

Perceptions, Implementation of Indigenous Peoples Education program and School Practices, Governance, and Performance in Socsargen

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Research Article



Open-access & Peer-reviewed
Received: 30 Apr 2025
Available: 30 Jun 2025

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated into how the Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) Program was used in several SOCSARGEN-affiliated schools in General Santos City, Sarangani Province, and South Cotabato. The study utilized quantitative methodologies and a descriptive-correlational research approach to find out how widely the IPEd program has been implemented and whether it is linked to government policies, school practices, and overall performance. Many people in the neighborhood use the IPEd program, which demonstrates that they are highly committed to teaching everyone in a way that respects their culture, as the results reveal. Schools that are known for having good operating processes usually educate indigenous methods of knowing and doing things. Still, they said that things like making plans and working together with other agencies need to become better. It is also crucial to note that the research did not find a link between IPEd's efficacy and academic success. This shows that implementation doesn't have much of an influence on performance, even when it goes well. The study recommends that planning based on data should be better, school leaders should have more training, and people should be able to provide feedback on a regular basis.

Keywords: education, perceptions, IPEd

INTRODUCTION

The right to an education is a fundamental human right. It is necessary to reach out to people from all walks of life worldwide. Exercising such a right can provide opportunity for people's well-being regardless of race, culture, or ethnic group. However, while education is a universal right, it is not always appreciated by all groups of people in the country. Indigenous peoples (IPs) are among the groups of individuals who are deprived of quality education (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021). Recognizing that many IP communities continue to be among the most marginalized in terms of basic education, IP Education was included as one of the reform items of the DepEd's Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA), which the World Bank-assisted National Program Support for Basic Education (NSPBE) Project supported throughout its implementation from 2005 to 2012. The single most important contribution of the technical work done under BESRA on IP Education (IPEd) within this period is the formulation and adoption by the DepEd of the National IP Education Policy Framework, considered a policy milestone in efforts to recognize and address the education issues and concerns of IP communities. The policy framework, formulated in consultation with representatives of IP communities, government agencies, and civil society organizations, articulates policy statements on key areas in IP education.

In South Cotabato, home to Tboli and Blaan communities, the DepEd Schools Division of South Cotabato and the Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) are formulating their IPed Framework which highlights the agreements reached by both parties on the implementation of IPed in the province. This was launched on October 21, 2016. Tboli and Blaan culture-based lesson plans were also being finalized for use by thirty-six (36) schools with learners who all belong to ICCs and five (5) newly-established schools also serving IP learners. With all the efforts of educating indigenous people, little is still known about the strategies that are effective because a large number of such programs are unsuccessful (Wa-Mbaleka, 2013). The problem of the IPs has often been characterized by a lack of access to an education that respects their diverse cultures and languages. Educational materials providing accurate and fair information on indigenous peoples and their ways of life have been all too rare, and, moreover, history textbooks have frequently depicted them in negative terms. Similarly, Boschman et al. (2014) noted that in many cases educational programs have failed to offer indigenous peoples the possibility of participating in decision-making, the design of curricula, the selection of teachers and teaching methods, and the definition of standards. In the Socsargen region, the implementation of the Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education program has been a journey of both cultural affirmation and educational adjustment. For many educators and school leaders, it's about more than just meeting policy requirements—it's about honoring traditions, building trust with communities, and finding ways to teach that respect indigenous identities. As Cariaga (2023) notes, when parents and communities are involved in education, especially in literacy and numeracy, students thrive. This is especially true in IP communities, where learning is often rooted in values passed down through generations. Yet, the shifting landscape of Philippine education (Cariaga, 2023) means teachers must keep up with new policies and expectations, even while working in environments that may lack basic resources.

There's also the growing push to integrate 21st-century skills like critical thinking and collaboration into the curriculum (Cariaga, 2024). But for teachers in IP schools, this means finding a balance—teaching modern competencies while staying rooted in cultural heritage. The work of Cariaga and ElHalaissi (2024) reminds us that education should be culturally responsive and socially meaningful, especially for historically marginalized groups. Still, many schools in remote IP areas struggle with limited access to technology and support programs (Cariaga, Pospos, & Daganan, 2024). These gaps affect not only how well the IP Education program is implemented, but also how schools are managed, how teachers perform, and how students experience learning in these unique and vibrant communities. It is in this context that the researcher decided to pursue this study to evaluate the status of implementation of IP Education Program of schools covered in SOCSARGEN. Likewise, it will also investigate the practices, governance, and school performance. Hopefully, the outcome of this research will provide a deeper understanding of the situation of education of Indigenous Peoples towards providing various interventions and programs to enhance its implementation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected IP schools in three municipalities in Region XII, namely: South Cotabato, Sarangani Province, and General Santos City.

