

A Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training for Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Technical education and vocational training (TVET) serves as a key strategy for raising employability of the Philippine labor force and reducing the polarity between skilled and non-skilled workers along with employed and unemployed graduates since the development of the Philippine Qualifications Framework. This study establishes a working model or a Competency-based TVET Framework for Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines. It will serve as an intervention paradigm that will guide TVET curriculum developers and policymakers in identifying and integrating theoretical and culturally appropriate disciplines into the curricular design of education and skills training for Indigenous Peoples. It will be a new framework, separate from but parallel to the current TVET Framework.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples in the Philippines face different barriers in education including that of technical vocational education and training and are being denied access to emerging employable skills and knowledge. As the United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group(2004) in its thematic paper points out:

“Children from poor communities, ethnic minority groups and indigenous peoples face three main barriers. The first of these is lack of access. For children to receive an education there must be a school within safe traveling distance, with teachers and pedagogical materials. In many countries, this is often not the case, especially for ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples who tend to live in remote areas or who move around. The second barrier is the poor quality of the education provided. Children from the poorest communities often have inferior educational institutions than those from richer communities. Children from ethnic minorities may be denied the opportunity to learn in their own language and their curricula and educational materials may be grounded in an alien culture. They may even be faced with social stigmatization. The third barrier is relatively poor outcomes. Children from ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples do not enjoy the same benefits from education as other children. They find it harder to get jobs, and their education often does not lead to significant contributions to life in their community. (p.5)”

This so-called problem of education not being able to contribute towards personal and community development serves a dead-end in many Western approaches towards education interventions in indigenous communities. These educated children and youth tend to leave their communities and find jobs in urban centers instead of becoming the primary actors in stimulating inclusive development simply because the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their education years do not match the conditions of the community. A bottom-up, community-driven pedagogical and curricula development approach has to be developed to ensure that the Indigenous communities can attain inclusive development.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Evolving Landscape of Technical Vocational Education and Trainings

In 2014, the Philippines shifted to outcomes-based education—which occurred much earlier in the TVET sector--proceeded alongside the curricular revisions in basic (i.e., K to 12 reform) and higher education (i.e., new GE curriculum). While the policies are already in place, their implementation at the level of teaching/learning and assessment on the ground is still uneven. As in the other ASEAN Member States (AMS), the requisite change in mindset and practice, especially in higher education, remains a major challenge. Nevertheless, significant headway has been achieved in opening the minds of teachers/professors in Philippine HEIs to the paradigm shift through the continuing advocacy of the country’s education and professional regulation agencies, reinforced by international Quality Assurance networks (e.g. the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network) and accreditation/assessment agencies(e.g. the ASEAN University Network) as well as the support of

international agencies in conducting workshops or projects that enhance learning outcomes-based education (*Philippine Qualifications Framework*, n.d.).

The Philippine TVET Qualification and Certification System (PTQCS) is a quality-assurance system in recognition of the attainment of competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) as referred to the competency standards set for middle-level occupation. It is the process of determining the qualification level of a person and a tool in identifying the training needs of a person with competency gaps. The national framework for TVET training in the Philippines was established because the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is a signatory to the Regional Model Competency Standards (RMCS) of the International Labor Organizations. Such framework recognizes existing and emerging industries over a wide range of labor absorbing sectors as the basis for the development of competency standards which are promulgated by TESDA through Training Regulations (*Philippine Qualifications Framework*, n.d.). The Philippine TVET framework as reflected through the Philippine TVET Qualification and Certification System (PTQCS) stratified skills into different levels:

- ✓ National Certificate I for routinary and predictable work skills
- ✓ National Certificate II for specialized functions and work procedures with minimal complexity of discretionary skills
- ✓ National Certificate III for wider range of skills which involves work supervision and problem solving; and
- ✓ National Certificate IV for complex and non-routine work which requires organizational leadership, job evaluation and management skills.

TESDA training is categorized into different employment sectors such as construction, agriculture, tourism, among others. Within these sectors are specific training programs based on specified skills-level training where Technical Vocational Training Institutions have to register with TESDA and implement with TESDA-certified Trainers/ Experts. Graduates of such training are subjected to mandatory competency assessments in TESDA-accredited Assessment Centers through a strict set of assessment standards and procedures. Unlike in many Western countries where skills certification is being done by industries, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority embraces full authority on skills certification in the Philippines which often leads to some companies complaining over TESDA graduates not having the required skills for actual industry work. To address this, TESDA is updating the competency standards in training programs to match the changes within the target industries. In addition, many of TESDA's Training programs have been recently migrated into new ones and the development of No-Training Regulation (NTR) programs are encouraged to test-run and match emerging industries such as the public sector and IT. Slowly though the Department of Education is taking full control in the implementation of training in Certification Levels I and II through the K+12 Senior High School Program. School-age youth in Grade 11 and Grade 12 are given the opportunity to take technical vocational training as part of the curricula's specialized strands. From National Certification level training, TESDA will soon focus on the

development of higher technical education programs in PQF5. Although the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is still short of its mandate in promulgating Diploma-level policies, it is without any doubt the agency will soon evolve into an independent government institution that will have full authority in Technical Education *per se* instead of mere technical vocational training. By then, the state agency will begin promulgating standards in Diploma-level education programs.

