



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES: THEIR ENDURING INFLUENCE ON THE BELIEFS AND DAILY LIVES OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the enduring impact of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) on the beliefs, values, and daily experiences of educators in the Cordillera Administrative Region, particularly at the University of Baguio Science High School. Through a qualitative, descriptive phenomenological approach, data were collected from semi-structured interviews with seven teachers to understand how ancestral knowledge, cultural values, and community customs shape their identities and professional behaviors.

Findings reveal that indigenous knowledge profoundly influences teachers' ethical principles, social responsibilities, and resilience. Core values such as inayan (ethical principle), bayanihan (community cooperation), and respect for nature remain integral to their personal and professional lives. Participants highlighted the role of ancestral teachings in fostering cultural sensitivity, community engagement, and environmental awareness. Moreover, educators actively integrate indigenous knowledge into their teaching practices to ensure its transmission to future generations.

Despite the influence of modernization, many educators successfully balance contemporary perspectives with traditional customs, demonstrating the adaptability of indigenous knowledge. This study underscores the importance of preserving IKSPs within educational settings and advocates for stronger institutional support to incorporate indigenous perspectives into curricula. By recognizing the role of IKSPs in personal and professional development, this research contributes to broader discussions on cultural sustainability and indigenous identity in modern education, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and cultural advocates.

KEYWORDS: *Indigenous Knowledge, Education, Cultural Value*

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge systems and practices have played a vital role in shaping the beliefs, values, and daily lives of diverse cultural groups. These time-honored knowledge systems, passed down through generations, were closely linked to local traditions, ecological management, and communal leadership (Battiste, 2002). Unlike contemporary scientific knowledge, indigenous knowledge was experiential, holistic, and deeply embedded within the spiritual and cultural identity of communities. Although extensive research has highlighted its significance in education and development, the ongoing influence of indigenous knowledge on personal beliefs and practices—particularly among educators—remained an important area for investigation.

Globally, indigenous knowledge has increasingly been recognized as a critical component of sustainable living and cultural heritage preservation. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018), traditional knowledge contributed to biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, and ethical decision-making. Indigenous groups such as the Māori in New Zealand,

the Sami in Scandinavia, and Native American tribes in North America preserved profound connections to their ancestral wisdom, which shaped their worldviews and everyday experiences (Smith, 2012). These communities exemplified the interconnectedness of nature, community, and self—principles that continued to influence their personal convictions and ways of life.

In the Philippines, indigenous communities maintained a rich legacy of traditional knowledge that influenced various aspects of life, including health, governance, and spirituality. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP, 2018) reported that indigenous knowledge systems among groups such as the Aeta, Mangyan, and Lumad persisted despite rapid modernization. Many Filipinos continued to observe traditional rituals, use herbal medicines, and employ community-based conflict resolution methods. These practices not only provided practical benefits but also reinforced cultural identity and social cohesion.

Within the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), indigenous knowledge remained an integral part of everyday life, especially among Igorot ethnolinguistic groups such as the Kankanaey,



Ifugao, Ibaloi, and Bontoc. Core values like inayan (a moral principle discouraging immoral behavior) and bayanihan (collective cooperation) continued to underpin how Cordillerans engaged with their communities and addressed personal challenges (Bagamaspad & Hamada-Pawid, 1985). Among educators and professionals, these indigenous principles influenced personal beliefs, ethical decision-making, and lifestyle choices. For instance, many educators incorporated indigenous values into their interactions with colleagues, students, and the wider community, demonstrating the persistence of these customs beyond formal educational settings.

This study aimed to explore how indigenous knowledge systems and practices continued to shape the beliefs and everyday experiences of educators at the University of Baguio Science High School. By examining their lived experiences, the research sought to deepen understanding of the relevance of traditional wisdom in contemporary society and to provide insights into how indigenous identity influenced the development of educators' personal and professional values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) represented the collective wisdom, customs, and beliefs of indigenous communities, significantly influencing various aspects of life, including education. In the Philippines, particularly in the Cordillera Administrative Region, these systems were essential to cultural identity and everyday activities. This literature review examined the enduring impact of IKSPs on the beliefs and daily experiences of educators at the University of Baguio Science High School. It focused on how IKSPs influenced educational practices, personal convictions, and community engagement among teachers.

