



Teaching Across Culture: Insights from Teachers of Indigenous Elementary Pupils at Gigaquit, Surigao Del Norte: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

This qualitative study delved into the experiences of Mamanwa Tribe teachers educating indigenous elementary students in Gigaquit, Surigao del Norte. Utilizing narrative inquiry and categorical-content analysis, the study highlighted two key themes: the considerable challenges faced by these teachers (such as language barriers and student absenteeism) and the strategies they employed to overcome them (including home visits and parental communication). The findings underscore the necessity for a multi-faceted approach from educational authorities to address these challenges and provide support for teachers in indigenous communities. Recommendations include increased scholarship opportunities and encouragement for indigenous learners to enter the teaching profession, thereby strengthening the ranks of indigenous educators.

Keywords: Indigenous education, narrative inquiry, teacher challenges, cultural sensitivity, community engagement

1. Introduction

The essentials of high-quality education are constantly evolving. To ensure positive teaching and learning outcomes, teachers must actively collaborate with students, peers, parents, and the community at large. Managing a classroom alongside the expectations of students, parents, and other stakeholders can create significant pressure for teachers (Hussin, 2018). While teachers have the immense power to change lives, they also carry substantial responsibility and stress. Shared accountability, enthusiastic collaboration, and acknowledging student diversity help teachers enhance their practices, leading to genuine satisfaction and self-fulfillment. According to Antinluoma et al. (2018), supportive learning environments that promote teacher empowerment and collaboration foster a superior teaching culture. However, despite their critical role in institutional success, recent teacher migration to private schools and instances of suicide highlight the pressures faced by teachers, including workload issues, mental health challenges, and strained relationships.

Education is a fundamental human right, as declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further elaborated upon in the Convention against Discrimination in Education. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also upholds this right within its frameworks, reflecting strong support for both global and regional commitments to education. ASEAN advocates for lifelong learning built on principles of equity, inclusion, and quality. The 1987 Constitution of the Philippines also enshrines this right, stating in Article XIV, Section 1, that the state must protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and ensure its accessibility.

To address the right of indigenous peoples (IP) to quality education that respects their identities, contexts, capabilities, cultural heritage, and values, the Philippine Department of Education recently launched the National Indigenous Peoples Education Program (D.O. 22, 2016). However, historically, indigenous children have often been

denied comparable education. Teachers of Indigenous Peoples (IP) have frequently lacked adequate support and training to develop their skills and expertise or to effectively teach IP students (OECD, 2017). Extensive research indicates that despite their dedication, teachers often lack a sufficient understanding of instructional strategies and the complexities of indigenous knowledge, cultures, and identities (Santoro et al., 2011).

IP education stands apart from conventional education, often employing distinct approaches. It recognizes and values the importance of highlighting indigenous knowledge, skills, practices, and values. To effectively teach IP learners, understanding their worldview is crucial. Connecting new information with a child's existing life experiences ensures that learning is meaningful and relevant throughout their lifetime. Even as educational interventions aim to benefit the community, they must respect the identity of IPs. An open environment where teachers and students can learn from each other is essential. Respecting the culture of the entire community demonstrates respect for everyone's dignity. Educational programs for these communities yield positive results when they are encouraged rather than imposed. All key stakeholders should recognize the abundance of both natural and human resources in the community, as education emphasizes the various qualities that have always been a part of it.

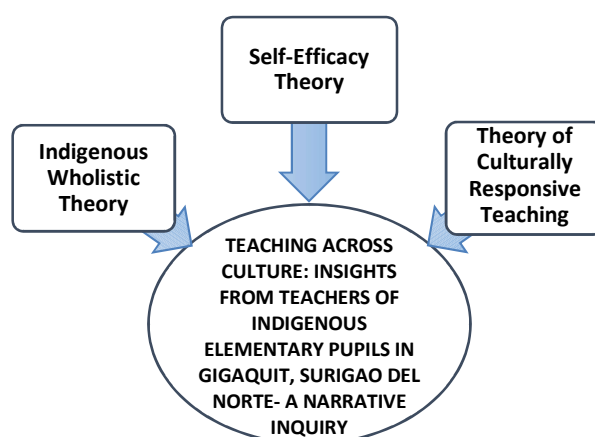


Figure 1. Simulacrum of the Study titled Teaching across Culture: Insights from Teachers of Indigenous Elementary Pupils in Gigaquit, Surigao Del Norte- A Narrative Inquiry