The Existing Framework on Competency -based TVET

It is important to ask how TESDA-promulgated Competency-based Curricula are being developed in order to see if there are underlying concepts of Indigenous education integrated within TESDA program development framework. A closer look at the Competency-based TVET Framework adopted by TESDA will expose several gaps in relation to principles in Indigenous community development.

First, the current literature identifies various Training Delivery areas such as Competency-based Curriculum Development, Learning Materials/ Courseware Development and Competency Assessment where modules of trainings will adopt the outcomes-based approach and skills adaptation and knowledge comprehension are based on flexible and more personal, individualized pacing. Nonetheless, the framework is drawn on an identified demand for skilled laborers by a specific industry which more likely does not exist in many, if not all, indigenous communities all over the country. The set of skills that will be translated into specific learning outcomes in a particular training program including the approaches for competency assessment to measure capacity change among training beneficiaries have not been specifically developed by or with indigenous communities. These trainings are obviously not linguistically and culturally appropriate for Indigenous community education(UNESCO (2010b, pg. 25). The TVET curricular design and learning outcomes are inapt on addressing the realities of indigenous populations. Indigenous communities have no sovereignty over their labor force's skills, needs, and socioeconomic circumstances. These trainings have not helped preserve indigenous culture and tradition nor contributed to the empowerment of indigenous communities. Instead, they have driven community members to migrate to urban-based employment.

Second, with education recognized as the center of efforts to address many of today's most critical global challenges including population growth, climate change, urbanization and conflict, the TESDA Framework falls short in ensuring that technical education and skills trainings has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of an ever evolving economic and political landscape of indigenous societies and communities and it can respond to the needs of learners within their diverse social and cultural settings' (UN CESC (1999, para 7(d)).

Looking Deeper into the TVET Framework Course Design Gaps

As far as trainings with existing TESDA- promulgated Training Regulations, there is none which recognizes among its learning competencies various critical dimensions of community participation, sense of community, local resource development, social capital, local empowerment and strategies for building capacities- all of which are key elements in IP empowerment. Although there is no existing literature which points out that a TESDA training has resulted in conflict, the same can be said to the absence of any documentation where a TESDA training has resulted in measurable empowerment of indigenous communities. Basic, Common and Core Competencies do not include cross-cutting areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are contributory to the above critical dimensions of learning.

Gaps in Competency Standards Development

There is an outright demand for the development of TVET curricula as well as learning materials and courseware that will result in the development of genuinely IP-based trainings by TESDA. But in coming up with such training programs, researchers and policymakers must consider developing models that go beyond measurable objectives that give due credence to direct human experience, relationships and value. For a training program to be indigenous centered, it may consider empowerment with decolonization, healing of conflict, social transformation where indigenous people themselves identify the processes and methodologies factoring in community, tradition, culture and values (Smith, 1999).

Gaps in Certification and Assessments and Scholarship Distribution

In terms of certification and assessment, it appears that the Philippine TVET Framework treats Indigenous peoples the same way as the Australian Indigenous Employment, Training & Enterprise Development (IETED) models where employment, training and enterprise support for indigenous people are geared towards purely absorbing them into mainstream industries to reduce unemployment rates on a national, global and regional scale instead of giving them the stimulus for self-determination where they will be empowered to generate local opportunities and face new labor challenges on their own. The Certification and Assessment standards currently being applied to all TESDA TR-based trainings contradict all universally accepted schools of IP-driven education and training. Traditional quality control of products and services are opposed to commercial standards in product size, designs, dimensions, aesthetics, materials. Traditional skills and workflow involve production techniques and procedures which are opposed to accuracy and uniformity of commercial products.

