
Research Article

Practices of Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies and Academic Engagement of Indigenous Peoples' Learners in Teaching Mathematics

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational design study determined the relationship between inclusive pedagogical strategies and the academic engagement of IP (Indigenous Peoples) learners as perceived by 29 teacher-respondents, considering teachers' profiles, instructional practices, and coping mechanisms. Grounded in Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory (Gay, 2018), Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017) and Multicultural Education (Banks, 2016), study highlighted how culturally relevant instruction can positively impact learners' engagement levels. Ninety-five percent of respondents identified as female and they were overwhelmingly early- to mid-career educators — mean teaching experience was 8 years. Most managed an average of two IP learners per class, suggesting that IP students are typically in the minority in mainstream classrooms. Interestingly, most did not have previous training in IP or inclusive education: highlighting a major gap in professional preparation. Nonetheless, teachers reported across-domain consistent use of inclusive pedagogical strategies. The domain that was most pronounced within our data was the learning environment, which related to establishing respectful and supportive classrooms. Assessment, learning resources and cocurricular practices were their also regularly applied, especially those that aimed to make the process relevant for learners and community members. Likewise, students receiving IP treatment expressed high engagement in academic dimensions, especially attending to classroom activities and recitation participation as well as task completion (see Table 2), showing active involvement while at the classroom context. Grouping by number of IP learners showed a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.023$), suggesting that class composition may have an impact on method of pedagogical delivery. There were no significant differences by sex, length of service, or training. Similarly, inclusive pedagogical practices were found to be positively correlated with academic engagement: effective and culturally appropriate teaching and learning increase learner participation. The teachers dealt with instructional challenges by implementing local knowledge, the mother tongue, and culturally responsive practices. But they also described challenges such as managing their time, emotional demands, and diversity in the classroom. As a result, these practices led to students exhibiting greater confidence in themselves as learners, their cultural identity, and social skills. On a more

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general level, there is clear evidence of inclusive pedagogical practices that are positively associated with learner engagement, but the lack of formal training looms as a major issue. To facilitate equitable and culturally relevant education for IP learners, they must be provided the appropriate teacher capacity through sustained professional development and institutional support.

Keywords: *Instructional challenges, classroom diversity, inclusive pedagogical practices, learner participation*

Introduction

Systemic barriers marginalized learners of an Alaskan native car citizen (Trask et al., 2021) Disparities that point to systemic exclusion are visible in international assessments such as PISA, which demonstrate how standardized metrics do not account for diverse strengths (Fischman et al., 2022). For example, in Asia, the ranking focus surpasses marginalized needs (Neubauer & Gámiz, 2022) which prompt scholars to explore ethnomathematics for inclusiveness (Rosa & Orey, 2021). This tension is evident in the Philippines, where deep systemic issues are demonstrated by poor 2022 PISA performance (Bernardo, 2023; OECD, 2023). Though the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program (DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015) is evidence of national policy that presses for cultural responsiveness across curricula, challenges abound in implementation — teacher unpreparedness among them (David & Nolasco, 2020).

Thus, this study is needed to fill an urgent empirical gap among Philippine studies emphasizing the documentation of ethnomathematics (Alanguí, 2020; Ocampo, 2021) rather than what actually happens in terms of pedagogical strategies that teachers employ within mainstream classrooms where Indigenous People (IP) learners are minority. Because Filipino teachers usually consider themselves ill-prepared to accommodate diversity (Salviejo et al., 2021), it is still unknown how the gap between a common curriculum and indigenous cultural backgrounds gets somewhere in non-IP schools. This study moves beyond general policy analysis to provide nuanced evidence of inclusive strategies that can inform educators and policymakers of important actionable content for making mathematics education truly accessible at all levels.

Also, this pursuit complied with the guidelines provided by DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009 that institutionalizes Inclusive Education as a major strategy for enhancing participation of all marginalized groups including indigenous peoples in formal education. While this memorandum imagines such schools as ones that make ‘teaching adaptable to the learning styles of the child’, acting on this vision in mainstream math classrooms is proving to be an elusive target. At present, inclusive education is often synonymous with SPED in the educational landscape which result to overlook the unique cultural accommodation needs of IP learners in general setting. This paper revealed real-world friction points that keep inclusivity from being genuine. Ultimately, specific insights from this work moved the system away from a compliance with policy to responding authentically to their culture.

