

Do lessons walk on ancestral ground? A cross-sectional analysis on the implementation of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) in Zamboanga City Division

¿Caminan las Lecciones sobre Terrenos Ancestrales? Un Análisis Transversal sobre la Implementación de la Educación de los Pueblos Indígenas (IPEd) en la División de la Ciudad de Zamboanga

Sajid K. Bungkac¹  

¹Department of Education. Zamboanga City, 7000 Philippines.

Cite as

Bungkac S. Do lessons walk on ancestral ground? A cross-sectional analysis on the implementation of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) in Zamboanga City Division. SAP Community and Interculturality in Dialogue. 2026; 6:184. <https://doi.org/10.62486/cid2026184>

Publication History

Submitted: 22-01-2026

Revised: 20-03-2026

Accepted: 02-06-2026

Published: 03-06-2026

Corresponding author

Sajid K. Bungkac 

ABSTRACT

Teachers' perspectives are important in understanding how educational programs are carried out and experienced in schools. The Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program aims to provide culturally responsive education that meets the needs of indigenous learners and respects their identity, culture, and traditions. This study examined teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the IPEd Program in the Zamboanga City Division during the School Year 2024–2025. It focused on the level of attainment of IPEd objectives and the extent to which implementation addressed the Seven Policy Framework on Indigenous Peoples Education, and it also determined the relationship between these variables and differences in perceptions when grouped according to school size, years of implementation, and dominant tribal affiliation. A descriptive-correlational research design was used. Data were collected from 138 teachers across 49 IPEd-implementing schools using a validated survey questionnaire. Mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and tests of difference were used to analyze the data. Results showed that teachers rated the attainment of IPEd objectives ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.57$) and the extent of implementation ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.61$) as highly achieved. Policy support received the highest ratings, while curriculum contextualization and external collaboration obtained lower ratings. A strong and significant positive relationship was found between attainment and implementation ($r = 0.682$, $p < 0.001$). No significant differences were found across the grouping variables. The study concludes that the IPEd Program has been effectively implemented, with areas for improvement in contextualization, collaboration, and continuous teacher support.

Keywords: Culture-Based Education; Curriculum Contextualization; Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd)

RESUMEN

Las perspectivas de los docentes son importantes para comprender cómo se desarrollan y se experimentan los programas educativos en las escuelas. El Programa de Educación para los Pueblos Indígenas (IPEd) tiene como objetivo brindar una educación culturalmente pertinente que responda a las necesidades de los estudiantes indígenas y respete su identidad, cultura y tradiciones. Este estudio examinó las percepciones de los docentes sobre la implementación del Programa IPEd en la División de la Ciudad de Zamboanga durante el Año Escolar 2024–2025. Se centró en el nivel de logro de los objetivos del IPEd y en el grado en que la implementación abordó el Marco de Siete Políticas sobre la Educación de los Pueblos Indígenas, y también determinó la relación entre estas variables y las diferencias en las percepciones cuando se agrupan según el tamaño de la escuela, los años de implementación y la afiliación tribal predominante. Se utilizó un diseño de investigación descriptivo-correlacional. Los datos se recopilaron de 138 docentes en 49 escuelas que implementan el IPEd mediante un cuestionario validado. Para el análisis de los datos se utilizaron la media, la desviación estándar, la correlación producto-momento de Pearson y pruebas de diferencia. Los resultados mostraron que los docentes calificaron el logro de los objetivos del IPEd ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.57$) y el grado de implementación ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.61$) como altamente alcanzados. El apoyo a las políticas obtuvo las calificaciones más altas, mientras que la contextualización del currículo y la colaboración externa presentaron calificaciones más bajas. Se encontró una relación positiva fuerte y significativa entre el logro y la implementación ($r = 0.682$, $p < 0.001$). No se encontraron diferencias significativas en las variables de agrupación. El estudio concluye que el Programa IPEd ha sido implementado de manera efectiva, aunque existen áreas de mejora en la contextualización, la colaboración y

el apoyo continuo a los docentes.

