Navigating Educational Crossroads: An In-Depth Analysis of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) Program in Santol, La Union, Philippines

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A B S T R A C T

This study explores the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program in Santol, La Union, Philippines, aiming to understand its intricacies, successes, challenges, and areas for improvement. Recognizing education's vital role in societal development, human rights, global sustainability, and empowerment of marginalized communities, the research addresses persistent challenges faced by indigenous populations despite strong legislative frameworks in the Philippines and global initiatives like Education for All (EFA). Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data collection involves surveys, documentary analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs), and interviews with teachers, pupils, parents, and Indigenous Peoples (IP) elders, primarily from the Kankanaey minority group. Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) and IP education specialists participate as advisors, ensuring cultural relevance and accuracy. Data analysis employs descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, with instrument validity and reliability ensured through expert reviews and pilot testing. Ethical considerations, including Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), confidentiality, and participant rights, are rigorously maintained. The findings aim to enhance educational policies and practices, aligning them with the evolving global and national educational landscape. By providing a comprehensive understanding of the IPEd Program's implementation, the study aspires to foster effective educational interventions that resonate with the unique cultural context of Indigenous communities. It advocates for a holistic approach to education, ensuring inclusive and quality education for all, especially for marginalized indigenous populations.

R E S U M O

Este estudo explora o Programa de Educação dos Povos Indígenas (IPEd) em Santol, La Union, Filipinas, com o objetivo de compreender suas complexidades, sucessos, desafios e áreas de melhoria. Reconhecendo o papel vital da educação no desenvolvimento social, nos direitos humanos, na sustentabilidade global e no empoderamento das comunidades marginalizadas, a investigação aborda os desafios persistentes enfrentados pelas populações indígenas, apesar dos fortes quadros legislativos nas Filipinas e de iniciativas globais como a Educação para Todos (EFA). Empregando um desenho de pesquisa de métodos mistos, o estudo integra abordagens quantitativas e qualitativas. A recolha de dados envolve inquéritos, análise documental, discussões em grupos focais (FGDs) e entrevistas com professores, alunos, pais e idosos dos Povos Indígenas (PI), principalmente do grupo minoritário Kankanaey. Representantes Obrigatórios dos Povos Indígenas (IPMRs) e especialistas em educação em PI participam como conselheiros, garantindo relevância e precisão cultural. A análise dos dados utiliza estatística descritiva e análise temática, com validade e confiabilidade do instrumento garantidas por meio de revisões de especialistas e testes piloto. Considerações éticas, incluindo Consentimento Livre e Prévio Informado (CLPI), confidencialidade e direitos dos participantes, são rigorosamente mantidas. As conclusões visam melhorar as políticas e práticas educacionais, alinhando-as com o cenário educacional global e nacional em evolução. Ao fornecer uma compreensão abrangente da implementação do Programa IPEd, o estudo aspira a promover intervenções educacionais eficazes que ressoem com o contexto cultural único das comunidades indígenas. Defende uma abordagem holística da educação, garantindo uma educação inclusiva e de qualidade para todos, especialmente para as populações indígenas marginalizadas.
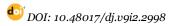
Introduction

Education, considered a fundamental human right and a powerful tool for societal transformation, is undergoing dynamic changes globally. Recent scholarly works underscore the evolving landscape of education, emphasizing its pivotal role not only in personal development but also as a catalyst for the realization of broader human rights and freedoms. As articulated by contemporary scholars, education serves as a gateway for marginalized populations, facilitating social and economic upliftment and active community participation (Smith et al., 2019; Jones, 2020; Wang & Lee, 2021).

In the pursuit of accessible and quality education for all, nations, civil society, and international bodies have rallied behind the Education for All (EFA) policy. This global initiative, underscored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), commits to ensuring the right to education, particularly for minority groups facing barriers to national education services (UNESCO, 2019). Recent literature affirms the significance of these efforts, recognizing education not only as an investment in personal development but also as a strategic input for a nation's survival and development (Brown, 2022).

The era of globalization has brought forth a paradigm shift in education, particularly within the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Recent literature outlines the imperative for a more internationally acclaimed higher education system, reflecting a commitment to addressing pressing challenges such as poverty, human rights violations, environmental degradation, and sustainable development adversities, especially among indigenous peoples (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020). The confluence of globalization and education policies aligns with the principles laid out in international human rights laws, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, emphasizing the integration of indigenous perspectives into mainstream education to preserve cultural identities (Cosentino, 2021).

Despite commendable global and regional initiatives, challenges persist, particularly for indigenous peoples (IPs) globally. Failure of many educational systems to address the unique needs of IPs, results in discrimination, cultural erosion, and high dropout rates among Indigenous children. The struggles faced by Native American students, as highlighted in a 2014 White House report, echo the global scenario, emphasizing the urgency of effective educational interventions for indigenous communities (Klein, 2023).

In the context of the Philippines, the significance of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and their education cannot be overstated. Mahinay (2015) reported in the mid-1990s that the country had approximately five million IPs, representing forty tribes. More recent estimates by the United Nations Development Programme (2018) suggest that there are now between fourteen to seventeen million IPs belonging to about one hundred eleven ethnic tribes/groups, primarily situated in the Northern and Southern Regions of Luzon.

IPs, often referred to as Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs), are typically found in coastal areas, lowlands, forests, and mountains, exhibiting diverse socio-economic levels of development. Their livelihoods encompass various systems of production, including farming, settled agriculture, hunting and gathering, livestock raising, fishing, and local handicraft production and trade. Central to their existence is their deep attachment to ancestral domains, considering land as crucial to their identity and survival (Doctolero, 2020).

Despite their rich cultural heritage, IPs are among the poorest and most marginalized groups globally, a reality reflected in the Philippines (Rimando, 2013). They continue to face limited access to quality basic social services, and economic opportunities, and suffer from social, economic, and political discrimination. Access to culture-sensitive and responsive basic education services remains a major challenge, especially considering the right to basic education as an enabling right (DepEd Order No. 62, S. 2011).

The 1987 Philippine Constitution, alongside Republic Act No. 8371 (IPRA Law), recognizes, protects, and promotes the rights of IPs, establishing the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to formulate and implement policies, programs, and protect their rights and well-being, including their right to education. Chapter VII, Section 46c of the IPRA Law mandates the Office on Culture, Education, and Health to ensure the effective implementation of education-related rights for IPs.

In response to the educational needs of IPs, the Department of Education (DepEd) has undertaken initiatives such as the Bureau of Alternative Learning System's (BALS) development of an IP Education Curriculum for the Alternative Learning System (ALS). This curriculum, developed in coordination with the NCIP, aims to meet the learning needs of IPs and ICCs, focusing on functional literacy and reflecting their core areas of concern, including family life, health, civic consciousness, economics, and the environment.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist, particularly concerning the lack of access to quality and culturally responsive education services for IPs. The establishment of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (K to 12) marked a significant milestone in Philippine education, aiming to align with international standards and address the needs of IPs through inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and flexibility in the curriculum (DepEd Order No. 62, S. 2011).

In the Ilocos Region, which is home to a significant Indigenous Peoples (IP) population, concerted efforts have been made to address the educational needs of IPs, with several schools implementing the IP Education (IPEd) Program. For instance, in La Union, one of the province's municipalities, Santol, has been designated as an IPEd implementing area, recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities for IP education in the region (Orpia, 2019).

Santol, formerly part of Amburayan, Mountain Province, boasts a rich history shaped by interactions between different ethnic groups, including Igorots and Ilocanos. Today, the municipality is predominantly inhabited by Ilocanos, with a significant population of the

Kankanaey ethnic group. However, despite efforts to preserve their culture and identity, challenges such as language loss, assimilation, and changing lifestyles pose threats to the Kankanaey tribe's heritage and the effectiveness of the IPEd program (Ducusin, 2021).

In light of these challenges, conducting a comprehensive assessment of the IPEd Program in Santol becomes imperative. By gaining insights into the current status of the program and identifying potential interventions, the Department of Education (DepEd) and relevant stakeholders can ensure that IPs in Santol receive quality and culturally responsive education, empowering them to preserve their heritage and contribute meaningfully to broader society.

This research endeavor aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on indigenous education, leveraging recent literature to analyze the status of the IPEd Program in Santol, La Union. Through an examination of the program's successes, challenges, and areas requiring improvement, this study seeks to inform educational policies and practices, aligning them with the evolving landscape of global and national educational goals.

Methodology

The methodology employed in the study concerning the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program in Santol, La Union, Philippines played a pivotal role in acquiring comprehensive and nuanced data. The research design, sources of data, data collection methods, data analyses, and ethical considerations collectively contributed to the robustness of the findings.

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, blending qualitative and quantitative approaches. This hybrid design allowed for a holistic exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of the IPEd Program, capturing both the statistical prevalence of challenges and the qualitative nuances of experiences. The deployment of surveys and focused group discussions (FGDs) ensured the triangulation of data, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the study. In this regard, the results of the Survey Questionnaire were validated and triangulated through the conduct of interviews and FGDs.

Sources of Data

The study is conducted across various elementary IPEd implementing schools in Santol, La Union, utilizing total enumeration sampling to comprehensively study the entire population of interest. This methodological approach proves practical due to the manageable size of the population and the homogeneous nature of the respondents, including teachers, pupils, parents, and Indigenous Peoples (IP) elders, predominantly belonging to the Kankanaey minority group.

Moreover, indigenous individuals, such as Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) and IP education specialists, actively participate as advisors in the research process. Their involvement ensures that the study respects and reflects the unique identity of the Kankanaey people, enriching the research with valuable insights and perspectives. Efforts are also made to integrate indigenous knowledge and practices into the research design, further enhancing cultural sensitivity and relevance. This holistic approach not only acknowledges the cultural context but also ensures that the research findings resonate authentically within the community.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Data collection methods encompass a range of techniques, including survey questionnaires, documentary analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs), and interviews. These methods are carefully selected to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the condition and status of the IPEd Program, facilitating both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Survey questionnaires are meticulously crafted based on relevant documents such as Department of Education Order No. 22. Series of 2016 (DO No. 22, s. 2016) - Implementing Guidelines of the Allocation and Utilization of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program Support Fund for Fiscal Year 2016 and Department of Education Order No. 62, series of 2011 (DO No. 62, s. 2011) -Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Policy Framework, while FGDs and interviews provide additional depth and validation.