Materials and Methods

Specifically, this study sought to investigate the association between teachers' inclusive pedagogical strategies and IP learners' academic engagement. To understand better, it also collected qualitative data from teachers through focused group discussions. As such, this study employed an Explanatory Sequential Design, a mixed-methods approach.

For example, mixed methods included a systematic approach involving the collection, evaluation, and integration of quantitative and qualitative data into one research Endeaveout (Magetti, 2020). Likewise, Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) also stated that mixed method research attempted to provide a broader and more humane understanding of an issue by combining qualitative as well as quantitative types of evidence in a single study. A combination of both these approaches was adopted for

better and accurate understanding of the issue under study.

Such research involved implementing the two-stage process that is a key feature of the explanatory design (Toyon, 2021).

It started with the quantitative phase, a statistical-fit of numerical data to measure teachers' usage of inclusive pedagogical strategies (Independent Variable) and the academic engagement of Inclusive Practice (IP) learners (Dependent Variable), using teachers' profiles as a moderating variable. This was followed by the qualitative phase where we collected non-numerical data to help clarify and explain those initial quantitative findings (Brunero, Dunn & Lamont, 2021). As a result, the qualitative interview guide was developed post-interpretation of the quantitative data. These questions were designed to specifically probe vague, important, or unexpected survey findings to help keep the anchors on the study's main objectives.

Respondents and Location

This study's respondents were the Mathematics Teachers of IP learners in mainly non-IP Schools on the elementary school level in Zone 4 of Zambales' Schools Division. Approval was sought first from the Schools Division Office of Zambales before conducting this study since it was conducted in San Marcelino, Castillejos, and Subic under Schools Division of Zambales.

The descriptive quantitative phase was participated by thirty (30) Mathematics Teachers from the elementary schools in Zone 4 of the Schools Division of Zambales. The researcher adopted Total Population Sampling (Global Sampling) to carefully cover all data. This was the proposed and most suitable technique because they are an entire, identifiable population, limited in size.

In order to validate the data, strict criteria was applied in selecting respondents for the study. Inclusion was limited specifically to current, employed Mathematics teachers in the elementary level in Zone 4 who are assigned to predominantly Non-IP schools and actively teaching classes with enrolled Indigenous People (IP) learners. This ensured that all respondents had direct pedagogical experience of the study subjects. Mathematics teachers

who have no learners requiring intervention plans in the class are excluded, as well as Mathematics teachers on study leave, sabbatical or long-term sick leave at the time of data collection. This process of careful elimination reflects Hayes (2020), where a complete population sample is defined as intentional sampling, examining all individuals in the total population that meets an explicit inclusion standard and Ghosh (2021) who theorizes how this method avoids the potential for losing subtle or minority perspectives—important in research studying marginalized groups such as IP learners which might otherwise get 'lost' within a typical randomized sample.

The qualitative phase involved purposive sampling of 13 participants, to better explain the statistical findings. Participants were selected from the initial sample of respondents using a stratified hierarchy of priority to ensure that the most relevant insights were garnered. First preference of selection was the Mathematics Coordinator (if they also teach IP learners), 2nd, the Class Adviser of the IP learners who also teaches Mathematics. This particularly stratification makes sure that interviewees hold either the highest level of subject oversight or the deepest daily involvement with learners to provide the contextualized information necessary to interpret the "How" and "Why" behind quantitative results.

The Instrument

The main tool used to collect the relevant information for this research was a data inquiry using researcher-made questionnaires. The first half of the items in the inquiry were developed from the comprehensive review of literature and studies conducted by the researcher to keep a progressive basis for collecting data.

The questionnaire included three main parts that were used to collect information about the study variables.

The first part aims to identify the Profile of Teacher-Respondents. This was related to their number of years in service, sex, number of IP learners per class, and the training with regard to both inclusive education and for IP learners. These data were used to put the results in context and provide a clear demographic profile of participants.

The 2nd part of the questionnaire concerned the use of Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies by teachers. The degree of practice for methods in motivation, successful learning environment, assessment strategies, learning resources, and extra-curricular activities was measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Likert scale of 4-point: 4 – Highly Practiced, 3 – Practiced, 2 – Slightly Practiced, and 1 – Not Practiced.

The third component focuses on the teachers' perception of their IP Learners' Academic Engagement; This was evaluated based on descriptive indicators in terms of daily attendees, recite every time, got all performance tasks, join contests, and attending school conventions: 4 – Very High; 3 – High; 2 – Moderate; and (1) -- Low.

Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument for establishing how sound and inter-connected each item on each of the variables are. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It refers to a measure of scale reliability (Heo, Kim, and Faith, 2015).

Consistent with the Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Method Design, the design of the qualitative interview tool was informed inductively by initial quantitative findings. This sought to ensure that the qualitative phase served its primary purpose of elaborating on and detecting greater depth of understanding from the numerical data. The questions were designed to more closely explore important but vague, unexpected or statistically salient insights from the quantitative analysis and it helped produce richer levels of investigative context while also anchoring the follow up closely to the study's core research aims:

Data Collection

The execution of this research was strictly guided by the principles of the Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods Design, progressing through two separate but linked stages. The study started with the quantitative phase. Foremost of them was approval which is getting permission to initiate the study and use a researcher-made generic tool as a resource from Zambales Schools Division Office (SDO). This petition was officially supported by the

Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDSs) in each of the municipalities within Zone 4.

Permission was then obtained from each school before the researcher liaised with appropriate staff and communicated the purpose of the study, participation requirements, and confidentiality measures to these schools, maintaining transparency at a grassroots level. To collect data, a contact inventory was created where respondents were asked about their preferred mode of virtual communication (contact numbers/facebook accounts/email addresses). A Google Forms questionnaire was the primary — tool to distribute and virtual harvest data. To promote equity and inclusivity, the researcher avoided potential technological barriers by offering hard copies of the tool to any respondent who lacked reliable air time. All responses were ensured to be completed within a fifteen (15) days period, all coming after several follow-up strategies (e.g. text reminders, calls) aimed at achieving 100% retrieval rate which is significant for the statistical analysis being more credible and reliable.

The survey data were treated and interpreted statistically when successfully gathered. The results from this stage, including any salient statistical associations, surprising mean differences or strange correlational patterns directly informed follow-up second qualitative phase. This transition was the method process of the abovementioned research design. Purposive sampling was used to select a subset of participants from the original sample. This analytical approach also targeted outliers or respondents in high and low scoring groups whose perspectives on that findings were particularly important to helping explain the numbers.

Based on the statistical analysis, a semi-structured qualitative interview or Focus Group Discussion (FGD) protocol was developed with questions specifically designed to explore the underlying rationales for such findings, lived experiences and contextual information. Such a structured inquiry was carried out through virtual interviews or

FGDs (using voice or video conferences), and all sessions were recorded as well as transcribed. This more qualitative and explanatory data was then merged with the initial statistical results to provide a rich understanding that

was necessary to address fully the overarching objectives of this study thereby satisfying the methodological tasks of an exploratory sequential design.

Data Analysis

After distributing and collecting the questionnaires, the researcher organized, compiled, calculated, and analysed the gathered data using different statistical techniques. The analyses were treated using Microsoft Excel Data Analysis Tool Pack and version 20 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The statistical methods that were implemented to analyse and interpret the collected data are listed below. The results of inferences were assessed using a significance level of 0.05 alpha.

1. Frequency Count and Percentage were employed to determine whether the percentages of participants correspond to a particular cohort in terms of their profile characteristics.

2. Mean (WM) was employed to evaluate the value of the variables regarding respondents' perceptions.

3. Standard Deviation was utilized to quantify the extent of variation within the set of scores in relation to the average value.

4. Kruskal-Wallis Test and Mann-Whitney U Test were used to ascertain the discrepancies in the perceptions of participants when categorized based on their profile characteristics.

5. Likert Scale. To improve the legibility of the assessments of the perceptions of the participants, the subsequent scale was utilized:

Result and Discussion

Teaching IP Learners in Non-IP Schools

As presented in Table 1, the extent of inclusive pedagogical strategies (motivation, learning environment, assessment, learning resources, and extra-curricular activities) being adopted by the mathematics teachers was summarized. This is evident in Table 1, where the overall mean of 3.12 (considered as Practiced), suggests that teachers do respond consistently with inclusive practices, but not all these dimensions are performed at the same intensity level.

The area with the highest mean of 3.25 overall and interpreted as "Always Practiced" was that of the learning environment, thus coming first. This indicates that the focus is on creating safe, respectful, and inclusive classroom environments for Indigenous students (Goold & Sweeney-AND). Developing a positive classroom climate has become widely accepted as a building block of inclusive education, through impacting learners' sense of belongingness, involvement, and academic self-esteem (Noddings., 2013; Gay., 2018). This dimension was the most prominent, indicating that teachers seem to be especially aware of the relational and affective dimensions of teaching.