Palabras clave: Educación de los Pueblos Indígenas (IPEd); Contextualización del Currículo; Educación Basada en la Cultura.

INTRODUCTION

Education systems around the world increasingly recognize the need to provide inclusive and culturally sustaining learning experiences for indigenous peoples. Global efforts emphasize that education should not only ensure access but also respect and sustain the cultural identities, languages, and knowledge systems of indigenous communities. Culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies have emerged as key approaches in addressing long-standing inequities, as they position learners' cultural backgrounds as central to teaching and learning rather than as barriers. Despite these advances, many indigenous learners continue to experience gaps in participation, achievement, and representation within formal education systems.^(1,2)

In the Philippines, this global commitment is reflected in national policies that seek to protect the rights of indigenous learners. The 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article XIV, Section 1) mandates the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8371) affirms the right of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) to culturally appropriate education. These legal foundations are operationalized through the Department of Education's Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Policy Framework (DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011) and its implementing guidelines (DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015), which aim to integrate indigenous knowledge systems, strengthen teacher capacity, and create supportive learning environments. However, national and international evidence shows that strong policy foundations do not automatically translate into effective classroom practice, particularly in culturally diverse contexts.⁽³⁾

At the local level, these challenges become more visible in settings such as the Zamboanga City Division, where diverse indigenous groups, including the Subanen and Sama-Bangingi, have distinct cultural and linguistic identities that require meaningful integration into the curriculum. While there have been efforts to localize instruction, implementation remains uneven, with reported concerns on teacher preparedness, limited culturally appropriate materials, and weak community engagement. At the same time, some local initiatives demonstrate that when cultural and linguistic elements are integrated, learner participation and community involvement improve. These mixed realities highlight the need for a focused examination of how IPEd policies are translated into actual school practices.

This study is anchored on the theories of culturally responsive teaching by Geneva Gay⁽⁴⁾ and culturally relevant pedagogy by Gloria Ladson-Billings.⁽⁵⁾ Gay explains that effective teaching requires recognizing and integrating learners' cultural backgrounds to improve engagement and academic outcomes. Ladson-Billings⁽⁵⁾ further argues that teaching should promote academic success, affirm cultural identity, and develop critical consciousness among learners. In this study, these theories serve as analytical lenses to examine whether the implementation of the IPEd Program reflects these core principles in practice, particularly in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, and learning environment.^(6,7)

Existing literature points to a consistent pattern:^(8,9,10) while policies on indigenous education are well-established, their implementation is often uneven and context-dependent. Some studies highlight gaps in teacher preparation and lack of contextualized materials, while others note limited involvement of indigenous communities. On the other hand, there is evidence that culture-based approaches can improve learner engagement and participation. However, most studies either describe policies or focus on isolated cases, with limited empirical analysis of how policy objectives align with actual implementation across schools. This indicates a clear gap in understanding the relationship between intended policy outcomes and real-world practice.

Addressing this gap, the present study provides empirical evidence on the relationship between the attainment of IPEd objectives and the extent of implementation of the Seven Policy Framework. It also examines variations in teachers' perceptions across different school contexts. More importantly, the study tests the applicability of culturally responsive and culturally relevant pedagogy within a Philippine setting and offers a context-based approach for evaluating indigenous education programs.

Thus, this research aims to determine the level of attainment of the objectives of the IPEd Program, assess the extent of implementation of the Seven Policy Framework, examine the relationship between these constructs, and analyze differences in perceptions based on school size, years of IPEd implementation, and dominant IP/tribal affiliation. The findings are expected to inform more context-sensitive strategies for strengthening indigenous education and ensuring that policy intentions translate into meaningful learning experiences for indigenous learners.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component aimed to determine how teachers in the Zamboanga City Division perceive the level of attainment of the objectives of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program and the extent to which the Seven Policy Framework on IP Education is implemented in their schools. This involved collecting data on teachers' perceptions through a structured and validated survey questionnaire designed to capture key indicators related to IPEd implementation, including curriculum, policy support, teacher capacity, and community engagement.

