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DESIGNING A CONTEXTUALIZED AND CULTURE-BASED READING MATERIAL FOR INDIGENOUS LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT
This research investigated the challenges and coping techniques the Indigenous Learners encounter in reading. The data collected were used to develop a contextualized and culture-based reading material for them. The jurors rated the developed reading material as "highly observed" in its respective means: the level of contextualization and level of culture inclusion had the highest composite mean of both 3.91; Level of acceptability 3.70; Level of Innovativeness 3.68; Level of effectiveness with 3.62 and Level of correspondence to the desired competencies got 3.57. The developed reading material enhances the reading proficiency of the Indigenous learners and supplementing textbooks used in the classroom. It contains lessons that directly address their identified needs and learning styles from their own context and stories.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is an indispensable foundation of education. It provides opportunities for survival, growth, security, and stability. It instills human formation by the needs and demands of society's culture and core values the learner thrives. The level of literacy that the learners may achieve is illimitable. Thus, the best education program and policy should be equally accessible to all regardless of race, culture, religious affiliation and beliefs,

To make teaching and learning available to all is considered the primary goal of the international community. This is widely asserted by various government human rights agencies and acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of achieving development, progress, and communal growth. This acknowledgment of education attainment is exemplified in the international aims, goals, and schemes that have been targeted in the past two decades (UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, stressed and reiterated schooling as a social right and persistently paved the way for an intense international relation. Further, the assembly of the international community in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 set an agenda that targeted to create development in education to 2015. At the World Education Forum, the Dakar Framework was adopted to formulate and bring to fruition the EFA commitments. This was composed of governments from 164 countries, including the Philippines, and representatives of regional groups, international organizations, donor agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), and civil society. The framework determined a set of challenges for international education. Approaching the 2015 deadline, it came out that the adult illiteracy rates have fallen by only 23% since 2000, instead of the targeted 50%, and most of the decrease was due to the transition into adulthood of larger associates of better-educated children. It was also found that at least 750 million adults, nearly two-thirds of them women, did not even have fundamental literacy skills in 2015. Moreover, the Global Monitoring Report suggested that educational growth remained unequally shared or experienced and that disadvantaged children still lag behind their peers (GMR & EFA, 2015).

Meanwhile, the Philippines' non-government and government agencies have merged to supporting the EFA (2015) to realize its set targets. These stakeholders' valuable commitment is needed to attain competence, which is the country's fundamental goal. This gave birth to establishing the National Education for all committee (NEC) with its 23 agencies signified their commitment of support through a memorandum of agreement (MOA). Likewise, DepEd Order 94 s.2009 was issued, which ordered that EFA regional and division committees be created to perform specific functions toward achieving global goals in increasing literacy.

With EFA by UNESCO and EFA Philippines in collaboration with the Department of Education (DepEd), there is an urging call for closing the achievement gap among diverse groups of learners and create a balance in the literacy rate among them. However, despite the government effort for equality in education, the ethnic groups, or the indigenous peoples (IP) in the Philippines, numbering between 15 to 20 million in around 110 communities, still share the same discrimination and marginalization experiences. Most of these indigenous tribes settle in mountainous parts of their provinces, far from the inaccessible public schools. Thus, various non- governmental and governmental groups provide education interventions in these communities (Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (ECIP, 2009).

Some of these ethnic groups, called the Agta or Kabihug, are found in Region V. For instance, a total of 34 communities are located in the towns of Camarines Norte (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2016). The government gave most of these

Indigenous People land. As such, 42 Indigenous families are found in the said place within the 5-hectare forest land, declared an ancestral domain obtained from the government. Most of the elders in these communities are unable to read and write, and only a few of the younger population, 6 years old to 27 years, can attend schooling, but to this date, none have earned a college degree.

In the Philippines, the ability to read and write is a priority, so any effort to promote literacy by any organization or even private individuals is encouraged (Cristobal, 2015). Accordingly, this research addresses the call of PDP 2017-2022 on documenting the diversity of culture through language using a culturally sensitive and ethically produced data. Likewise, It heeds the recommendation of Asia South Pacific Association for Basic Education in the Philippines (Soriano et al., 2007), reflected in the result of their report on Indigenous Peoples Education in the Philippines, that the curriculum reform must be done to tailor the local context and provide chances for Indigenous Peoples to attend schooling in the mainstream classes.