The qualifications of trainers and assessors under the existing framework recognizes only the academic, professional and industry experience of certified trainers and assessors. A TESDA- certified trainer has to achieve National Skills Certification, Trainer's Methodology Certification, some Industry-experience

and at least Level 5 education credentials. A TESDA-accredited competency assessor has to comply with certain industry experience, Assessorship certification and a strict accreditation and calibration process. These long lists of trainer and assessor qualifications reject the political systems of Indigenous peoples. In indigenous communities, tribal leaders, cultural masters, traditional healers and elders are considered authorities in their respective fields of traditional knowledge and their roles in the hierarchy of tribal political structures. When it comes to scholarship distribution, key employment generators from existing industries should not be the determining factors in the identification of priority training programs as TESDA currently considers. Lest NTR programs which are IP-driven will be closed down soon, TESDA should consider providing funds to IP-driven programs which are outside of the list of current and emerging employment-generating industries.

METHODOLOGY

This study involves a rapid scan of relevant literature and analysis of case studies on best practices in indigenous peoples education. Constructive analysis of the existing framework in technical vocational education and training in the Philippines, workshops, interviews and detailed analysis of documented experiences of several organizations are among the approaches used in this policy research.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

A deep review of literature in the previous section will allow us to analyze the impacts of the current TVET framework implementation towards IP communities.

Empowerment vs Employment

Does the current approach adopted by TESDA in the conduct of technical vocational education and training for IP Communities empower the latter and contribute to their self-determination and preservation of their culture and traditions? Or does it further marginalize the Indigenous peoples? It is an established fact that the technical vocational training implemented by TESDA has improved employment opportunities to all employable sectors and to indigenous community members (*Tesda - Technical Education and Skills Development Authority*, n.d.). But the economic impact brought by employment towards the IP members is only random. Through the years the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority have repeatedly announced having implemented training programs in indigenous communities and having provided skills training to the indigenous community members. Although these trainings have benefited several indigenous communities *per se*, these employable skills acquired by indigenous community members are in nature foreign to their culture and tradition and will eventually encourage those who have acquired skills certification to become migrant workers.

Marginalization

In a report published by the Japan-based Asia-Pacific Human Rights Resource Center, it is believed that in many cases, Indigenous customary practices and laws worked favorably for women. Historically in the indigenous communities of Cordillera, violence against women was a communal concern and various community interventions which included persuasive approaches directed towards men were effective deterrents to VAWC cases. But such institutions of community involvement and intervention in VAWC cases slowly transformed into a private household matter due to the deepening westernization of the indigenous society. In a parallel matter, indigenous women used to enjoy control over forest resources within the tribal territories. Such control over natural resources empowered women with a sense of economic and political independence from men in the community. When land registry and forest management systems were imposed, women gradually lost this significant social status. The above cases highly suggest that it is indispensable to “maintain, rather than dismantle, the traditional economy and value systems, and the customary laws and practices in order to keep the women's status high and protect their dignity (HRJP.org, nd).” In a rapid study on cluster TVET implementation of DSWD SLP in Zamboanga del Sur, TVET trainings for women in rural communities are entirely limited to Beauty Care, Dressmaking, Cookery, among other related skills which in plain view would suggest that women's place in the employment sector are stereotyped only as non-laborious and non- highly technical workforce. This predicament gives multiple blows to indigenous women because they are “women” and “indigenous” (Gangoso, 2019).

A key outcome of the Philippine technical education and skills training framework should be the empowerment of identified marginalized sectors and women, especially IP women, should be at the front row. The importance of women's empowerment as a general outcome of the TVET framework should be treated as indispensable. The TESDA TVET Framework adopts an up-down approach in developing competency-based trainings where national and regional level key employment generating sectors (KEG) extracted from the Labor Market Intelligence Report of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) are the main factors in determining priorities the distribution of training scholarship programs as well as the development of new training programs. Scholarships are only given to programs with a promulgated Training Regulation (TR). Thus, the development and implementation of a No Training Regulation (NTR) program does not provide technical vocational training institutions and trainers the incentives for doing so because there are no subsidized training vouchers available under the current TESDA Scholarship schemes. And because IP-based trainings may only fall under the NTR category, it is unlikely that such programs will be developed and implemented in the near future save for some institutions that are dedicated towards empowering the Indigenous peoples through IP-driven technical vocational education and training programs.

In addition to, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority for its part promulgated TESDA Circular No 3-Series of 2008 which dictates that the key employment generators will be extensively used as the basis for the distribution of Training for Work Scholarship Programs (TWSP) and Special Training for Employment Program (STEP). Said circular recognizes Indigenous peoples and cultural minorities as among Special clientele of the scholarship programs but such provision considers them of parallel importance to a wide range of other clientele such as farmers and fishermen, workers in the informal sector, senior citizens, among others which makes the Indigenous communities further marginalized among the already marginalized sectors. To seriously empower Indigenous communities, there should be a transformation of power relationships where approaches to IP empowerment should not be limited to government and community partnerships where technical education and skills training should also be based on indigenous perspectives (Labonte, 2002). It is therefore conclusive to say that the current TVET policy and framework further marginalizes the Indigenous communities.