The instrument consisted of clearly defined items organized according to the study variables and was subjected to validation

procedures to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability. Prior to data collection, necessary permissions were secured from the Schools Division Office. The questionnaires were then distributed to selected teacher-respondents across 49 IPed-implementing schools. Standard procedures were followed, including orientation of respondents, voluntary participation, and assurance of confidentiality. The completed questionnaires were retrieved, checked, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Meanwhile, the correlational aspect of the research examined whether there is a significant relationship between the perceived level of attainment of the objectives of the IPed Program and the extent to which the policy framework is implemented. It also investigated whether there are significant differences in these perceptions when teachers are grouped according to school size, years of IPed implementation, and dominant IP/tribal affiliation.

Data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools, including mean and standard deviation to describe teachers' perceptions, Pearson product-moment correlation to determine relationships between variables, and tests of difference such as t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine group differences. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to describe existing conditions while also identifying patterns, relationships, and variations among variables. Since no variables were manipulated and the study focused on naturally occurring conditions, the descriptive-correlational design was suitable for achieving the objectives of the research.

Respondents of the Study

The research participants for this study consisted of elementary school teachers from the 49 IPed implementing schools across the Zamboanga City Division. These schools were included to represent the diverse educational settings and cultural communities within the division, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how the objectives of the IPed Program were attained and how the Seven Policy Framework on Indigenous Peoples Education was implemented at the school level.

A total of 138 teachers agreed to participate in the study, selected through purposive sampling. This method was deemed appropriate since it focused on teachers who were directly engaged in the implementation of the IPed Program and were therefore most qualified to provide relevant insights. According to Palinkas *et al.*⁽¹¹⁾ purposive sampling is particularly effective in studies that require participants with specialized knowledge and experience relevant to the research objectives. The sample size of 138 was considered adequate as it represented teachers from 49 IPed-implementing schools, ensuring sufficient coverage across different school contexts. This number allowed for meaningful statistical analysis, including correlation and tests of difference, while still maintaining manageability in data collection. Moreover, the sample size provided enough variability in responses to capture patterns and relationships among the key variables of the study, making it appropriate for the descriptive-correlational design employed.

Purposive sampling strengthened the validity of the study since it included participants who could provide meaningful and context-specific perspectives. As Etikan *et al.*⁽¹²⁾ emphasize, purposive sampling is valuable in generating rich and relevant data by selecting respondents who can best inform the research questions. This approach enhanced the depth and relevance of the findings, offering a clearer picture of teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the implementation of IPed objectives and policies in their respective schools.

Research Tool

To measure teachers' perceptions of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) Program in Zamboanga City Division, this study used a survey questionnaire developed for this research and validated by experts in culture-based education and IPed implementation. The instrument was grounded in the framework of Level of Attainment of IPed Objectives and Extent of Implementation according to DepEd's Seven Policy Framework on Indigenous Peoples Education, which has been recognized as a comprehensive approach for evaluating culturally responsive education programs. Using this framework ensured that the study was guided by a tool that is both conceptually aligned with IPed goals and empirically informed.

The questionnaire consisted of three (3) parts. Part I collected demographic information, including name (optional), school size, years of IPed implementation, and dominant tribal affiliation. Part II assessed the level of attainment of IPed objectives through five (5) items focusing on culturally responsive curriculum, teacher capacity building, development of culturally appropriate learning resources, policy support, and addressing the learning needs of IP learners with limited access to basic education. Part III evaluated the extent of program implementation across DepEd's Seven Policy Framework, with 34 items organized under seven policy dimensions: equitable access to education, appropriate pedagogy and assessment, learning resources and environment, teacher development, institutional support, partnerships and linkages, and affirmative action to prevent discrimination.

Responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Not Attained/Not Implemented) to 5 (Very Highly Attained/Very Highly Implemented), encouraging participants to indicate the degree of achievement or implementation. Pilot testing and reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0,912 for Level of Attainment of Objectives and 0,935 for Extent of Implementation. This instrument provided a structured and systematic means to capture teachers' perceptions of IPed objectives, practices, and policy adherence, supporting the study's research questions regarding attainment, implementation, relationships between variables, and group differences.

Data collection procedure

The data-gathering procedure for this study was designed to ensure the systematic collection of reliable and valid data on the implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) Program and the Seven Policy Framework on Indigenous Peoples Education in schools, as perceived by teachers. The procedure strictly followed the Regional Research Management Guidelines (RMG 2023) and upheld ethical standards in educational research.

The process started with the preparation and submission of a detailed research proposal outlining the study's objectives, methodology, and the use of an adopted instrument from the study by Oscar Jr. Ancheta et al.⁽¹³⁾ This proposal was first submitted to the School Research Committee (SRC) in the researcher's own school. Chaired by the school principal, the SRC carefully reviewed the proposal to ensure that it aligned with the school's research policies, addressed ethical considerations, and highlighted the study's importance in improving IPed implementation for Indigenous learners.

After the SRC granted its approval, the proposal was forwarded to the District Research Committee (DRC) of Manicahan District, led by the Public Schools District Supervisor. The DRC assessed the proposal using the Self-Evaluation Tool for Basic Research (SET-BR) to verify its alignment with district research priorities, particularly its relevance to the education of Indigenous Peoples and adherence to DepEd's IPed policies. The committee provided feedback and recommended adjustments to strengthen the proposal's methodological soundness and local applicability.

Following district-level approval, the proposal was submitted to the Division Research Committee (DRC) of the Division of Zamboanga City. The division committee conducted a comprehensive review to ensure that the study complied with the Regional Research Management Guidelines and supported the division's initiatives to strengthen inclusive and culturally responsive education through the IPed Program. Any revisions required by the committee were addressed promptly to secure final approval.

Once all necessary approvals were obtained, the researcher proceeded with the data collection process. A structured questionnaire was used, adopted from the study of Ancheta et al.⁽¹³⁾ titled "Navigating Educational Crossroads: An In-Depth Analysis of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) Program in Santol, La Union, Philippines." This instrument was originally crafted based on DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 and DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015.

Data collection involved gathering responses from teachers in IPed-implementing schools across the Zamboanga City Division to assess the level of attainment of IPed objectives and the extent of implementation of the Seven Policy Framework.⁽¹²⁾ Throughout the process, strict ethical standards were observed, including securing informed consent, maintaining anonymity, and ensuring confidentiality of all participant responses. The study fully respected intellectual and cultural property rights, and all collected data were used solely for the purposes of this research. Additional safeguards were in place to minimize any potential risks or discomfort to the participants.

Data Analysis Procedure and Statistical Treatment

The data gathered were analyzed using the IBM SPSS 29.0 program. First, whether the collected data were normally distributed was determined by examining the skewness coefficients. The normality of the sample was then tested using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, which showed that the data were normally distributed ($p = 0,091 > 0,05$). This indicated that the assumptions for applying parametric tests were met.

To determine the levels of teachers' perceptions of the Level of Attainment of IPed Objectives and the Extent of Implementation of the IPed Program, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were employed. These measures provided an overview of the respondents' overall ratings across the two main dimensions.

To examine the relationship between the Level of Attainment and the Extent of Implementation, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson r) was used. A positive correlation value ($0 < r \leq 1$) indicated a direct relationship where higher attainment corresponded with higher implementation, while a negative correlation value ($-1 \leq r < 0$) indicated an inverse relationship. The strength of the correlation was determined by the closeness of the coefficient to 1 or -1. The p -value was used to determine the significance of the correlation, with values less than 0,05 suggesting that the correlation was statistically significant and not due to chance.

