



TEACHING IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON NON-IP TEACHERS' CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The experiences of non-IP teachers immersed in cultural communities may be laden with challenges but with appropriate adjustments, such experience may be transforming. This qualitative descriptive research explored the experiences of non-IP teachers deployed to teach in an identified IP school in a tribal municipality in Misamis Oriental. Five (5) non-IP elementary teachers voluntarily participated in the study. Grounded on Anzaldúa's border theory and Nakata's cultural interface theory, the study describes how non-IP teachers perform their role and navigate in a new cultural community, focusing on the pedagogical challenges, and adaptations they encounter. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were utilized in data gathering and were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis, which involved familiarization, coding, themes, reviewing, defining, and reporting of data. Based on the data gathered, six (6) themes emerged: (1) Personal-Emotional Readiness, (2) Contextual and Professional Challenges, (3) Struggles in Unfamiliar Learning Contexts, (4) Adaptive Pedagogical Adjustments, (5) Transformative Teaching, and (6) Professional Immersion. The findings indicate that teaching in an Indigenous community is a complex yet meaningful experience for non-IP teachers because it requires emotional readiness, adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and a willingness to work in unfamiliar conditions. Moreover, teaching effectively in Indigenous communities is strengthened by immersion, respect for local traditions, strong relationships with learners and families, and support from colleagues and community members. Ultimately, it recommends expanding this study to other Indigenous community and geographical locations and a larger scope to compare and support these findings.

Keywords: *non-IP teachers, Indigenous community, experiences, descriptive, challenges, adaptations*

INTRODUCTION

In Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities, non-IP teachers encounter unfamiliar voices and diverse cultures, which can lead to unexpected challenges and a search for purpose. Coping is not just surviving. It is connecting. Teaching is not an easy task, it is a demanding profession that requires deep expertise, boundless patience, and emotional resilience. Non-IP teachers' experiences in Indigenous Peoples (IP) community gives a crucial understanding in cultural dynamics, improving educational quality, and developing more effective teaching strategies. Teaching indigenous learners can be highly rewarding and pleasant, but equally challenging, especially for non-IP teachers (Sarmiento & Tudy, 2020).

The Department of Education (DepEd) guarantees that Indigenous People (IP) communities receive equal opportunities to basic education through school constructions within their communities. This way, it honors their cultural identity and fosters their indigenous knowledge, skills, and heritage. However, newly hired teachers are usually deployed to a far-flung hinterland area where they teach in Indigenous Peoples (IP) school communities, even if they are not IP themselves. Additionally, the Philippine government is hiring non-indigenous teachers due to a lack of indigenous teachers (Sarmiento & Tudy, 2020).

Non-IP teachers in an IP communities face significant cultural and communication challenges that require comprehensive adaptation and cultural sensitivity. Likewise, Cubi and Rollo (2025) revealed multiple complex dynamics, including language barriers, cultural differences, and communication barriers. Teachers need to maintain a delicate balance in integrating modern teaching strategies while maintaining the integrity of traditional cultural values (Bastida et al., 2023). Among are the primary challenges that non-IP teachers experienced in indigenous communities which includes learning to adapt to new cultural settings, overcoming language barriers in communication, and developing culturally responsive instructional approaches. Hence, this study is hinged.

Studies by Sarmiento and Tudy (2020), Ambaic and Villocino (2024), and Orcales-Tabile (2024) all highlight the several hurdles that non-IP teachers encounter in teaching in Indigenous Peoples (IP) schools, such as language barriers, limited resources, cultural differences, learner passivity, and geographical isolation while also covering how these teachers learn and respect local culture. These studies demonstrate that despite non-IP teachers' challenges that hinder effective instruction, they come up with various coping mechanisms, such as learning local languages and employing community-based materials.

However, these studies only focus on other Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities, such as Aeta, tribes from Sarangani, and Davao de Oro, which limits the in-depth understanding of non-IP teachers' lived experiences and pedagogical challenges overall.

These findings point to exploring similar themes in different geographic areas to determine if these experiences are consistent across regions. This study filled the gap through qualitative exploration of non-IP teachers' experiences deployed in an IP school community in a municipality of Misamis Oriental.

