

Collaborative Initiatives in Making Education Accessible and Equitable: The Cases of the Agta, Batak and Dumagat Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to look at how access and equity in education have been addressed by communities and their various stakeholders through collaboration. Group cohesion and partnership with others are obvious dynamics obtaining in the build-up of communities, if they have to survive. Unfortunately, there exist more dominant groups who ascribe to themselves certain privileges that create gaps towards achieving an ideal state of pursuing equal opportunities for all. Collaboration goes further when researchers analyse these gaps in generating issues and concerns. This study aims to describe the community efforts that formed part of the collaborative initiatives in pursuing IP education with focus on three ethnic groups struggling to claim their right to education: the Agta, the Batak and the Dumagat. Collaboration is defined as "the working together of both cultures (beneficiaries and other stakeholders like government agencies, civil society that includes the church and universities- italics mine) building trust, social cohesion and reciprocity which are considered pivotal elements of social capital that empower the individual and lead to material and social benefit (Kingsley et al.)." As a higher education institute (HEI), the Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU) through its Community Extension & Service Learning Center (COSeL) takes an active role as a facilitator- researcher for the collaborative efforts. It shall be referred to throughout this study as LPU-COSeL.

Keywords: Collaboration; Access; Equity; Indigenous Peoples Education; Service Learning; Social Capital

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INTRODUCTION

In the 4th world conference on Indigenous education held in New York in June 2013, Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, Christian Back stressed "that equal access to education for children and youth must be at the core of securing the right to education. This means that it is necessary to create solutions that are targeted at excluded groups such as indigenous peoples." [1]. In the same world conference, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) further clarified that "most often, education systems and curricula do not reflect or respect indigenous peoples' diverse cultures, and even aim at devaluating indigenous cultural traditions," hence, access is to be understood as education that is not merely providing structures and teachers but what IWGIA considers one that "should serve as a route towards the achievement of empowerment and self-determination." [1]. Furthermore, it has been proven that education level matters to economic growth of a country [2].

In the national level, IPs were recognized by the 1987 constitution as Filipinos with the same rights and privileges enjoyed by the national citizenry. A specific law, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) was promulgated in 1997 to insure the indigenous peoples protection and enjoyment of these rights but 14 years after IPRA show that "progress has been uneven in different areas and for different ethnic groups" [3]. IPs are still negotiating for their children to be accorded their rights to education among others.

Much literature have been written and advocacies expressed on how basic service deliveries like education [4], health [5] and other human rights deprivations [6] have promoted inequities and inequalities at the expense of the disadvantaged and those living in the margins such as indigenous peoples.

Manifestations of the degree of deprivations or exclusion of these rights and privileges show two general indicators which access and equity are as cited in various researches. It is therefore not

surprising that the United Nations articulated similar frameworks in its Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that embraced the Educational for All (EFA) agenda for which the Philippines is a signatory. Consequently, the Philippine's version of EFA has prioritized these in its policy on primary education which states that it " veers away from according high priority to the expansion of access and participation, except to accommodate "hard-to-reach children and marginalized communities."

The purpose of this study is to look at how access and equity in education have been addressed by communities and their various stakeholders through collaboration. Group cohesion and partnership with others are obvious dynamics obtaining in the build- up of communities if they have to survive. Unfortunately, there exist more dominant groups who ascribe to themselves certain privileges that create gaps towards achieving an ideal state of pursuing equal opportunities for all. Collaboration goes further when researchers analyse these gaps in generating issues and concerns [6-9]. The results are then surfaced so that the gaps will be addressed using various fields of disciplines.

This paper aims to describe the community efforts that formed part of the collaborative initiatives in pursuing IP education with focus on three ethnic groups struggling to take part in mainstream education: the Agta, the Batak and the Dumagat. Collaboration is defined as "the working together of both cultures (beneficiaries and other stakeholders like government agencies, civil society that includes the church and universities- italics mine) building trust, social cohesion and reciprocity which are considered pivotal elements of social capital that empower the individual and lead to material and social benefit [6]." As a higher education institute (HEI), the Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU) through its Community Extension & Service Learning Center (COSeL) takes an active role as a facilitator-researcher for the collaborative efforts. It shall be referred to throughout this study as LPU-COSeL.