Figure 1 shows that the study is grounded in the philosophy that teaching indigenous pupils requires a culturally sensitive approach, acknowledging the cultural differences between diverse groups, including those of indigenous learners. It posits that teachers should aim to create bridges for minority learners to integrate into mainstream culture and the existing social structure. Given this context, the study appropriately utilizes Self-Efficacy Theory, recognizing that teachers' self-efficacy can predict student engagement levels. Self-efficacy refers to a teacher's belief in their ability to influence outcomes and events, such as motivating students to actively participate in class (Cayci, as cited by Tejada, 2021). Further, by anchoring the study in the Indigenous Wholistic Theory, the research considers the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects of existence. This implies that teachers of IP students should go beyond simply acknowledging their students' past, present, and future. Finally, the study employs the Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory of Instruction. This approach aims to empower students politically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually by utilizing cultural references to impart attitudes, skills, and knowledge.

This study employed a narrative inquiry approach to explore the lived experiences of teachers educating indigenous elementary pupils in Gigaquit, Surigao Del Norte, specifically focusing on the challenges and insights gained from teaching across cultures. The research aimed to answer three key questions: What are the specific teaching experiences of these teachers when working with IP learners? What reflections can be drawn from their narratives? And finally, based on these findings, what implications can be made for improving the educational experiences of indigenous students?

2. Literature Review

The right to education is a fundamental human right, applicable to everyone regardless of their background (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021). However, simply having access to education isn't enough; it must be quality education, as emphasized in the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (Green Policy Platform, 2024). Unfortunately, accessing such education can be challenging in many countries, especially for indigenous and minority groups, as traditional education often clashes with their worldviews.

International laws do support the educational rights of indigenous peoples. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008) clearly outlines their right to establish and control their educational institutions, providing instruction in their native languages and using culturally relevant teaching methods (Article 14, Section 1). Additionally, Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) protects the right of indigenous children to maintain their language, culture, and religion (OHCHR, 2013). Therefore, it's essential that indigenous children receive an education that respects and aligns with their worldviews.

In the Philippines, it was stated in the 1987 Constitution that the state shall promote quality education among its citizens at all levels and that it is accessible to all, especially the rights of the indigenous cultural communities for the preservation of their cultures, traditions, and institutions (De Leon, 2005). Republic Act No. 8371, referred to as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, was created with the purpose of upholding the rights of indigenous peoples. It was stated in Chapter VI, Section 30, that the state shall provide equal opportunities to the ICCs/IPs through an educational system based on their own language with appropriate cultural methods for the teaching and learning process (Philippine Statistics Authority, 1997). As a result, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, otherwise known as Republic Act No. 10533, stresses that the primary education curriculum shall be flexible. It allows the school to contextualize, localize, and indigenize the lessons for the students that are suited to their social contexts (OECD, 2013). With the various legal bases created aligned to the education of indigenous peoples, the government is serious about giving quality education to these marginalized sectors of society. The Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program was made possible by the Department of Education with the aid of DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 or the Adopting National Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education Policy Framework, which calls for this program to collaborate with a range of stakeholders. By integrating their Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) with the national education system, which is predicated on the perspectives of IP learners and how they think, act, and behave, indigenous peoples have already been granted the opportunity to have a curriculum that is sensitive to their culture.

With reference to DepEd Order No. 43, s. Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, also known as Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 10533 and DepEd Order No. 62, s. Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Policy Framework, is being adopted by the Department of Education (DepEd) in 2013. The framework for the Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum is enclosed and aims to support educational institutions and other programs in their interactions with indigenous peoples, helping them to contextualize the K–12 curriculum in light of their distinct social and educational circumstances. DepEd also intends to foster long-term community development via educational programs that can build adaptable and pandemic-relevant indigenous community knowledges, such as indigenous farming and health systems, through rural farm schools, senior high school programs, and comparable programs. The IPEd Program also aims to be in line with UNESCO's directive that by 2025, education for sustainable development must be a central component of all curricula.

In a DepEd Teaches episode, Victor, as cited by Buenaflor et al. (2023), emphasized how, in addition to the other facets of their history, it respects their identities and values and fosters their knowledge systems, talents, and ideals. The contextualization of lesson plans, using the local language for instruction, elders acting as mentors and teachers, using the ancestral domain as a classroom, establishing IPEd Senior High School, employing more subject-matter experts, and increasing instruction are some ongoing initiatives aimed at providing IP learners with a culture-responsive education. However, learners and their parents benefit when teachers incorporate indigenous knowledge into the classroom (Prest et al., 2021). Teachers' rich in indigenous knowledge are better positioned to guide their learners about the literature of that particular area (Burgess et al., 2020). Following the national

education system, teachers' cultural competencies mean their ability to teach their learners from different cultures and educational backgrounds (Hordijk et al., 2018). Cultural knowledge, interpersonal awareness, and other abilities that improved socialist lessons were all part of teachers' cultural competences (Kumari et al., 2020). Besides, extensive study of the literature shows that when teachers spend more time building relationships with their learners based on the social-cultural and historical backgrounds and cultural identities and incorporate quality teaching based on cultural competencies, the learners perform better (Burgess & Evans, 2017).