Research Questions:

This study explored the experiences of non-IP teachers deployed to teach in an IP school in a tribal municipality in Misamis Oriental.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. How did the non-IP teachers initially perceive teaching in an IP community before their actual deployment?
2. What pedagogical challenges do non-IP teachers encounter, and what adjustments do they make, when teaching in an IP community?
3. What insights and recommendations do they offer to support future teachers who will be assigned in indigenous community?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the experiences of non-Indigenous Peoples (IP) teachers deployed in IP community in a municipality of Misamis Oriental. Descriptive qualitative research can be characterized by a process that seeks to describe the experiences and events in a clear and understandable manner without emphasizing thick description, theory formulation, and interpretation of meanings (Johnston & Dowling, 2023). This research approach was the most appropriate for the research because it aimed to describe the experiences of non-IP teachers in Indigenous communities to understand the "how" and "why" of the participants' transition.

The participants of this study were five (5) elementary non-indigenous peoples (IP) teachers. They were selected based on the following criteria: 1) They were non-indigenous peoples (IP) teachers assigned in an identified IP schools; 2) They were licensed public school teachers of the Department of Education; 3) They had not yet completed two years of service working in the community; and 4) They were employed within the Division of Misamis Oriental. Additionally, purposive sampling was employed in this study considering its nature and objectives. According to Palinkas et. al (2013), Purposive sampling enables the researchers to identify the right people to give relevant information about the research topic and helps in getting the data which will be useful for the research objectives, thus enhancing the validity and relevance of the study.

In this study, the researchers created a collection of open-ended questions based on the study's objectives and theoretical perspectives to direct data gathering process such as in-depth interviews following Seidman (2013) methods, where three interviews were conducted to gain a structured grasp of the participants lived experiences. The data

were gathered in a three-phase section: exploring their assumptions before deployment, identifying their pedagogical challenges and adjustments, and lastly, obtaining insights and recommendations for future non-IP teachers that will be assigned in an IP community. The guide questions for the interviews were examined and cross-checked with the panelists for appropriateness and clarity.

The researchers sought ethical clearance from the Lourdes College Research Ethics Committee to explore the experiences of non-IP teachers in an IP community. Five (5) non-IP elementary teachers were purposively invited after obtaining permit to conduct the study from the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd Misamis Oriental. Informed consent was sought to ensure that each teacher-participant was fully aware of the purpose of the study before it commenced. The researcher employed a semi-structured in-depth interview via online platform such as Google Meet for conducting interviews due to area constraints. All the participants preferred to have it done virtually and in order to protect the sanctity of class hours, sessions were held on weekends at the participants' preferred times. Each session was recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

The researchers followed the three in-depth interview sessions with each participant lasting approximately 60 minutes each which developed by Seidman (2013) as a means of gathering data. In the first interview, the researcher used focused life history to give the non-IP teachers an opportunity to open up about their life before deployment in the IP school. The second interview was used to get into the details of the experience, wherein the participants shared their actual experience of pedagogical challenges and adjustments within the community. The third interview was used to get a reflection of the meaning of the experience, wherein the participants were encouraged to get a reflection of their experience by comparing their past and present experiences, which led to the transformation of their identity as a non-IP teacher (Seidman, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022), which involved familiarization, coding, themes, reviewing, defining, and reporting of data. The process of the thematic analysis started with the process of familiarization, where the researcher read the interview transcripts repeatedly to develop initial codes to identify the relevant data on the experiences and the adjustments of the non-IP teachers. In the later stages of the analysis, the codes were grouped into candidate themes, which reflected the overall importance of the teachers' shared experiences. The researchers undertook a process of recursive review to refine the emerging themes to ensure they continued to have a strong relationship with the original data, while at the same time making it clear how the emerging themes were differentiated. The emerging theme was defined and named, providing a central organizing concept to explain the shared challenges and adjustments of teaching in an Indigenous community (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Terry et al., 2017).