METHODOLOGY

A multiple-case study approach is used where a participating community is described as a unit of study. It allows examination of how collaboration developed in each case and across all cases in surfacing Meta analyses of multiple case studies. It also insures involvement of communities from the very start as it deploys a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach.

A case study refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or group [10]; it is multi perspectival where the voice and perspective of the actors are included but also those of relevant groups that interact with them [5, 11]; based on intensive and detailed examination of a single example within its real life context [12]. Thus, Meta analyses become useful in synthesizing the results of a number of independent empirical-studies in a systematic and rigorous way [13, 14]. Also called Meta ethnography, "it is an activity in which separate parts are brought together to form a "whole" [15]. In other words, while the case studies are researched independently as single cases, they are eventually synthesized as a whole without the intention of obtaining generalizability from the very start.

This study presents the individual cases as they defined on how the communities to obtain an education (formal schooling) needed for their advancement as IPs. The communities are treated singly in a descriptive fashion then they are meta-analysed with others of similar situations to arrive at results that define their status in the pursuit of an indigenous education program. Part of the Meta analyses is the "triangulation" of other experiences outside of the loci of study that validates or confirms certain context similar with the gathered data. The tools used to gather data are direct observation, participant observation (participatory research), documents, and conversations (individual and group).

Location and Sampling

Six communities are chosen for the case studies: (1) Cabog in Dingalan, Aurora (2) Singawan in Dingalan, Aurora (3) Masla in General Nakar, Quezon (4) Dionuan in Nagtipunan, Quirino (5) Tagnaya in Roxas, Palawan and (6) Paglitaw in Antipolo, Rizal. These communities represent three ethnic groups inhabiting them namely the Agta (Quirino), the Batak (Palawan) and the Dumagat (Aurora, Quezon & Rizal). The period covered by the study begins in January 2012 until May 2014. Prior community engagements have already been made with some of the communities as early as 2008 but for purposes of this study, the period covers particularly the beginnings of the communities' realizations to pursue an IP education.

Procedures

First is the requests coming from the communities in the form of letters, oral requests done through LPU partners and coordinators from the field, verbalized recommendations made by them from earlier engagements are reviewed by LPU-COSeL.

Secondly, initial /exploratory staggered visits with the community particularly addressing the requests are done on-site.

Third, consultations are done with the community members after both parties agree on initial responsibilities and time lines.

Fourth, actions are then mapped out to address collective plans at the same time that other collaborators are identified to support the initiative as necessary.

Fifth, implementation of plans proceeded with both parties given tasks and timelines as close as possible.

Lastly, periodic monitoring and evaluation components are integrated in the ensuing planned actions to insure achievement of goals.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Community profiles

The Philippines has an estimated total population of 98 million (2010) of whom 14 million are IPs. They comprise about 17% of the entire populace. However, only the more dominant ethnic groups specifically those in the Cordillera region and part of Mindanao have been the topics of research. There is a dearth of research on the Agta, Batak and the Dumagat for which reason they have not been included as recipients in basic government services.

There are six communities responding to this study which are profiled according to their general demographics. The communities in four provinces specifically Quirino, Aurora, Quezon and Rizal are located and spread out within the Sierra Madre Mountain range paralleling the Pacific Ocean coastlines except for Quirino which is landlocked in the mountain side. Palawan which hosts one of the communities is located opposite the other five towards the South-western side of the Philippines bounded by the China Sea. Common to all the inhabitants of these communities are their identification as IPs with similar physical features. They chose to be identified as Agta (Quirino), Batak (Palawan) Dumagat (Aurora, Quezon and Rizal).

The ethnic groups are representatives of their own kind. They are chosen here because they are partners of LPU since 2010 except for Tagnaya who was only included in 2012. The NCIP reports about 110 ethno linguistic groups of IPs. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) records about 181 IP languages in the Philippines. "Out of the 181 languages, 153 languages are considered "healthy"; 14 are "in trouble"; 10 are "dying" and four are already "extinct" as revealed by SIL." Language is an important component in IP education hence; this is being made part of future IP researches as part of their educational profile.