Previous studies demonstrated that IKSPs were intricately embedded in the educational approaches of the Philippines. For instance, Banes and Baniqued-Dela Cruz (2020) highlighted the integration of indigenous knowledge into higher education curricula, emphasizing its role in enriching academic content and supporting cultural preservation. Similarly, Ibera (2019) discussed the challenges and resilience of indigenous communities in maintaining their knowledge systems amid contemporary pressures, underscoring the importance of IKSPs for sustainable development. Furthermore, Madlela (2024) proposed a framework for incorporating IKSPs into science education, illustrating practical applications of indigenous knowledge within modern curricula.

Collectively, these studies revealed a consistent trend: embedding IKSPs within educational systems enhanced cultural relevance and strengthened students' connection to their heritage. The inclusion of indigenous knowledge enabled educators to improve instructional methods while simultaneously preserving cultural identity. Themes of community-oriented education and the integration of indigenous perspectives into curricula emerged

prominently, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between education and indigenous wisdom.

Despite the benefits of integrating IKSPs, challenges persisted. Banes and Baniqued-Dela Cruz (2020) stressed that institutional support was crucial for the successful incorporation of indigenous knowledge into higher education. Ibera (2019) identified external influences and modernization as threats to the preservation of IKSPs, necessitating proactive measures to protect these traditions. Madlela (2024) emphasized the importance of teacher training and curriculum development to effectively embed IKSPs, warning that without adequate support, integration efforts might remain superficial.

Although existing research addressed the integration of IKSPs in education broadly, there was a notable gap regarding how IKSPs specifically affected the personal beliefs and daily practices of secondary school teachers in the Cordillera region. Understanding this dynamic was essential for developing strategies that supported educators in weaving indigenous knowledge into their teaching and personal lives.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was grounded in the intersection of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and individual beliefs, examining how IKS continued to influence the daily experiences of educators at the University of Baguio Science High School. Indigenous Knowledge Systems refer to the traditional wisdom, beliefs, and practices unique to indigenous communities, encompassing ecological knowledge, cultural rituals, and educational methods transmitted across generations. In the Philippine context, IKS served as a foundational element of community identity and sustainability efforts (Tebtebba Foundation, 2019).

Teachers' personal beliefs were shaped by their cultural backgrounds and interactions with Indigenous Knowledge Systems, which affected their perspectives on life, values, and social relationships. Embracing indigenous concepts enhanced both personal and professional effectiveness by fostering deeper cultural awareness (Tamayao, 2022). These beliefs often manifested in everyday behaviors, influencing how teachers related to students, colleagues, and the wider community. Prior studies indicated that integrating IKS into professional and personal practices promoted inclusivity and strengthened connections to cultural heritage (Kovach, 2009).

Several factors affected the relationship between IKS and educators' daily lives. Cultural competence, defined as the ability to understand and respect cultural diversity, enabled individuals to incorporate IKS into their interactions and decision-making. Developing cultural competence was essential for preserving indigenous perspectives in both personal and educational contexts (Suarda, 2021). Institutional support also played a critical role; educational environments that encouraged the inclusion of IKS allowed teachers to effectively adopt and apply indigenous knowledge (Austin, 2011). Additionally, community



engagement, involving collaboration between individuals and indigenous groups, ensured that knowledge was shared authentically and respectfully, thereby safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting personal growth (Mandikonza, 2011).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study examined the enduring influence of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and practices on the values and daily experiences of educators at the University of Baguio Science High School. It provided valuable insights for various stakeholders by investigating how indigenous wisdom shaped educators' values, actions, and decision-making processes. The findings contributed to a deeper understanding of the role of ancestral knowledge in fostering ethical principles, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement within educational settings. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of integrating indigenous perspectives into curricula to promote cultural sustainability and support educators in balancing traditional customs with contemporary educational demands.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this research was to explore the lasting impact of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and practices on the beliefs and everyday lives of teachers at the University of Baguio Science High School. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To examine how Indigenous Knowledge Systems and practices shaped the personal beliefs and values of teachers.
2. To explore the ways in which teachers continued to apply indigenous traditions and practices in their daily lives.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the enduring influence of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and practices on the beliefs and daily experiences of educators at the University of Baguio Science High School. Using a descriptive phenomenological approach, detailed semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect rich, in-depth data on how indigenous traditions shaped the teachers' identities, values, and everyday interactions. The approach allowed for the exploration of participants' lived experiences and personal perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of the role of indigenous knowledge in their professional and personal lives.