Reports on the literacy of ethnic groups in the country suggest that they are often the last to benefit from governmental social and educational services. Thus, pockets of illiteracy among indigenous people remain (UNESCO, 2006). Helping the ethnic groups enhance their literacy level to ensure that they would be functionally literate is a major consideration to make education accessible to all regardless of race, culture, religious affiliations, and beliefs. Through education, they could protect themselves and their rights in the society they are thriving.

However, as the indigenous learners join the mainstream and get the same education with their non-indigenous contemporaries, they are confronted with the numerous challenges that beset the present educational system. First, they have to cope with the curriculum mandates with high expectations yet do not fully support teachers' and students' plight in terms of instructional needs. They struggle to comprehend texts and use the English language as have been attested by the teacher during the interview. The proficiency in reading, which is one of the fundamentals of achieving literacy, has been an issue among indigenous peoples in the province. Finally, the books are limited to meet the number of students in a class. There are no reading materials available for classroom use in some grade levels. There is no contextualized and culture-based instructional material for the Indigenous students to be used as a supplemental reading resource.

Few of similar studies have been done in the Philippines. On the other hand, the numerous researches on reading were mostly on non–indigenous groups, and only a few dealt with the Indigenous Peoples in the country. Consequently, few attempts were made to develop and produce a research-based reading material for Indigenous learners in the study's locale. Having these considerations, the researcher's output- the Contextualized and Culture-Based Reading material is deemed to benefit the Indigenous Learners and their teachers.

State of indigenous peoples education

A survey of IP situations in some countries would indicate that indigenous peoples are already being given due recognition and importance as part of the bigger community.

In the Philippines, it was noted that with around 6.3 million indigenous peoples in 2000, 46% of them have finished elementary, while 19% have graduated secondary. 18% have no education than almost 2% who have finished college (Soriano et al., 2007).

In the conduct of EFA conferences in Mindanao and Cordillera in 2002 to 2007, the education program brought up by the indigenous peoples themselves focused on the

priority task for their people to learn the modern/dominant languages, knowledge, and skills that will further empower them to assert their rights

Like any other group of people in different countries, tribes in the Philippines have their transfer knowledge and honing their youth to become responsible members of the community eventually. The modern concept of education has its resemblance to that of the ethnic groups. "Educare," the Latin word for education, signifies 'bringing up" (Frankena, 2003). This concept is directly similar to the universal notion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPS). IKSPS refers to generating, storing, transmitting, and evaluating education by the Indigenous peoples throughout the world. The unique knowledge they possess is protected through time and has stayed in their ancestral domain.

The tribe people learn within the corners of their ancestral domain. This is similar to the 'lifelong learning' insight into education society. This indigenous education system that has been practiced for centuries has to be recalled by indigenous communities. As their elders say, anyone is a possible source of knowledge and companions in the learning process - parents, grandparents, elders who have recognized expertise, even peers, and younger children. The knowledge passed on to the next generation of young people is called traditional knowledge (Castellano, 2000 cited in Steinhauer, 2002 p.2).

Indigenous peoples' challenges in attaining literacy

Literacy is the ability to read and write and count. All individuals must become literate to survive in the mainstream society that most thrive on staying. To become literate includes the capacity to use language to communicate with other people or social groups who share the same culture and characteristics and have a distinct cultural and social identity compared to mainstream society.

Indigenous people are diverse, which ideally, the educational system should complement the diversity; thus, not the one-size-fits-all approach.

Much research on Indigenous literacy shows that backwardness in education is regarded as one of the major hindrances in the social advancement of tribes. This issue on literacy achievement has been the highlight of ethnic studies in education in almost two decades. Because of this, the government is giving greater importance to plug in this widening gap.