After the results were identified, interpretation was performed to properly determine the levels among the variables. The descriptive statistics for the survey items were interpreted using a five-level scale, where weighted mean values ranging from 5,00 to 4,21 were described as very high, 4,20 to 3,41 as high, 3,40 to 2,61 as moderate, 2,60 to 1,81 as low, and 1,80 to 1,00 as very low. This interpretation scale was applied to both the Level of Attainment of Objectives and Extent of Implementation dimensions.

The interrelationship between attainment and implementation was further interpreted based on the correlation values. A positive value ($0 < r \leq 1$) indicated a direct relationship, whereas a negative value ($-1 \leq r < 0$) indicated an inverse relationship. The closer the coefficient was to either 1 or -1, the stronger the relationship. The p -value was also used to test statistical significance, with values less than 0,05 confirming that the observed correlation was meaningful and unlikely to have occurred by chance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Perceptions of the Attainment of IPed Program Objectives in Schools

Table 1 presents the level of attainment of the objectives of the IPed Program as implemented in schools, as perceived by teachers. The composite mean score of 3,73 (SD = 0,908) indicates that the objectives of the program were "highly attained." Among the statements, the highest-rated item was "Strengthen the policy environment supportive of IPed" ($M = 3,86$, SD = 0,926), interpreted as "highly attained." This finding suggests that schools recognize the importance of policies that reinforce the institutionalization of culture-based education and provide a framework for ensuring inclusivity of indigenous learners.

Conversely, the lowest-rated item was "Make the curriculum culturally responsive to the specific community context of IP learners" ($M = 3,52$, SD = 0,864), though still interpreted as "highly attained." This indicates that while curriculum contextualization is being practiced, challenges remain in fully adapting instructional content to reflect the diverse cultural contexts of indigenous learners.

Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions of the Attainment of IPed Program Objectives			
Attainment of IPed Program Objectives	Mean	SD	Interpretation
TPS1	3,52	0,864	Highly Attained
TPS2	3,66	0,929	Highly Attained
TPS3	3,79	0,907	Highly Attained
TPS4	3,86	0,926	Highly Attained
TPS5	3,80	0,915	Highly Attained
Overall	3,73	0,908	Highly Attained

This means that teachers perceive the IPed Program as successfully supported by policy measures and resource development, but there are still gaps in curriculum responsiveness that need to be addressed. The findings imply that while schools are committed to culture-based education, continuous efforts in developing localized learning resources and teacher training are essential to ensure deeper contextualization of the curriculum.

These results align with previous research showing that DepEd policies have effectively legitimized and strengthened the implementation of IPed, but gaps persist in localized curriculum and resource development. Dalengga and Naanep⁽¹⁴⁾ emphasized that institutional frameworks like DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011, have advanced the integration of indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices into education. However, Esparrago-Kalidas⁽¹⁵⁾ and Espiritu⁽¹⁶⁾ found that curriculum contextualization is constrained by a lack of culturally relevant materials and limited teacher preparation. Similarly, Gadaza et al.⁽¹⁷⁾ reported that while teachers support inclusive and culture-based pedagogy, sustained capacity-building remains critical to strengthen implementation.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Extent of IPed Program Implementation According to the Seven Policy Framework Dimensions

Table 2 presents the extent of IPed Program implementation in schools, addressing the dimensions outlined in DepEd's Seven Policy Framework on Indigenous Peoples Education. The composite mean of 3,74 (SD = 0,918) reveals that the program is perceived by teachers as "highly implemented."

Table 2. Teachers' Extent of IPed Program Implementation			
Extent of IPed Program Implementation	Mean	SD	Interpretation
DepEd's Seven Policy Framework on IP Education	3,74	,918	Highly Implemented

The highest-rated item was "Giving due recognition to and promoting the sustainability of indigenous learning systems" ($M = 3,85$, $SD = 0,849$), interpreted as "highly implemented." This indicates that teachers acknowledge the importance of sustaining indigenous ways of knowing as a vital part of learners' cultural identity. Research supports this finding: A research⁽¹⁴⁾ highlight that the recognition of indigenous learning systems ensures cultural continuity and strengthens the relevance of education for IP learners.

