



INITIATIVES OF FACULTY MEMBERS IN THE INTEGRATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS) IN THE TERTIARY LEVEL CURRICULUM OF BENGUET STATE UNIVERSITY

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HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a significant role in the integration of IKS in the curriculum.
- ✓ Experiential learning such as actual cultural presentations, community immersions, and field works, are some of the effective ways to let students appreciate their history and cultural heritage.
- ✓ Researches on Cordillera history and cultural heritage, production of IECs, and knowledge products may help realize the revitalization and continuity of IKS.
- ✓ Training/fora and conferences are avenues to raise awareness of faculty on the IKS current trends and issues.
- ✓ In-depth IKS integration in the curriculum is a teacher's initiative and personal advocacy.
- ✓ Faculty Members are challenged in the integration of IKS in the curriculum due to the limited availability of updated IKS materials, limited knowledge and cultural exposure, limited appreciation of IKS among faculty members and students, changing landscape, modernity, clash between Christian beliefs/ ideologies and the spiritual aspects of IK, lack of university mechanism for monitoring the integration of IKSP in the curriculum, and poverty of time/ lack of opportunities to integrate IKS.
- ✓ The challenges experienced by the faculty members affect the in-depth integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in the tertiary level curriculum.



INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge and learning systems have long been recognized as indispensable components of indigenous people's education. However, formal educational systems usually neglect indigenous knowledge, as it is labeled an antiquated form and because learning has been attached to western perspective of pedagogy (Enkiwe-Abayao, 2000).

As a consequence, the dichotomy between western culture and local culture has been entrenched. Indigenous peoples have developed an ideal type of human development in which western education is the core and is identifiable with progress or civilization. Indigenous knowledge is, thus, perceived as obsolete or inferior. Formal education promoted by the state, has contributed to the marginalization of indigenous knowledge. (Enkiwe-Abayao, 2000).

Victor and Yano (2015) stated that the indigenous communities want an education that primarily nurtures the cultural wellbeing and personhood of their young. This becomes the foundation for developing other competencies that can enable them and, subsequently, the indigenous communities to contribute to nation-building. Codamon-Dugyon (2019) asserted that the educational sector plays a major role in continuing, preserving, protecting and even transmitting IK from generation to generation. She also claimed that IK is linked to sustainable development.

However, this goal will not be realized if the faculty members who play a significant role in the integration of IKS in the curriculum faced various challenges such as what IKS topics need to be integrated in the subject or course they are handling and how to interface them with the knowledge system of existing educational programs. In addition, faculty members are challenged on how to localize and contextualize IKS in response to the demands of the time. This is similar with the research findings of Seehawer (2018) that what hinders teachers to integrate IK includes the following: curriculum and structure of education system make it harder to integrate IK, lack of (access to) indigenous knowledges, and a clash between Christianity and the spiritual aspects of IK.

Hence, this study explored the initiatives and challenges experienced by the faculty members in their IKS integration in the curriculum that need to be addressed to strengthen the implementation of the CHED Memo Order No. 2 series of 2019.

INFORMING POLICY & PRACTICE



METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature. Specifically, it utilized exploratory qualitative research design to obtain information on the initiatives and challenges of the thirty-three (33) faculty members from the seven colleges and two institutes in Benguet State University (BSU) - La Trinidad campus handling/ teaching culture-related subjects, and of those who are integrating IKS in their teaching methodologies. They were also chosen based on their willingness and cooperation to be the research participants of the study. An informed consent document was provided to the participants before the scheduling of the key informant interviews and FGDs.



Small Focus Group Discussion with Prof. Banana (CHET), Dr. Belao (Humanities Department), Dr. Sagandoy (Social Sciences Department), Dr. Alafag (Biology Department)



FINDINGS

Initiatives Employed by BSU Faculty to Address the Challenges

Challenges Experienced by Faculty members	Initiatives Employed by BSU Faculty to Address the Challenges
Limited IKS Reference Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required/encouraged students to produce AVPs, documentaries, and written literatures on IKS Developed instructional manuals on IKS Conducted researches on IKS related topics
Limited Knowledge and Cultural Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted group discussions and class sharing of cultural practices Attended seminars/ conferences on IKS Organized photo exhibits, and actual cultural presentation
Limited Appreciation of IKS among Faculty Members and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated IKS in selected university activities like Celebration of United Nations, Buwan ng Wika, Indigenous Peoples Month and Women's Month to raise awareness on the diversities in cultures Localized and contextualized scientific terms
Changing Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated IKS in the school curriculum to fill in the gap of non-transmission of IKS from parents/ elders to students due to urban migration
Modernity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used technologies to transmit IKSP to students through audio-visual presentations (AVPs) such as video clip documentation on on Cordillera history and cultural heritage
A Clash Between Christian Beliefs/ Ideologies and the Spiritual Aspects of IK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed the significance of IKS and giving of concrete examples without disrespecting religious beliefs of students
Lack of Mechanism in Monitoring the Integration of IKS in the Curriculum by the faculty members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraged teacher's initiative and personal advocacy to integrate IKS in the subjects that they handle Solicited support from the administrators to approve planned IKS activities
Poverty of Time/ Lack of opportunities to discuss IKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraged collaborative activities for both students and faculty members Organized forum every October during the celebration of Indigenous Peoples month to discuss IP Issues

Challenges Encountered by the BSU Faculty Members in the Integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Limited IKS Reference Materials

The top challenge the faculty members encountered is the limited updated IKS reference materials like books, researches on local cultures, documentary videos, material cultures and other related instructional materials. There are also scarce published researches on IKS specifically dealing on the culture of the Cordilleras available for faculty members to be used as references in the specific subjects they are handling.