Table 1

Summary of Math Teachers' Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies and Practices in Teaching IP Learners in Non-IP Schools

Summary	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation	Rank
Motivation	2.87	Practiced	5
Learning Environment	3.25	Always Practiced	1
Assessment	3.19	Practiced	2
Learning Resources	3.13	Practiced	4
Extra-Curricular Activities	3.17	Practiced	3
Overall Mean	3.12	Practiced	

On the other hand, assessment (mean = 3.19, rank 2), extra-curricular activities (mean = 3.17, rank 3) and learning resources (mean = 3.13, rank 4) in general can be interpreted as “Practiced,” which means teachers are implementing inclusive strategies in these areas reasonably consistently. These dimensions represent new efforts to diversify evaluation methods, extend lessons beyond the classroom, and use culturally responsive materials. These types of practices are in line with equitable instruction principles that highlight flexibility, representation, and contextualization to meet the needs of various learners (Banks, 2016; Tomlinson, 2014).

However, their means, which are slightly lower than the learning environment, indicate that these areas would require more strengthening for a more strategic and embedded inclusive pedagogy. Motivation had the lowest mean (2.87), but was still understood as “Practiced.” This suggests that although teachers are using culturally relevant strategies to engage

Indigenous learners, these practices are not consistently applied to the same extent as other domains. Motivation rooted in learners’ cultural and lived experiences is at the core when it comes to elevating engagement and academic success (LadsonBillings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2017). This one rank relatively lower, which indicates that more conscious and sustained endeavors to contextualize instruction and generate intrinsic motivation for the learners is needed.

Summary of Level of Engagement of IP Learners as Perceived by Mathematics Teachers when Teaching in Non-IP Schools

Table 2 presents the summary of the level of engagement of Indigenous (IP) learners in mathematics across key dimensions, namely daily attendance, recitation, performance tasks, participation in contests, and attendance at various school activities.

Table 2

Summary of Level of Engagement of IP Learners as Perceived by Mathematics Teachers when Teaching in Non-IP Schools

Summary	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation	Rank
Daily Attendance	2.97	Highly Engaged	4
Recitation	3.07	Highly Engaged	1
Performance Tasks	3.04	Highly Engaged	2
Participation in Contests	2.93	Highly Engaged	5
Attendance at Various School Activities	3.02	Highly Engaged	3
Overall mean	3.01	Highly Engaged	

As shown in Table 2, the overall mean of 3.01 classified as “Highly Engage” implies that students in IP have a consistent engagement level towards academic and school-related activities.

Among dimensions, recitation achieved the highest mean of about 3.07 and ranked

first. This implies that most actively engaged in oral classroom participation, IP learners are confident and willing to share their opinions during math instruction. Behavioural engagement in recitation translates into cognitive and emotional investment in learning, which is needed to deepen understanding and ensure

academic success (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004).

Next is performance tasks (mean = 3.04, rank 2), showing that learners really engage in applied and collaborative learning activities. Their involvement in performance-based tasks indicates students' capacity to materialize their mathematical knowledge as practical outputs, consistent with a constructivist perspective of learning, which posits that meaning is actively constructed through meaningful tasks (Vygotsky, 1978).

Interaction is supported by attendance to school events (mean = 3.02, rank 3) while daily attendance (mean = 2.97, rank 4) indicates the IP learners are attending school activities as well as showing up for basic classes. Such forms of Behavioural engagement indicate learners' sense of belonging and commitment to the school environment, both important drivers that enable continued academic participation (Finn, 1989).

In contrast to these, participation in the contests received the lowest mean ($M=2.93$), but this is still interpreted as "Highly Engaged". This indicates that even though the learners taking part in competitions are very engaged, there may be a relatively lower eagerness or courage of some class participants to take a position in a competitive academic environment. Intrinsically, they may not want to participate; this can be related to anxiety issues, past limited exposure or the perceived difficulty of a given activity (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Test of difference on the inclusive pedagogical strategies of the respondents in teaching IP learners when grouped according to profile variables

The following segment shows the result of the one-way analysis of variance that was done for inclusive pedagogical strategies in terms of how math teachers in non-IP schools perceive them when they cater IP Learners. This test will establish which profile variables produced differing perceptions.

