



Instructional Development Barriers Among Indigenous Peoples Education Teachers in Santol District

REYNA LYNNE B. ORDOÑEZ

School of Graduate and Professional Studies, Osias Educational Foundation, Inc.
Balaoan, La Union, Philippines.
ORCID ID 0009-0007-0474-8963

ABSTRACT :

This study examined the instructional barriers experienced by Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) teachers in Santol District, La Union. It aimed to describe the respondents' profile, determine the level of instructional barriers, assess instructional effectiveness, and test differences in instructional barriers when grouped according to selected variables. A descriptive-comparative research design was employed involving sixty (60) IPEd teachers. Data were gathered using a validated questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, t-test, and ANOVA at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that respondents were mostly female, belonged to varied age groups, and many had earned or were pursuing graduate studies. Instructional barriers were rated at a moderate level (overall mean = 3.10), mainly due to multi-grade classroom management, limited instructional resources, and lack of culturally relevant and Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP)-based materials. Despite these challenges, instructional effectiveness was rated very effective (overall mean = 4.31), particularly in learner engagement and culturally responsive teaching practices. Significant differences in instructional barriers were found in IP status, length of service, training attended, and ethnic affiliation. The findings highlight the need for targeted, context-sensitive instructional support to strengthen culturally responsive teaching and improve learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Indigenous Peoples Education, instructional barriers, culturally responsive teaching, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices, Santol District, teacher effectiveness*

Introduction

Problem and Its Scope

Education for Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) and Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the Philippines is recognized and protected under the Republic Act No. 8371 (IPRA Law). This landmark law affirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples to preserve their cultural identity, ancestral domains, and access to basic social services, including education. In line with this mandate, the Department of Education established the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program to ensure that IP learners receive education that is culturally responsive, inclusive, and respectful of their traditions and knowledge systems. The institutionalization of Indigenous Peoples Education in the Philippine basic education system was further strengthened through DepEd Order No. 62 s. 2011. This policy affirms that IP learners have the right to basic education that is responsive to their cultural context, respects their identities, and promotes their Indigenous knowledge, competencies, and cultural heritage. According to the Department of Education, during the first decade of the implementation of the IPEd Program, approximately 2.529 million Indigenous learners in 42,176 public schools across the country were served (DepEd, 2021). Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) is a national program of the Department of Education that ensures the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) to quality and culturally responsive basic education. In the case of Santol District, a locality known for its diverse Indigenous population, such as Kankanaey and Bago, the implementation of IPEd reflects the interplay of culture, community engagement, and formal schooling. Within this broader national and institutional framework, the role of teachers serving in IPEd contexts is pivotal. These teachers are not merely general education instructors; rather, they are responsible for delivering instruction that is culture-based, contextualized, and, in many cases, multilingual through the learners' mother tongue (Bastida & Batuctoc, 2022; Cubi, 2025). They must respond to learners whose experiences, cultural backgrounds, and educational trajectories differ significantly from those in mainstream settings. At the same time, they are expected to engage in continuous professional development through capacity building, mentoring, resource support, and context-specific training to effectively meet these demands (Ancheta & Casem, 2024; DepEd, 2021).

However, despite strong policy foundations, the implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education at the field level continues to reveal multiple instructional barriers that affect teaching and learning processes. In district-level contexts such as Santol District, where Indigenous learners are predominant, these challenges are further intensified by geographic isolation, limited instructional resources, and the need for culturally grounded teaching approaches.

While previous studies have identified general instructional challenges in Indigenous education, there remains limited localized research examining how these barriers vary according to teacher-related factors such as IP status, training exposure, length of service, and ethnic affiliation. This gap highlights the need for a focused investigation in Santol District, making this study essential in providing context-specific evidence that can inform instructional support and culturally responsive interventions for IPed teachers.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the barriers that hinder the instructional development of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) teachers in Santol District and examine how these barriers relate to their profile variables. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: What is the profile of the IPed teachers in Santol District in terms of: Age; Sex; Highest educational attainment; Length of service in IPed schools; Current teaching position; Teaching level; Indigenous Peoples (IP) membership status; Number of IPed-related trainings or seminars attended; School location; and Ethnic affiliation. What are the perceived barriers to instructional development of IPed teachers in Santol District in terms of: Availability and contextualization of instructional materials; Language and cultural barriers in classroom instruction; Access to training opportunities that support instructional improvement; Institutional and administrative support; and Community involvement and partnership. Is there a significant difference between the profile variables of IPed teachers and the perceived barriers to instructional development? What strategies or interventions may be proposed to address the identified barriers to instructional development of IPed teachers in Santol District?