Specifically:

1. School and School Heads/Teachers Profile Analysis: Documentary analysis and structured surveys are employed to gather data on school profiles, as well as profiles of school heads and teachers.

2. Assessment of IPEd Program Objectives and Implementation: Survey questionnaires serve as the primary tool to assess the level of attainment of program objectives and the extent of program implementation. Additionally, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) validate quantitative results.

3. Practices and Challenges in IPEd Implementing Schools: Focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews are conducted to explore the practices and challenges encountered by IPEd implementing schools. Through open dialogue and in-depth interviews, key issues and potential solutions are identified, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of program implementation challenges.

Data Analysis

Data gathered are organized, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive measures such as frequency counts, percentages, ratios, ranking, and mean. Thematic analysis is employed for decoding and validating responses from FGDs and interviews. The validity and reliability of instruments are assessed through expert reviews and pilot testing, ensuring the robustness of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Proper ethical protocols are observed throughout the study, including coordination with relevant authorities and obtaining Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) from participants. Measures are taken to ensure confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection of participants' rights. Scholarly treatment of data is maintained, with transparency in acknowledgment of sources and ethical conduct in data handling and analysis. This methodological approach ensures the systematic gathering and analysis of data while upholding ethical standards and cultural sensitivity in the research process.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the IPED Implementing Schools

Table 1 presents the profile of IPED-implementing schools in Santol, La Union, including (a) participation rate of IPs in enrollment, (b) school drop-out rate of IP learners, (c) classroom-to-pupil ratio, (d) financial resources, and (e) graduation rate of IP learners. Analysis of the table reveals that Santol Central School has the highest enrollment, averaging 261 learners over the past three years. This can be attributed to its central location within the

municipality, attracting both residents and highlanders seeking access to education, trade, and modern amenities.

Following Santol Central School, Bay-O Integrated School (Bay-o IS) and Liguay Elementary School have average enrollments of 247 and 172 learners, respectively. Despite being located in mountainous areas, these schools still have significant enrollments due to their strategic placement at the crossroads of various barangays in the upland regions of the town. Additionally, offering complete basic and secondary education programs contributes to their appeal and enrollment numbers.

It's worth noting that Sasaba Primary School has the fewest IP enrollees, averaging only 21 learners from School Years 2017-2020. This finding can be attributed to its remote location, along with Sapdaan Elementary School, Tubaday Primary School, and Pisnadan Primary School. These schools are situated in sparsely populated areas and offer education only up to grade 3. However, examining the percentage of IP learners in these schools reveals that nine out of ten have a 100% IP participation rate, with only Central School having a rate below 100% (82%) over the last three school years. This indicates that schools with a 100% enrollment rate cater to learners characterized as pure-blooded IPs. Consequently, the identified IPEd implementing schools in Santol, La Union, meet the Department of Education's requirement of at least an 80% enrollment of IP learners, thus qualifying to operate and implement culture-based education. Moreover, the results indicate that DepEd schools in Santol, La Union, adhere to the concept of "equal access to education," as evidenced by schools operating in remote areas despite having few enrollees.

Regarding the school dropout rate of IPs, four schools reported dropouts over the last three school years: Deccan Primary School, Liguay Elementary School, Ramot Elementary School, and Bay-O Integrated School (with rates of 0.72, 1.60, 0.31, and 3.91, respectively). According to information from the School Principals/Heads, common causes of dropout include family circumstances, distance from home to school, and lack of interest in school. Despite reported dropouts in some IPEd-implementing schools in Santol, La Union, the rate is negligible, constituting only a small portion. This indicates that most IP learners enrolled in these schools value education. Contrary to the findings of Ragma and Legaspi (2020) suggest high dropout rates impose failure among administrators, teachers, and the academic community, the negligible dropout rate in IPEd-implementing schools in Santol implies otherwise.

As to the classroom-to-pupil ratio, the table illustrates that most schools have a below-average ratio of 1:25, which is ideal for schools. Notably, LUSSCA has the highest classroom-to-pupil ratio (1:43) among the ten IPED-implementing schools. The School Head attributes this to having only two classrooms officially turned over by the Department of Education. To maintain the ideal ratio, makeshift classrooms were created with the assistance of the Parent-Teachers Association (PTA), and classrooms were borrowed from their high school

counterparts. In line with this, Belaineh (2021) discusses the conducive learning environment as one with an ideal number of pupils in the classroom. The initial data on classroom-to-pupil ratio in Santol suggests that IPED schools are striving to provide conducive learning environments, crucial for effective teaching and learning.

Additionally, Table 1 of the study outlines the annual financial resources of the ten IPED-implementing schools in Santol, La Union. Notably, Bay-O Integrated School receives the highest budget allocation. Despite ranking second in terms of IP learner enrollment, it receives the highest budget allocation due to its status as an integrated school offering junior high school education.

Following Bay-O Integrated School is Santol Central School, noted for having the highest number of enrollees. Conversely, Sasaba Primary School receives the least average budget allocation, correlating with its low enrollment numbers. Each IPED-implementing school receives a budget through Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE), granting school heads flexibility to plan and prioritize needs and encouraging them to seek financial resources from other sectors. Thus, financial resources for implementing the IPEd Program would not pose a problem to the schools if prioritized. Supporting this, Doctolero (2020) mentions that in Ilocos Sur schools, financial concerns are addressed through the increased autonomy of school heads, encouraged in all DepEd schools.

Lastly, Table 1 reveals data on the graduation rate of IPs. Four of the ten IPED-implementing schools achieved a 100% graduation rate over the past three years. Two schools attained an average rate of 97.40%, possibly linked to reported dropouts. In contrast, three schools had an average rate of 66.6%, reflecting one school year without graduates. Examining these schools—Deccan Primary School, Pisnadan Primary School, and Tubaday Primary School—it's noted that they primarily cater to primary pupils. School heads clarified that in some years, they didn't offer full basic education due to low enrollment. However, before enrollment, parents are informed, and pupils are assisted in transferring to nearby schools offering complete basic education. Thus, pupils who start primary education in these schools aren't hindered from continuing intermediate grades elsewhere (Antolin, 2021). Despite this, the high graduation rate of IP learners in Santol's IPEd-implementing schools suggests their eagerness and determination to pursue education.

The results regarding the profile of IPED implementing schools in Santol, La Union, indicate that these schools are qualified, sufficiently equipped, and capable of implementing the IPEd Program. This is evidenced by the high participation rate of IP learners, negligible or zero dropout rates in most schools, an ideal classroom-to-pupil ratio, availability of financial resources, and a high graduation rate of IP learners.

Table 1
Profile of the IPED Implementing

IPED Implemen-ting Schools	Participation Rate of IPs in Terms of Enrolment					School Drop-Out Rate of IP learners (in %)				Classroom to Pupil Ratio				Financial Resources				Graduation Rate of IPs			
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Ave.	%	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Ave.	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Ave.	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Ave.	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Ave.
Deccan PS	68	40	46	51	100%	0	0	2.17	0.72	1:23	1:13	1:15	1:17	136,246	152,796	174,768	154,6003	100%	0%	100%	66.67%
Liguay ES	195	173	148	172	100%	1.03	1.73	2.03	1.60	1:22	1:19	1:19	1:20	189,876	243,948	274,444	236,089	98.08%	100%	94.12%	97.40%
Pisnadan PS	58	72	64	65	100%	0	0	0	0	1:12	1:14	1:13	1:13	91,812	131,352	157,692	126,952	0%	100%	100%	66.67%
Ramot ES	113	107	104	108	100%	0	0.93	0	0.31	1:28	1:18	1:17	1:21	176,160	201,360	223,632	200,384	100%	100%	100%	100%
Santol CS	258	263	262	261	82%	0	0	0	0	1:32	1:33	1:33	1:33	268,044	303,333	394,632	322,003	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sapdaan ES	64	61	54	60	100%	0	0	0	0	1:13	1:12	1:11	1:12	141,180	141,180	206,226	162,862	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sasaba PS	24	20	20	21	100%	0	0	0	0	1:12	1:10	1:10	1:11	68,640	111,264	142,284	107,396	0%	0%	0%	0%
Tubaday PS	55	64	58	59	100%	0	0	0	0	1:14	1:16	1:15	1:15	79,332	118,848	186,096	128,092	0%	100%	100%	66.6%
LUSSCA	71	90	94	85	100%	0	0	0	0	1:36	1:45	1:47	1:43	76,668	118,848	173,448	122,988	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bay-O IS	255	253	234	247	100%	4.31	3.56	3.85	3.91	1:23	1:23	1:21	1:22	187,756	567,144	602,412	452,437	92.31%	100%	100%	97.44%

Turning to the profile of school heads and teachers, Table 2 reveals that the majority have pursued or are currently pursuing postgraduate education. Specifically, 49.92% have master's units, 16.67% hold master's degrees, 4.17% have completed doctorate units, and 4.17% have obtained doctorate degrees.

Conversely, only 25.01% have acquired postgraduate diplomas, indicating that most are still in the early stages of higher education pursuit. This suggests that the percentage of school heads/teachers meeting basic entry requirements (27.08%) and those with master units (47.92%) largely consists of individuals early in their careers, those supporting families prioritizing their children's education, or those nearing retirement who may not see the benefit of further educational advancement.

These findings regarding the educational qualifications of school heads and teachers align with those revealed in the study by Doctolero (2020), which noted that most school heads and teachers in IPED-implementing schools in Ilocos Sur possess basic entry qualifications and have completed units in Master's programs. This suggests that postgraduate education is beginning to be recognized by school heads and teachers as an important tool for professional development.