RESULTS

Table 1
Themes and Core Ideas of Non-IP Teachers Initially Perceive Teaching in an IP Community Before their Actual Deployment

Themes	Core Ideas
Personal - Emotional Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelming fear of the unknown • Conflicting emotions of getting the job but also scared of the distance • Pure gratitude and the fulfillment of a dream • Crossing the bridge when they get there • Survival mindset and constant alertness • Practical preparation for economic hardship • Essential survival gear for remote areas
Contextual And Professional Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cultural preparation • Lack of professional training • Underprepared for specialized mission • Facing and questioning personal biases • Language and culture gap and the fear of being unable to communicate • Managing expectations based on the reality of the location

Table 2
Themes and Core Ideas on Pedagogical Challenges and Adjustments of non-IP Teachers in an IP community

Themes	Core Ideas
Struggles in Unfamiliar Learning Contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-IP teachers' inability to communicate to IP students • Miscommunication with the students during lesson proper • Students' difficulty in comprehension due to language barrier • Having limited material resources • Not conducive learning environment due to broken infrastructure • Deprivation as a constant hindrance to learning • Students' having the difficulty of following rules • Managing classroom management • Learning gap of the students • Technology gap • Unavailability of technological equipment • Limiting technology-based instruction due to no digital tools

<p>Adaptive Pedagogical Practices Adjustments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplifying instructions • Step-by-step guidance with visual aids • Translating language from English modules to the student's tribal language • Teacher's learning new term of the tribal language • Learning from mistakes of pronunciation of the tribal language • Seeking advice from IP teachers for correct translation • Integrating real life experiences in delivering lessons • Relating stories in real life • Incorporating local culture to the lesson • Personal financial support for learning materials • Preparing instructional materials beforehand • Borrowing resources from neighboring institution • Reinforcing good behavior through rewards • Using discovery learning in activities • Letting IP learnings do nature play • Constant encouragement to IP learners • Patient is a virtue • Safe space for IP learners
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Table 3
Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights and Recommendations of Non-IP Teachers to Support Future Teachers who will be Assigned in Indigenous Community

Themes	Core Ideas
<p>Transformative Teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being flexible in teaching • Readiness for diverse context • Embracing the unfamiliar environment • Accepting the culture overcomes hardships • Personal growth being visible through student's progress • Emotional satisfaction from seeing students excited to see the teacher • Making the assigned school as a second home • Teaching is not just about academic but also understanding the community • Teaching with a heart

Professional Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilizing community resources• Making connections with the community• Community as a collaborative partner• Adhering to local traditions• Respecting the indigenous practices• Being culturally sensitive• Contextualization of lesson plans• Calling for cultural immersion• To participate in mentorship program• Collegial support is essential• Teachers thrive with community-based support• Strengthening teachers' bond through emotional support
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DISCUSSION

Non-IP Teachers Initially Perceive Teaching in an IP Community Before Their Actual Deployment

Research question 1 is about the initial perception of non-IP teachers upon their impending deployment. Based on the data gathered through in-depth interviews, two (2) themes emerged: (1) Personal–Emotional Readiness, and (2) Contextual and Professional Challenges.

Personal–Emotional Readiness

The core ideas explore the emotional landscape of non-IP teachers as they prepare for their deployment to an IP community. The personal-emotional readiness of non-IP teachers prompt them to give up the comfort of familiar things and embark on the uncertainties of serving in a distant ancestral domain. This inner preparation allows them to navigate the outsider status often experienced by non-IP educators (Conrad, 2022).

Non-IP teachers are not just moving to a new classroom but to a whole new different cultural community. These emotions have a big influence on how teachers behave and how well they educate (Feiss et al., 2023). Even though they were filled with deep anxiety and fear of the journey ahead, they were also happy and excited to finally start their teaching careers in DepEd. This "emotional tug-of-war" demonstrates that they were indeed ready to chase their dreams, despite being nervous about the challenges of living in a remote community.

Their readiness mindset was driven by their dream to teach. Galut (2025) stated that strong readiness mindset of teachers in remote areas is characterized by love and passion for teaching. Non-IP teachers were not only hoping for the best but also preparing for the worst possible that might happen at any time, where they accept the unfamiliar cultural environment while having essential tools for survival. Non-IP teachers were

mentally vigilant and physically prepared to face the realities of Indigenous community. Furthermore, non-IP teachers deployed to teach in remote areas often faced challenges that demand high levels of mental vigilance and physical preparedness (Fabrigas and Paglinawan, 2025).

Contextual and Professional Challenges

The core ideas highlight the tension between the teacher's training and the physical and cultural realities of an Indigenous school setting. The worries that had been creeping out upon their impending deployment. Teachers may have to deal with the so-called "red flags" in the learning environment, as well as adjust their teaching style according to the needs of the community, as the traditional Western teaching style may not always be applicable (Conrad, 2022).