In the Philippines, education for indigenous peoples is similarly given priority and attention. In line with its thrust to promote culture-based education, the Department of Education (DepEd), through its Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program, continues to strengthen its engagement with Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities, especially in the contextualization of the K to 12 basic education curriculum. Tribal literacy, however, is facing obstacles such as enrolment and drop out situation caused by adverse family environment, familial aspects such as looking after younger siblings, and poverty as major impediments to education (Paul, 2013).

In effect, "One size fits all" approach in teaching, backwardness in education, having no tribal teachers, Indigenous Peoples speaking different languages at home and school, frequent absenteeism, misconception to inadequate knowledge, the inability to read and write as reasons for IP students' low scores in standardized tests, and absence of respect to diversity and multiculturalism are some of the noted research-based challenges in IPs' education.

Contextualization of teaching and learning materials

Education for All's (EFA) third objective calls for a flexible reaction and offers materials with relevant content to all minorities.

Contextualized Teaching and Learning is a way to teach content through relevant materials that keep students engaged in learning. It refers to instructional strategies designed to link the learning of basic skills and academic or occupational content by focusing on teaching and learning directly on concrete applications in a specific context that is of interest to the student((Bird et al. (2010). It could also refer to a family of instructional strategies designed to seamlessly link the learning of foundational skills and academic content by focusing teaching and learning squarely on concrete appellation in a specific context that is of interest to the student (Mazzae et al., 2003). The lessons' contextual grasp is ensured as a key instructional strategy contextualization presents the interconnectedness of all things from experience, context, and meaning. It is believed that anything presented in context has meaning (Johnson, 2002). Thus, meaning and usefulness to present a content area and basic skills are the main contextualizations (Perin, 2011).

The contextualization of teaching and learning following the set curriculum's principles and standards is culture-responsive and locally grounded education. The Philippine constitution encompasses contextualization as Article XIV section 1 (par.1) states**:** *"The state shall establish, maintain and support a complete, adequate and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society."*

The mandate emphasizes that the Philippines ' education system provides for a relevant education that responds to people and society's needs. The thrust to promote culture-based education, especially in contextualizing the K to 12 basic education curriculum, exemplifies this goal. There is a significant move in the existing curriculum to institutionalize sustained dialogue and collaboration with the indigenous elders and other community representatives to ensure that education programs are genuinely inclusive, culture-sensitive, and relevant to their aspirations, IP or non-IP.

Due to the paradigm shift in education, contextualization began to gain its prominence. The educational change from pure learner as the receiver of knowledge to the learner as a constructor of meaning is the prime starter of the contextualized teaching and learning. From a view that change of behavior is a sole determiner of learning, the present education embraces the philosophy that using real-life experiences of students in the teaching-learning process provides the student meaningful learning experience. It is more practical, real, and values-based. The mental construct of students in learning becomes more accurate, making them multifaceted learners.

The use of cultural aspects in classroom instruction can be a source of student's interests towards the subject matter. Furthermore, this can lead learners to a strong connection between classroom learning experiences and their way of life. They may also develop a spirit of patriotism, nationalism, and cultivate their strong sense of belongingness to the community. Moreover, it offers a venue to shape values, understand shared norms and beliefs, practices, and experiences as a group of people. (Kana'iaupuni, S.2007). All this will lead to an optimistic change to the nation.

Therefore, the instructional materials' design should meet the students' requirements (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2004). Books must satisfy the learners' needs to become effective supplements in learning (Erlina, Mayuni & Akhadiah, 2015). As such, materials should be developed holistically and must be relevant to the learners' existing needs. Teachers should be knowledgeable in designing the instructional materials to address the current status of the learner's proficiency in reading (Ranjit &UNICEF, 2015). Balanced

handling of the triangular relationship between learner, learning, and material is always important in creating a learning-friendly environment and designing a learning material that will help teachers understand their beliefs and practice in teaching reading in a foreign language (Lopera, 2015).

The foregoing literature and studies inform the present undertaking, especially along with factors that affect the reading comprehension of the Indigenous learners. The principles underpinning contextualized and culture-based learning are valuable in conceptualizing the proposed material in the present study. Other results suggesting other contributory factors in the development of literacy in reading among IPs such as the availability of contextualized reading materials and technology in the classroom, teaching and learning styles, classroom environment, home support, economic status, and existing old traditions and new knowledge provide grounding to the current investigation.