In the study conducted by Ion and Iucu (2021), it was discovered that enrolling in postgraduate studies contributes significantly to the teaching skills of educators. This includes improvements in instructional competence, teaching programs, instructional environments, material development, measurement and evaluation, and fostering a culture of continuous

learning. Such educational advancements enhance teaching practices and provide opportunities to explore new strategies for teaching and research.

However, considering the realities that obtaining postgraduate education demands considerable time, financial resources, and effort, coupled with the fact that not everyone may be willing to pursue further education and that delays in IPEd implementation are undesirable, there arises a need to explore alternative means to address these challenges.

Zooming to the ranks of the teachers, the table demonstrates that a majority of school heads and teachers hold the Teacher 1 position (43.75%). This trend arises from the practice of assigning newly hired teachers to upland schools, allowing senior teachers opportunities to teach in lowland areas (Esteban, 2021). Given that many IPED-implementing schools are situated in mountainous regions, this practice aligns with the data.

This finding correlates with the data on the Highest Educational Attainment of school heads and teachers, wherein most are in the process of acquiring master's units, followed by those meeting basic entry requirements. In a related study by Berry, Daughtrey, & Weider (2022) suggested that teachers' rank significantly influences their effectiveness, reflecting their overall professional background encompassing educational qualifications, teaching experience, eligibility, professional training/seminars, and expertise. Higher rank often correlates with greater competence and effectiveness, although this is not always the case. These insights imply that the rank of school heads and teachers may impact the implementation of the IPEd Program to some extent, but not entirely. This underscores the need for alternative approaches to address this concern, as improving rank is not a quick process.

Regarding years of service by school heads and teachers, the majority have served for 1-10 years (72.92%), followed by 11-20 years (18.75%), with the smallest percentage having served 21-30 years (8.33%). This indicates that teaching positions in Santol's IPED-implementing schools are predominantly held by newer and younger educators. This trend aligns with the data on the Highest Educational Attainment and Rank of school heads and teachers, suggesting that many key figures in Santol's IPEd-implementing schools are relatively new to the profession and are still in the process of adjusting, learning, and experimenting. This underscores the importance of professional guidance through mentoring, monitoring, seminars, pieces of training, and similar avenues. In terms of the Ethnicity of School Heads and Teachers, it's noteworthy that the majority belong to the Kankanaey tribe (54.17%), followed by Ilocano (41.67%), with a smaller percentage from the Bago tribe (2.00%). This finding in Santol's IPED implementing schools aligns somewhat with DepEd Order 62, s. 2011, which aims to strengthen the hiring, deployment, and continuous development of duty-bearers by encouraging and supporting IPs to enter the teaching profession and participate in an education that respects, protects, and promotes their culture and identity. Incorporating this policy into the implementation of the IPEd Program is rooted in the belief that IP school heads and teachers are better equipped to implement culturally responsive education. However, despite the favorable number of Kankanaey school heads and teachers, some schools are still managed by non-IP school heads and are staffed predominantly by non-IP teachers.

The Department of Education anticipates this issue and emphasizes the importance of school engagement with Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) and capacity-building opportunities. Engaging with ICCs provides schools the opportunity to better implement IP education by involving IP elders not only in planning but also in the teaching-learning process, particularly in integrating IP culture or Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs). Capacity-building opportunities aim to equip school heads, teachers, and other stakeholders, both IP and non-IP, with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the IPEd Program effectively.

On the contrary, the findings regarding the Mother Tongue of School Heads and Teachers paint a different picture. It was revealed that the majority use Iloko as their mother tongue (62.50%), while only 47.67% use Kankanaey, despite earlier indications that the majority of duty bearers belong to the Kankanaey ethnicity. This discrepancy can be attributed to the fact that some pure-blooded Kankanaey school heads/teachers may have grown up in Ilocano communities, thus learning the local culture and dialect instead of or alongside their ancestral culture and dialect.

This situation can be understood through the concept of acculturation, as explained by Erten et al. (2018), where immigrant and resident cultures coexist, leading individuals to engage in cross-cultural interactions. When resident individuals are more culturally conservative than immigrants, immigrants tend to adopt the culture of the residents, especially if certain cultural traits offer more advantages. Individuals use social learning to adopt these advantageous cultural traits.

Considering that IP culture and dialect are integral aspects of the IPEd Program, the results on the ethnicity and mother tongues of school heads and teachers could potentially impact the program's implementation. This highlights the need for alternative interventions to address this issue.

Regarding the Number of Hours/Days of Seminars/Training Attended on IP Education within the last three (3) years, Table 2 illustrates that the majority of respondents have not attended any seminar or training on IP education (52.08%), followed by those who have attended only 1-3-day seminars/pieces of training (43.75%). These data underscore the significant lack of training and seminars among school heads and especially teachers in implementing the IPED Program.

As highlighted by Solheim (2021), effective teacher learning and professional training play a crucial role in student achievement. These insights emphasize the importance of providing adequate training and seminars for teachers and school heads to ensure the success of the program and the holistic development of learners.

Thus, the results of this indicator do not align with the objectives outlined in DepEd Order No. 43, s. 2013, titled "Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 10533," which aims to strengthen the hiring, deployment, and continuous development of teachers and learning facilitators in implementing IP Education Programs. Similarly, they do not align with the mandate outlined in DepEd Order No. 22, s. 2016, which emphasizes the importance of capacity building for teachers and school heads.

Last on the profile of School Heads and Teachers is the Number of Localized/Indigenized Teaching/Learning Materials Used within the last three (3) years. The result on this aspect is concerning, as the majority of respondents reported using none (66.67%), followed by those who reported using 1-3 teaching/learning materials (16.67%), 4-6 materials (10.41%), and 10 and above (6.25%). These results deviate from the promotion of culturally appropriate learning resources and environments responsive to the specific community context of IP learners, as outlined in DepEd Order No. 43, s. 2013, and DepEd Order No. 22, s. 2016. This misalignment also contradicts the research report of the ECIP (2010), which emphasizes the importance of appropriate educational aids and the localization/indigenization of materials in education for IPs.

In the research conducted by Garin et al. (2021), it was found that students exposed to localized teaching materials achieved higher pretest and posttest scores compared to those exposed to contextualized but not localized (indigenized) teaching. This underscores the importance of using localized and indigenized teaching and learning materials, especially in IPED-implementing schools.

Acknowledging that all indicators under the profile of school heads and teachers in identified IPED-implementing schools can potentially affect program implementation, these results emphasize the significant task of addressing and supporting the main implementers of the IPEd Program in Santol, La Union. Additionally, considering that educational qualifications, rank, years in service, ethnicity, and mother tongue cannot be altered overnight, alternative strategies must be implemented.

Table 2.
School Heads and Teachers' Profile

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
A. Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree Holder	13	27.08 %
With Units in Masteral	23	47.92 %
Master's Degree Holder	8	16.67 %
With Units in Doctorate	2	4.17 %
Doctorate Degree Holder	2	4.17 %
B. Rank		
Teacher I	21	43.75 %
Teacher II	6	12.50 %
Teacher III	10	20.83 %
Master Teacher I	3	6.25 %
Head Teacher I	5	10.42 %
Principal	3	6.25 %
C. Years in Service		
1-10 years	35	72.92 %
11-20 years	9	18.75 %
21-30 years	4	8.33 %
D. Ethnicity		
Kankanaey	26	54.17 %
Bago	2	4.17 %
Ilocano	20	41.67 %
E. Mother Tongue		
Kankanaey	23	47.92 %
Iloko	30	62.50 %
F. No. of Hours/Days of Seminars/Training Attended on IP Education within the last 3 years		
None	25	52.08 %
1-3 Days	21	43.75 %
4-6 Days	1	2.08 %
7 Days and Above	1	2.08 %
G. Number of Localized/Indigenized Teaching/Learning Materials Used within the last 3 years		
None	32	66.67 %
1-3 Teaching/Learning Materials	8	16.67 %
4-6 Teaching/Learning Materials	5	10.41 %
7-9 Teaching/Learning Materials	0	0 %
10 and Above	3	6.25 %

Level of Attainment of Objectives of the IPED Program

The analysis of the Level of Attainment of Objectives of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) Program in the Santol region, as presented in Table 3, provides a comprehensive overview of the program's effectiveness and identifies areas needing improvement. The overall Grand Mean of 3.71, with a Descriptive Rating of "Highly Attained,"

indicates commendable progress towards meeting the set objectives. This high level of attainment is somewhat corroborated by the results of the school profiles, which indicate that most IP learners are eager to attend and complete their basic education. It suggests that IP learners do not feel threatened attending school, perceiving value and absence of discrimination.

Upon closer examination of the data, it is evident that objective five (5) achieved the highest level of attainment, with a weighted mean of 3.99, corresponding to "Highly Attained." Objective five aims to "Address the learning needs of IP learners who lack access to basic education services." This is supported by statements from pupil interviews, where many expressed appreciation for the proximity of their schools to their homes and the absence of financial burden. As one pupil exclaimed during an interview, "It's good, big brother. Our school is beautiful and near. Fewer expenses because there are no things to spend with." Similarly, parents cited economic considerations, with one remarking, "My pocket will be emptied if it's in the low land but here we have our livelihood."

Table 3.
Level of Attainment of Objectives of the IPED Program

Objectives of the IPED Program	Administrators/ Teachers		Pupils		Parents		IPMRs		GRAND Mean	
	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR
1. Make the curriculum culturally responsive to the specific community context of IP learners.	4.05	A	3.23	MA	3.32	MA	3.7	A	3.58	HA
2. Build the capacity of teachers, school heads, and other concerned personnel at different levels of governance in implementing culture-based education for IPs	3.65	A	3.41	MA	3.45	MA	3.5	MA	3.50	MA
3. Support the development of culturally appropriate learning resources and learning environments responsive to the specific community context of IP learners.	3.79	A	3.47	MA	3.41	MA	3.3	MA	3.49	MA
4. Strengthen the policy environment supportive of IPEd.	4.25	A	3.82	A	3.62	A	4.2	A	3.97	HA
5. Address the learning needs of IP learners who lack access to basic education services.	4.35	A	3.83	A	3.89	A	3.9	A	3.99	HA
GRAND Mean	4.02	HA	3.55	HA	3.54	HA	3.72	HA	3.71	HA

Legend: M – Mean; DR – Descriptive Rating; VHA– Very Highly Attained; HA – Highly Attained; MA – Moderately Attained; SA –Slightly Attained; NA– Not Attained

However, despite these positive sentiments, it was noted that some pupils still need to walk considerable distances, about 20-30 minutes, to reach school. Nonetheless, many appreciate the presence of schools in their communities and the dedication of teachers who

travel from the lowlands to provide education services. This is evidenced by the high participation rate of IP learners, negligible drop-out rates or zero drop-outs in most schools, and high graduation rates of IP learners.