Study Design

This research employed a descriptive phenomenological approach to understand and describe the lived experiences of participants regarding Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Phenomenology was deemed appropriate because it facilitated an in-depth exploration of how teachers internalized, interpreted, and integrated indigenous traditions into their personal and professional lives (Moustakas, 1994). Through the use of open-ended interviews, this approach allowed for the collection of rich and meaningful narratives from the participants, providing detailed insights into their experiences.

Population of the Study

The target group comprised educators from the University of Baguio Science High School who had experience with Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices. A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who either had personal or ancestral ties to indigenous customs or acknowledged the influence of indigenous values in their daily lives. The sample size included seven educators, consistent with the qualitative research emphasis on depth rather than breadth.

Data Gathering Tools

The primary method of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews conducted in person to accommodate the convenience of the participants. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore the teachers' beliefs, values, and the ways in which they integrated Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into their daily lives. In addition to the interviews, field notes and observations were utilized to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information, which enriched the understanding of participants' responses.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher obtained approval from the school administration and secured informed consent from the participants before initiating the study. Educators who met the inclusion criteria were identified and invited to participate. Semi-structured interviews were scheduled at mutually convenient times, ensuring a comfortable and private setting for the participants. With their consent, every interview was audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and facilitate transcription. After the interviews, transcripts were produced, and additional observational notes were compiled for further analysis. To enhance the credibility of the data, member-checking was conducted by providing participants with summaries of their responses, allowing them to review and verify the accuracy of their statements.

Treatment of Data

The qualitative data collected were subjected to thematic analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes related to the influence of Indigenous Knowledge Systems on teachers' beliefs and daily experiences. The process involved transcribing the recorded interviews verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness. Subsequently, the transcripts were systematically coded to categorize emerging themes. Patterns were then identified and interpreted in alignment with the research objectives. Finally, conclusions were drawn that authentically reflected the participants' lived experiences and perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

To uphold the ethical integrity of this research, several measures were implemented. Participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by protecting personal information and responses, and pseudonyms were used to ensure the anonymity of participants.



Participation was entirely voluntary, with no coercion or undue influence exerted on individuals to take part in the study. Interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher to safeguard the data. Additionally, the study respected cultural sensitivity by honoring indigenous beliefs and traditions, thereby avoiding any misrepresentation or exploitation of cultural knowledge.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

1. To examine how Indigenous Knowledge Systems and practices shape the personal beliefs and values of teachers.

Theme 1: The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Shaping Personal Beliefs and Values

Sub-theme 1.1: Connection to Ancestral Teachings and Upbringing

Numerous participants highlighted the crucial influence of their upbringing in forming their individual beliefs and values. This impact mainly arises from family lessons and cultural customs transmitted over generations.

R1: *"The way I view things in life, I still go back to the roots I came from, to the teachings of my parents and grandparents. Since I was born and raised in a conservative and traditional family, I value those things and still adapt and practice what is applicable today."*

R2: *"Indigenous knowledge, such as beliefs in inayan (a moral and ethical principle) and respect for nature, was passed to me by my grandparents."*

R5: *"Since culture is a way of life, it has provided guiding principles to live by, the norms that should be followed, and the path to undertake."*

These findings resonate with current literature highlighting the significance of indigenous knowledge in influencing individual and communal values. For example, Battiste (2002) emphasizes the role of indigenous perspectives in forming people's ethical and social duties. Moreover, Dei (2011) claims that ancestral knowledge is essential in shaping identity and directing behavior within indigenous communities

Sub-theme 1.2: Cultural Sensitivity and Community Engagement
Indigenous knowledge also influences teachers' perspectives on cultural diversity, social responsibility, and community participation.

R3: *"My indigenous knowledge system has developed my cultural sensitivity, allowing me to be more understanding and appreciative of cultural diversity."*

R4: *"Bayanihan or community help influenced me the most. Damayan (mutual aid) during weddings, deaths, and celebrations is a community effort where young and old contribute their time and resources. As such, I see it as my responsibility to help and give my time to participate in our local traditions."*

This focus on community involvement and cultural awareness is supported by Smith (1999), who highlights that indigenous education fosters social responsibility and communal welfare. In

a similar vein, Kovach (2009) examines how indigenous knowledge contributes to cultivating a sense of belonging and mutual aid among community members

Sub-theme 1.3: Spiritual and Environmental Connections

Several participants emphasized the role of indigenous knowledge in fostering resilience, environmental respect, and spiritual guidance.