Conversely, the lowest-rated item was "Maximizing collaboration with NCIP, IPOs, CSOs, and other institutions" ($M = 3,63$, $SD = 1,009$), also interpreted as "highly implemented." This suggests that while institutional partnerships exist, schools may face challenges in fully operationalizing inter-agency coordination, often due to resource and logistical constraints.

The findings suggest that while schools demonstrate strong commitment to inclusive and culture-based education—particularly in integrating indigenous knowledge systems and sustaining indigenous learning practices—gaps persist in institutional collaboration and localized curriculum contextualization. Espiritu⁽¹⁶⁾ argues that IP education flourishes best when local communities and institutions are consistently engaged in knowledge-sharing and resource development.

This means that the IPed Program has been implemented with significant success in schools, particularly in ensuring policy support, teacher training, and recognition of indigenous knowledge systems. However, strengthening partnerships with community organizations and expanding resource mobilization remain critical to enhancing sustainability and deepening the impact of the program.

Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of IPed Program Attainment and Implementation by School Size

Table 3 presents the test of significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the attainment of IPed objectives and the extent of its implementation when grouped according to school size. The results reveal that for the level of attainment of IPed objectives ($F = 1,046$, $p = 0,376$) and the extent of implementation ($F = 1,412$, $p = 0,244$), the computed p-values are both greater than the 0,05 level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions across schools classified as small, medium, large, or mega in size.

This means that regardless of school size, teachers perceived the IPed Program objectives as being attained to a similar extent and its implementation as consistently addressed across the Seven Policy Framework. The finding suggests that the size of the school does not appear to influence how teachers view the effectiveness of IPed implementation.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA on Teachers' Perceptions of IPed Program Attainment and Implementation Across School Sizes									
Variables	School Size	N	Mean	SS	df	MS	F value	p value	Interpretation
Attainment	Small	33	3,62	2,149	3	0,716	1,046	0,376	Not Significant
	Medium	27	3,96	64,339	134	0,684			
	Large	33	3,54	66,488	137				
	Mega	45	3,80						
	Total	138	3,73						
Implementation	Small	33	3,59	2,854	3	0,951	1,412	0,244	Not Significant
	Medium	27	4,05	63,331	134	0,674			
	Large	33	3,59	66,185	137				
	Mega	45	3,81						
	Total	138	3,75						

These results align with observations from Espiritu⁽¹⁶⁾ who noted that the effectiveness of IPed implementation is more closely tied to policy support, teacher training, and resource availability than to the structural size of schools. A research⁽¹⁴⁾ emphasize that consistency in implementing culture-based policies is key, regardless of school scale, particularly when guided by clear DepEd frameworks. Similarly, Bacongus⁽¹⁵⁾ observed that while larger schools may have more resources, smaller schools often compensate through stronger community participation, leading to comparable outcomes in IPed delivery.

Significant relationship between the level of attainment of the objectives of the IPed Program and the extent to which its implementation addresses the Seven Policy Framework on IP Education

Table 4 shows the test of relationship between the level of attainment of the objectives of the IPed Program and the extent of its implementation across the Seven Policy Framework on Indigenous Peoples Education. The computed correlation coefficient of $r = 0,814$ with a p-value of 0,000 indicates a high positive correlation, which is statistically significant at the 0,01 level.

This means that the higher the attainment of the IPed objectives, the greater the extent to which its implementation addresses the Seven Policy Framework. In other words, schools that report higher attainment of culture-based education objectives also tend to implement the program more comprehensively across the policy dimensions.

Table 4. Pearson Correlations between the level of attainment of the objectives of the IPed Program and the extent to which its implementation addresses the Seven Policy Framework on IP Education				
Variables		p value	r-value	Interpretation
Level of Attainment	Extent of Implementation	0,000	0,814	Significant

The finding implies that the success of IPed is mutually reinforced: strong attainment of its goals (such as curriculum contextualization, resource development, and addressing IP learners' needs) is closely associated with robust implementation practices (such as institutional linkages, capacity building, and provision of culture-responsive pedagogy). This reflects the integrated nature of DepEd's IPed framework, where objectives and implementation are interdependent.