In a similar vein, it could also be understood from the results that although the descriptive rating for the level of achievement of objectives is high, it has not yet reached the highest possible level, suggesting that improvement is still needed. Zooming in on the results, two (2) of the IPED objectives were found to have a moderately attained descriptive equivalent, with weighted means of 3.50 and 3.49 respectively. These objectives, numbered two (2) and three (3), aim to "Build the capacity of teachers, school heads, and other concerned personnel at different levels of governance in implementing culture-based education for IPs" and to "Support the development of culturally appropriate learning resources and learning environments responsive to the specific community context of IP learners."

The result regarding the capacity building of teachers, school heads, and other personnel can be attributed to the findings on the profile of school heads and teachers. It was discovered that the IPEd schools in Santol, La Union are mainly staffed by young educators with basic entry qualifications, primarily occupying Teacher 1 positions, relatively new in their roles, not predominantly from the Kankanaey tribe, more fluent in Iloko than in Kankanaey, and have mostly not attended seminars or trainings on IP education within the last three (3) years. Additionally, during focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted with school heads and teachers, it was observed that they expressed a lack of capacity to effectively implement IP education. One school head mentioned during an FGD, "Number one is the limited knowledge of the teachers about the IKSPs since most are non-IP, although they are IP they did not get to witness these cultural practices before." The limited understanding of IKSPs, integral to the IP Education Curriculum Framework as specified in various Department Orders, indicates that teachers are not adequately prepared to implement culture-based education.

Furthermore, although school heads mentioned efforts to build capacity through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, teachers revealed that there were few sessions specifically focused on IP education. When asked about seminars or pieces of training, most respondents mentioned only attending one recent webinar, indicating insufficient training. One teacher participant expressed, "It is not enough, sir. Especially for me, as I tend to forget things and there are aspects of IPED that I am not familiar with because I belong to the new generation."

During FGDs with Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs), there was an acknowledgment of the potential of IP school heads and teachers to implement the IPED program with training. Parents also expressed reservations, particularly regarding non-IP educators' ability to effectively teach IP education. From the students' perspective, IP teachers were seen as capable, while non-IP teachers were perceived as making an effort. However, when asked about the integration of IP culture into lessons, most students reported minimal incorporation and difficulty providing examples.

Alsubaie (2021) and Johnston and George (2018), emphasized in their study that for effective and successful curriculum implementation, it's imperative for teachers, including school heads, to be actively involved and trained. This underscores the significant roles played by these key implementers, underscoring the necessity of their preparation and training to effectively carry out the curriculum.

Additionally, regarding the third objective of the IPED Program, which focuses on developing culturally appropriate learning resources and environments for IP learners, the findings are further supported by data collected on the profiles of school heads and teachers. It was revealed that a majority of them have not attended seminars or training on IP education, potentially hindering their effectiveness. This aligns with the findings on the utilization of localized or indigenized teaching materials within the last three years, where it was also discovered that most school heads and teachers lack such materials.

During focus group discussions and interviews conducted to triangulate the questionnaire results, this lack of materials was confirmed. A parent participant expressed, "I'm not seeing anything like that, sir," when asked about the presence of IP-specific teaching or learning materials in their child's school. Similarly, pupils mentioned primarily encountering musical materials like "gongs" with minimal IP content in their textbooks.

IPMRs also concurred, noting a shortage of IP teaching and learning materials in implementing schools. This sentiment was echoed by teachers and school heads, who cited a lack of materials as a significant challenge. One teacher mentioned, "The problem in my case is the lack of materials, especially stories that students can relate to. Using materials written by someone from the USA isn't effective." A school head also emphasized the importance of creating materials like mortar and pestles to facilitate understanding. The consensus among parents, pupils, IPMRs, teachers, and school heads underscores the critical need for adequate IP-specific teaching and learning resources to effectively implement the curriculum and promote culturally responsive education.

In this regard, Ajoke (2021) emphasized the significance of using appropriate instructional materials, revealing that students exposed to such materials performed better compared to those who were not. Similarly, Shreveport (2020) defined a culturally responsive environment as one that utilizes cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and diverse learning styles to enhance learning effectiveness and relevance. A culturally responsive learning environment, he noted, offers several benefits including reduced behavioral problems, stronger teacher-student bonds, enhanced learning, and increased self-esteem.

However, in the context of the school heads and teachers in Santol's IPEd-implementing schools, despite many belonging to the Kankanaey tribe, most admitted to not having witnessed their ancestors' cultural practices due to growing up in Ilocano communities. Additionally, many are relatively young, as revealed in their profiles.

Extent of Implementation of the IPED Program

Table 4 illustrates the Extent of Implementation of the IPED Program, utilizing the 7 Policy Framework on IP Education outlined in DO. No. 62, s. 2011 (Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) Policy Framework). The weighted mean for the extent of implementation is 3.86, with a descriptive equivalent of Highly Implemented. This aligns with the result on the level of attainment of objectives of the IPED Program and is further supported by the profile results of the IPEd schools in Santol, La Union. These schools qualify as IPEd implementing schools, with nearly one hundred percent (100%) IP learners, adequate budget means, and sufficient classrooms/learning environments. Moreover, they demonstrate a capacity to implement culture-based education, as evidenced by the high willingness of IP learners to attend schools and complete their education, reflected in the negligible dropout rates and high graduation rates among IPs. Despite the high extent of implementation, there is room for improvement as it has not yet reached the highest possible level.

Upon analysis of the generated data, it is apparent that Policy one (1) — "Ensure the provision of universal and equitable access of all IPs to quality and relevant basic education services towards functionality for all" — exhibits the highest level of implementation. This policy correlates with Objective 5 regarding the level of attainment of objectives, which also garnered the highest weighted mean and is supported by the results of the schools' profiles. This indicates that IPs value the presence of schools within their communities and appreciate having teachers who cater to their learning needs.

Table 4.

Extent of Implementation of the IPED Program

DepEd's Seven Policy Framework on IP Education	Administrators/ Teachers		Pupils		Parents		IPMRs		GRAND Mean	
	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR
1. Ensure the provision of universal and equitable access of all IP to quality and relevant basic education services towards functionality for all.	4.21	HI	3.73	HI	3.72	HI	4.05	HI	3.93	HI
1.1. Providing culture-responsive basic education services through formal school system.	4.28	HI	3.72	HI	3.79	HI	4.0	HI	3.95	HI
1.2. Using basic education service contracting and other public-private partnership (PPP) schemes.	4.26	HI	3.81	HI	3.75	HI	4.4	HI	4.01	HI
1.3. Expanding both supply and demand-side interventions and diversified as needed.	4.21	HI	3.67	HI	3.71	HI	4.2	HI	3.95	HI
1.4. Gathering in an appropriate and timely manner relevant data needed from schools for the effective planning and implementation of IPs' education.	4.08	HI	3.72	HI	3.61	HI	3.6	HI	3.75	HI

DepEd's Seven Policy Framework on IP Education	Adminis-trators/ Teachers		Pupils		Parents		IPMRs		GRAND Mean	
	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR
2. Adopt appropriate basic education pedagogy, content, and assessment through the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) in all learning areas and processes.	4.02	HI	3.77	HI	3.66	HI	3.68	HI	3.78	HI
2.1. Giving due recognition to and promote the sustainability of indigenous learning systems.	4.12	HI	4.02	HI	3.92	HI	4.1	HI	4.02	HI
2.2. Prioritizing the further development and implementation of school services for schools with enrolled IP learners.	4.09	HI	3.72	HI	3.81	IH	3.7	HI	3.83	HI
2.3. Mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE).	3.72	HI	3.39	MI	3.19	MI	3.5	MI	3.45	MI
2.4. Culture-responsive education for sustainable development.	4.19	HI	3.82	HI	3.73	HI	3.8	HI	3.89	HI
2.5. Alternative modes of instruction delivery and assessment schemes to address the peculiar needs of IP learners.	4.0	HI	3.91	HI	3.68	HI	3.3	MI	3.72	HI
3. Provide adequate and culturally-appropriate learning resources and environment to IP learners.	4.03	HI	3.67	HI	3.66	HI	3.75	HI	3.78	HI
3.1. Ensuring the proper selection and development of textbooks and other supplementary learning materials provided to IP learners.	3.89	HI	3.35	MI	3.16	MI	3.1	MI	3.38	MI
3.2. Putting in place a policy that would promote the establishment and maintenance of culture responsive educational infrastructure, learning environment and spaces.	3.93	HI	3.70	HI	3.83	HI	3.7	HI	3.79	HI
3.3. Encouraging and supporting documentation and research activities by IPs on their own history, knowledge, practices, and other aspects of cultural heritage.	4.02	HI	3.75	HI	3.70	HI	4.1	HI	3.89	HI
3.4. Upholding and advocating the protection of the intellectual property rights of IPs in pursuing this policy.	4.26	HI	3.87	HI	3.95	HI	4.1	HI	4.05	HI
4. Strengthen the hiring, deployment and continuous development of teachers and learning facilitators in the implementation of the IPEd Program.	4.04	HI	3.67	HI	3.73	HI	3.95	HI	3.85	HI
4.1. Reviewing, harmonizing and aligning its teacher education and development policies consistent with the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS), MTB-MLE Policy, "Localization Law" (R.A. No. 8190), and other relevant laws and issuances.	4.39	HI	3.52	HI	3.87	HI	4.0	HI	3.95	HI
4.2. Support affirmative action responding to the learning needs of IP learners.	4.25	HI	3.84	HI	3.83	HI	3.9	HI	3.96	HI