There is a problem among teachers teaching the IP learners as experienced by the teachers. This is supported by the findings of the study of Otxero (2022), which showed that the lack of culturally relevant learning resources and instructors' lack of experience in localizing the lesson made teaching difficult. Therefore, in order to fully execute the IPed program, it is necessary to address the numerous issues that the implementers have run into. One possible solution is to take the suggested intervention program into consideration. In her study, Gortifacion (2022) recommended that teachers must strengthen student-to-teacher communication to avoid weakening the relationship primarily stabilized in school. And that teachers should undergo seminars on the teaching strategies in handling students with indigenous backgrounds in inclusive settings.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study utilized narrative inquiry through in-depth interviews to explore the lived experiences of indigenous elementary teachers in Gigaquit. It aimed to uncover their unique perspectives and deep understanding of teaching IP learners. The study was conducted in all identified IP elementary schools in Gigaquit, with nine Mamanwa Tribe teachers as informants, selected through purposive sampling. An interview guide was the primary instrument, facilitating the collection of narrative data. Interviews were conducted using guide questions to extract detailed accounts of their experiences. Due to the sensitive nature of the questions, only personal interviews were used, not focus groups. Research ethics were strictly adhered to. Informed consent was obtained from all informants, detailing the study's purpose, risks, benefits, and their voluntary participation. Cultural sensitivity towards the IPs in Gigaquit was emphasized, reminding teachers to avoid judgment and embrace cultural differences, being mindful of their language. Informant identities and data were kept confidential. Ethical considerations, such as the principle of doing no harm, were observed. Informants were fully briefed on the study's purpose, significance, confidentiality, and contact person for any queries. Logistical steps were taken to secure necessary approvals. Despite not involving IPs as human subjects, validation from the NCIP authority was obtained, following NCIP Administrative Order No. 1. Research approval was also acquired from St. Paul University, the Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor, and identified IP Elementary School Principals. Respect for informants was maintained throughout, with regular appreciation for their time and contribution.

4. Results and Discussions

Nine IP teachers shared their lived experiences teaching elementary IP pupils in Gigaquit, Surigao del Norte. Their narratives revealed the subjective meaning of their overall teaching experiences. To protect their anonymity, code names (italicized and capitalized P with subscripts 1-9) were assigned. Six female and three male IP teachers participated, each providing a profile and engaging in a 30-50 minute interview. Table 1 details their demographic and background information, offering educational and professional insights into each informant.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile Summary*

Code Name	Age	Gender	Type of School	Current Position	Years in Teaching	Years as IP Teacher	Trainings Attended	Specialization	Highest Educational Attainment
P ₁	27 y. o.	F	PIIPS	T I	6 years	6 years	Division & Regional	Filipino	MA Grad.
P ₂	50 y. o.	M	COMBI	MT I	16 years	10 years	Division & Regional	Education Management	MA Grad.
P ₃	25 y. o.	M	COMBI	T I	3 years	3 years	Division	General Educ	BEED
P ₄	31 y. o.	M	COMBI	T III	8 years	3 years	District	Tech. Mngt.	PhD Units
P ₅	32 y. o.	F	PIIPS	T I	5 years	5 years	Division	Filipino	MA Units

P ₆	27 y. o.	F	PIIPS	T III	7 years	7 years	District, Division, Regional National & Intl.	Education Management	MA Grad.
P ₇	30 y. o.	F	COMBI	T I	5 years	5 years	Regional	English	MA Units
P ₈	29 y. o.	F	PIIPS	T III	5 years	5 years	Division	Filipino	MA Grad.
P ₉	27 y. o.	F	PIIPS	T I	6 years	6 years	Division, Regional	Filipino	MA Units

As shown in Table 1, the study's nine informants were predominantly female IP teachers aged 25–35, mainly serving in IP-specific schools. Most had over five years of teaching experience, and all had taught IP learners for at least three years. Their training backgrounds ranged from district-level workshops to international programs. Almost half specialized in Filipino, with others in educational management, general education, or technology management. Data analysis uncovered two primary themes: the significant challenges these teachers face, and the proactive strategies they use to overcome them. The first theme, “Highly Difficult Teaching Responsibilities,” encompasses language barriers, absenteeism, prioritizing livelihood over education, parental illiteracy and lack of involvement, and workplace issues. The second theme, “Overcoming IP Teachers’ Challenges to Teaching,” emphasizes solutions like home visits and regular parent communication.