METHODOLOGY
This paper utilized the qualitative method to investigate the challenges the Indigenous learners encounter in reading and their coping practices to deal with the learning difficulties. The Instructional Materials Design and Development (IMDD) (UCRDC, 2017) model was used to develop the contextualized and culture-based reading material and identify some areas that require enhancement.

In employing the IMDD model, the following elements were considered:

Needs Analysis –this was done in the investigation on the challenges and coping practices in the reading of the tribe's students;

Identification of the beneficiaries- The 13 multi-grade Indigenous learners were identified as respondents of the study.

Significance of the material-Presentation of new knowledge and approaches- the Design-Based Research (DBR) Model (Reeves, 2003), Barett's Taxonomy on Levels of Comprehension (2000), and the DepEd Reading Comprehension Target Competencies for grades 7, 8 and 9 (2013) were all considered and consulted to have an empirically produced reading material which aimed to address the challenges and support the coping practices in reading comprehension of the respondents;

Establishing the applicability of the material to a target group – was done through a qualitative assessment of the material with the help of experts in the field and the series of field trials with the respondents;

Finally, *Assessment of the material was* done through re-evaluation by another set of experts to determine possible enhancement/s per lesson to suit the target users.

Interview Guide was used in conducting the Focus Group Discussion. Video and tape recorders were used to record and video the Focus Group Discussion and semi-structured interview. Expert validated reading material evaluation sheets were used by the experts to evaluate the proposed Contextualized and Culture-Based reading material.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
As a start of designing the reading material, the needs analysis was conducted to investigate the posited challenges and coping techniques the Tribal Learners experienced in reading.

The respondents expressed their encountered challenges about reading comprehension. They were transcribed, coded, and presented by themes such as the following:

1. Lack of Reading Material
a). lack of learning materials in English
b.) lack of pictures in reading texts
c.) lack of enhancement drills in reading

2. Language barrier
a.) low comprehension
b.) limited knowledge in English
c.) limited vocabulary
d.) difficulty relating to the story
e). difficulty in sentence construction

3. Lack of home support in reading tasks.
In a similar investigation, Paul (2013) recognized that looking after young siblings of the ethnic minorities impedes education as frequent absenteeism is observed among the IP students.

Also, the members of the Indigenous community still practice fixed marriages. Thus, Indigenous Learners in higher-level stop schooling because they are arranged to marry early. Their teacher mentioned this as she witnessed how this happened to some of her Indigenous learners.

Along with difficulties in reading comprehension, There were identified coping techniques with specific practices that learners do with to deal with their experienced problems; these were:

1. In Relying on the teacher as a direct source of information, learners are;
(a) asking the teacher to translate the lesson from English to Filipino
(b) asking the teacher questions in the middle of the discussion
(c) asking the teacher to repeat the explanation of the lesson
(d) asking the teacher the meaning of a word
(e) asking the teacher to use the vocabulary word in their context.

2. Using instructional technology as a supplement to reading ability enhancement, learners;
(a) use dictionary
(b) research in the school computer laboratory
(c) read books with pictures at the tribe's Learning Center.

3. Using reading techniques as an aid to comprehension, students indicated
(a) taking notes from the teacher's discussion
(b) inferring emotions on the text based on their experience in watching television shows,
(c) organizing details based on clues/ signal words
(d) predicting the events in the story
(e) adhering to sentence completion/ cloze technique by the teacher.

4. The other strategy that students do when faced with difficulty is simply, Withdrawing from reading tasks.

These findings bear resemblance with that of other studies with indigenous learners, where the teacher was found to be the focal figure in learning and reading comprehension. Mbalika (2010) observed in the first grade that the teacher could teach the pupils spelling in English with enough motivation from the teacher. The teacher of Kabihug in the present study likewise extends her unselfish patience in translating lessons in Filipino and provides constant assistance in making follow -up questions in the

discussion to ensure learning and comprehension among students. Similarities in terms of challenges and coping practices both by the students and the teacher were also noted in the Indigenous learning environment. For instance, lack of textbooks in the native language and all subjects were a primary problem in ethnic groups. Tribal Literacy likewise experiences obstacles such as enrolment and drop out situation caused by adverse family environment, familial aspects such as looking after younger siblings, and poverty as major impediments to education (Paul, K., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., A., Wang, X., Zhang, J.,2013).