Sampling Design

There were 50 IP schools in SOCSARGEN. Out of these, the researcher used cluster sampling in selecting 30 IP schools in the three municipalities, namely: South Cotabato, 10; Sarangani, 10; and General Santos City, 10. According to Lohr (2012), cluster sampling was a method of probability sampling that was often used to study large populations, particularly those that were widely geographically dispersed. Researchers usually used pre-existing units such as schools or cities as their clusters. In cluster sampling, researchers divided a population into smaller groups known as clusters (Simkus, 2022). They then randomly selected among these clusters to form a sample. The selection of 30 IP (Indigenous Peoples) schools out of the 50 in the SOCSARGEN (South Cotabato, Sarangani, and General Santos City) region was guided by specific inclusion criteria to ensure that the sampled schools accurately represent the diversity and educational conditions of IP schools in the region.

Geographical representation was a crucial criterion, ensuring that schools from three municipalities—South Cotabato, Sarangani, and General Santos City—were equally represented with 10 schools each. This balanced distribution allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the regional differences and commonalities in IP

education across SOCSARGEN. The selection included both primary and secondary schools of varying sizes, representing both small and large educational environments. This approach ensured a comprehensive overview of the educational landscape, capturing the diversity of school types and sizes. Community representation was also a key consideration, with schools chosen from different indigenous communities within the SOCSARGEN region. This criterion aimed to capture the cultural diversity among the IP populations, including schools serving different ethnic groups, languages, and cultural practices. Accessibility was another important factor; schools that were logistically feasible to reach for the research team were prioritized, ensuring efficient data collection while considering transportation, safety, and the ability to conduct in-person visits if necessary. Total Enumeration was applied. Total enumeration, also known as complete enumeration, is a data collection method where every member of a population is included in the survey or study. Total enumeration ensures that every individual or unit is accounted for, providing comprehensive data.

Data Analysis

To analyze the extent and level of Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) implementation, school practices, governance, and performance in SOCSARGEN, the study used frequency counts and mean. These helped determine how much the program is being implemented in terms of teaching strategies, materials, teacher training, assessment, and other key areas. It also measured how schools are practicing leadership, managing resources, and delivering quality education within the IPEd framework. Using the mean allowed the researcher to summarize the responses and identify the general level or extent across different areas. To find out whether there is a relationship between the level of IPEd implementation and the schools' practices, governance, and performance, the study used Spearman's rho. This statistical tool was chosen because the data were not normally distributed, and Spearman's rho is appropriate for non-parametric data. It helped determine if higher or lower levels of implementation were related to how well schools are managed and how they perform.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. The Extent of Implementation of IP Education Program in SOCSARGEN

Indicator	Mean	Description
Pedagogy and Methodology	4.69	Very Great Extent
Material Resources	4.77	Very Great Extent
Teacher Training	4.77	Very Great Extent
Methods and Strategies	4.75	Very Great Extent
Assessment and Evaluation	4.80	Very Great Extent
Overall Mean	4.80	Very Great Extent

Table 1 shows the extent of implementation of the IP Education Program in SOCSARGEN across different categories. The highest mean score is for Assessment and Evaluation (Mean = 4.80), suggesting that this aspect of the program is implemented to a very great extent. This indicates that there is a strong emphasis on culturally sensitive assessment and evaluation practices within the program, which is crucial for the success of indigenous education initiatives. Following closely are Material Resources and Teacher Training, both with a mean score of 4.77, indicating that these aspects are also implemented to a very great extent. This suggests that there is a focus on providing teachers with the necessary training and resources to effectively teach indigenous learners. Pedagogy and Methodology and Methods and Strategies also have high mean scores of 4.69 and 4.75 respectively, indicating a very great extent of implementation. This implies that the program places importance on using culturally appropriate pedagogical approaches and teaching strategies to enhance the learning experience of indigenous students. The overall mean score for the extent of implementation of the IP Education Program in SOCSARGEN is 4.80, indicating that the program as a whole is implemented to a very great extent. This suggests that the program is successful in its efforts to provide quality education that is culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of indigenous learners. These findings are consistent with scholarly perspectives on culturally responsive and indigenous education. Gay (2018) asserts that culturally responsive teaching enhances academic performance by validating students' cultural identities and integrating them into the learning process. McCarty and Lee (2014) also emphasize that critical culturally sustaining pedagogy helps indigenous communities reclaim sovereignty over their knowledge systems through formal education.