Highly Difficult Teaching Responsibilities

This overarching theme had clearly stipulated a new paradigm for IP teachers regarding the vitality of their functions and responsibilities. More or less, teaching in IP schools and with the IP learners may be somewhat highly tasking. It is clearly a highly tasking instructional responsibilities, with too many responsibilities that may be added. Besides, there is a very high demand for IP teachers to fully equip themselves by making education inclusive in handling multicultural classes (Reyteran, 2021). As a matter of fact, the government, in recognizing the vulnerability of the marginalized indigenous peoples in the Philippines, initiated the delivery of access to culture-responsive basic education among the IP learners. In this connection, future teachers for IPs and those already with the IPs were trained and groomed to be effective IP teachers. This is embodied in the DepEd Order No. 62, series of 2011, as cited by Reyteran (2021), which states that in order to equip the IPs with the knowledge and skills needed to face various social realities, trainings and seminars should be provided to the teachers who will be teaching IP students, making them responsive to their learning needs. Even if these are short-term trainings, this would help ease or unload the burdens IP teachers have encountered in teaching IP learners.

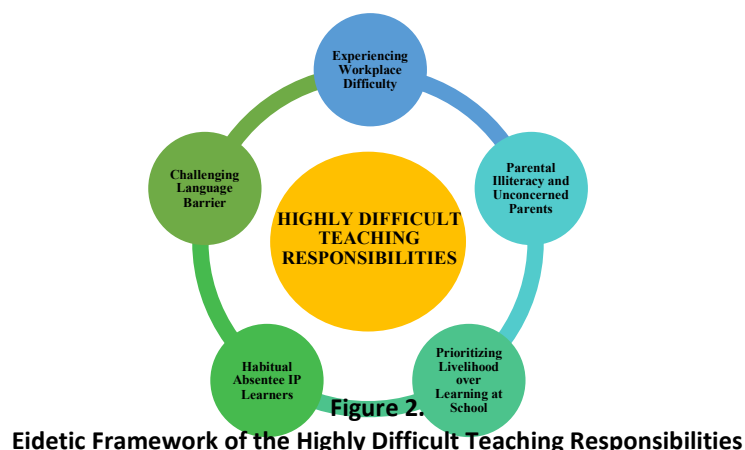
After all, the main purpose was to introduce to the teachers the culture of the indigenous peoples and identify strategies on how to teach culture-responsive lessons, in general, to the IP learners (Reyteran, 2021). However, the trainings and seminars given were not enough to teach the teachers how to teach IP learners (Ocampo & Delgado, as cited by Reyteran, 2021). As the study reveals, the IP teachers assigned in the Gigaquit District have faced challenges, citing that it is not easy.

“...makalaong gajud ko na dili sajun, mura siyag roller coaster naay ups and down. (I could say that it is not easy, it’s much like a roller coaster ride with ups and down). [P₁]

“so ako as teacher maglisud pa gajud ako paglaong, maglisud ako pag estorya pa gajud nan fully minamanwa ... (So, as a teacher I can hardly tell, I can hardly talk fully their Mamanwa dialect) [P₄].

“an classroom nuon nako lisud gajud kay gamay, so amo gani jaon tag tunga nako sija kay di gajud ma cater ang mga bata parehas jaon tag 30 plus ka bata... (the classroom, my classroom is difficult because it is very small, so we divide because it cannot cater to the children like when 30 plus children). [P₄]

The study of the challenges faced by instructors working with IP learners led to the discovery that language barriers and inadequate teaching resources were contributing factors in Cabardo's (2020) qualitative research. Furthermore, it was found to be challenging to instruct IP learners in the context of the emerging themes. Therefore, the issue may be resolved if internal and external stakeholders provide the teachers with the assistance they need. The above findings corroborated the study of Dayaganon, as cited by Corlet and Tarusan (2022), elucidating that there is bitterness as non-IP teachers go on their teaching career. Teaching IPs is a highly difficult responsibility. And what is needed of them is utmost patience in teaching.