Continuation of Table 4. *Extent of Implementation of the IPED Program*

DepEd's Seven Policy Framework on IP Education	Adminis-trators/ Teachers		Pupils		Parents		IPMRs		GRAND Mean	
	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR
4.3. Pursuing as needed a support program for the training and provision of incentives for teachers assigned in IP communities, especially in isolated and hard to reach areas.	3.75	HI	3.47	MI	3.55	HI	3.7	HI	3.61	HI
4.4. Encouraging and mobilizing support for members of IP communities, who may wish to enter the teaching profession, help them complete the necessary academic preparation and satisfy professional licensure requirements encouraging and supporting participation of community members, especially elders and community knowledge specialists, in the learning process.	3.77	HI	3.83	HI	3.65	HI	4.2	HI	3.86	HI
5. Establish and strengthen appropriate multi-level units within DepEd responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring IP Education interventions.	4.30	HI	3.66	HI	3.53	HI	3.60	HI	3.77	HI
5.1. Strengthening the capacity of its teaching and non-teaching staff across levels to effectively and efficiently manage the IP education.	4.63	HI	3.66	HI	3.31	MI	4.0	HI	3.9	HI
5.2. Ensuring that adequate financial support-sourced from various sources, such as the agency's regular annual budget, the LGU's Special Support Fund (SEF), and education projects-are readily available to implementing units/entities to ensure smooth implementation and sustainability of education services.	3.96	HI	3.66	HI	3.75	HI	3.2	MI	3.64	HI
6. Expand and strengthen institutional and civil society linkages to ensure proper coordination, knowledge-sharing, and sustainability of the IPs' education.	3.93	HI	3.55	HI	3.75	HI	3.5	MI	3.68	HI

Continuation of Table 4. *Extent of Implementation of the IPED Program*

DepEd's Seven Policy Framework on IP Education	Adminis-trators/ Teachers		Pupils		Parents		IPMRs		GRAND Mean	
	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR
6.1. Maximizing collaboration with NCIP, Indigenous Peoples' Organization (IPO), civil society organization (CSO) , and other public and private institutions as the mechanism to coordinate, formulate policies, undertake social mobilization and advocacy, mobilize resources, and monitor and evaluate IPs' education interventions and initiatives.	3.89	HI	3.61	HI	3.81	HI	3.4	MI	3.68	HI

	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR	M	DR
6.2. Organizing consultations and dialogues needed.	3.96	HI	3.48	MI	3.68	HI	3.6	HI	3.68	HI
7. Implement stronger affirmative action to eradicate all forms of discrimination against IPs in the entire educational system.	3.94	HI	3.50	MI	3.68	HI	3.60	HI	3.68	HI
7.1. Nurturing, among all learners and DepEd teaching and non-teaching personnel, respect for human rights and cultural diversity.	4.39	HI	3.93	HI	4.05	HI	3.9	HI	4.07	HI
7.2. Ensuring that textbooks, supplementary learning materials, and other learning resources are free from discriminatory content and erroneous accounts, descriptions, and visual depictions, part of the Philippine nation's cultural heritage and history.	3.33	MI	3.10	MI	3.43	MI	3.3	MI	3.29	MI
7.3. Appropriately integrating IP culture and history into the learning content of mainstream schools and learning programs.	3.89	HI	3.25	MI	3.32	MI	3.5	MI	3.49	MI
7.4. Actively Promoting compliance with its policy among private schools and other private institutions of learnings.	4.14	HI	3.71	HI	3.91	HI	3.7	HI	3.87	HI
GRAND Mean	4.07	HI	3.65	HI	3.68	HI	4.05	HI	3.86	HI

Legend: M – Mean; DR – Descriptive Rating; VHI– Very Highly Implemented; HI – Highly Implemented; MI – Moderately Implemented; SI –Slightly Implemented; NI– Not Implemented

Regarding the second policy, while it received Highly Implemented remarks, concerns arose during the FGDs with IPMRs, school heads, and teachers regarding the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) in the implementation of the IPED Program. An IPMR participant stated, "Teachers who are non-IP find it difficult to integrate IKSPs, as even IP teachers struggle." Similarly, a teacher-participant highlighted the challenge, stating, "Integration of IKSPs is essential, but it's difficult if you lack knowledge; you might inject something incorrectly."

School heads concurred, identifying a lack of IKSP integration alongside teachers' general unfamiliarity with IKPs as key issues. Parents and pupils echoed this sentiment during interviews, indicating a perceived lack of IP culture integration in classrooms, with many expressing that it exists to a minimal extent ("Adda met").

These findings align with results from the profiles of school heads and teachers, revealing a lack of necessary experiences, knowledge, and skills to understand and integrate IKSPs effectively into education. This mirrors Donato-Kinomis's (2022) findings, which highlighted an increasing deterioration in IPs' knowledge, systems, and practices due to ongoing assimilation and teachers' inability to incorporate them into classroom settings, contributing to waning interest among young people.

Similarly, under this policy, it is worth noting that one of its indicators, indicator 2.3 on the use of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), has a Moderately Implemented descriptive equivalent rating. During interviews with pupils, this finding was somewhat supported, as most stated that the mother tongue used in their schools is Iloko rather than Kankanaey. However, some mentioned that certain teachers use Kankanaey, while others use both languages. As one pupil-participant expressed, "They are using Iloko and a little of Kankanaey."

This observation was also echoed during interviews with parents, as many perceived that most teachers in their children's schools are Ilocano, thus using Iloko. This is consistent with findings from the profiles of school heads and teachers regarding ethnicity and mother tongue. Despite most school heads and teachers in IPED implementing schools being Kankanaey, the results regarding their mother tongues paint a different picture, revealing that most use Iloko.

Returning to the interviews with parents, one participant remarked, "Ilocano teachers speak Iloko, and Kankanaey teachers speak Kankanaey. But most of the time, they use Iloko because it is what they use when talking to us." However, one comment from a parent particularly caught the researcher's attention: "They are only using Iloko because even we parents are being instructed not to allow our children to use Kankanaey in school so that they can also learn how to speak Iloko, Tagalog, and English." This remark is concerning, as it suggests that IP learners are being prohibited from using their language in school, contradicting the purpose of such schools, which should protect and promote IP culture, including their dialect, rather than suppress it.

During the FGD with the IPMRs, a suggestion emerged regarding how to enhance the implementation of the IPED Program in Santol: teachers should use Kankanaey as one of the mediums of instruction. One participant expressed, "Mother tongue should be taught/used instead of Iloko. Mostly in the mountains, their mother tongue is Kankanaey but they are teaching/using Iloko. This should be one of the things that they will look into."

Conversely, in the FGD with the teachers, the viewpoint differed from that of the parents, pupils, and IPMR participants, as most stated that they are indeed using Kankanaey as one of the mediums of instruction, particularly in the lower grades. The rationale behind this preference for Kankanaey in lower grades is that K-Grade 3 pupils have difficulty understanding Iloko, finding Kankanaey more accessible. This practice was further supported by school heads' discussions on teacher placement as a response to culture-based education. One school head explained, "Our school is culture-sensitive and culture-responsive because teachers assigned to lower grades are IP teachers. Sometimes, though the grade 1 teacher is not an IP, they can explain using the dialect because they have been there for quite some time."

The FGDs also shed light on the mother tongue profiles, noting that Iloko is the mother tongue of most school heads and teachers. However, participants clarified that being Iloco speakers doesn't imply a lack of proficiency in Kankanaey. Regarding newly hired non-IP teachers assigned to IPEd schools, they are not placed in primary grades until they gradually learn the IP dialect.

These insights helped the researcher understand why most pupils and parents perceived this indicator as moderately implemented, as they are from grades 4-6 where Kankanaey usage is less prevalent. Additionally, the decision to prioritize Kankanaey in primary grades aligns with the mandate of the Department of Education on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) under Republic Act 10523 (DepEd, 2016), as articulated in DO. No. 32, s. 2015 where mother tongue must be used in the primary grades only and Filipino and English will be used as mediums of instruction in the intermediate grades.

With participants in the FGDs and interviews consistently describing their own experiences and observations, alongside real scenarios from the schools they represent regarding IKSP, the researcher gained insight into the validity of Policy 2's rating. Despite being rated as Highly Implemented, it became apparent that this rating does not hold, particularly for indicators 2.1 and 2.5. These indicators, focusing on giving recognition to and promoting the sustainability of indigenous learning systems and alternative modes of

instruction delivery, respectively, serve as primary avenues to integrate IKSPs into basic education pedagogy, content, and assessment across all learning areas and processes.

Regarding indicator 2.3, which pertains to MTB-MLE, it can be concluded that the result is accurate but with certain caveats, as outlined above. This suggests that MTB-MLE implementation in IPEd schools in Santol, La Union, is not problematic and is being executed effectively. Additionally, Teacher Placement strategies are being utilized to address concerns regarding non-IP teachers and those who are not fluent in Kankanaey.

In essence, while Policy 2 may appear to be highly implemented overall, a closer examination reveals nuances in certain indicators. This underscores the importance of thorough evaluation and understanding of implementation practices to ensure alignment with intended outcomes.

On the contrary, the result of the third policy, focusing on the adequacy and appropriateness of learning resources and environment for IP learners, contradicts the result of Objective 3, which addresses the development of culturally appropriate learning resources and environments responsive to the specific community context of IP learners. Policy 3 is rated as highly implemented, whereas Objective 3 is rated as Moderately Attained. However, upon closer examination of the different indicators under Policy 3, one indicator stands out as moderately implemented: "Ensuring the proper selection and development of textbooks and other supplementary learning materials provided to IP learners."

This finding aligns with the results of interviews conducted with pupils and parents, FGDs with IPMRs, teachers, and school heads, and profiles of school heads and teachers, particularly regarding the number of seminars and trainings attended on IP education. These factors may explain the lack of productivity among school heads and teachers, reflected in the limited use of localized or indigenized instructional materials within the last three years.