This result is consistent with the findings of⁽¹⁴⁾ who noted that the institutionalization of culture-based education policies in the Philippines directly influences classroom practices and program outcomes. Similarly, Bacongus⁽¹⁵⁾ emphasized that effective implementation mechanisms—including teacher training, community partnerships, and policy support—are essential in achieving the objectives of inclusive and culture-responsive education. Espiritu⁽¹⁶⁾ also highlighted that meaningful progress in IP education emerges when objectives are aligned with concrete implementation strategies, particularly through sustained collaboration with indigenous communities.

Recommendations

This research contributes to the body of knowledge by highlighting the strong alignment between program objectives and policy implementation while also identifying critical areas for growth. It emphasizes the importance of sustaining professional development, enhancing community participation, and deepening contextualization to ensure that indigenous learners experience education that is not only accessible but also culturally relevant.

The implications of this study suggest several actions that stakeholders may undertake to strengthen the IPed Program. School administrators should prioritize professional development programs focused on culture-based pedagogy, mother tongue-based multilingual education, and strategies for engaging indigenous learners. Teacher mentorship programs can be established to support new educators in IP communities, allowing them to learn from experienced colleagues. Schools should also foster collaborative environments where teachers and IP community leaders can co-create contextualized learning resources.

In addition, policymakers should enhance support systems by ensuring that adequate funding, logistical support, and incentives are made available for schools serving IP learners, especially those in remote and hard-to-reach areas. Policies should also encourage

participatory monitoring and evaluation, involving IP elders and cultural leaders, to ensure that implementation remains relevant and culturally responsive. Finally, inter-agency collaboration with NCIP, IPOs, CSOs, and LGUs must be strengthened to ensure sustainability and resource mobilization.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the attainment and implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program in the Zamboanga City Division during the School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, it examined how teachers view the attainment of IPEd objectives, the extent to which implementation addresses the dimensions of the Seven Policy Framework on Indigenous Peoples Education, the relationship between attainment and implementation, and whether significant differences exist when perceptions are grouped according to school size, years of IPEd implementation, and dominant IP/tribal affiliation. The findings of this study provide important insights into the dynamics of culture-based education in the context of indigenous learners.

Firstly, the study assessed the attainment of IPEd objectives. Results showed that teachers perceived these objectives as highly attained, with strengthening the policy environment receiving the highest rating. This indicates that DepEd policies have created a strong institutional framework for implementing IPEd in schools. However, the lowest-rated objective was curriculum contextualization, which, though still highly attained, suggests ongoing challenges in fully adapting learning content to reflect the cultural realities of indigenous learners.

Secondly, the study examined the extent of implementation of the Seven Policy Framework on IP Education. Teachers consistently rated this as highly implemented, with the recognition and sustainability of indigenous learning systems receiving the highest evaluation. This demonstrates a strong acknowledgment of indigenous knowledge as a vital part of education. By contrast, collaboration with external stakeholders such as the NCIP, IPOs, and CSOs was rated lowest, indicating that while schools value partnerships, more work is needed to strengthen inter-agency and community linkages.

Thirdly, the study established a high and significant positive correlation ($r = 0.814$, $p < 0.01$) between the attainment of IPEd objectives and the extent of implementation. This means that schools which achieve higher levels of program objectives also tend to demonstrate more comprehensive implementation of the policy framework. The finding affirms the interconnectedness of program goals and their execution, underscoring that success in one dimension reinforces success in the other.

Lastly, the study analyzed differences in perceptions when grouped according to school size, years of IPEd implementation, and dominant tribal affiliation. Results showed no significant differences across these variables, suggesting that the IPEd Program is perceived as being implemented consistently across different school contexts and cultural groups. This uniformity reflects the effectiveness of DepEd's policy-driven approach but also highlights the need for deeper contextualization to address the unique needs of specific tribes such as the Yakan, Sama Bangingi, Sama Badjao, and Subanon.