Case Study 1: The Australian Vocational Education and Training Experience

According to Cydde Miller(2005) of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (Australia), his ten-year research and systematic review show that the national vocational education and training (VET) system in Australia is still challenged by the goal of reaching a suitable balance between pursuing equality for all, and training that is compatible and affirming of Indigenous community aspirations and cultures. It notes that “there are seven factors that will lead to positive outcomes in vocational education and training for Indigenous Peoples: *Community ownership and involvement, Indigenous identities, cultures, knowledge and values, True partnerships, Flexibility in course design, content and delivery, Quality staff and committed advocacy , Student support services , and Funding and sustainability*”

Although these factors are manifestations from Indigenous Australians’ aspirations on VET outcomes, they remain essential in conducting tech-voc trainings regardless of time and place. The research reflects general strategic and coordinated appropriate policy and practices applicable to ensure indigenous peoples’ skills for self-development, employment, community development, and self-determination. Taking into consideration the heterogeneity of indigenous communities and cultures in the Philippines and in some sense its similarity to Australia, the TVET experience from the latter serves as a key reference in developing IP-driven TVET programs in the Philippines. The Australian experience gives us some important takeaways. Indigenous identities, cultures, knowledge and values shall be integrated into IP-driven technical education and skills training. Methodologies used in course designs, content and delivery should be flexible. They should not be constrained to standards utilized in basic and tertiary education that have been applied in TVET.

Case Study 2: The School of Living Traditions

The School of Living Tradition (SLT) is a project of the Subcommission on Cultural Communities and Traditional Arts of the NCCA which establishes informal learning systems in indigenous communities where indigenous knowledge and skills are taught to young IP members by cultural masters (Talavera,2015). SLT's are established with technical and financial support from NCCA in different parts of the country. The SLT Model includes: Living Community as Learning Center, Non-formal Civic Center, Formal School Type , Non-Formal Workshop/Demonstrations, and The Living Master as Resident Artist.

In the province of Zamboanga del Sur, the SLT's are organized by the Dumendingan Arts Guild Inc, a non-profit organization supported by the NCCA. In their experience, the Dumendingan Arts Guild Inc or DAGI has gone beyond being an organization devoted towards the preservation of indigenous culture and the arts to becoming an organization synonymous to NCCA and Subanen. Over the years, DAGI has successfully carried out programs from capability-building of emerging cultural organizations to providing technical support to indigenous artists. DAGI's success is the result of their deep rooted and first-hand experience with indigenous communities. Key takeaways from DAGI's experience are as follows:

1. For educators and trainers, it does not always mean that someone from outside the community cannot be effective and will be rejected. Living ample time with the Subanen people is key to their acceptance and support.
2. Respect to Cultural Masters, giving them high regard, regardless of their formal education credentials, ensures success in the conduct of training. This is secondary to financial and technical support.
3. In all of the types of skills training done in indigenous communities, those whose ultimate outcome is the preservation of traditional language & cultural practices are the ones which are sustained and have gained unquestionable success.
4. Using an IP-centered approach in project management is indispensable. While there are legal procedures in accordance with the Indigenous People's Rights Act that must be observed in the conduct of any project within IP communities, the tribe's historical and cultural practices such as spiritual offerings, rituals and consultation processes take precedence.

Case Study 3: The Southeast Asian Institute Experimental Curriculum

A private DepEd-recognized and TESDA- registered academic institution in Western Mindanao, the Southeast Asian Institute of Public Management Inc. has established a pioneering initiative to integrate IP education into Senior High School Technical Vocational Strands and has developed a TESDA NTR Program in Traditional Fabric and Non-fabric Design (Weaving, Embroidery and Beadwork).

A. SAI's Senior High School Program for Indigenous Youth

Southeast Asian Institute's experimental Senior High School Program for Indigenous Youth started in 2018 with a cohort of Subanen students who are native Subanen speakers (non-Cebuano speaking) from a highly homogenous Subanen community and are not likely to proceed to Senior high school levels due to absence of financial capacity and access to a public high school. Forty-eight students, mostly girls, are given full scholarship support-allowances, tuition fees, uniform, books, board and lodging, among others. Far from their remote village, almost inaccessible by vehicle transportation, 89 kilometers from the closest urban center, these senior high school students live in a subsidized dormitory at the Southeast Asian Institute's Pagadian City Campus. As to curriculum, Southeast Asian Institute's IP-based Senior High School Program adds two mandatory elective courses: Subanen Studies and Subanen Language, divided into two levels each for Grade 11 and Grade 12. These two courses are taught in both English and Subanen mediums. All Core courses such as Math, English and Sciences as well as specialized technical vocational courses are taught in English and Subanen as well. Professional teachers who are native Subanen speakers are especially hired to handle the core and specialized courses. But for the elective courses which cover Subanen culture, history, tradition, and arts and craft, the Institute tapped cultural masters to teach, providing them technical, logistical and financial support. SAI's Senior High School Program for indigenous youth teaches us the following key takeaways:

1. Cultural education should not be limited to IP communities and members. In fact, it should be made mandatory to non-IP learners in both IP and non-IP areas. It is possible to integrate IP Studies and IP Language courses in the Senior High school levels.
2. Native language should be used as a second language among learners, both IP and non-IP in technical vocational courses.
3. For a technical education program to succeed, cultural masters and tribal leaders should play a crucial role and recognition and resources should be accorded to them.

B. SAI's TESDA NTR Program in Traditional Design (Weaving, Embroidery and Beadwork)

Southeast Asian Institute ventured into developing a technical skills program that focuses on indigenous craft skills that will cover Level I to Level III of the Philippine Qualifications Framework. In a conference organized by TESDA Zamboanga del Sur to initiate IP-driven programs, the author presented a curricular design framework for its NTR program consistent with the competency standards of TESDA (Gangoso, 2019). The Traditional Decorative Textile/ Fabric & Non-fabric Design (Weaving, Embroidery & Beadwork) Curricular Matrix is structured into the following TESDA/ PQF levels: Level I- Traditional Weaving/ Embroidery/ Beadwork Assistant, Level II- Traditional Weaver, and Level III- Cultural Master. The curriculum was developed by SAI with the Subanen cultural masters and tribal leaders as the key panel experts. A feasibility study was made and the program was applied for registration at the TESDA Zamboanga del Sur Provincial Office as an NTR Program. It was

implemented with success despite the absence of support from TESDA. From SAI's experience in developing an IP-based technical training program that shall be registered as an NTR Program of TESDA, the following are the key takeaways:

1. The program's key principles include: First, the IP (Subanen) communities right to self-determination must be recognized where they shall be given the opportunity to identify and prioritize which traditional industries and what government-recognized training programs shall be developed. Second, the standards of skills, training activities, and assessment of learner outcomes are based on tradition rather than commercial or global industrial standards. Third, that knowledge, skills and attitude development is anchored on the preservation of the local community's indigenous culture and tradition, rather than to increase the employability of learners into urban-based industries.
2. In terms of curricular content, the identification of tools and equipment as well as the production process of crafts should be based on traditional and historically appropriate standards instead of commercially available ones. In weaving for example, the measurement of specific raw materials shall be done by using the trainee's thumb instead of a ruler.
3. In terms of training delivery, training should be done using the native/indigenous language. The trainer should be someone who enjoys the status of a cultural master or a tribal leader. Teaching methodologies should be flexible, non-linear and non-structured. In IP culture, rituals are performed prior to, during and after the learning sessions.
4. In the development and application of these types of programs in TESDA, support and appreciation including funding should be provided by the government agency.

Case Study 4: IP Education in Philippine Basic Education

The United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) provides for the right of IPs "to establish and control their education systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning " (p.7). As the government's arm in nurturing Filipinos' basic education, the Department of Education (DepEd), in line with its constitutional mandate and adherence to the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, implements the Indigenous People's Education (IPEd) Program in 2011 in response to the right of IP to education – formally institutionalizing IP context, respect to their identities, and promotion of indigenous knowledge, skills, and other aspects of their cultural heritage. Not long after the enforcement of DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 (DO62) outlining the policy framework for IPEd Program, the new K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum was adopted in 2013—subscribing to the international demands of educational standards and principles that are: inclusive, culture-sensitive, and flexible enough to enable and allow schools to localize, indigenize, and enhance based on the community's educational and social context.

In a study by Maria Lourie Victor and Belmer Yano (2015) on the areas of interface of perspectives in formulating a meaningful national policy framework for indigenous peoples' education, DO62 was in fact "the first rights-based, comprehensive, and systemic policy on culturally responsive education for indigenous children and youth"—a product of decades of dialogue between indigenous communities. Its institutionalization was a drastic move from the preceding policies by DepEd that catered to more specific concerns (e.g., recognition of community-based schools in IP areas, production of educational resources), local in scope (regional, division, school levels), and tended to focus on service delivery. Embedded in this national framework are a series of community engagements and consultations with IP authorities to ensure that all initiatives of the Program are responsive and appropriate to the local community.