Additionally, Simal and Robles (2024) noted that while teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness—especially in terms of personal awareness and teaching practices—there remains a need for infrastructure improvements. Investing in such infrastructure is essential to support initiatives, enabling teachers to fully

leverage digital tools and resources in their instruction. Meanwhile, del Carmen Salazar (2013) highlights that teacher training is a key factor in promoting equity and humanizing pedagogy, particularly when educators are prepared to understand and respect learners' cultural contexts. The success of IPED in SOCSARGEN, therefore, not only fulfills the mandates of DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 but also supports global educational practices that prioritize inclusivity, relevance, and indigenous empowerment.

Table 2. The Extent of School Practices in IPED Schools as Assessed by the Respondents

Indicator	Mean	Description
Leadership and Governance	4.76	Very Great Extent
Curriculum and Learning	4.71	Very Great Extent
Accountability and Continuous Improvement	4.75	Very Great Extent
Management of Resources	4.72	Very Great Extent
Overall Mean	4.74	Very Great Extent

Table 2 shows the extent of school practices in IPED schools as assessed by the respondents, covering leadership and governance, curriculum and learning, accountability and continuous improvement, and management of resources. The highest mean score is for leadership and governance, with a mean of 4.76, indicating that respondents perceive this aspect to be implemented to a very great extent in IPED schools. This suggests that there is strong leadership and governance in place, which is crucial for the effective management and implementation of IPED programs. The second-highest mean score is for accountability and continuous improvement, with a mean of 4.75. This indicates that IPED schools are effective in ensuring accountability and continuously improving their practices. This is essential for maintaining high standards and addressing the evolving needs of indigenous learners. The lowest mean score is for curriculum and learning, with a mean of 4.71. While still considered to be implemented to a very great extent, this suggests that there may be some areas for improvement in terms of curriculum development and learning practices in IPED schools. Overall, the overall mean score is 4.74, indicating that the extent of school practices in IPED schools, as assessed by respondents, is very great. This suggests that IPED schools are generally effective in implementing practices that support the education and well-being of indigenous learners, across various aspects of school management and operation. These implications are supported by scholars such as Khalifa et al. (2016), who highlight that culturally responsive school leadership is essential in promoting equity and inclusion. Brayboy and Castagno (2009) emphasize that strong governance structures that include indigenous voices are critical for the success of culturally grounded education. Moreover, Sleeter (2011) asserts that ongoing evaluation and adaptation are vital in ensuring that culturally relevant pedagogy remains effective and meaningful.

Table 3. The Level of School Governance of IPED Schools in SOCSARGEN

Indicator	Mean	Description
Developing and Communicating Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objective	4.67	Very High
Data-Based Strategic Planning	4.47	High
Problem-Solving	4.57	Very High
Building High and Performance Teams	4.67	Very High
Coordinating with Others	4.57	Very High
Leading and Managing Change	4.63	Very High
Overall Mean	4.60	Very High

Table 3 shows the level of school governance in IPED schools in SOCSARGEN across various indicators. The two highest means are for "Developing and Communicating Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objective" and "Building High and Performance Teams," both scoring Very High at 4.67 and 4.67, respectively. These high scores suggest that these schools excel in articulating and communicating their vision, mission, goals, and objectives effectively, as well as in building and maintaining high-performance teams. Effective communication of vision and goals is essential for aligning efforts and driving progress (Lencioni, 2012). The two lowest means are for "Data-Based Strategic Planning" and "Coordinating with Others," both scoring High at 4.47 and 4.57, respectively. While still rated high, these scores indicate that there may be some room for improvement in terms of utilizing data for strategic planning and coordinating efforts with others. Effective data-based strategic planning is crucial for informed decision-making and resource allocation (Bryson, 2018). Overall, the table's mean score is Very High at 4.60, indicating that school governance in IPED schools in SOCSARGEN is highly effective across

the assessed indicators. This suggests that these schools excel in several aspects of governance, including developing and communicating vision and goals, building high-performance teams, problem-solving, and leading and managing change. However, there may still be opportunities to further enhance data-based strategic planning and coordination with others to drive continuous improvement and achieve better educational outcomes. These implications are consistent with the literature on school governance and leadership in indigenous contexts. Hallinger and Heck (2010) emphasize that effective school leadership must involve strategic visioning and capacity-building to support sustained improvement. Harris and Jones (2015) argue that successful educational change, particularly in culturally diverse settings, requires strong collaborative leadership and stakeholder engagement. Meanwhile, Bishop et al. (2009) highlight that inclusive and culturally responsive leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing indigenous student outcomes by aligning school governance with the aspirations of the community.