Non-IP teachers limited pre-formal training, particularly, in Indigenous school community restricted them for better preparation. Contrary to Goodwin (2020), his study reveals that teacher preparation is crucial for achieving better academic outcomes for diverse learners. Non-IP teachers' transition pointed out how they felt as their lack of formal training thrown them into the deep end without any prior briefing on the culture of the IP community or the complexities of multigrade teaching. The lack of preparation makes the non-IP teachers rely on the short, informal advice of colleagues, which shows that the teachers were prepared more on the job than through their academic credentials. As noted by Toquero et. al. (2020), in terms of teaching in remote areas, teachers were not fully prepared and professionally trained for.

When moving from urban to hinterland areas, non-IP teachers often find the contrast between their previous lifestyles in the city and the reality of living and working in a remote area. This also makes it difficult for some non-IP teachers to immediately take the job (Poole et. al., 2022). Non-IP teachers were prepared to experience the stark contrast between their urban, private-school upbringing and the resource-poor environment of the mountains. Their awareness shows the need for a complete shift from the way they would be communicating and teaching when they move to an IP school community. However, as observed by Wang et. al., (2021), both social responsibilities and professional development requirements may facilitate urban teachers' motivation to transfer to rural regions despite family commitments and adaptation difficulties.

Pedagogical Challenges and Adjustments Encountered by Non-IP Teachers in an IP Community

Research question 2 explores the different pedagogical challenges and adjustment they encounter in an IP community. Based on the data gathered through in-depth interviews, two (2) themes emerged: (1) Struggles in Unfamiliar Learning Contexts, and (2) Adaptive Pedagogical Practices Adjustments.

Struggles in Unfamiliar Learning Contexts

The core ideas highlight the struggles of non-IP teachers on linguistic and communication barrier, socio-economically constraints, students' learning behavior challenges, and technological constraints. These struggles hindered non-IP teachers effective teaching in unfamiliar cultural settings (Nazarita & Morales, 2025).

As Nazarita and Morales (2025) noted, one of the most important challenges for non-IP teachers is the language barrier, as they cannot teach a native dialect that they do not speak and understand. The experiences of the participants exposed the wide communication gap wherein the classroom becomes a space of mutual uncertainty. For non-IP teachers in an IP school community, language was at the top of their struggles because it is difficult to teach when they do not know the local language. Such a linguistic disconnect presents a challenging situation wherein the teacher must establish a sense of empathy and a desire to learn the local language to connect with the students (Khatima et al., 2025).

Due to challenges with transportation and the provision of educational resources, teaching in remote locations has socioeconomic drawbacks that impact efficacy (Silvido & Escote, 2024). These harsh realities of non-IP teachers faced tells how socio-economic environment becomes a constant hindrance to learning. It demonstrates that the "readiness" of the teacher here is not only about the lesson plans but also about having the heart to teach in an environment where survival is first before learning. Teaching in socio-economically disadvantaged areas brings physical and educational inequalities to teachers, both as individuals and organizations (Culha & Demirtas, 2023).

Non-IP teachers also deal with the student's learning behavior, but who didn't? A study shows that learning outcomes are greatly impacted by students' learning behavior (Azahary et al., 2020). The nature of the students' learning is characterized by a "disconnect" in that traditional teaching methods that seemed to be ineffective and fail to hold their attention. Even when non-IP teachers make their teaching methods and instructions as basic as possible, the students seem to be unable to grasp the information, and instead of following the rules, they tend to break them or wander off towards other groups out of curiosity and not out of rebellion. According to Shah and Basnyat (2024), traditional teaching methods cause difficulties and frustration for students, stifling creativity, and a shift towards learner-centered approaches is necessary.

In fact, according to Angana et al. (2025), teachers in remote Philippine schools experience technological displacement, where the absence of electricity and internet connectivity makes it difficult to teach the 21st century curriculum. The experiences of non-IP teachers show that being in a state of technological constraints were not just being deprived of gadgets but being deprived of technology altogether. The teachers, despite their willingness to impart technology into their teaching methods, found it impossible to do so due to the lack of electricity, stable signals, and internet connection. This forced them to rely on DIY methods and tools, and from here, one can see that although technology is being implemented in schools within urban communities, teachers within Indigenous communities must work twice as hard just to make concepts understandable

to students, and that is without a single technology-related tool. This is further evidenced by Regalado (2020) as he states that, within resource-limited Indigenous communities, technological deprivation causes a return to traditional pedagogical roots, resulting in a disconnection for both students and teachers from the global digital landscape.