On the other hand, Mbalika's (2010) study suggests that learning and better performance could transpire even with a minimal translation of the lesson. The students are generally motivated and respected in the classroom. In a classroom environment where indigenous learners are mixed with the mainstream classes and are not discriminated against because of their physical appearance and difference, they adjust and blend well with the non-IPs. The positive atmosphere in the classroom contributes significantly to their disposition to learn.

The present study then recognizes the need to support teachers in the indigenous community in their dedication to addressing the learners' English language and reading needs as well as in their struggle to provide contextualized learning to help students grasp concepts, enjoy learning, and be involved in topics of interest to them.

Development of the reading material

The developed reference material features eight lessons to improve the reading comprehension and address the challenges the Indigenous Learners experience in reading. Every lesson is composed of the following parts: *Mind Bubbles*, *Aim These Goals*, *Discussion Points, Take the Challenge-Tasks 1-5, and Remember These*.

Mind Bubbles contains discussion insights or dialogues which activate prior knowledge of the readers and prepare them for the lesson. The students may use the dialogues and dramatize or do pair-storming to engage them with the topic. Likewise, this part initiates prediction skills as to what the lesson is about.
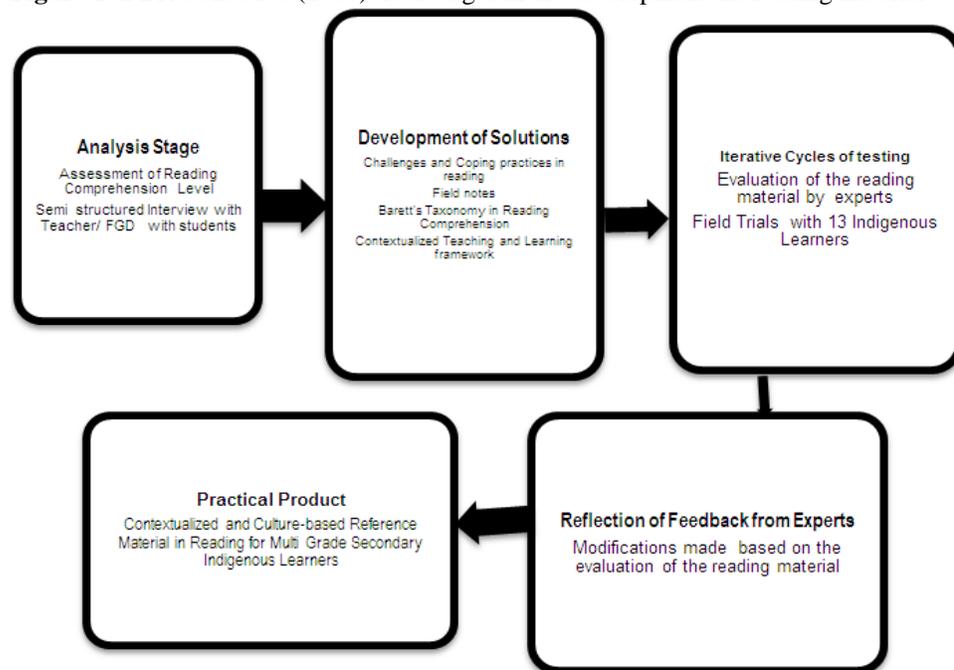
Aim These Goals enumerates the topic objectives, which are to be attained at the end of the tasks and discussion. These goals are anchored on DepEd's curriculum in Reading for Secondary. They are outlined to meet the 13 multi-grade Kabihug respondents' needs as posited in the challenges and coping strategies they encounter in reading.

Discussion Points presents the concepts of the topic and explains the main ideas of the lesson.

Take the Challenge (Tasks 1-5) enhances the students' competencies as they are provided various activities to improve reading comprehension at every level. Sets of questions are arranged in spiral progression (SP) to include higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) techniques.

