to make the lessons more relevant and applicable for the learners. In this part of the intervention plan, it is important for teachers remain friendly with the community members so they could get much accommodation they need in order to learn the language.

The first to fourth quarters focus on the activities that address geographical barrier. The possible interventions are transportation support, on-site accommodations, travel assistance partnerships, and time management and awareness program. Admittedly, transportation support initiative could be demanding. The teachers or school heads need to make some arrangements with any of the transport groups to provide them available vehicles from any pick up points going to school. It is also hoped that the school heads will allot some fund for fuel and vehicle maintenance. They can also ask for assistance from the local government or any members from the local business sectors for transportation support and discounts. More so, the school may provide dormitories or housing near schools so that traveling time will no longer be an issue. Teachers and school heads may work hand in hand to look for partners to help them build these simple housing initiatives. To improve the productivity and efficiency among the teachers, schools may also conduct time management and awareness program. This program may help teachers plan ahead all their routes and schedules to avoid delays when they travel. This strategy may enhance or build a culture of accountability and time management.

Still part of the first to fourth quarters, the activities will focus on addressing the learner-engagement barrier. In here, the school heads and teachers have to create a learning environment that is very welcoming where all learners are well recognized and respected. The teachers need to do the following: profiling of the learners to fully know their backgrounds, design learning activities that suit the needs of the learners, and conduct PTA-organized events. As teachers handling diverse learners, it is appropriate to identify their strengths and weaknesses so that the teachers can provide learning activities that are culturally-responsive, requiring the integration of the daily cultural practices of the learners. With this plan, the teachers will be able to explore the deep meaning and purpose of implementing inclusive education embedding the indigenous education. It is important for teachers to develop cultural awareness and competence. The competence would include teachers' ability to demonstrate and apply culturally-responsive teaching strategies for the total development of the indigenous learners. Culturally aware can be achieved among teachers if they can deal positively with parents and elders within the community. In this case, communication and collaboration have to be practiced. Working together in the community can be challenging but with consistency and commitment, objectives towards achieving inclusive is possible.

This intervention plan needs the participation of the school heads, teachers, parents, elders, and other community members. This also requires monitoring and evaluation for its sustainability. School heads may ensure that the inputs in every activity would be effectively implemented by the teachers. There may be follow-up actions by conducting classroom observations. Learning action cell sessions can also be done for teachers to discuss further other considerations such as insights, experiences, best practices which can help improve their performance and how far they have gone through in making the inclusive and indigenous education successful in the classroom.

Conclusions

Language barrier, geographical barrier, and learner-engagement barrier are the three main obstacles faced by non-Indigenous teachers exploring the field of Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd). To guarantee educational fairness and equality for all children, regardless of background or geography, these barriers to successful education delivery highlight the need for comprehensive reforms.

Furthermore, for non-IP teachers working in IPEd schools, the language barrier is a major obstacle to effective communication and rapport-building with Indigenous learners. This challenge highlights the pressing need for culturally aware instruction and language competence programs to close the gap in communication and promote inclusive learning environments. Geographical obstacles exacerbate these problems by making it more difficult to get necessary resources and to involve the community in remote areas.

To overcome these regional limitations, infrastructural upgrades and focused support systems are needed to increase teacher access and professional development opportunities. Furthermore, a significant obstacle that impairs the quality of education and makes it more difficult for teachers to successfully address the varied needs of their learners is a lack of resources leading to learner-engagement barrier. Overcoming these obstacles and guaranteeing a supportive learning environment in IPEd schools requires spending money on professional development and resource allocation.

Hence, these difficulties influence both learners and teachers' general growth and well-being outside of the classroom. To establish inclusive and encouraging learning settings, structural changes; fair resource distribution; and cultural sensitivity must be given top priority. The researcher believe that teachers and school heads can work together to overcome these obstacles and advance educational fairness, teacher empowerment, and the overall growth of learners in IPEd schools.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Eureka Kris T. Nazarita

Edenton Mission College, Inc. – Philippines

Lily Grace M. Morales

Holy Trinity College of General Santos City – Philippines