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focused on Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) teachers in Santol District and examined the instructional dimension. The study considered several factors, including teacher background, school location, language of instruction, availability of contextualized instructional materials, and the level of institutional support from the Department of Education. The perceptions of teachers regarding barriers and enabling conditions were central to the analysis. This study has several limitations. First, it focused primarily on IPed teachers currently teaching in the Santol District. While this allows for in-depth local analysis, Second, variations in cultural and linguistic diversity across Indigenous communities may influence teachers' perceptions of barriers in ways that are context-specific. Despite these limitations, the study ensured the reliability and validity of data through carefully designed instruments, adherence to ethical research procedures, and systematic data collection.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design. This design was appropriate because it describes the profile of IPed teachers and their perceived instructional barriers, and determines whether a significant difference exists between these variables. The descriptive component was used to identify and describe the profile of respondents and the instructional barriers they experience. The comparative component was used to test whether significant differences exist between the teachers' profile variables and their perceived instructional barriers. The study was conducted in Santol District, Division of La Union, during the School Year 2025–2026. The district is composed of schools implementing the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) Program, which serves Indigenous learners in culturally diverse and geographically challenged communities. These schools provide an appropriate setting for examining instructional barriers experienced by IPed teachers due to their direct engagement with Indigenous learners and culturally contextualized instruction.

Results and Discussion

The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, teaching position, teaching level, Indigenous identity, number of trainings attended, school location, and ethnic affiliation. In terms of age, six (10%) of the respondents belong to the 26–30 age bracket, 11 (18.33%) are 31–35 years old, 16 (26.67%) are 36–40 years old, 11 (18.33%) are 41–45 years old, eight (13.33%) are 46–50 years old, three (5%) are 51–55 years old, and five (8.33%) are 56–60 years old. This indicates a balanced representation of both early-career and experienced teachers. With regard to sex, the respondents are predominantly female, with 54 (90%) females and six (10%) males, reflecting a largely female teaching workforce in the IPed program. As to the highest educational attainment, five (8.33%) hold a Bachelor's degree, 31 (51.67%) have earned Master's units, 13 (21.67%) have completed a Master's degree, five (8.33%) have Doctoral units, and six (10%) have completed a Doctoral degree. This suggests that most respondents are pursuing or have completed graduate-level studies.

In terms of length of service, 12 (20%) have served for 0–5 years, 22 (36.67%) for 6–10 years, 14 (23.33%) for 11–15 years, four (6.67%) for 16–20 years, and eight (13.33%) for 21 years and above, indicating a mix of novice and experienced educators in the sample. As to current teaching position, 36 (60%) are Teacher III, 13 (21.67%) are Teacher VI, four (6.67%) are Teacher I, two (3.33%) are Teacher II, three (5%) are Master Teacher I, and two (3.33%) are Master Teacher II. No respondents hold positions as Teacher IV, V, or Master Teacher III/IV. With regard to teaching level, seven (11.67%) teach Kindergarten, while 53 (88.33%) are assigned to the elementary level, indicating that most respondents handle elementary classes. In terms of Indigenous identity, 29 (48.33%) identified as Indigenous Persons (IP), while 31 (51.67%) are non-IP. As to the number of trainings attended, one (1.67%) reported attending no trainings, 41 (68.33%) attended 1–2 trainings, 16 (26.67%) attended 3–4 trainings, none attended 5–6 trainings, and two (3.33%) attended more than six trainings. This suggests that most respondents have participated in at least one professional development activity related to IPed. In terms of school location, 24 (40%) are assigned in rural or remote areas, while 36 (60%) are in mountainous or hard-to-reach areas, reflecting the geographic diversity of IPed schools. With regard to ethnic affiliation, 29 (48.33%) belong to the Kankanaey group, 30 (50%) are Ilocano, and one (1.67%) is Bago, indicating the presence of multiple ethnic groups among the respondents.