R6: *"The concept of angels and souls is part of our indigenous knowledge system in school. It assists and guides us, influencing our ideas, techniques, and styles, which has improved my confidence as a teacher."*

R7: *"Cultural teachings made me think we are resilient—we fight for things we know are right. Our ancestors thrived in the mountains through hard work and perseverance. These lessons taught us to endure challenges and adapt. Our rituals and beliefs emphasize a deep respect for the land and the environment."*

The relationship between indigenous knowledge and environmental stewardship was extensively documented. Berkes (2008) argued that traditional ecological knowledge played a crucial role in the sustainable management of natural resources. Similarly, Cajete (2000) highlighted the deep connection between spiritual traditions and environmental ethics within indigenous worldviews.

2. To explore the ways in which teachers continue to apply indigenous traditions and practices in their daily lives.

Theme 2: Application of Indigenous Traditions and Practices in Daily Life

Sub-theme 2.1: Integration of Indigenous Knowledge in Teaching and Personal Life

While modernization has influenced teaching methods, indigenous traditions remain significant in shaping perspectives and approaches.

R1: *"Right now, I need to adopt certain new things in teaching, but I share my indigenous knowledge and experiences with students, especially when we discuss our past. Despite changes, my beliefs still shape me as a person."*

R3: *"Certain indigenous traditions still influence my daily encounters. These traditions are deeply rooted in my value system, shaping how I approach situations and interact with others."*

McGregor (2004) argued that incorporating indigenous knowledge into teaching methods enhanced students' comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage and environmental sustainability. This supported the findings that educators continued to integrate indigenous knowledge within their classroom

Sub-theme 2.2: Preservation and Adaptation of Indigenous Practices

Some respondents highlighted how they balance modern perspectives with traditional beliefs.

R2: *"I no longer believe in spirits living in rocks, trees, or caves, but I still practice mindfulness when visiting and treating these natural sites with respect."*



R5: "To a limited extent, I apply modern options but often end up using traditional methods as they are tried and tested."

R7: "We still follow certain customs, rituals, and values passed down from our ancestors. They guide how we interact with others, face difficulties, and shape our worldview."

The balance between ancestral customs and contemporary life demonstrated the dynamic nature of indigenous knowledge systems. Simpson (2004) argued that indigenous knowledge adapted and evolved over time to accommodate modern conditions while preserving core cultural values.

Sub-theme 2.3: Social Responsibility and Indigenous Values

One respondent expressed their strong commitment to helping others, a value deeply rooted in indigenous traditions.

R4: "I see it as my responsibility to extend my help to those in need."

The emphasis on collective support and social obligation characterized indigenous cultures, promoting strong community ties and reciprocal assistance. Kovach (2009) described frameworks of indigenous education as fostering social accountability and group awareness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research underscored the vital impact of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) on the personal beliefs, values, and daily practices of educators at the University of Baguio Science High School. The results indicated that ancestral wisdom, cultural awareness, community involvement, and environmental consciousness were profoundly integrated into their views and behaviors. Although modernization has influenced certain traditional beliefs and practices, numerous teachers maintained and incorporated indigenous knowledge into their lives, especially regarding their ethical values, social relations, and professional duties.

While some traditions have gradually diminished due to cultural shifts, the research highlighted the resilience and adaptability of indigenous knowledge. Educators struck a balance between conventional and innovative methods, safeguarding essential cultural traditions while adapting to contemporary society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, this study advocated for the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into the educational curriculum to ensure their preservation and continued relevance in contemporary society. Teachers were encouraged to incorporate indigenous values, customs, and ethical principles into their instructional practices to enhance students' cultural awareness and sensitivity. Furthermore, educational institutions and local communities were urged to collaborate in documenting and preserving traditional knowledge through cultural activities such as storytelling, workshops, and participation in local customs.

The study also emphasized the importance of promoting environmental stewardship by embedding indigenous ecological knowledge into sustainability programs, thereby fostering respect

for nature and responsible resource management. Additionally, schools were recommended to reinforce the principles of bayanihan (collaboration) and damayan (mutual assistance) through community service initiatives, motivating both educators and students to embrace social responsibility and communal support.

Although modernization influenced teaching approaches, educators were advised to strive for a balance between contemporary innovations and traditional wisdom to safeguard cultural identity. Future research was suggested to explore effective strategies for preserving indigenous traditions within evolving educational environments, ensuring their integration into modern pedagogical methods. By adopting these recommendations, educational institutions could contribute to the long-term sustainability of indigenous knowledge systems and their enduring significance in modern society.

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