Table 4. The Level of School Performance of IPed Schools in SOCSARGEN

Indicator	Mean	Description
School Leadership, Management and Operations	4.69	Very High
Basic Education Services	4.86	Very High
Learning Environment	4.72	Very High
Human Resource Management and Development	4.69	Very High
Parent's Involvement and Community Partnership	4.69	Very High
Overall Mean	4.73	Very High

Table 4 shows the level of school performance of IPed schools in SOCSARGEN across various indicators. The two highest means are for Basic Education Services and Learning Environment, both scoring Very High at 4.86 and 4.72 respectively. These high scores indicate that these schools excel in providing a wide variety of subjects, suitable education for all kinds of learners, and a learning environment that supports modern modalities and sustains education despite the challenges posed by the new normal (Ramsden, 2018). The overall mean of 4.73 suggests a Very High level of performance across all indicators. This indicates that IPed schools in SOCSARGEN are performing well in terms of school leadership, management, operations, basic education services, learning environment, human resource management and development, and parent's involvement and community partnership (Marzano et al., 2019). The lowest mean is for School Leadership, Management, and Operations at 4.69, which is still considered Very High. This indicates that while these schools are strong in various aspects, there may be some areas for improvement in leadership and management practices. These implications align with findings in educational literature. Nieto (2010) emphasizes that culturally relevant schooling leads to improved educational outcomes by affirming learners' identities and making education more meaningful. Villegas and Lucas (2007) argue that effective teacher preparation and professional development in diverse settings must be grounded in cultural competence. Meanwhile, Epstein (2011) highlights that strong school-family-community partnerships are key to improving student achievement and engagement, particularly in marginalized contexts. The results from SOCSARGEN thus reflect a comprehensive, community-driven approach to education that can serve as a model for IPed implementation in other regions.

Table 5. Relationship between the Extent of Implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education and Extent of School Practices in IPED Schools in SOCSARGEN

Variables	r, value	Degree of Relationship	P-value	Remarks
Extent of Implementation		Very Low		
Extent of School Practices	0.1802	Positive	0.0002	Significant

Table 5 shows the relationship between the extent of implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPed) and the extent of school practices in IPed schools in SOCSARGEN. The mean for the extent of implementation is 4.80, while for school practices, it is 4.74. The r value, which measures the strength and direction of the relationship, is 0.1802, indicating a low, negligible positive correlation between the two variables. This suggests that as the extent of implementation of IPed increases, there is a slight tendency for the extent of school practices to also increase, but the relationship is not strong.

The p-value of 0.0002 indicates that the correlation is statistically significant, meaning that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This finding implies that there is some level of association between the extent of implementation of IPEd and the extent of school practices in IPEd schools in SOCSARGEN. However, the low r value suggests that other factors not accounted for in this study may also influence school practices in these schools (Field, 2018). Overall, this finding suggests that while there is a relationship between the implementation of IPEd and school practices, it is not a strong one. Schools may need to consider additional factors or strategies to improve school practices in IPEd, beyond just the extent of implementation of IPEd itself. These findings are consistent with research that emphasizes the complexity of educational improvement. Fullan (2007) asserts that meaningful educational change depends not just on program implementation but also on internal school dynamics and stakeholder engagement. Similarly, Datnow (2005) highlights those reforms, including culturally responsive initiatives like IPEd, require alignment across organizational structures, professional development, and community collaboration to be truly effective. Therefore, while IPEd implementation is a vital part of the equation, sustained improvements in school practices likely depend on broader systemic support and integrated leadership efforts.