On the instructional barriers encountered by IPed teachers. The results show that all indicators were rated as moderate barriers, with an overall mean of 3.10, indicating that instructional challenges are present but remain manageable. This suggests that while barriers exist in IPed implementation, teachers continue to demonstrate adaptability and commitment in addressing diverse classroom needs in geographically and culturally diverse contexts.

Among the indicators, the highest-rated barrier is multi-grade classroom management (WAM = 3.30), reflecting the difficulty of addressing multiple grade levels simultaneously within one classroom setting. This is followed by limited access to appropriate instructional resources (WAM = 3.23), such as visual aids and localized learning materials.

The third is the limited availability of culturally relevant materials aligned with Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) (WAM = 3.20). Other moderately rated barriers include insufficient culturally appropriate materials, lack of academic support programs, limited cultural knowledge, language barriers, insufficient training in culturally responsive pedagogy, limited engagement with elders, and a mismatch with Indigenous learning styles.

On the level of effectiveness of instructional practices in addressing instructional barriers among IPed teachers. The results indicate that all indicators are rated from effective to very effective, with an overall mean of 4.31, interpreted as very effective. The highest-rated indicator is the improvement of teaching effectiveness through instructional support and capacity-building activities (WAM = 4.53), suggesting that structured learning opportunities enhance teaching performance. This is followed by learner engagement through instructional strategies (WAM = 4.37), indicating improved classroom participation. The use of mother tongue instruction (WAM = 4.27) also contributes to improved comprehension among learners. Teachers also reported confidence in addressing Indigenous learners' needs despite instructional challenges (WAM = 4.22). The lowest-rated indicator is the implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies (WAM = 4.15), though still interpreted as effective.

On the level of effectiveness of cultural and community-based instructional practices.

The findings reveal an overall mean of 4.35, interpreted as very effective, indicating strong integration of cultural and community-based approaches in instruction. Teachers reported active participation in culturally relevant school and community activities (WAM = 4.45), which ranked highest. This is followed by supporting learners' cultural identity through classroom practices (WAM = 4.35). Engagement with community elders and culture-bearers (WAM = 4.30) also contributes to enriched learning experiences. The integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (WAM = 4.28) was also rated highly.

Differences in Instructional Barriers Among Variables

Given the presence of instructional barriers and the effectiveness of instructional practices, the study further examined whether these barriers differ significantly when grouped according to demographic and professional variables. There is no significant difference in instructional barriers between male and female teachers ($t = 0.206$, $p = 0.842 > 0.05$). This indicates that both sexes experience similar levels of instructional challenges, suggesting that gender does not significantly influence these barriers in IPed settings.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to IP Status. There is a significant difference in instructional barriers between IP and non-IP teachers ($t = -2.714$, $p = 0.009 < 0.05$). IP teachers experience higher instructional barriers, which may be attributed to their closer engagement with Indigenous learners and awareness of cultural and contextual gaps in instruction.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to Age. No significant difference exists in instructional barriers across different age groups ($F = 1.92$, $p = 0.134 > 0.05$). Teachers, regardless of age, experience similar levels of instructional challenges.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to Current Teaching Position. There is no significant difference in instructional barriers between classroom teachers and master teachers ($p = 0.586 > 0.05$). This indicates that teaching rank does not significantly affect the perception of instructional challenges.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to Teaching Level. There is no significant difference in instructional barriers between kindergarten and elementary teachers ($p = 0.757 > 0.05$), indicating that teaching level does not influence the perception of instructional challenges.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to Educational Attainment. No significant difference exists in instructional barriers based on educational attainment ($F = 2.465$, $p = 0.056 > 0.05$). Teachers experience similar barriers regardless of their academic qualifications.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to Length of Service. A significant difference exists in instructional barriers based on length of service ($F = 3.425$, $p = 0.014 < 0.05$). Teaching experience influences perceived barriers, with less experienced teachers may experience greater instructional challenges.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to the Number of Trainings Attended. A significant difference exists in instructional barriers based on training attended ($F = 4.159$, $p = 0.021 < 0.05$). Teachers who have attended more training perceive fewer instructional barriers, highlighting the importance of professional development.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to School Location. There is no significant difference in instructional barriers between teachers in rural and mountainous schools ($p = 0.547 > 0.05$). School location does not significantly affect the perception of instructional challenges.