Challenging Language Barrier

As shown in figure 2, it appears in the study that the challenging language barrier has been one of the challenging experiences of the IP teachers in Gigaquit District. Informant 1 shared that, based on her six years teaching in IP School, she mentioned that she could not speak the language of the IP learners and believes that, for her part, it is a disadvantage because they are having difficulty communicating the lessons to their learners. The other four informants have the same opinion.

"... tapos isa sad gajud jaon ila inistoryahan, na ikaw mismo nag tudlo unhon man nimo pag kuan sa ila kun mismo an ila language or inin ilang dialect nag lisud kaw pag express or pag sulti kay ikaw sad ya pa kaw kabayo, ing ana." (Then, one is their dialect, when you as the teacher, how would you deal with their language or dialect when you also have difficulty in expressing because you do not know how?) [P₁]

"My experiences in teaching IP learners (...) ahh it's hard to deal with the (...) ahh pupils especially the kindergarten teachers because of their (...) ahh, language (...) there is a language barrier to the both of the learners and for me as a teacher, kay ako bisaya man and then sila is jaoy may ila (...) ahh own language which is minamanwa, so ako as teacher mag lisud ako pag estorya pa gajud nan fully minamanwa" It is hard to deal with the pupils, especially the kindergarten, because of their language, there is a language barrier. I speak Visayan, then they have their own, which is Minamanwa. As a teacher, I felt it was hard to talk fully in minamanwa). [P₄]

"One thing that comes to mind is my experience in communicating with the children, communication gajud (...) for people who don't know, mamanwa people speak minamanwa, which is quite similar to sinurigaonon but has some hint of like waray but is spoken in a different accent, making it hard to understand" [P₅]

“Second experience is sa kuan (...) sa language barrier sa amo, kay syempre nag dako kami na an amo linguahi is lain (...) lain sad sa ila, sa ako na part mag lisud ako kay everytime na an ako student mag raise, mangutana sa ila dialect, mag lisud ako pag address kay bisan ako na teacher ya ako makasabot sa ila linguahi” (Second experience is language barrier as we grow up with different languages, and the IP’s have their own. On my part, I felt it hard every time my student would raise a question in their dialect. I can hardly address because even if I am their teacher, I do not understand their language). [P₇]

“...the challenges there are dili nako masabtan an ila mga estorya, kay first time pako makipag halo bilo sa ila, first time ko mag handle and then na deretso ko sa IP, mao ng first challenge na na experience nako as an IP teacher.” (The challenge is I cannot understand the way they talk, as it was my first time mingling with them, it’s my first time handling IPs and this was the challenge I experienced as IP teacher.) [P₉]

The challenging use of a native language or dialect is really a hard experience. This is a recurring theme not only in the context of this study but also in the previously cited research in the context of Indigenous Peoples. In the study of Cansino et al. (2022), it was emphasized that it would be better if the teacher was from the community. On the other hand, the same study expressed that the linguistic difference between the teachers and the pupils, poses a problem. Pupils say something, but teachers do not understand them. According to an IP teacher, “when they are crying, we cannot comprehend what they are saying. These things made our job difficult. Sometimes we do not know if something is hurting them, but they are having difficulty communicating it, and we teachers can't comprehend enough what they are saying. So that is the problem” (Cansino et al., 2022).

Habitual Absentee IP Learners

The IP learners are absent not just once but many times. Their absences from classes became a routine for many reasons. Some of them prepare to work rather than going to school. Usually, the indigenous parents bring their children to wherever they can have their source of food. In the study of Baxter and Mayers (2019), it revealed that children in the farming areas are expected to work in the fields during harvest time. They pulled from school for two or three months so they may drop from school and repeat the grade.

The same goes with findings of the present study:

“... most of them do not know how to read and always absent in the class. One of their habits is to go to other places to visit their relatives and it takes a long time to return”. [P₃]

“... mostly IP learners were good only at the beginning of the school classes but months later, they will start making absences”. [P₈]

The IP teachers complained about the constant absences of their indigenous learners. The problem of habitual absenteeism among learners can annoy the non-IP teachers. Moreover, this threatened the performance of the learners and can hinder the result of their achievement tests. Indirectly, the learners may develop lower participation rates compared to the non-indigenous learners. All these were the result of accustomed absentees of the learners.