The philosophy behind these educational initiatives is akin to the concept of Indigenous Learning Systems (ILS) and IP knowledge and wisdom under Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP). Through the years, data available to the Department show that several targets were met: (1) devolution and implementation of IPed to 117 division and 16 regional field offices and focal persons all over the country to guarantee IP and local community consultations; (2) as of SY 2018-2019, DepEd totaled 2,593,555 IP learners upon provision of more educational inputs; and (3) by SY 2017-2018, the IPed Program reached the school level with the national implementation of contextualized lesson plans in Kinder and Grade 1. As of SY 2019-2020, there were 3,034 IPed implementing schools using contextualized lesson plans.

The existing IPed Program manifests the efforts by the government in fulfilling its Millennium Development Goal on Education For All (EFA). However, anecdotal evidence and available reports suggest low survival and completion rates among IP learners. "The formal education peoples' educational needs (Victor and Yano, 2015)". Such a result is not only limited to the usual problem of access to and quality of education in the school system. There were hidden barriers such as the following:

- Experiences of discrimination based on one's ethnic identity, considered to be "native" or "tribal;"
- Difficulties with the language of learning because the language used in school was different from what was used at home and in the community. The inconsistency of languages used hindered the development of learning skills and comprehension of topics being discussed;
- Comprehension difficulties because the social and cultural contexts of the lessons differed very much from the realities of the indigenous children's communities; and
- Cognitive dissonance and personal tensions that became tensions in the family and community because their identity and the way of life practiced at home and in the community were negated and/or considered primitive and backward in school.

Despite the attempts made by DepEd to provide a rights-based approach to IP's basic education, it falls short in establishing a strong advocacy for the preservation and empowerment of IP knowledge, systems, and practices. These hidden barriers have brought about the "alienation of indigenous youth from their own communities, heritage, culture and history." According to Villaplaza (2021) among schools with IPED programs validates the foregoing – that in terms of pedagogy and methodology and IKSP got a "satisfactory" rating, while curriculum content and planning language of instruction, teacher training, materials, and assessment and evaluation got a "poor" rating. Here are key takeaways in IPED with regard to IP Education:

1. DepEd has shown that Integration of IP Education into the Philippine Basic Education is possible whereby IP members can be developed or tapped into teachers.
2. IPED experience shows that there is a demand for serious efforts to develop IP-based learning materials. While IPED has been creating "contextual" learning materials which is a good start, IP-based learning materials are yet to be developed. Meanwhile, Curricular development that shall apply IP-based education principles has not been seriously considered yet. It is therefore important for IP education not only to use IP/native language as a medium of instruction or to use IKSP as basis for "contextual" learning materials development, but to develop materials and curricula where IP members themselves develop, teach and utilize.
3. While it is significantly a good practice to tap native speakers of IP languages among public school teachers as IPED instructors, there is no platform or systematic plan to tap existing "cultural masters" or "tribal leaders" among IP communities as IPED Instructors. In Subanen, they are the "Gukoms," *Thimuays*", and "Baliangs". There have been attempts to "consult" them or "solicit" their ideas but DepEd refuses to recognize their position in the community simply because they do not qualify to become a part of the elite and professional education community. While most cultural masters lack the academic credentials required to become a licensed public school teacher, they enjoy culturally and historically-established political leadership and an unequivocal degree of respect from among the IP community members. When indigenous culture, history and tradition, not basic literacy, are concerned, cultural masters are the authority in the field. They do not need a PhD or a college degree or a professional eligibility to attain such status. Is it really difficult for our policymakers to understand this?

Case Study 5: the ALCADEV

Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development, Inc. (ALCADEV) was established on July 19, 2004 as an alternative learning system especially designed to provide secondary education to indigent indigenous youth -the Manobo, Higaonon, Banwaon, Talaandig and Mamanwa. They live in the poverty-stricken mountains of Surigao del Norte and Sur, Agusan del Norte and Sur (Caraga Region, Philippines).

According to ALCADEV'S Blog Site,

"There are no schools in these communities. Children walk under the scorching heat of the sun or even brave storms to reach the town centers where the schools are.... ALCADEV offers academic studies, vocational and technical skills. Students are likewise linked up with their communities through various activities with their parents and community members.

ALCADEV closely coordinates with the indigenous people's organizations and also with the Department of Education-Bureau of Alternative Learning System (CARAGA and Surigao del Sur), TESDA, local government units, private and public schools and nongovernment organizations that promote alternative farming technology and offers various livelihood skills training program (ALCADEV, nd)."