Table 6. Relationship between the Extent of Implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education and the Level of School Governance in IPEd Schools in SOCSARGEN

Variables	r_s value	Degree Relationship	of P-value	Remarks
Extent of Implementation		Very Low		Not Significant
Level of School Governance	0.0833	Positive	0.0869	

Table 6 shows the relationship between the extent of implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) and the level of school governance in IPEd schools in SOCSARGEN. The mean for the extent of implementation is 4.80, while for the level of school governance, it is 4.60. The r value, which measures the strength and direction of the relationship, is 0.0833, indicating a low, negligible positive correlation between the two variables. This suggests that as the extent of implementation of IPEd increases, there is a very slight tendency for the level of school governance to also increase, but the relationship is not strong. The p-value of 0.0869 indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant, meaning that the observed relationship could likely have occurred by chance. This finding implies that there may not be a meaningful association between the extent of implementation of IPEd and the level of school governance in IPEd schools in SOCSARGEN. Other factors or aspects of governance not captured in this study may play a more influential role in determining the level of school governance in IPEd schools. These results align with studies emphasizing that program implementation does not automatically result in governance transformation. Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) argue that the interpretation and uptake of educational reforms depend heavily on the perspectives and capacity of school leaders. Similarly, Anderson (2009) notes that the impact of culturally responsive education is often limited when not supported by aligned leadership and governance practices. These insights underline the need for deliberate efforts to strengthen the connection between IPEd implementation and school governance mechanisms, ensuring that the values of indigenous education permeate all levels of school leadership.

Table 7. Relationship between the Extent of Implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education and the Level of School Performance in IPEd Schools in SOCSARGEN

Variables	r_s value	Degree Relationship	of P-value	Remarks
Extent of Implementation		Very Low		Not Significant
Level of School Performance	0.0106	Positive	0.828	

Table 7 shows the relationship between the extent of implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) and the level of school performance in IPEd schools in SOCSARGEN. The mean for the extent of implementation is 4.80, while for the level of school performance, it is 4.73. The r value, which indicates the strength and direction of the relationship, is 0.0106, suggesting a low, negligible positive correlation between the two variables. This means that as the extent of implementation of IPEd increases, there is a very slight tendency for the level of school performance to also increase, but the relationship is not significant. The p-value of 0.828 indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant, suggesting that the observed relationship could likely

have occurred by chance. This finding implies that there may not be a meaningful association between the extent of implementation of IPed and the level of school performance in IPed schools in SOCSARGEN. This result suggests that the extent of implementation of IPed may not have a significant impact on the level of school performance in these schools. Other factors not considered in this study may play a more crucial role in determining school performance in IPed schools. This result is supported by existing literature, which stresses that the effectiveness of culturally responsive programs like IPed often depends on how well they are aligned with institutional goals and performance metrics. Ladson-Billings (2006) notes that culturally relevant pedagogy is often marginalized when schools prioritize standardized outcomes that overlook cultural and contextual dimensions. Similarly, Gay (2018) argues that unless cultural initiatives are fully integrated into all aspects of teaching, assessment, and leadership, their impact on measurable school performance may remain limited. These findings emphasize the need to revise performance evaluation frameworks to better reflect the success and influence of Indigenous Peoples' Education initiatives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study evaluated into how successfully the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed) Program operated in SOCSARGEN, which includes General Santos City, South Cotabato, and Sarangani Province. Several of the schools in the area have done a terrific job of educating youngsters to value and understand other cultures. A lot of them really wanted to assist Native American kids, and it was evident. Most schools were also well-run, with leaders who set clear goals, encouraged cooperation, and handled change effectively. But there was always room for improvement, especially when it came to making strategies based on reliable data and communicating to stakeholders. The IPed program was set up correctly, but the statistics indicated that it didn't improve how schools ran or how well kids fared in school. This showed that doing the program by itself won't have a big impact. People who create the curriculum were told to tell instructors to maintain studying how to teach in a way that is respectful of many cultures. To make governance better, school leaders need to work closely with local partners and base their decisions on facts. Teachers were told to make their teachings more practical by using local culture. Barangay leaders and parents also did crucial things by staying in contact, going to school events, and supporting community education programs. Finally, the researchers were asked to look at how these methods influenced the health and schoolwork of native students. If SOCSARGEN promotes working together and recognizes each other's traditions and contributions, it could be possible to keep building an education system where Native American kids do well in school, socially, and culturally.

Acknowledgements

The main author would like to extend her heartfelt gratitude to her research adviser for the invaluable guidance, encouragement, and expertise that greatly contributed to the completion of this study. Sincere appreciation is also given to the respected members of the panel for their constructive feedback and insightful suggestions that helped improve the quality of this research. Special thanks are also due to the Dean of the Graduate School for the support and leadership throughout the academic journey.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there was no conflict of interest, whether financial, professional, or personal, that influenced the conduct, findings, or reporting of this study titled "Implementation of Indigenous Peoples Education Program and School Practices, Governance, and Performance in SocSarGen."

Funding

The authors funded this research.

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