Prioritizing Livelihood over Learning at School

It is true that the learners prefer to go to work than to school. The learners, under the influence of their parents, would prioritize looking for food over going to school to learn. This holds true to the experience of the participant by revealing that:

“...mag sabi man gud na sila mulaong na “Sir, mag sabi kami na mo subida na kami ila uma”, an ila uma is very far gikan sa amo station, they need to (...) an ila travel is kuan ra sila walking ra, mag panaw ra, 1 to 2 hours jaon ila baktason sa ila uma. Sa amo na part sa teacher, e allow namo na mag (...) mo absent and bata mulaong man gud sila na “Sir way amo bugas, so sa amo na part, e allow namo na mag uma sila kay di man namo ma provide an ila needs, like basic needs laman, mulaong sila na way ila bugas. Syempre ikaw (...) as much as possible di nimo gusto mo absent imo student, e allow nimo kay way man lage ila ing ana (...) sa ila pag adlaw adlaw way gani an iban bayon”. (They would ask permission that they will go to the farm, their farm is very far, and they need to walk for 1 to 2 hours. For our part as teacher, we would rather allow them to absent because they would say, Sir we have no rice, so we would allow them to go to the farm because we cannot provide their basic needs. We don’t want them to absent as much as possible, but you have to allow them because they do not have daily needs, others don’t have food to bring).

Besides, some parents would encourage their children to leave the room and let their children go with them to find food. Livelihood is their priority. It is better for them to plant than staying in the classroom. Some prioritize planting than reading. There is even occasion when the teacher asked “why you did not write or practice reading?” They would just answer: “ay ma’am manana ke pu” and when they tell that to the teacher, the teacher cannot do anything. It goes without saying that they are thinking that if they will not work, they cannot provide food so, learning or reporting to school is becoming less of a priority. Their first priority is to find their food.

Parental Illiteracy and Unconcerned Parents

It is always the joy of the IP teachers if the parents of the IP learners are supportive. It could have been fulfilling if parents showed their support by helping in the repair of the classroom. But based on the experience, informants shared that:

pero jaon gajuy ila kuan na (...) na, jaon murag dili sila (...) dili sila laong na grabi ka (...) grabi mo support sa mga bata, dili gajud sila supportive karajaw sa mga bata when it comes sa education”. (But they have that...wherein they are not so supportive to their children when it comes to education). [P₄].

“...jaoy gajud ila pangisip na lahi ra kinta mo reklamo sila, daghay e kuan nila sa ilang mga kaugalingon, ma (...) kanang ma (...) “dili kami jaon mo boluntaryo Ma’am, kay sige ra laman kami jaon” (...) (They have a thinking when they would protest from being asked for a voluntary work. They would refuse and say ‘we will not volunteer as we used to doing it!). [P₂]

Because of being illiterate, some IP parents cannot be easily asked for an errand. Even in the simplest way, the parents failed to show that they are concerned about the education of their children. It is contrary to the perceptions that IP parents are supportive to their children as a positive culture. That IP parents are backing the needs of their children especially when it is for their benefits. Based on the result of the study, most parents are illiterate thereby causing them ill-mannered and lack of support and concern to their children.

Most of the parents were illiterate and that they cannot even put their children in order. Most of the IP mothers were so indecent and that their children were untidy as they go to school. Teachers felt so inconvenient and disturbed of the strong odor of the learners.

Experiencing Workplace difficulty

If they are to choose, IP teachers would rather choose not to be assigned to the IP schools because of the condition of the workplace. By the experience, a teacher informant said:

Okay mag una kita sa area, like sa pag travel namo gajud, makalaong ako na dili (...) ahh sajun an pag travel namo, kay an dayan, dili sementado, di gajud sementado tapos (...) labon na sa konting uyan, jaon an pinaka struggle namo kay mo cross pa kami ng suba, hadlok since sa part namo, anytime man gud mo sulig an tubig sa suba, mo (...) basta mo baha sija, so amo jaon suyungon gamit an pumpboat, nah kay ang hadlok man gud basi (...) may possibility man gud na ma disgrasya or (...) malunod". (We shall start with the area, like in travelling, we can say it is not easy because the roads are not cemented, with little rain, we are afraid because we will cross the river, and anytime flood will come. We will use pumpboat. And it is fearful if we might meet accident like sinking). [P₇]

Kuman ang fear nalang nako ana is sa travel rakan jaon ting uyan kay lisud gajud multiple times na kami jaon mangatumba, makiling ang motor or mabali ...". (Now, our fear is on our travel especially if during rainy season because multiple times already that we slip-up and fall, the motorcycle would get outbalanced). [P₇]

Then, another teacher informant expressed that:

Oo, sementado naman, pero an pag saka man didto sa school di man sementado. An dayan raman pero pag abot didto sa taas, kay what is bukid man, dili, (...) lapok na sija, laong pa, may tendency na ma slide kaw laong..(Yes, it is cemented but at the top portion, it is yet cemented. It is muggy and there is a tendency that you would slide). [P₃]

Among the experiences shared by the informants, it was in the workplace wherein they suffered more. In the sense that they are considered strangers to the place, they found it very difficult to adjust the culture of the IPs at the beginning. Despite their best intentions to educate the IPs, teachers have inadequate knowledge on how to deliver their services as expected. Moreover, the risky, distant, rough road to school, especially during rainy days, hinders the immediate delivery of services. These would mean that teachers have given up their luxuries and conveniences in order to serve the indigenous peoples. Additionally, the teachers felt home sickness considering that most of them go home only on weekends. The bitter experiences of non-IP teachers amidst indigenous communities sometimes motivated them to file a transfer to other schools that were not inhabited by the indigenous peoples.

Overcoming IP Teachers Challenges to Teaching

No doubt, in every problem had its own set of solutions. In this case, the IP teachers' challenges and struggles led to the unique and practical application of their identified coping strategies based on their lived experiences while teaching the IP learners. Teachers have been experiencing challenges of different modes and levels. As such, IP teachers also face challenges every day. Oftentimes, as their experience would tell, their challenges come from their IP learners or pupils, whether they are misbehaving or failing to fully understand the lesson. Sometimes, they are also challenged by the behavior and reactions from the IP parents and the greater IP community. Nevertheless, IP teachers in the study can bond over the challenges they face and overcome them. Hence, overcoming the challenges encountered, the teachers themselves have their ways to combat them manifested in the generated sub-themes as follows: *Utilizing Home Visitation, Constant Communication with the Parents and Utmost Patience in Teaching.*

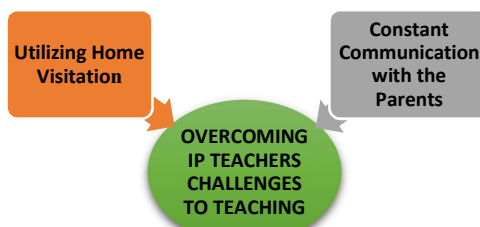


Figure 3.
Eidetic Framework of the Overcoming IP Teachers Challenges to Teaching

Utilizing Home Visitation

Understandably, home visits have a large influence on the academic achievement of the learners. Home visitation also influences the relationship between the teachers and the learners. Confronted with the issues of disruptive learners' behavior, inability to participate, and the prevalent habitual absenteeism, the participants of the study overcome such an issue of challenge by utilizing home visitation. Here are what they have said:

Uhmmm... home visit, kinahanglan gajud kaw mag home visit kay para mahibaw an nimo na "ngano ingun ani man ang bata?", "nganong ingun ani man ang iyang batasan?" ... ahh siguro kay amo inin ginikanan..." so pag mag home visit kaw ma kuan man gud nimo jaon sija... the way mo estorya ang ginikanan." (home visit, you need to home visit to know "why the child is like this? Why his attitude is like this" maybe because the parents are like this. So, if you're making home visit, you would know him from the way parents would tell story). [P₁]

"Oo, home visitation, amo gajud jaon isa ka kuan namo, total duol raman sa kumunidad, mo kuan gajud kami, mag hatag ng panahon para gajud ma address jaon na problema..." (Yes, home visitation, that is one we need to do because it is near in the community, we need to give time to address the problem). [P₂]

"Mag home visitation ako, oo kay lisud man kun 2-3 days na waya nay imo kuan kay di na gajud jaon sila (...) laong mo (...) may eagerness pa gani mo eskwela kay na kuan naman gud sila na (...) murag kapoy na sa ila kay laju man gud ang area... So amo jaon gikan gajud (...) basta kay 2-3 days di na na sila maka eskwela e home visit na gajud jaon namo". (I will do the home visitation because if already 2-3 days, it will be hard they might loss the eagerness to go to school, it seems that they felt tired because the area quite far. It's like that, if it is already 2-3 days that they escaped classes, we will do the home visit). [P₄]

"Oo home visitation tas nag decide kami na muhangjo kami sa barangay na mutugot na mo conduct kami nan (...) tutorial, half day ra, bahala half day ra." (Yes, home visitation then we decided to request from the barangay to allow us to conduct tutorial even half day only). [P₇]