Adaptive Pedagogical Practices Adjustments

The core ideas emphasize the modification of non-IP teachers' teaching methods despite the challenges to make learning more relevant and effective. Schipper et al., (2020) discovered that teachers adapt instruction based on the needs of the students, the students' prior knowledge, and the students' learning differences. However, the process of implementing adaptive instruction is complex and requires a strong understanding of the students.

These adjustments were used by non-IP teachers to fully engage the IP students. Gutierrez and Babaran (2025) noted that non-IP teachers use pedagogical scaffolding as an essential bridging strategy to bridge the learning gap. Non-IP teachers' experiences of moving into an IP school community demonstrates a change from a structured lesson plan to one that is fluid and learner centered. It highlights how non-IP teachers connect to their students through translating lessons and simplifying instructions to make IP learners understand broader lessons. This demonstrates that the effective teacher is one who is a bridge for the children linguistically and culturally, translating concepts as well as words into a form that speaks to their love of story and pictures (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024).

Non-IP teachers find themselves learning the language as a way of building a foundation of trust and belongingness within the indigenous community. This helps the IP students comprehend complex ideas by translating English words into their mother tongue (Magadan et al., 2025). The journey of learning the language involves a strong emphasis on cultural humility. Instead of adopting a position of all-knowingness, non-IP teachers are students of the tribal language and rely on their fellow teachers, parents, and the larger community to correct them when they mispronounce a word or to explain a term that they are unsure of. Through this, non-IP teachers connect well and foster good relationships with the learners and the community. It tells how non-IP teachers utilize communal learning as a primary strategy for cultural adjustment (Nazarita & Morales, 2025).

Integrating real life experiences, relating stories in real life, incorporating local culture, the use of IP dictionary, utilization contextualize picture books, and mother tongue translation are among the culturally responsive teaching practices of non-IP teachers. Through this adaptation, it helps learners understand broad concepts and make learning more effective. In a study on culturally responsive teaching, it was noted that using students' language, culture, and strategies such as differentiation and making things simpler by connecting what is learned in class to real-life situations helps improve students' engagement and learning (De La Garza et al., 2020). Clearly, non-IP teachers' approach to culturally responsive teaching practices were based on their deep localization and personalization of the curriculum. They were making broad topics more interesting

by relating it to the students' own experiences and making abstract concepts more meaningful by using real-life landmarks of the community. According to Ladson-Billings (2021), culturally responsive teaching practices—such as using students' home language, connecting lessons to their experiences, and adapting instruction—enhance student understanding and engagement, especially in diverse classrooms.

Non-IP teachers within IP school communities have shown resourcefulness and innovation by coping with resource scarcity using improvised and indigenous resource usage. (Medel & Gallardo, 2025). Non-IP teachers were willing to do anything for the betterment of their students. As a result, non-IP teachers' reaction presents how the absence of teaching materials is characterized by resourcefulness and self-sacrifice. When there are no resources, these teachers take it upon themselves to make up for it. It highlights how these teachers used their own money to buy materials that are lacking, develop materials ahead of going to the mountains, or borrowing materials from other programs such as ALS. It seems evident that the teachers are resourceful and committed individuals who are going beyond what they have to make sure the students get what they need for their learning (Algonos et al., 2024).

Non-IP teachers were making sure that theories do not just remain in books but in realities, too. Whatever that works, works. Moreover, it has been discovered that implementing Play-Based Learning (PBL) at IPED schools is a highly successful strategy for boosting kids' engagement, confidence, and growth (Ramirez & Mendoza, 2025). Non-IP teachers found various ways like rewards, outdoor activities, games, and group activity to make learning more engaging and efficient for their students. It demonstrates how these practices help grab the students' attention and make them take an active role in learning. It is more fun when students were actively participating and learning. This is supported by recent research, which demonstrates that active and collaborative learning strategies promote learners' engagement and understanding (OECD, 2020).