In terms of population size, the IPs are generally few in number as compared to the other residents of the area with Tagnaya registering the least with only 80 and the biggest is Cabog with 447 members. All the six communities register a total population of 1,268 and a total household number of 291. The population is young showing a general pattern of 60% adults as against 40% children. The total number of children of school age (5years to 14 years) reflects an average of 28% against the total population. If the non-school age population of (15 to 24 years old) averaging 20% are added, the average size of the education target would reach 48%. These have implications to determining how many are accessing education in the schools.

On the average, the highest educational attainment that the IPs has finished in terms of formal schooling is Grade 2. Individually, a handful finished high school and some college. In terms of gender there is a balance between the males and females. Like any typical community, work is gendered with the males expected to do the hunting and fishing but all do the food gathering and subsistence farming. The chieftains are predominantly males but there is a shared responsibility in terms of decision-making. Except for Singawan who recently elected a woman chieftain, the rest have male chieftains. There is no fixed income as they gather food for subsistence or produce crops for business for those who have the capacity to include trading in the town proper but in a very limited way. Income if quantified in terms of the IPs' estimates on how much their families earn fetch an average of PHP 800 to 900/week or from PHP 35 to 40 a day. Economics and educational attainment play an important role in access and equity of education.

Initial exploratory visits: Acknowledging the requests of the communities

To start from where they are, LPU- COSeL reviewed the communities' requests particularly those that have a direct bearing on their children's education. The following narratives summarize each group's requests describing the circumstances accompanying such requests.

Cabog

[Financial Assistance for High School Students] Last April 2013, the parents of the Dumagat scholars being supported by LPU (16 of them) requested for their continuation of support for the next school year 2013-2014. The scholarship project which began in 2010 is reviewed each year to check the progress of the students. Parents took care of their children's daily expenses while LPU paid their miscellaneous fees. There are now 18 scholars presently enrolled from first to 4th year in Dingalan National High School. LPU instituted a guidance program to look into the students' progress at the same time contribute to needs that can be provided from LPU like computer units and corresponding trainings. The community provided a headquarters for LPU to conduct trainings and to use the same for lodging purposes. (Annex 1 -List of Dumagat high school scholars)

Singawan

[Motor Boat] On November 7, 2012, a letter from the Singawan community signed by 10 leaders was received by LPU through one of its officers. The request was for the provision of a boat which the parents can use to transport their children to school. Their community is located far from the school where the children have to cross rivers ten times. A series of meetings was conducted by LPU with the community on how the boat if given will be operated by them. Similarly, LPU had to seek from its constituents who can raise funds for this and how both the community and LPU work together to sustain the project. (Annex 2- Letter from Singawan)

Masla

[Classrooms, teachers, basic supplies] LPU- COSeL first met the Quezon Dumagats in a barangay near the center town called Anoling. They were already an organized group during this first engagement with LPU. Upon request, LPU visited their community in Masla near the Pacific Ocean where most of their members lived. Through a series of visits in the area, the community decided to offer a school site for their young children if LPU can support them construct a school which has been their dream for a long time. With an identified site from their ancestral domain, LPU consulted with all the families including nearby Sitios in Masla to get their perspective and to explore the possibility of starting a primary school. Leaders of 5 sitios converged in Masla and promised about 40 students on the first year of classes. Again, LPU raised funds for the purpose.

Dionuan

[Financial Assistance for school supplies etc] The Agta in Nagtipunan, Quirino is well supported by a very active field officer of the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). She mobilized support from a national NGO, Assissi Foundation to build a school for them. As the children are advancing each year, they saw the need to tap other like-minded groups to support the children's education especially in the form of school supplies, learning materials for both the pupils and the teachers. DepED built the next classroom for grades 3 & 4. The LGUs have been providing them rice. LPU included them in its program considering that they now have a high school level (Grade 7) this new school year by providing school supplies, library books and teacher trainings.