"The basic here is the home visitation, but ahh sa laong pa nko gaina naay mga bata na pag home visit nimo waya then (...) kung mag home visit man gani kay naa tapos lang on nimo "eskwela naka pag ka lunes ha", "Yes Ma'am!", pero pag ka lunes waya". (The basic is the home visitation but there are children when you do home visit are out of coverage; if they are around, I will tell them to come to class on Monday. They are saying Yes Ma'am, but if Monday comes, they did not come). [P₉]

Many school systems employ teacher home visits as a means of fostering connections with parents in order to raise parent participation in the classroom and, ultimately, to improve student accomplishment. Based on the narration of the informants, the teachers from the IP schools in Gigaquit District managed the habitual

absenteeism of the IP learners that they have encountered by monitoring the learners or pupils through regular home visitation for intervention. This relates to the findings from the study by Valenzuela et al. (2022), which revealed that to ensure that their pupils are doing well, regular home visitation to visit their students and doing the “Learning Kamustahan” was contributory. The uniqueness of this practice from the other schools helps them a lot, even though some of the houses that they are visiting are so far from the school and sometimes it took 3 hours of walking and traveling in the houses of the Aeta pupils.

Constant Communication with the Parents

Much has been said that parent-teacher communication is very important to the process of helping improve the performance of the child in school. This has something to do with monitoring the child. It is true that improved communication between a child's parents and teachers promotes greater social development. To follow the status of the child, the parents need to contact and communicate with the teachers. And if the teachers are in doubt about the condition of the child, they need to communicate with the parents. As this challenge occurs with the IP teachers' experiences in teaching the IP learners, they come to a point of establishing constant communication with the parents to address such challenges. To view their responses, two teacher informants said:

“Syempre mo communicate kami sa parents, ‘na uman ini mga nanay naya man nag eskwela an imo bata’.. (Of course, we communicate with the parents saying, ‘why is this happening that your child is absent, we need to have reading activity). [P₂]

“I always have contact or communication to their parents, text or call to monitor pupil's attendance...” [P₆]

Overcoming the challenges through constant communication is very essential. Hence, teachers always need the help of the parents and for this reason, they will communicate with the parents. According to Jha (2022), teachers need to realize that parents can prove an excellent asset for the educational success of their children. Therefore, keeping communication with the parents consistent really helps.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study on the experiences of indigenous elementary teachers in Gigaquit reveals the complexities of education in indigenous communities. The teachers' narratives highlight the challenges and triumphs of bridging cultural and linguistic divides through quality education. The overarching themes, "Highly Difficult Teaching Responsibilities" and "Overcoming IP Teachers' Challenges to Teaching," underscore these complexities. Language barriers emerged as a significant hurdle, suggesting a need for comprehensive linguistic training for teachers in IP schools. Culturally responsive instructional strategies are essential for engaging IP learners. Habitual absenteeism, linked to prioritizing livelihood over education, indicates deeper socio-economic issues, calling for a more flexible and relevant educational system that incorporates traditional knowledge and skills. Teachers' encounters with parental illiteracy and occasional lack of community support emphasize the need for broader outreach strategies. Education in these contexts demands a holistic approach that involves the entire community, extending beyond traditional school-based instruction. Successful home visits and consistent parent communication serve as examples of effective community-focused approaches. Obstacles faced by teachers, from difficult commutes to inadequate resources, reflect the educational inequities experienced by marginalized groups. These experiences suggest the necessity for greater attention and resources from educational authorities to support teachers in challenging environments. However, these teachers' stories demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to self-improvement. Their dedication, coupled with a deep love for their students, offers hope for better educational outcomes for IP learners.

Educational authorities must proactively revisit schools within indigenous communities to accurately identify and address their unique challenges. Increased support and resources are crucial for teachers navigating these demanding environments. It's essential to provide them with the tools and infrastructure needed to foster effective learning. Developing and implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies, methods, and materials is vital for truly engaging IP learners. Education should resonate with their worldviews and lived

experiences, fostering a sense of connection and relevance. Building stronger partnerships with indigenous communities is key to successful education in these contexts. Involving parents and community members in the educational process, and implementing broader outreach strategies to address issues like parental illiteracy and lack of support, can make a significant difference. Providing comprehensive linguistic and cultural training for teachers working in IP schools is essential. This should be coupled with ongoing professional development opportunities that allow IP teachers to continuously enhance their skills and knowledge. Encouraging more IP learners to pursue careers in education is a crucial step towards culturally relevant teaching. Providing scholarship grants to support their education can help build a strong cohort of indigenous teachers who deeply understand the needs of their students.

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