During interviews with pupils and parents, most responded affirmatively when asked if they had specific teaching and learning materials for IPs or Kankanaey in school, or if their books contained IP context, but many struggled to provide examples beyond musical instruments and traditional clothing. According to DO. No. 32, s. 2015 (Adopting the Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum Framework), learning resources encompass various materials beyond artifacts, stories, dances, and songs. Similarly, during FGDs with IPMRs, participants expressed that there are few IP materials in schools, with some reporting none at all. One participant remarked, "It is lacking. When we observed a demonstration in Tubaday (a school in Santol), all that they were showing were pictures. They don't have actual materials/objects."

Furthermore, during the FGD with the School heads, they mainly mentioned contextualized lesson plans during discussions, but a deeper examination revealed issues with material contextualization. A teacher-participant expressed, "Even if we have contextualized lesson plans, the problem now is how we transfer it to the learners because we don't have materials." Another noted, "The problem I encountered is the lack of reading materials and real objects. Each school should have an IPED classroom equipped with stories, pictures, and real objects."

Considering the complementary results from the profiles of school heads and teachers regarding instructional materials, the level of attainment of objectives of the IPEd Program, particularly in supporting the development of culturally appropriate learning resources, and participants' remarks in FGDs and interviews asserting a lack of materials in their schools, it can be inferred that the result of this indicator is accurate. This issue of inappropriate books and other learning materials extends too to many indigenous students worldwide. In Dupere's article (2022) on the 5 issues facing indigenous students globally, one cited concern is the

discriminatory and degrading content of books about IPs. This underscores the need to enhance materials to align with their way of life without discrimination or degradation.

Another noteworthy point is the result of indicator 3.3, regarding encouraging and supporting documentation and research activities by IPs on their history, knowledge, practices, and cultural heritage, rated as Highly Implemented. While it's acknowledged that IPs may be encouraged to document and research their culture, there is scant evidence to support this claim. During FGDs with IPMRs, it was mentioned that Santol lacks a book encapsulating Kankanaey culture in the town which negates the IPRA Law (Republic Act No. 8371, Section 32) on community intellectual rights for ICCs/IPs, highlighting the need to involve and encourage IPs in these endeavors. Teachers also noted the absence of books specific to Kankanaey culture, hindering their integration of IKSPs. Although teachers conduct performance tasks related to IP culture, primarily focused on cultural dances, this aligns with findings from pupil interviews, where most mentioned musical instruments as their learning. Additionally, in FGDs with school heads, a concern raised was the dwindling number of IPs knowledgeable about their culture or IKSPs. One school head mentioned, "What I can see is that there are only a few IPs who know their IKSPs," echoing sentiments from others about the loss of cultural elders. These statements suggest that many IPs in the community may not fully grasp their culture.

Regarding the fourth policy on strengthening the hiring, deployment, and continuous development of teachers and learning facilitators in the IPEd Program, the result appears acceptable. FGDs with teachers and school heads revealed the use of MTB-MLE, localization of lesson plans, and responsiveness to IP learning needs. Indicator 4.2, which addresses responding to IP learning needs, correlates with the highly attained remark of objective 5. Although it was found that teachers lack training, the existence of a program to support training under DO. No. 22, s. 2016, along with larger hazard fees for upland teachers, supports this finding.

Indicator 4.4, focusing on encouraging and mobilizing support for IP community members to enter the teaching profession, also appears valid. Most teachers in Santol's IPEd schools are from the Kankanaey tribe, as revealed in teacher and school head profiles. Furthermore, in an interview with a parent participant, it was revealed that schools participate in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), wherein financial assistance is contingent upon children attending school. This illustrates the schools' support in encouraging and mobilizing IP members to pursue teaching professions.

Policy 5, which emphasizes the establishment and strengthening of multi-level units within DepEd for IP education interventions, presents a questionable result, particularly regarding indicator 5.1 on strengthening staff capacity. The policy garnered a weighted mean of 3.77 with a descriptive equivalent of Highly Implemented, and indicator 5.1 also obtained a weighted mean of 3.9, likewise indicating Highly Implemented. However, referring back to the profiles of school heads and teachers, which highlighted the need for capacity building as an alternative measure, and correlating this with the moderately attained result of objective 2 on building teacher and school head capacity, the validity of the indicator's result is brought into question.

Further supporting the negation of this indicator's result are the findings from FGDs with IPMRs, school heads, and teachers, as well as interviews with pupils and parents regarding teachers' capacity to implement IP education. These sources often cited insufficient knowledge and skills among stakeholders to effectively plan, implement, and monitor IP education initiatives. Given the interconnected findings on stakeholder capacity, it can be inferred that the result of this indicator is not valid, as teachers, in particular, express a need

for further capacity building. As articulated by one teacher-participant, "At my age, I can attest that I am only now growing in IPED. Therefore, when it comes to training, I still feel lacking."

Relatively, Villeza (2020) emphasized in his article the pivotal role teachers play in delivering quality education services. He further highlighted the importance of capacitating teachers to elevate the standard of education, suggesting that seminars and workshops are effective avenues for enhancing their capabilities and skills. This insight underscores the necessity of providing ongoing learning opportunities to both teachers and non-teaching staff, enabling them to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as implementers of the IPEd Program, given its reliance on their effectiveness.

However, regarding the expansion and strengthening of institutional and civil society linkages to ensure proper coordination, knowledge-sharing, and sustainability of IP education, the result diverges from the accounts provided during FGDs and interviews. In FGDs with IPMRs, many stated that communication with IPED schools only occurs for activities like cultural dance presentations. As one IPMR mentioned, "There are instances where school teachers involve IP elders, usually regarding Igorot dance practices." IPMRs suggested formal consultations with culture bearers/IPMRs to discuss Kanknaey culture within the educational system.

Conversely, in FGDs with school heads and teachers, they claimed to consult IP elders in their communities for IP education. However, it emerged that only one consultation involving some IP elders occurred during a demonstration teaching, primarily for critique. Moreover, their statements implied that consultations often happen informally, indicating insufficient coordination and knowledge-sharing. As one participant stated, "In my case, sir, if I have free time, I enjoy conversing with elders. There are many elders from different places whom I learn from. It's informal nonetheless." School heads also mentioned conducting meetings involving teachers and parents, but when parents were asked during interviews about meeting topics, most cited matters like cleaning or card collection only.

Based on these findings, it can be inferred that the result is not valid due to the singular formal consultation conducted and the limited coordination primarily revolving around cultural dance activities, school maintenance, and report card distribution.

Following DO. No. 32, s. 2015, also known as the "Adopting the Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum Framework," sustainable community engagement is fundamental to the meaningful participation of ICCs. This implies that coordination and consultation should be ongoing, extending beyond cultural events and school upkeep. It emphasizes the importance of involving elders and community members in aspects such as teaching-learning processes, assessment, and management.

Furthermore, as highlighted in the ECIP's 2010 report, one of the key components of an education system suitable for IPs is community involvement in school management. This suggests that IPs should have a role in defining and designing the type of education they require. Similarly, Victor and Yano's (2023) article underscores the significance of linkages and partnerships between ICCs/IPs and IPEd schools. Accordingly, agreements between DepEd and ICCs/IPs entail ongoing community involvement in school management, curriculum enhancement, and appropriate class conduct. Such management arrangements actualize the recognition of indigenous communities' right to self-determination.

The last policy, aimed at implementing stronger affirmative action to eradicate all forms of discrimination against IPs in the entire educational system, is also rated as Highly Implemented. However, upon closer examination of the data, it becomes apparent from the table that two of its indicators are only Moderately Implemented.

The result of indicator 7.2, focusing on ensuring that textbooks, supplementary learning materials, and other resources are free from discriminatory content and erroneous

accounts, resonates with the findings on the number of localized/indigenized materials under profile and objective 3 under the level of attainment of objectives. This alignment was corroborated through the FGDs and interviews with participants as a means of validating/triangulating answers. The underlying reasons for this outcome stem from the limited instructional materials for IPs and the generalized IP context in books, lacking specificity to the Kankanaey culture.

Similarly, indicator 7.3, concerning the appropriate integration of IP culture and history into mainstream school content and programs, is only Moderately Implemented. This result can also be linked to the findings on the profile of school heads and teachers, highlighting the importance of equipping the main implementers, and objective 2 on the capacity of teachers and school heads, which achieved only a Moderately Attained level. The participants in the FGDs and interviews confirmed the validity of the obtained results in the survey questionnaire. They emphasized that not all teachers, especially non-IP ones, are capable of teaching or integrating IP culture and history. Furthermore, it was observed during the discussions that the integration of IP culture and history is limited.

During interviews with pupils, most indicated that IP culture is integrated only into Araling Panlipunan and Filipino subjects, despite DepEd's mandate for integration across all learning areas. Suggestions to improve IP education, such as introducing a special subject for integrating IP culture, were also proposed by school heads. They emphasized that the current limited integration by teachers is insufficient for pupils to grasp the knowledge effectively.

Moreover, the limited knowledge of IKSPs among teachers hinders them from appropriately integrating IP culture and history into mainstream school content and programs, as inferred from responses from teachers, school heads, and IPMRs.

In this connection, findings from the study by Donato-Kinomis (2022) shed light on pertinent issues. Her research revealed that teachers facing challenges in teaching Integrated Biology encountered three main problems. Firstly, they struggled due to limited sources of IKSPs from books, the internet, and library resources. Secondly, students, particularly those who couldn't relate IKSPs to scientific concepts, exhibited limited interest. Lastly, teachers often provided inadequate factual knowledge about IKSPs and lacked supporting evidence, visual aids, and other resources during discussions.

Practices of the IPED Schools along the Three Thematic Focus Areas

Table 5 reveals the practices observed in IPED-implementing schools in Santol concerning the three thematic focus areas of the IPED Program. The first area concerns curriculum and learning resource development. According to DO. No. 22, s. 2016 (Implementing Guidelines of the Allocation and Utilization of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program Support Fund for Fiscal Year 2016), activities in this area may include: (a) Curriculum contextualization and learning resources development sessions, consultations, and workshops involving school and division personnel with IP elders, leaders, culture bearers, community representatives, and other relevant stakeholders. (b) Production of learning materials with content validated by concerned IP communities and subjected to quality assurance. Within this first area, two themes emerged: Contextualization and IP Consultations.