Difference in Instructional Barriers According to Ethnic Affiliation. A significant difference exists in instructional barriers across ethnic groups ($F = 6.377$, $p = 0.003 < 0.05$). This suggests that teachers from different ethnic backgrounds experience instructional barriers differently, likely due to variations in cultural familiarity and contextual understanding.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn; The IPed teaching workforce in Santol District is diverse in terms of experience and qualifications, yet many teachers have limited exposure to specialized IPed training; Instructional barriers exist at a moderate level, particularly in areas related to instructional resources, cultural integration, and multi-grade teaching, indicating the need for strengthened instructional support systems; IPed teachers demonstrate a high level of effectiveness in both instructional and cultural practices, showing adaptability and commitment to delivering

meaningful and culturally responsive education; Certain variables, specifically IP status, length of service, training exposure, and ethnic affiliation, significantly influence the level of instructional barriers experienced by teachers; The presence of instructional barriers indicates the need for a structured intervention to further improve instructional practices.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are offered; Strengthening Multi-Grade Instructional Support through Differentiated Strategies; Schools and district offices may support teachers in managing multi-grade classrooms by promoting the use of differentiated instructional strategies included in the intervention, such as peer tutoring, flexible grouping, and learning stations or activity corners. These strategies allow teachers to address diverse learning needs simultaneously while maximizing learner participation and independence; Development and Utilization of Contextualized and IKSP-Based Instructional Materials Teachers are encouraged to develop and utilize localized instructional materials aligned with Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs), such as localized big books, mini-books, visual representations, and culturally grounded learning tasks. School heads and district leaders may support the reproduction and sharing of these materials across schools to address the lack of culturally relevant resources; Enhancement of Instructional Resources through Improvisation and Localization

Given the limited availability of instructional resources, teachers may maximize the use of improvised and locally available materials such as stones, sticks, leaves, and indigenous artifacts as teaching aids. This approach ensures that instruction remains meaningful, contextualized, and feasible even in geographically isolated and resource-constrained settings; Strengthening Professional Development through School-Based and Collaborative Learning The district may implement continuous and sustainable professional development programs such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, mentoring, and micro-teaching demonstrations, where teachers share effective practices from the intervention. Focus areas may include culturally responsive teaching, IKSP integration, and differentiated instruction strategies; Institutionalizing Community Engagement and Cultural Integration Schools may strengthen collaboration with Indigenous elders and community members by involving them as resource persons or co-teachers in classroom instruction and cultural activities. Structured activities such as scheduled cultural sessions or “Elder Days” may be implemented to support authentic learning and preserve cultural knowledge; Promoting Learner-Centered and Reflective Practices; Teachers are encouraged to incorporate reflection activities such as journaling, exit slips, and guided questioning to support learners’ self-awareness and cultural identity formation. These practices enhance both cognitive and affective learning outcomes among Indigenous learners; Sustaining Daily Cultural Integration in Instruction; Teachers may integrate short but consistent cultural elements in daily lessons, such as mother tongue vocabulary, storytelling, and contextual examples, to ensure continuous cultural relevance without adding to instructional load. This supports the long-term sustainability of culturally responsive teaching practices.