While ALCADEV has drawn a lot of controversies in relation to its political affiliation to progressive movements in the Philippines, there is no doubt about their best practices. In 2014, ALCADEV received the Most Outstanding Literacy Program in the Province of Caraga. In the same year, Alcadev was nominated and won 5th place in the National Literacy Awards Outstanding Literacy Program Category of the Department of Education (DepEd). and in 2015, while in evacuation, Alcadev students and teachers led the communities into developing idle lands from farmers' organizations and support groups, allowing them to use the farming skills learned at Alcadev. As a result, they were able to fill the food needs of 3,000 evacuees and were able to sell some more, according to a 2017 updated report prepared by NGOs and church institutions that support tribal schools in Caraga.

These recognitions are an evidence of the effectiveness of ALCADEV's pedagogical approach in IP education. Sustainable vocational farming skills training with long-term capital and technical support provides economic stimulus to impoverished and inclusive indigenous communities. Its DepEd-sanctioned Alternative Learning System (ALS) program provides alternative formal learning to communities which have no access to the DepEd's basic public school education services. Having access to basic literacy and foundational skills education highly empowers these indigenous communities. The inclusion of technical education along with the promotion of local tribal culture and tradition into these learning platforms that ALCADEV provides to indigenous communities creates a political vacuum brought by the polarity between rural and urban and between IP and non-IP communities in the Philippines in terms of access to basic education. There is beyond any doubt that such an approach in both formal and vocational skills training applied by ALCADEV hits the very core of IP empowerment- decolonization and social transformation (Smith, 2002). Healing of conflict resulting from social justice is one area where the Philippine government needs to look into as the current militaristic approach is a long step back from upholding IP rights. In the ALCADEV experience, indigenous people themselves identify the processes and methodologies factoring in community, tradition, culture and values.

CONCLUSION

Key Principles and Pedagogies

Technical vocational education should encompass indigenous, community-based principles. It must contribute to the reversal of the impacts of long, historical colonization brought by education itself, ironically, and most particular of these impacts is the subjugation and marginalization of indigenous peoples- their culture, knowledge and even language (May, 1999). It must seek to counter the assimilation of indigenous culture and language into dominant culture and languages of education systems which are primarily, if not exclusively, developed and controlled by non-indigenous educators, a precept that prevails in today's IPED framework of the Philippines' Department of Education (Anderson, 1991).

Technical skills training currently implemented by TESDA must at least recognize the economic, political, and cultural and linguistic structures of indigenous communities. The current TVET Framework should be able to contribute to the targeted outcomes of the Sustainable Development Goals or Agenda 2030 which includes in many areas the Indigenous Peoples. On a country-level, the TVET framework must incorporate or explicitly pronounce the inclusion of the Indigenous Peoples empowerment through technical education and skills training as among its long-term development agenda. It must afford to Indigenous peoples the spirit of RA 8371 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations which recognizes the right to equal opportunity and treatment towards them.

An ideal school in TVET for Indigenous Peoples should adopt three highly recognizable core principles that correlates to global impact levels: *Empowerment, Social Transformation, and Culture of Peace.*

IP Empowerment

For this paper's purpose, we will define IP Empowerment as granting *Indigenous Peoples exclusive control in the utilization and development of their resources, including their ancestral domains, and of their way of life identity, language, culture and spiritual beliefs without intervention and coercive imposition of policies from state actors that counters their right to self-determination.* IP Empowerment is widely recognized as an indispensable core principle in IP Education. In retrospect, IP education must be able to close the polarity between indigenous and non-indigenous learners in terms of success. Language death according to Crawford (1994) must be reversed, and indigenous language use must be promoted to non-speakers both indigenous and non-indigenous learners in basic education. This is only possible if the Competency Standards in technical education and skills training are primarily driven by the Economic, Political and Socio-cultural interests of the indigenous peoples. It must decolonize indigenous communities from deep-rooted impacts of coercive and assimilative education systems, past and present. TVET education must eventually heighten the economic and political status of Indigenous peoples on a national and regional and even global scale.

Social Transformation

Social transformation can be defined as *the conscious process of change of an individual's identity and of the society to which one belongs over time in terms of social relationships, behavior and values as a result of economic, political and cultural development including technological advances and innovations.* Taking into account the marginalization of indigenous peoples and the colonization of indigenous knowledge and systems, an TVET Framework for IP's must be transformative in a way that it will return to the indigenous peoples the latter's right to determine their own future. It must effectively break the cultural barriers between IP's and non-IP's in the Philippines to give the former economic and political leverage. Indigenous women who have been robbed of their historical societal leadership in IP communities must be given special treatment in all education and training programs.