Non-IP teachers found having a safe cultural space with the students enabled them to better understand the realities of the community. In such a space, the power balance changes so that the school is no longer a space for assimilation but a space for affirmation (Forstag & Cuff, 2022). Non-IP teacher's role is not just about the academic learning but also about being a compassionate adult that the students can trust and open hearts to. It highlights the importance of building relationships to help students stay motivated and engaged. This reflect how stronger the connection is, the stronger the urged to participate. This is supported by the fact that the teacher-student relationship is vital for the well-being of the students, as noted by the OECD (2021).

Non-IP teachers' Insights and Recommendations to Support Future teachers who will be Assigned in Indigenous Community

Research question 3 reflect on the non-IP teachers' insights and recommendations to support future teachers who will be assigned in indigenous community. Based on the data gathered through in-depth interviews, two (2) themes emerged: (1) Transformative Teaching, and (2) Professional Immersion.

Transformative Teaching

The core ideas point to the adaptive teaching mindset, intrinsic rewards of teaching, and professional realizations in teaching of non-IP teacher in an IP school community. Jimenez and Moorhead (2021) assert that the concept of transformative teaching includes practical mindsets and realizations in teaching sustainability issues, such as local context, psychology of students, teaching methods, and mental health.

Non-IP teachers developed an adaptive teaching mindset such as flexibility in teaching, readiness for diverse context, and courage in unfamiliar environment. It highlights the kind of mindset that had developed while teaching in an IP school community. The findings of Zarrinabadi and Afsharmehr (2022) study show that it is essential to create awareness among teachers regarding their mindsets and the potential influence they might have on their approaches and appreciation of students. The experiences of non-IP teachers transition to IP school community shows how it requires flexibility in both professionally and personally. It demonstrates how the strategies that work in urban schools does not necessarily mean it works in an IP school community. Thus, non-IP teachers adjust their teaching styles to make it more relatable and meaningful to the IP students. This is a clear indication that being flexible and accommodating is essential in helping teachers connect with their students (Gay, 2020).

Teaching in an Indigenous school community can be a very rewarding experience for non-IP teachers, as they were able to overcome hardships, have personal growth, have emotional satisfaction, and have a strong community partner. This is not only beneficial to the students, but it is also beneficial to the teacher because it makes them feel more effective and fulfilled (Han, 2022). Non-IP teachers exhibit a strong sense of fulfillment in their teaching journey in an IP community. It shows how despite all the hardships and difficulties they encountered, seeing their students happy, engaged, and learning makes all the effort worthwhile. This reflect how resilient non-IP teachers are. According to Martin et al. (2024), when teachers are motivated and committed to the instruction of Indigenous perspectives, they are more likely to have a better relationship with the students and derive satisfaction from the students' engagement.

According to Lefebvre et al. (2023), reflection can help the teacher improve their teaching skills and change their perception of their roles and the students. Non-IP teachers understand that teaching in Indigenous communities is not only about imparting knowledge, but it is also about the school being a second home and making meaningful relationships with the community and the students. It highlights the importance of care, empathy, and understanding in crafting a meaningful teaching experience. This constant reflections of non-IP teachers impact how they teach students and connect with the community. This is evident from the fact that reflective and relationship-based teaching has been shown to improve teacher and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2021).

Professional Immersion

The core ideas highlight the recommendations for future non-IP teachers who will be assigned in an IP community. This enables them to acquire skills and build confidence

and understand the learners through direct interaction and real-life experiences (Belford et al., 2020).

It is important for non-IP teachers to have community engagement because in this way, non-IP teachers could easily connect and get help from the community. This is important because it makes education more relevant and responsive to real-life situations (Farnell, 2020). Non-IP teachers place significant value on the community elders in their work. They consider the elders as significant in this matter because they are highly respected and trusted, which makes it easier for the teachers to interact with the members of the community and obtain their cooperation. This proves the significance of the involvement of the local community in the effective functioning of the school, which benefits the teachers and the students as well. Furthermore, Farnell (2020) states that collaborating with the members of the local community can enhance educational outcomes and strengthen school relationships.

To truly get the full experience of being a non-IP teacher in an Indigenous school, one should show respect for culture. Respecting their culture enables the teacher to become responsive to the students, thus being more effective in teaching, as they teach according to the learners' context (Belford et al., 2020b). Non-IP teachers put great importance to respect and accommodate the culture of the community. Since they were the ones that came into the community, it is they who adhere to its culture. This has helped non-IP teachers create a harmonious learning environment by showing respect and interest in learning the culture of the community, hence creating a harmonious learning environment. Wilcoxon et al. (2021) study proves that immersion and direct engagement with the community can help the teacher better understand the culture and needs of the students.