Indigenous Peoples' Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies among Respondents. Teaching

(IP) Table 3 shows the test of difference on the inclusive pedagogical strategies of the respondents in teaching Indigenous Peoples (IP) learners when grouped according to selected profile variables: sex, number of IP learners in class, length of service, and number of trainings related to IP and Inclusive Education.

Results using analysis of variance (ANOVA) determine if significant differences exist in teachers' practices across these categories.

Analysis on Sex: The computed F-value was 1.400 with a p-value of 0.264, which shows that when categorized according to sex, there is no statistically significant difference in the inclusive practice pedagogical strategies of the respondents. The null hypothesis is not rejected because $P > 0.05$ level of significance. Indicating that male and female teachers generally have a similar level of inclusive practices implementation. This finding echoes the existing literature, which suggests that inclusive teaching competencies are less influenced by demographic characteristics such as gender and more so through professional training and pedagogical beliefs (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Nevertheless, the trend is different for the number of learners' IP in a class, where an F-value of 3.762 with a significance value of 0.023 shows that there is a significant difference between mean scores. The table states "Reject H_0 ." This p-value of less than 0.05 indicates that we should reject the null hypothesis. Hence, it indicates that the level of inclusiveness in the pedagogy that teachers adopt varies significantly based on how many IP learners they have under their tutelage. This finding indicates that teachers may have increased awareness, adaptability, and implementation of inclusive strategies through diverse interactions with IP learners. Direct contact with culturally diverse learners makes teachers more responsive and better able to contextualize instruction (Gay, 2018).

Table 3

Test of difference on the Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies of the Respondents in Teaching IP Learners when Grouped According to Profile Variables

Factor of Variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision/ Interpretation
Sex	Between Groups	1.174	2	0.587	1.400	0.264	Fail to Reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	11.325	27	0.419			
	Total	12.499	29				
Number of IP learners in class	Between Groups	3.883	3	1.294	3.762	0.023	Reject Ho Significant
	Within Groups	8.601	25	0.344			
	Total	12.484	28				
Length of Service	Between Groups	4.925	12	0.410	0.795	0.651	Fail to Reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	7.228	14	0.516			
	Total	12.153	26				
Number of IP and Inclusive Education Related Trainings	Between Groups	2.594	4	0.649	1.574	0.213	Fail to Reject Ho Not Significant
	Within Groups	9.890	24	0.412			
	Total	12.484	28				

In terms of length of service, the F-value obtained is 0.795 at a significance of 0.651, which shows no significant difference in providing inclusive pedagogical strategies considering the years taught. This indicates that there is no significant difference in terms of inclusive practice between novice and experienced teachers. Although experience might contribute to refining classroom management and instructional practices, this does not

equate with intentionality regarding inclusive or culturally responsive teaching without being backed up by professional development support (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

In the same way, Training related to IP and Inclusive Education gave an F-value of 1.574 with a significance value of 0.213, which also proves no significant difference; which implies that, based on the information extracted from this particular sample of

respondents, their participation in any noteworthy inclusivity educational initiatives does not appear to orientate itself over the implementation of inclusive pedagogical approaches. The number of trainings attended based on the respondent profile could be a reason for this outcome, as the larger sample may limit access and hence the degree impact professional development gives to individuals. Research suggests that successful trainings are not just about getting people to attend, but how effective they are, the length of training time, and its real-world application (Desimone & Garet, 2015).

Conclusion

1. The majority of the respondents are females teaching for a short span (1–10 years), with 1 or 2 IP learners in the class, and have not attended any formal training session on IP/inclusive education.
2. The learning environment was also the one most frequently practiced by teachers, followed closely by motivation, assessment, learning resources, and extra-curricular activities
3. Learners in this level not only show high engagement for recitation, performance tasks, and daily attendance but also display active involvement on school programs and class activities.
4. The number of IP learners in the class (not sex, length of service or training) had a positive correlation with teaching strategies.
5. Teachers successfully manage by converting culturally responsive strategies, local knowledge, and inclusive practices, which boost learners' comprehension, confidence, and engagement.
6. There is a strong positive relationship between inclusive pedagogical approaches and IP learners' engagement with academic work.
7. ICR-based pedagogies are significant in the academic participation of IP learners. Yet, the totality and fullest potential of these practices are not achieved under lacklustre teacher training and support systems. This action is vital in paving the way for inclusive education as its outcome.

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