Tagnaya

[Classrooms, teachers, basic supplies in] The Batak in Palawan occupies small hamlets that dot the mountains in the Puerto Princesa and Roxas town areas. While Palawan has just discovered its niche in the tourism industry, education has not been as progressive. In fact, most of the schools in the remote areas have been established by missionaries. One of these small villages is Tagnaya whose Batak parents requested the missionary schools to be included in their educational programs. The Pastor Principal then interceded for them if they can be included in LPU's program for IP education. The Batak parents expressed willingness to build their school in their own local site.

Paglitaw

[Community Library, basic supplies] In 2010, LPU visited Paglitaw as part of its tracer study. The community leaders were at that time planning for the putting up of a primary school with the support of a church-based organization. LPU facilitated the discussion of this need with the Barangay Captain and the principal. Sometime in 2012, LPU learned that they have already put up the school. However, the church that has been helping them has reduced its support. The lone teacher expressed the aspirations of the community to be included in LPU's program. A series of meetings ensued and their request for the beginnings of a library was granted.

Issues and concerns

From the case studies and the consultative meetings, conversations and direct observations that ensued, the IPs identified the following issues and concerns. Some issues and concerns may overlap but each case shows the unique conditions that shape its concerns, hence each issue or concern is not exclusively pointing only to the specifically attached case.

Far distances of schools

In the Philippines, one common reason cited for marginalized groups being unable to obtain formal education is the lack of access to centers where schools are usually located. Yet, the Department of Education (DepEd) itself contributed to the lack of schools by issuing 60 as the minimum number of enrolment in a current curriculum year before any new school is established be it in a remote area or otherwise. Naturally, remote areas such as those inhabited by IPs could not produce the standard number of pupils given their dwindling and spread- out populations. An exception is observed where 15 is allowed if it is multi-grade. The latter may serve as a compromising condition in terms of size but, multi-grades could not be met in some schools because most pupils may still be starting all in kindergarten or in grade 1. These standards are now being made flexible by the same agency that created it. Through the newly approved K to 12 law, some provisions made indigenous education more accessible.

All the groups described distance as the reason for them not to have sent their children to school. The table 1 summarizes where they are coming from and the time spent traveling to the schools. The challenges are felt when walking is done during hot or rainy weather. The Table 1 shows a brief description of the distances of school sites and the means of transport used. Distance is not just the concern. Even the paths are fraught with dangers. The paths can get very muddy even with light rains, many underbrush and protruding sharp bushes extend to the main paths that hurt feet and legs. Steep climbs to those with sharp terrains sometimes require clawing at sturdy plant roots to haul one.

Table 1. *Distances of schools from identified centers*

Specific Sites	Locations	Means of transport
1. Cabog	From Cabanatuan City, a bus to Dingalan goes straight to barangay Matawe past the high school at the Poblacion. Travel time is about 2 hours. Students travel to Poblacion from Matawe by bus for 30 minutes. Dingalan National High School (DNHS) is along the road.	Transport is by bus. A regular bus plies Umiray (the last town) to Cabanatuan and vice versa twice a day. jeeps and vans are also available after 5 p.m. but these can be negotiated for special trips
2. Singawan	Umiray is the last town of Dingalan and the last bust stop. From Cabanatuan, travel by bus to Umiray takes about 3 hours. From Umiray, a boat takes about 45 minutes to reach the school. The villages from where the pupils come	Same bus travel conditions and means of transport with the Dingalan areas. From Umiray, a boat ride to Singawan takes about 45 minutes. The most remote of the villages is hiked for about a day which includes crossing the Umiray river on foot.
3. Masla	From General Nakar's capital town, Masla can be reached in 1 ½ hours by jeep during good weather. The school site is just located along the main road.	Transport is by jeep which traverses bumpy roads, crossing large and small streams. During typhoon months, the place is unreachable as the streams and rivers swell.