When teaching in Indigenous community, non-IP teachers highlight the need for professional advancement such as contextualization of lesson plans, cultural immersion, and participating in mentorship program. This could have helped better prepare non-IP teachers before deployment. Providing opportunities for professional development may also help individuals to access new knowledge and perspectives that may shape their attitude towards their job (Kilag et al., 2023). Non-IP teachers' sentiment reflects the calls for programs and trainings before deployment. This reflection shows a deep aspiration for better preparation—namely, in the norms and basic language of the tribal people—to avoid the shock of seeing how different life is up there compared to the city. Matsumura and Hinoki (2024) emphasized the need to provide needs-based, continuous professional development programs, as well as effective peer support systems, to ensure the effective transfer of training outcomes to actual teaching practice.

Non-IP teachers need a continuous support system. Such support is essential for them to thrive. It shows that without proper support, teachers face difficulties in meeting the cultural and learning needs of their students, especially when they are in Indigenous school community (Castagno et al., 2023). Non-IP teachers need to have a good support system, especially from their co-teachers, where they can share their experiences, get advice, and emotional support and vice versa. They also appreciate the support they can get, as it helps them from feeling lonely, especially when teaching in remote areas. Blair

et al., (2023) indicate that having a good relationship and support from colleagues improves well-being and helps them cope, emphasizing the importance of peer support systems in the teaching profession.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that teaching in an Indigenous community is a complex yet meaningful experience for non-IP teachers because it requires emotional readiness, adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and a willingness to work in unfamiliar conditions. The participants experienced challenges related to insufficient preparation, language and communication barriers, lack of resources, multigrade classes, socio-economic difficulties, and limited access to technology. These realities show that teaching in Indigenous communities goes beyond the usual classroom demands because teachers are also required to adjust to different cultural practices, living conditions, and student needs. Despite these challenges, the participants were able to adapt through flexibility, culturally responsive teaching practices, resourcefulness, and continuous efforts to understand the language and culture of the community. Their experiences show that effective teaching in Indigenous communities is strengthened by immersion, respect for local traditions, strong relationships with learners and families, and support from colleagues and community members. These experiences also reveal that teaching in Indigenous communities not only improves instructional practices but also develops teachers personally and professionally, allowing them to become more compassionate, reflective, and committed educators.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are:

1. Non-IP teachers may continue to exhibit flexibility, cultural awareness, and reflection in teaching in order to build meaningful relationships with the students and the community. They may also actively engage in learning the tribal language and the culture like following their traditions and respect their differences.

2. Schools and community stakeholders may build a stronger partnership by engaging elders, parents, and the community in the programs conducted in the schools and vice versa. Moreover, fostering strong collaboration between schools and community stakeholders may offer a more thorough support system for the betterment of the IP learners.

3. School administrators may consider better resource allocation, localized materials, and support structures like mentoring and regular meetings between non-IP teachers and IP teachers for shared expertise. They may ensure a positive and cooperative school environment for the teachers.

4. The DepEd IPEd leaders may provide pre-deployment training, which includes cultural immersion, language, and emotional readiness, to help the teachers get ready to work with Indigenous community. They may provide trainings to help the teachers stay updated with culturally responsive teaching skills.

5. Policymakers may focus on education policies that are culturally responsive and ensure funding for resources and support for the teachers in the Indigenous school

community. There may be programs designed to meet the needs of the remote communities. This will ensure the sustainability of education for the Indigenous students.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study was carried out following the ethical principles of Lourdes College Research Ethics Committee, whereby all participants were fully informed of their right to withdraw at any time, for any reason, and without incurring any costs. Informed consent was sought and obtained from all the participants before the interview. The researchers prioritized the participants' thoughts and feelings by providing a safe and comfortable interview environment even through the screen. All data obtained in this study were handled in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Personal data and identifiers were anonymized to make sure that participants cannot be identified in any publication. The researchers assert that there was no conflict of interest in conducting the study, plagiarism was rigorously avoided, and the findings were direct result of the participants' experiences rather than the researchers. Moreover, the study was conducted exclusively with the goal of advancing academic knowledge, and any use of AI tools were merely for language improvement, while the authors reviewed the output for further revisions.

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