In terms of contextualization, it was discovered that IPED schools in Santol primarily focus on contextualizing their lesson plans to create a culturally responsive and appropriate curriculum, aligning with DepEd's mandate on contextualization. According to the Teacher 2

participant, "Last year, there was a division-wide contextualization of lesson plans. We, as a group, aligned our lesson plans with the curriculum and integrated Kankanaey's practices, culture, and beliefs. Everything that could be contextualized was included."

However, further discussion revealed that most participants only attended one contextualization session, which was conducted via webinar. When asked if this webinar was sufficient, all teacher participants unanimously responded negatively. The teacher 4 participant explained, "No, it's not enough. I only attended one webinar, and the signal was weak. I couldn't fully access the discussion or understand it."

Table 5.

Practices of the IPED Schools along the Three Thematic Focus Areas

Three Thematic Focus Areas	Frequency	Percentage
A. Curriculum and Learning Resources Development Themes		
Contextualization	18	100 %
IP Consultations	6	33.33%
B. Capacity Building Themes		
Learning Action Cell (LAC) Sessions	14	77.78%
Mentoring	9	45.00%
Training on IPED Implementation	7	38.89%
Monitoring	5	27.78%
IP Consultations	2	11.11%
C. Education Planning for IPED Themes		
School-Based Planning	18	100%
District Planning	8	12.5%

Despite this, it was found that some teachers attended more than two seminars on contextualization and shared their knowledge in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and informal mentoring. However, it was mentioned that discussions on contextualization during LAC sessions were merely incidental and not the main focus.

As a result, it can be inferred that due to limited training sessions or seminars on contextualization, teachers and school heads often rely on internet searches and their community observations and experiences for guidance. This inference was corroborated by the Teacher 7 participant, who stated, "In my teaching practice, we align examples with the curriculum and what can be found in the community. We localize it by integrating community practices, materials, stories, history, and culture."

Additionally, it was noted that new and non-IP teachers typically engage in searching and observation practices for contextualization, while those with more experience, particularly IPs, rely on their accumulated knowledge. These insights from the FGDs with school heads and teachers support the findings regarding the lack of training/seminars for most implementers, as well as the shortage of localized/indigenized instructional materials in Santol's IPED schools.

Furthermore, Berger et al. (2018) noted that teaching experience correlates with effectiveness. However, considering the distribution of years of service among school heads and teachers, most fall within the 1-10 years range, particularly in mountainous areas where many IPED schools are located. It was also observed that even IP teachers may lack comprehensive knowledge of their ancestors' culture, as some did not witness or experience it firsthand, and certain cultural practices have been discontinued.

This context sheds light on the moderately remarked level of attainment for Objective 3 regarding the development of culturally appropriate materials and the indicators on

instructional materials' extent of implementation, which were found to be inadequately implemented.

Another theme surfaced during the FGDs under the first focus area of the IPED Program: IP Consultations. Participants mentioned consulting elders, parents, and even IP children for clarifications and validations. School Head 1 Participant stated, "If there are things about their culture that we don't understand, like death or wedding rituals, or certain terms, we ask the elders." School Head 2 Participant added, "Sometimes our pupils provide Kankanaey terms for things in the book. We learn from each other. If there are meetings, we involve parents too. We help one another."

During the FGD with teachers, it was revealed that there was only one formal consultation with elders, with most consultations being informal. This was echoed in the FGD with school heads, where field testing was mentioned as a formal consultation.

However, one School Head claimed to have had various consultations with elders, both formal and informal. They mentioned that elders validated contextualized lesson plans and recently created activity sheets. Teachers from Santol's IPED schools were even enlisted as writers during the pandemic, and instructed to consult elders. Materials created by these teachers are currently under review by the Division, explaining the lack of available IP materials mentioned by some teachers and school heads.

In the FGD, one teacher participant admitted to using a supposedly indigenized story that had not been validated by IP elders. Others mentioned assigning projects for pupils to create their IP materials. "I asked my pupils to craft something like a wooden spoon or items found in their homes. If they encounter unfamiliar things from the books, I encourage them to seek help from their parents," shared Teacher 4 Participant. Some teachers also stated they contextualize lessons using materials from the community. Teacher-participant 3 explained, "In my health lesson, when soap wasn't available, they used burnt rice husks to smooth their hair." Teacher-participant 9 shared, "In our kinder lesson on fruits, instead of apples, which we lack here, I use tomatoes, which have a similar color."

These responses indicate that while localized materials are used in Santol's IPED schools, true indigenization may be lacking. Despite contextualization sessions and consultations, it appears that Santol's IPED Schools are still in the early stages of the process, which aligns with the finding of a lack of available teaching/learning materials.

The second thematic focus area of the IPED Program is capacity building, which encompasses various activities: (a) training/retooling of teachers and school heads for IPED implementation, (b) workshop sessions on IKSPs and ILS, (c) workshop sessions on community engagement and partnership-building for IPED, and (d) technical assistance training for IPED implementers. Five themes emerged in line with these activities: (1) Learning Action Cell (LAC) Sessions, (2) Mentoring, (3) Training on IPED Implementation, (4) Monitoring, and (5) Consultations with IPs.

Among these themes, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions were identified as the primary activity conducted by IPED Schools in Santol for capacity building. Most school heads claimed to empower their teachers through these sessions. When teachers were asked how they were being capacitated, many mentioned LAC sessions. Teacher Participant 1 stated during the FGD, "Through LAC Sessions, sir. Usually, we discuss teaching strategies on how to contextualize and handle IP learners. Sometimes, we conduct LAC sessions in our school alone, and sometimes in clusters." The IP Focal Person further explained that cluster sessions are currently being implemented. However, when asked how many LAC sessions were conducted on IP implementation/education, most lamented having only one, while others reported none. Those who mentioned LAC sessions clarified that IP implementation topics were discussed briefly.

Mentoring emerged as another prominent theme, especially for teachers. Teacher 2 participants explained, "Aside from LAC sessions, mentoring is also crucial. If our co-teachers, especially non-IPs, have difficulties understanding something, we mentor them and teach them the strategies used in IP education." Another teacher participant echoed this sentiment, saying, "We also have LAC sessions and mentoring. If someone among us has more knowledge to share, we ask them to mentor us." These responses were supported by others, indicating that mentoring is a common practice. Additionally, it was noted that those who have attended seminars/trainings, especially the IPED coordinators in each school, often serve as mentors by sharing their knowledge.

The third theme that emerged under the second thematic focus area is Training on IPED implementation. Some teachers mentioned attending various trainings on IPED implementation, which was corroborated by some school heads. When asked about the number of seminars they had attended, most reported attending only one, particularly the recent webinar, while four participants stated attending 2-4 seminars/trainings. It was noted that often, the individuals sent to these seminars/trainings are the IPED coordinators. Furthermore, participants are expected to share what they learned through LAC sessions. School Head 6 participant explained, "To capacitate my teachers, we send them to various seminars/workshops initiated by the Division. Sometimes, only the Focal Person attends, and sometimes 2-3 teachers go. Then, during LAC sessions, we require them to re-echo what they learned."

Interestingly, some schools do not conduct LAC sessions but instead opt for informal knowledge sharing. Teacher 4 participant remarked, "We don't have LAC sessions. We only have informal knowledge sharing, as mentioned." In the FGD with school heads, the IPED Focal Person of the District noted that in a recently conducted webinar, only a few were chosen to attend due to limited slots. Moreover, most school heads failed to mention any trainings/seminars/workshops they attended themselves when asked how they were capacitating themselves as school leaders, focusing instead on their teachers or IPED coordinators.

Still, within the realm of capacity building, Monitoring also emerged as a significant theme, drawn from the responses given by the School Heads. This activity is seen as a means to capacitate teachers, according to the School Heads. School Head 1 participant stated, "Monitoring should be conducted to oversee implementation, such as classroom observations, to provide reminders." School Head 4 participant mentioned, "During face-to-face classes, school heads were required to conduct 10 observations per month." However, when asked if this target was being met, all responded in the negative. Some mentioned having fewer than 10 teachers, making it impractical, while others stated they entrusted this responsibility to their teachers. School Head 3 participant explained, "During LAC sessions, I inform my teachers of what needs to be done and entrust them with the classroom management. I empower them to execute their strategies, so I refrain from intervening. I rarely observe their classes because I trust them to handle it."

Lastly, the theme of IP Consultations also emerged. "In my role as a school head and district representative, I prioritize self-capacitation through interviews with elders I encounter. For instance, during events like funerals or weddings, I engage with knowledgeable elders to gain insights into our culture," expressed the School Head 7 participant. School Head 8 participant echoed this sentiment, stating, "In my case, sir, during my free time, I enjoy conversing with elders from different places, learning from their experiences." It became evident during discussions that most consultations conducted by School Heads were informal. While the IP Focal Person claimed to have conducted various formal consultations with IP elders, most School Heads primarily engaged in informal consultations. This suggests that not

all school heads, especially those from IPED-implementing schools in Santol, have equal opportunities for capacity building. It also implies that activities conducted in these thematic focus areas of the IPED Program are still limited.

The third and final thematic focus area of the IPED Program is Education Planning for IPED. As outlined in DO. No. 22, s. 2016, activities under this include (a) training of school heads on Culture-responsive/Ancestral Domain-based School Improvement Plan, (b) IPED planning activities of schools and Schools Division Offices, and (c) collaboration with IP communities and other offices dealing with IP education. Two themes emerged in this area: School-Based Planning and District Planning.