Remember, These summarize the learning and highlight specific and brief points to recall the lesson.\The reading texts feature the cultural aspect, and tasks are contextualized activities.

Figure 1: DBR Collective (2003): four stages in the development the reading material

Evaluation of the reading material

Table 1 summarizes the reading material's validation results in the different levels of acceptability criteria. The rating for each area is generally highly acceptable based on the respective means. The level of contextualization and level of culture inclusion have the highest composite mean of 3.91. It is followed by the Level of acceptability with a mean of 3.70, Level of Innovativeness with a mean of 3.68, Level of effectiveness with a mean of 3.62, and Correspondence level with the desired competencies with a mean of 3.57.

The expert-validators' positive assessment of the different criteria indicated a high level of acceptability of the proposed reference material in reading. The degree of satisfaction rating given the indicators in all areas validates this humble effort to contribute to the government's thrust of ensuring a truly inclusive, culture-sensitive, and relevant education programs for the Indigenous Learners.

Table 1: Summary of the Evaluation by experts (N=7).

Indicators	Grand Mean	Interpretation
1. Level of Correspondence with the Desired Competencies	3.57	*Highly Observed*
2. Level of Contextualization	3.91	*Highly Observed*
3. Level of Culture Inclusion	3.91	*Highly Observed*
4. Level of Acceptability	3.70	*Highly Observed*
5. Level of Innovativeness	3.68	*Highly Observed*
6. Level of Effectiveness	3.62	*Highly Observed*

Legend:

Scale range	*Interpretation*
3.26-4.00	*Highly Observed*
2.51-3.25	*Observed*
1.76-2.50	*Needs Modification*
1.00-1.75	*Not Observed*

This undertaking is not only the result of the inquiry on the literacy situation of the Indigenous learners in the locale where the study was conducted, but it also aims to respond to the call on initiatives to produce indigenized materials in the various IP communities all over the country especially that studies noted that children of the Indigenous Peoples with low economic backgrounds and are foreign to language and speech used in school have lower performance rate than peers in mainstream class tasks (National Center for Education Statistics,2001; Robertson,1993); thus, have a higher probability of having literacy problems (Bishop & Adams, 1992).

Other similar researchers found that Ethnic minorities have a greater possibility of being at risk in terms of learning disabilities than their counterparts (Skiba et al., 2008). In one foreign study, it was determined that American Indians have problems along with cultural insensitivity on the educational system in the mainstream (Ingalls, Hammond, Dupoux, & Baeza, 2006). Hence, educational practices are also considered a factor in achieving learning (Faircloth, 2006). The situation may be similar to that of the respondents of this study. Although during the conduct of the study, the teacher was observed to give assistance in reading and provide a non-threatening atmosphere in the class, the challenges encountered by the students like lack of instructional materials, difficulty understanding the target language, and the absence of home support in reading tasks greatly affect their learning. Thus, this study lays out its findings vis a vis a proposed alternative reading resource.

CONCLUSIONS
Lack of reading materials and language barriers are significant factors that affect Indigenous Learners' reading comprehension. Further, when students do not read fluently or regularly, their learning difficulties are compounded since reading comprehension involves factors such as vocabulary and fluency, active reading skills, and critical thinking that must work together.

Reading materials are often the source of knowledge, and content vocabulary is necessary for comprehension and other higher thinking skills. Thus when these are contextualized, it would be easier for the learners to engage themselves in the content and increase their comprehension despite the language barrier. In this light, reading strategies are equally important in aiding students to cope with reading difficulties. These coping practices scaffold their comprehension, which aids better learning. The indigenous learners are taught other learning strategies that they could use to improve their reading comprehension and eventually raise their academic performance like metacognitive strategies or skills such as planning, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress towards completion of a reading/learning tasks so that they would have a better sense of their strengths and needs related to the reading or learning process. Designing a contextualized and culture-based reading material should consider the established needs based on a study. Thus, experts' validation is highly essential in all areas of content validation criteria. Hence, the developed Reading material is highly recommended for classroom teaching because it supports and contributes to indigenous students' learning. The contents were found to promote IP culture and reinforce IP knowledge and teaching.

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