Culture of Peace

Technical education and skills training must contribute towards healing conflict brought by colonial education. A peace-based approach in curriculum development and skills training implementation should be adopted. Culture of peace as defined by the UN is "a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviors and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations (UNDOC, nd)."

Factors in Developing an IP-based TVET Competency Standards Matrix

An IP-based competency standards matrix follows a bottom-up, community-driven pedagogical and curricula development approach. It must factor on the economic, socio-cultural and political realities of indigenous communities.

Community Ownership

Community ownership at one hand is having community members take the lead in the implementation of an education or training program; on the other hand, it is also being able to address the economic needs and challenges of an individual IP member and the IP community as a whole. In the process of developing IP-centered competency standards, it is important to appraise dire local employment and household income issues of IP communities. More often, these issues bury the more ethnocentric interest of tribal leaders in preserving tribal traditions. When tribal communities have full ownership of the trainings, they will find it more difficult to turn their back on these crucial community issues and the outright impact of these trainings on their economy will ensure that. At the household levels for instance, women are often limited to household work and when employment and income by men cannot provide for the needs of a growing family or has become impossible, the drive for women to take on the responsibility to earn for a living will overwhelm household and community political structures. In many Subanen communities in Western Mindanao, tribal leadership is no longer exclusive to men as women are getting more and more empowered without breaking the values and traditions of their

respective communities. This evolving politics within indigenous communities can be taken into consideration in the development of training intervention models. Women should be given a dynamic and empowering role and their drive for economic empowerment should be given emphasis. An IP-centered technical education and skills training model must therefore empower communities to take control of their local employment and economic challenges and encourage community ownership of such training programs.

Indigenous Knowledge, Systems and Practices

The Tradition and Culture of Indigenous peoples, and not the industry standards outside of the community, should determine the standards of skills certification systems in IP-based TVET Programs. Core competencies in technical education and skills programs must reflect cultural identity and tradition of indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge, systems and practices should define the skills sets in specific learning outcomes of basic and common competency standards. These standards should be flexible and adaptive to each specific IP tribal community. Training must be delivered in native languages and if practical, as a second language in communities where indigenous languages are totally assimilated or dead. In arts and crafts, creativity must take precedence over market standardization.

Recognition of IP Political Structures

Political structures and mechanisms in IP communities must be respected in a way that the competency standards defining the technical and academic requirements of TVET educators and trainers must be in accordance with the realities in IP communities. Cultural masters must be accorded high regard in terms of their qualifications equivalent to certified training specialists or licensed formal education practitioners. Their formal education credentials do not matter. Their knowledge and skills are paramount and magisterial. Recognition of Prior Learning or RPL should extend beyond a person's educational and professional background to take in tribal leadership status of cultural masters.

Curriculum, Learning Material, Delivery, Assessment and Module Development

Following the horizontal order of TVET Competency Standards development, both policymakers, and technical educators and skills trainers alike must ensure that course modules are designed as flexible as possible in outlining specific learning activities and delivery methods to allow IP trainers to apply tribal religious practices and traditions. The critical dimensions of learning such as community participation, sense of community, local resource development, social capital, local empowerment and strategies for building capacities are integral aspects of the curricula. Content of training should be based on community-accepted traditional standards such as styles, designs, patterns, processes, tools, equipment among others. Training should be delivered in native tongue/ indigenous language in linguistically homogeneous IP communities. The conduct of assessment and skills certification does not

necessarily follow the usual processes used in the current TVET standards of TESDA. Assessment and certification may be done in an informal, portfolio or output-based evaluation and assessors do not need formal technical accreditation process nor be required a standardized trainer's methodology training and certification.

FURTHER STUDY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the adoption of a separate yet parallel TVET Framework for Indigenous Peoples, the following policy reforms to the existing TVET Framework are recommended:

1. TESDA shall adopt a policy where existing TR and non-TR based TESDA programs that will be implemented in indigenous communities or for IP members must integrate IP Language and IP studies as a mandatory elective Common Competency in the same way as TESDA have done to Entrepreneurship.
2. The TESDA UTPRAS Policy must be amended to give Tribal Leaders and Cultural Masters presumption of compliance to Trainer Qualifications and Requirements in training programs for IP's.
3. TESDA officials, personnel and staff and accredited assessors and trainers involved in training for IP communities or where IP members are beneficiaries must be required to undergo cultural sensitivity training and native language courses.
4. TESDA must incentivize the development of NTR programs by TVI's aimed at promoting indigenous skills training which take into account the key principles of IP Education. Scholarship grants should be allocated to programs that are consistent with the TVET Framework for Indigenous People.

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