Limited Knowledge and Cultural Exposure

Data revealed that majority of the faculty members have limited knowledge and exposure regarding indigenous knowledge systems of the Indigenous Communities especially, the culture of the Indigenous Peoples in the Cordilleras. As a result, they opted not to integrate because they have fear that what they teach may not be similar as to how it is practiced by the IPs.

Limited Appreciation of IKS among Faculty Members and Students

Majority of the key informants admitted that they have limited appreciation of the indigenous knowledge and practices of the IPs since these cultural practices were not transmitted to them by their parents and elders. They admitted that some cultural practices are considered sacred and are not taught or explained to the younger generations. Some key informants admitted that Igorots are also ashamed of their cultural roots or identity that even students cannot see the value of IKS to their lives at present.

Changing Landscape

Today, faculty members migrate to urban areas for job opportunities. They seldom go home to their indigenous communities and have greater tendencies to assimilate city-life. The non-practice of cultural practices in the city posed a threat of vanishing or disappearing IKS of their elders.

Modernity

Modernity also changes the perspectives of both students and faculty members about Indigenous cultures. With the introduction of western education and technological advancement, present generation perceived indigenous cultures as backward. When one talks about IKS, the students feel it as “baduy” or outdated which means it does not fit with the current time. One respondent admitted that students are caught between what element of culture should be changed and what are worth preserving to cope with the change of time and space. It was observed that younger generations are more open to pop culture than to their local cultures. This perspective of the students also affect the teaching methodologies of the faculty members in order to address students’ interest in the subject content.

Modern technology also has discarded the use of cultural practices like the camaraderie or bayanihan in the transfer of irrigation and traditional way of harvesting rice grains by the community members. The bayanihan was no longer being practiced since the people preferred to use modern agricultural technology according to one respondent.

A Clash Between Christian Beliefs/ Ideologies and the Spiritual Aspects of IK

Different religious beliefs and ideologies have impact to the change of perspectives of the IPs about their cultural practices. There is clash of religion and culture. Religion taught them that indigenous cultural practices are evil and promote paganism. These religious perspectives prevented them from carrying out their cultural practices.

Lack of Mechanism in Monitoring Integration of IKS in the Curriculum

The laxity of university policy on the integration of Indigenous Knowledge in the Curriculum despite the provisions from CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) 20, series of 2013 (General Education Curriculum: Holistic Understandings, Intellectual, and Civic Competencies) does not motivate the faculty members to incorporate IKS in their teaching methodologies. Also, there is no existing standard teaching guides for integration of IKS. Topics on IKS are not explicit in the course syllabi. Thus, the integration of IKS in the tertiary curriculum is a teacher’s initiative.

Rigorous Requirements for Immersion

Policies of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on educational tours and community immersions hinder the opportunity of the teachers and students to learn the cultural practices of the Indigenous Peoples in the rural communities. Tedious requirements by CHED under Memorandum Order No.63, s.2017 (Policies and Guidelines on Off-campus Activities), hinder the faculty initiatives to organize educational tour/ field trips or community immersions. This reality in the academe influence faculty members to develop alternative learning activities but these do not compensate the experiential learning in the actual setting. It is also sad to note that some faculty admitted that they have personal cultural biases and stereotypes in the integration of IKS in the curriculum due to lack of cultural exposure.

Poverty of Time/ Opportunities to Discuss IKS

Poverty of time in integrating IKS in teaching methodologies is also a challenge to the majority of the faculty members. The faculty acknowledged that culture can be appreciated by students through experiential learning like community-based research, documentations of the cultural practices, actual cultural presentations, museum tours and other activities. However, these are not being realized due to lack of time to do the requirements. Some teachers give shallow discussion on IKS topics just to finish the content of the course syllabus.

A common sentiment also of the faculty respondents is the lack of time to conduct research on IKS to be used as reference materials in the integration of the IKS in the curriculum. Majority of the faculty narrated that much of their time were spent on teaching (preparation of lessons, checking of papers, consultation with students). Another is the administrative designations and other appended functions like to serve as coach in sports, advisers for student organizations, and thesis advising.



CALL TO ACTION

- ✓ University policy on IKS integration has to be in place to be followed by a series of training on IKS integration in the different colleges and scheduled community immersions for teachers and students.
- ✓ There should be a series of trainings of pool of cultural advocates/ bearers from faculty members to integrate of IKS in the curriculum/ teaching methodologies.
- ✓ The Colleges and Institutes in the University can study possibilities of integrating IKS in their curriculum. Furthermore, different colleges are encouraged to conduct feasibility studies/ researches on the probabilities of offering indigenous studies courses.
- ✓ The library should communicate with the faculty members on what IKS instructional materials are needed before procurement.
- ✓ The Office of the Research and Extension (R&E) has to strengthen the implementation of the inclusion of Cordilleran culture and practices in their programs to provide venue or space for the said topics.
- ✓ Encourage linkage between HEIs/ SUCs and DepEd to facilitate capability-buildings on IPED subject integration.
- ✓ BSU can create an Indigenous Knowledge Center as a centralized office to ensure the promotion of the integration of IKS in the university's core functions namely: Instruction, Research, Extension & Production.



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ABOUT THE MATERIAL

Informing Policy and Practice is published quarterly by the Institute of Social Research and Development of Benguet State University. It synthesizes findings from research and development activities, or presents results of quick survey and opinion poll on social, economic and policy issues and concerns affecting the Cordillera region. It also distills key messages and provides recommendations for the information and consideration of decision and policy-makers.

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