REFERENCES

- Ainscow, M. (2020). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: Lessons from international experiences. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.
- Ancheta, O., Jr., & Casem, R. (2024). Navigating educational crossroads: Indigenous Peoples Education program in Santol, La Union. *Journal of Education Research and Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.60027/jelr.2025.2278>
- Ball, J., & Pence, A. (2006). Supporting Indigenous children’s development: Community-university partnerships in Canada. UBC Press.
- Bastida, J. R., & Batuctoc, R. (2022). Culturally responsive teaching practices in Indigenous Peoples Education. *Philippine Education Research Journal*.
- Battiste, M. (2002). Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education. University of British Columbia.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design. Harvard University Press.
- Cajete, G. (2000). Native science: Natural laws of interdependence. Clear Light Publishers.
- Capacio, L. O., & Tual, J. S. M. (2025). Difficulties of non-Indigenous teachers in teaching Indigenous Peoples learners and learners’ academic achievement. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 40(9), 1240–1255. <https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.400910>
- Castagno, A. E., et al. (2023). Strengthening STEM teaching in rural, Indigenous-serving schools through culturally responsive professional development. *Journal of Teacher Education and Practice*.
- Cubi, M. (2025). Indigenous Peoples Education implementation in local contexts. *Education and Society Journal*.
- Cucio, L. (2019). Contextualized instructional materials in Indigenous education. *Philippine Journal of Curriculum Studies*.
- Department of Education. (2011). DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011: Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework. <https://www.deped.gov.ph>
- Department of Education. (2015). DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015: Indigenous Peoples Education Program implementing guidelines.

<https://www.deped.gov.ph>

- Department of Education. (2017a). DepEd sustains support for culture-based education for IP learners. <https://www.deped.gov.ph>
- Department of Education. (2017b). DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017: Gender-responsive basic education policy. <https://www.deped.gov.ph>
- Department of Education. (2021). Indigenous Peoples Education Program report. <https://www.deped.gov.ph>
- Epstein, J. L. (2018). School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools. Routledge.
- Glickman, C. D., Gordon, S. P., & Ross-Gordon, J. M. (2018). SuperVision and instructional leadership (10th ed.). Pearson.
- Koehl, L. (2021). Curriculum alignment challenges in Indigenous education contexts. Education Policy Review.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Prentice Hall.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children. Jossey-Bass.
- Leaño, A., Mat Rabi, N., & Gnana Piragasam, G. A. (2019). Speaking difficulties of Philippine Indigenous learners in English semantics. Southeast Asia Early Childhood Journal, 8(2), 16–27. <https://ejournal.upsi.edu.my/index.php/SAECJ/article/view/3152>
- Mi-ing, J. G. K. (2019). Trailblazing IPed praxis in Mountain Province, Philippines. International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 11(4), 27–36. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijhss.11.4.4>
- Nazarita, R., & Morales, P. (2025). Language and cultural barriers in Indigenous classrooms. International Journal of Education Studies.
- Nganga, L., & Kambutu, J. (2024). Culturally responsive professional development programs for teacher educators using community-based collaborative learning. Teaching and Teacher Education Journal.
- Nolasco, R. (2012). Mother tongue-based multilingual education in the Philippines: From theory to practice. Linguistic Society of the Philippines.
- Pascua, L., & Macapobre, D. (2020). Challenges of teachers in implementing Indigenous Peoples Education in the Cordillera region. Journal of Indigenous Education Studies, 5(1).
- Philippine Information Agency. (2025, October 24). DepEd official praises CAR for Indigenous Peoples Education implementation. <https://pia.gov.ph>
- Republic of the Philippines. (1997). Republic Act No. 8371: Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997. Official Gazette. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph>
- Reyes, M. (2022). Instructional barriers in Indigenous Peoples Education implementation. Asian Journal of Education Research.
- RSIS International. (2023). Multi-grade teaching challenges in rural education settings. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science.
- Salamanca, J. (2025). Promoting cultural sensitivity in supporting learners with Indigenous backgrounds. International Journal of Education and Cultural Studies.
- Schunk, D. H. (2020). Learning theories: An educational perspective (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Sonza, M., & Protacio, R. (2025). Voices of language teachers in Indigenous education settings. International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies, 10(2), 321–330. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.102.50>
- UNESCO. (1994). The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education. UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2009). Indigenous knowledge systems and practices in education. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.
- UNESCO. (2015). Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and framework for action. UNESCO.

-
- UNESCO. (2019). Knowledge-driven actions: Indigenous knowledge systems and education. UNESCO.
 - United Nations. (2007). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). United Nations.
 - Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.