In the FGD with the School Heads of the various IPED-implementing schools in Santol, it was revealed that the planning approach is top-down. This means that starting from the Division plan, the district, led by the District IPED Focal Person, formulates activity plans aligned with the Division framework. These plans are then disseminated to the individual IPED schools, where they identify activities aligned with the District plan. School Head 7 participant explained, "Based on the IPED Framework/Programs, I develop an action plan for the school year at the District level, which is then distributed to all IPED coordinators. These coordinators devise plans aligned with both the District and IPED framework." This explanation was echoed by other School Heads, as supported by School Head 6 participant, "It's the same for us. The District plan aligns with the Division Framework, and we base our school plan on the District plan."

Regarding School-Based Planning, School Head 7 participant mentioned, "At the school level, we consult with elders and involve the community in crafting plans. We present our annual plan at a general assembly and seek feedback from elders." Conversely, the School Head 4 participant stated, "To achieve good results, we assess the school's needs through analysis and discussions with teachers and benchmarking." Similarly, School Head 5 participant added, "When planning in school, we engage classroom representatives, board directors, religious groups, and PTA officers." During the FGD with School Head participants, most mentioned involving teachers and parents in planning, with only two mentioning elders. In contrast, in the FGD with teachers, all referred solely to school-based planning for IP education, focusing on classroom and general assembly planning. They initiate meetings for classroom planning, sometimes involving parents. Teacher 3 participant explained, "Since we're teachers, our planning is primarily for our classrooms. We also share ideas during meetings." For whole-school planning, they conduct general assembly meetings with participation from school heads, teachers, and parents. Notably, none of the teachers mentioned involving elders. In the FGD with IPMRs, most reported limited coordination or consultation with IPED schools in Santol, primarily during cultural presentations, with minimal involvement in educational planning. Similarly, in the FGD with parents, their participation in school meetings primarily focused on practical activities like cleaning, with no mention of involvement in planning activities.

With these, it could be inferred that planning in the IPED schools of Santol is mostly done by the school heads and teachers. This does not conform to what is being mandated for IP schools in which IP communities and elders must be involved in the planning as contained in the different DepEd Orders on IP Education and so with the report of the ECIP (2010).

Problems/Challenges Being Encountered by the IPED Implementing Schools in the Implementation of the IPED Program

Table 6 presents the problems and challenges encountered by the IPED Implementing Schools in Santol during the implementation of the IPED Program. The table highlights five key issues that hinder the efficient and effective execution of the program.

One major challenge faced by the IPED-implementing schools of Santol is the Lack of Contextualized Teaching and Learning Materials. According to the Teacher 2 participant, "The main issue I see is the contextualization of materials because it involves numerous processes, which need validation by the elders." Similarly, the Teacher 5 participant remarked, "The challenge lies in contextualization because even when crafting lesson plans, there are no materials aligned with the MELC." Another teacher stated, "We lack tangible objects for teaching, such as traditional musical instruments like those made from bolo. We don't know where to find them, and I've never seen one." During the FGD with teachers, they consistently highlighted the scarcity of both physical and written teaching materials. School Heads echoed these concerns during their FGD, with School Head 5 participants emphasizing, "There's a shortage of learning resources. Even basic items like a mortar and pestle are unfamiliar to students. We need to create these materials to aid learning." School Head 6 participants also noted the absence of contextualized lesson plans, stating, "Teachers struggle because there are no pre-existing contextualized lesson plans to serve as guides."

The lack of contextualized learning and teaching materials is a significant challenge faced by teachers in implementing the IPED Program. This issue aligns with the profile of school heads and teachers, indicating a scarcity of localized and contextualized materials in their respective schools. Moreover, it corresponds with the moderately attained objective related to the development of culturally appropriate learning resources. Additionally, the extent of implementation results reflects moderately implemented indicators regarding the provision of adequate and culturally appropriate learning resources.

Table 6.
Problems/Challenges Being Encountered by the IPED Implementing Schools

Problems/Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
A. Lack of Contextualized Learning/Teaching Materials	10	55.56%
B. Lack of Trainings/Seminars on IP Education	10	55.56 %
C. Difficulty in the Integration of IP Culture	7	38.89 %
D. Limited Knowledge of Teachers on IKSPs	5	27.78 %
E. Diminishing Number of Culture Bearers	3	16.67 %

Another notable challenge is the lack of training and seminars on IP Education, particularly for non-IP and new teachers. During the FGD with teachers, it emerged that most participants attended only one seminar or training related to IP Education. Furthermore, it was observed that the majority of those sent to seminars or trainings were IPED coordinators. However, despite the expectation for these participants to share their knowledge through LAC sessions, it was revealed that many teachers had limited or no such sessions on IP education.

When asked about the sufficiency of their training experiences, participants expressed various concerns. For instance, a Teacher 2 participant mentioned, "The training is not enough because there are still a lot of things that we need to learn especially in making materials." Teacher 4 participant highlighted the inadequacy of their experience, stating, "I was only sent once, and it was a webinar. I lost connection and did not understand anything." Similarly, the Teacher 6 participant emphasized the ongoing learning process, saying, "It is not enough, especially for me as I tend to forget things and there are aspects of IPED that I am still unfamiliar with, being part of the new generation." Teacher 10 participants echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the challenges of teaching IP culture amid limited training opportunities.

These responses underscore the insufficiency of training and seminars on IPED, reinforcing the findings regarding the profile of school heads and teachers and the limited number of training sessions attended within the last three years. This issue is also linked to the

moderately attained objective regarding the capacity building of teachers and school heads within the IPED Program's objectives.

The third problem/challenge identified by participants concerns the integration of IP culture into their lessons. One reason cited for the difficulty in integrating IP culture is the changing beliefs and practices of young IPs. School Head 8 participant explained, "We find it hard, sir, to integrate IP culture into our lesson content, like our Grade 3 lesson about God because they have different beliefs now." Similarly, School Head 3 participant noted, "Integrating IP culture is challenging because their culture is influenced by other places, especially with internet access now." Some teacher-participants also expressed their views on this issue. Teacher 5 participants mentioned, "Another problem is integrating values or core knowledge of IPs because, despite my age, it's no longer our practice; we forgot it already." Teacher 7 participant echoed this sentiment, saying, "Teaching IP culture to learners is difficult because even teachers struggle to learn, so how much more for the children? That's why they tend not to believe it when presented." These accounts from participants underscore the significant challenge of integrating IP culture into lessons. Similarly, Policy 7, which addresses the appropriate integration of IP culture and history into mainstream schools and learning programs, was rated as moderately implemented, indicating a need for improvement.

Another critical aspect of the IPED Program identified as a problem or challenge in its implementation is the limited knowledge of teachers regarding Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs). As highlighted by School Head 7 participant, "The main issue is the limited knowledge of teachers about IKSPs, especially since the majority are non-IPs, and even IP teachers may not have experienced the cultural practices firsthand." Teacher participants also voiced similar concerns during the FGD, indicating that non-IP teachers often lack understanding of IKSPs due to their upbringing in their own cultures. Additionally, some IP teachers admitted to limited knowledge of their IKSPs, either due to being raised in the Ilocano culture or not having witnessed Kankanaey practices firsthand. The issue of limited teacher knowledge of IKSPs is closely linked to the challenge of integrating IP culture into lessons, as the adage "You cannot give what you don't have" aptly illustrates in this context.

The diminishing number of culture bearers emerges as a significant problem within the IPED-implementing schools of Santol. According to School Head 7 participant, "It's evident that there are few people knowledgeable about IKSPs, leaving few to consult. Moreover, some comment that their culture is not worth preserving." Adding to this sentiment, the School Head 3 participant emphasized, "Another concern is the passing away of elders who held vital cultural knowledge. They've been replaced by individuals less connected to our IP culture, leading to a loss of around 30% of our cultural heritage." Similarly, the School Head 2 participant noted that intermarriages between Ilocano and Kankanaey individuals contribute to the erosion of IP culture. These remarks highlight a sense of despair among participants regarding the preservation and promotion of Kankanaey culture in Santol's IPED schools. This sentiment may also explain the limited number of IP consultations conducted and cast doubt on the validity of indicator 3.3. The IPED Program encourages documentation and research by IPs on their heritage.

These findings suggest that problems in IPED Program implementation are predominantly related to capacity building, instructional materials, and IP planning coordination. These challenges echo the findings of Suazo and Montenegro (2018) where they found that schools in Surigao Del Sur, Philippines, were only moderately prepared to implement Indigenous Peoples Education. Issues included non-IP teachers' limited ability to teach or integrate IKSPs due to inadequate training and a lack of involvement of IP elders as resource speakers. Additionally, schools faced shortages of learning materials essential for culture-based education.

Conclusion

The exploration of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program in Santol, La Union, reveals a complex landscape shaped by diverse profiles of educators and intricate challenges in implementation. This study illuminates the educational dynamics and underscores the resilience in integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) into mainstream education.

The diversity among educators—from non-IP teachers to those with limited exposure to IKSPs—highlights gaps in understanding and engagement with Kankanaey cultural heritage. These gaps, particularly evident in the scarcity of culturally appropriate learning resources, underscore the urgent need for tailored interventions.

Navigating the Department of Education's 7-policy framework on IP education reveals a mix of successes and hurdles. Integrating IP culture into mainstream content poses a significant challenge amidst evolving beliefs among young Indigenous Peoples. This underscores the call for educational strategies that balance tradition with contemporary realities.

Challenges such as inadequate training and the preservation of cultural knowledge in the face of diminishing culture bearers intertwine, necessitating a collaborative and holistic approach. Specific recommendations for enhancing training opportunities and fostering community partnerships emerge as crucial steps forward.

In synthesizing these findings, this study advocates for a pedagogical renaissance that transcends cultural barriers and adapts to the evolving ethos of Indigenous communities. Strengthening community engagement and documenting IKSPs are pivotal in rewriting the narrative of Indigenous education.

As this academic journey concludes, the narrative of Santol's IPEd Program invites stakeholders to embark on a collective expedition. It urges policymakers and educators to co-author a narrative that celebrates diversity, preserves heritage, and fosters a dynamic synthesis of tradition and progress. The journey towards inclusive Indigenous education is not just scholarly—it is a communal narrative waiting to be realized through collaborative efforts and evidence-based strategies.

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