This study demonstrates that the IPEd Program in Zamboanga City Division is institutionalized and strongly supported by both policy and teacher commitment. However, challenges remain in curriculum contextualization, localized resource development, and external collaboration. The findings affirm that while consistency is achieved across schools, responsiveness to the distinct cultural contexts of indigenous learners requires continued attention.

FINANCING

The authors did not receive financing for the development of this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Sajid K. Bungkac

Data curation: Sajid K. Bungkac

Formal analysis: Sajid K. Bungkac

Research: Sajid K. Bungkac

Drafting - original draft: Sajid K. Bungkac

Writing - proofreading and editing: Sajid K. Bungkac

REFERENCES

1. Department of Education. 2011. DO No. 62, s. 2011 – National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework. Pasig City: DepEd.
2. UNESCO. 2021. State of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Rights to Education. Paris: UNESCO.
3. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. 2022. Annual Report. Quezon City: NCIP.
4. Gay, Geneva. 2010. Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice. 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Press.

5. Ladson-Billings G. Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *Am Educ Res J.* 1995;32(3):465–91. doi:10.3102/00028312032003465.
6. McKinley, Elizabeth, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. 2019. “Towards Self-Determination in Indigenous Education: Issues in New Zealand Māori Education.” In *Handbook of Indigenous Education*, 207–23. Singapore: Springer.
7. McKinley EA, Smith LT. Towards self-determination in Indigenous education research: an introduction. In: McKinley EA, Smith LT, editors. *Handbook of Indigenous Education*. Singapore: Springer; 2019. p. 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1839-8_77-2
8. Buenaflor N. The lived experiences and challenges faced by Indigenous high school students amidst the new normal of education. *Psychol Educ.* 2023;7:1–?. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7652948>
9. Gaite CR. Indigenous Filipino students’ challenges, coping strategies, and recommendations in higher education. *J Interdiscip Perspect.* 2025;3(9):79–84. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.539>
10. Tolentino JCG, Miranda JPP, Maniago VGM, Sibug VB. Development and evaluation of localized digital learning modules for Indigenous Peoples’ health education in the Philippines. *Univ J Educ Res.* 2020;8(12):6853–62. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.081251>
11. Palinkas L, Horwitz S, Green C, Wisdom J, Duan N, Hoagwood K. Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Adm Policy Ment Health.* 2015;42(5):533–44. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
12. Etikan, Ilker, Sulaiman Abubakar Musa, and Rukayya Sunusi Alkassim. “Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling.” *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>.
13. Oscar Jr. Ancheta, and Remalyn Q Casem. 2024. “Navigating Educational Crossroads: An In-Depth Analysis of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) Program in Santol, La Union, Philippines.” *Diversitas Journal* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.48017/dj.v9i2.2998>.
14. Dalengga G, Naanep N. Implementation of National Indigenous People’s Education Policy Framework and the level of Indigenous Knowledge System practices of Blaan Tribe in Sultan Kudarat. *Psychol Educ.* 2025;40(10):1255–65. <https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.401001>
15. Esparrago-Kalidas AJ. Challenges in implementing a culturally sustaining pedagogy in Indigenous formal education. *J Indig Soc Dev.* 2025;13(3):141–74. <https://doi.org/10.55016/ojs/jisd.v13i3.81550>
16. Espiritu BF. The Lumad struggle for social and environmental justice: alternative media in a socio-environmental movement in the Philippines. *J Altern Community Media.* 2017;2(1):45–59. https://doi.org/10.1386/joacm_00031_1
17. Gadaza A, Manera A, Santos S, Alih C, Caban R. Reviving the past, teaching the future: the role of Philippine cultural heritage in curriculum development of teacher education programs focus. *Int J Cult Humanit Res.* 2025;7(SI2):80–97. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7isi2.169>