4. Dionuan	From maddela, a jeepney ride can go straight oi Nagtiunan for about 2 hours. Dionuan then can be accessed by hiking about 3 hours from the nearest main road.	Land transportation of any kind may be used for Quirino as roads are in good condition except when rivers need to be crossed.
5. Tagnaya	From Puerto Princesa, travel by bus takes about 1½ hours to reach Barangay Concepcion. From the highway, the school site at Tagnaya will be reached for about one hour hike.	Regular buses and vans are the main transport from Puerto Princesa to Roxas. Tagnaya can still be traversed by motor bike at any time. There is only one river to cross and the path is muddy and slick.
6. Paglitaw	From Antipolo, it takes 1 hour to reach Calawis Barangay; then travel proceed s to Sitio Apia mostly by walking for about one hour as roads were damaged up to now. Another 3 hours hike up Paglitaw completes the journey.	Means of transport from Antipolo is by jeep; then by tricycle going to Barangay Calawis. No tricycles ply the area from Calawis to Apia as the road has become impassable since it was damaged by a typhoon. Horses may be hired but these are expensive. Hiring is about Php 600 each for baggage haul with return trip.

The Dumagat children in Singawan swim their way to school which becomes risky especially for small children when the river swells. Upon reaching the school, they have to contend with being wet. What they wear going is what they wear all day until they go home.

Discrimination in Mainstream schools

Perhaps the most recipients of verbal discrimination are the high school students studying in DNHS. Students claim that they often times miss out or skip classes when they are embarrassed by remarks they hear about their black colour or dirty clothes. These are teenagers coming from a far flung area and once they enter a more “modern” setting where the high school is located, the dynamics of interaction becomes threatening. There are 18 Dumagats supported this school year in a school that has a total population of about 800. Their minority number has an effect on their lack of confidence.

In Masla, parents feel uncomfortable when the teachers in the mainstream school comment on their non- payment of fees during PPTA meetings. The discomfort is not so much the public declaration but also the accompanying scathing remarks like “Dumagat as usual cannot pay on time.” Not only are they unable to pay fees, they fear that their children are marked with low grades because of this inability. In Singawan, the Dumagat community teacher said she was isolated by Non-IPs when she was in first year. A concerned teacher noticed the treatment and admonished the students against such bad behaviour of excluding anyone in class. The Dumagat finished high school because of this teacher, who protected her from bullying,

The Agta in Quirino will not survive in schools in the center. They were only able to finish elementary grades because the schools were built where they live. It is visibly noticed how the kids scamper away every time new comers enter their territory. These attitudes speak of previous bad experiences with the outside world.

Most often teachers who lack the innate concern that befit their profession make or show disdain to IPs. The NCIP officer who lived with the Agta for more than 10 years recount several encounters of indifference shown by non-IP teachers to the Agta. This prompted her to seek support for an Agta school as these children cannot survive in the center schools even if they were given opportunities to do so. Cabog and Masla parents cited how they are often times “bullied” or “dinudumagat” for their inability to cope with their children’s school needs. This is similarly expressed in other areas. In Singawan, when the Dumagat community teacher was asked what it means to be “dinudumagat.” She said:

Illiterate Parents

Exacerbating all the IP school children's plight is their parents' inability to assist them in their assignments. Most parents have not gone to school which was their main consideration for wanting their children not to experience what they went through.

Documents show participants' signatures in attendance sheets are mostly marked in thumb marks especially in Singawan, Dionuan, Tagnaya and Paglitaw. When requested for interview, most of the elders point at others to be interviewed because they said they are not educated. However, when discussions are simplified and their confidence boosted, they warm up to it and attempt to engage. This implies much patience in eliciting conversations.

The dwindling use of the mother tongue speakers among IP children

Except for the Batak and the Agta whose children are still observed to be speaking their mother tongue, the Dumagat especially in Masla are more and more becoming Tagalog speakers. The Dumagat in Paglitaw except for 2 siblings do not speak nor understand Dumagat. Most are also Tagalog speakers. Assimilation has set in especially for those living in the coastlines because of intermarriages. Tagalog and English are the mediums of instruction in the schools. Parents have a very important role in guiding their children to preserve if not to revive the language.

Invisibility of some government agencies

The first time the LPU staff asked the Batak about what government agencies are helping them, they could not name any. LPU facilitated ensuing visits with them to include personnel from NCIP, DepED and LGU staff. Unlike Dionuan which is well-supported by the NCIP the Dumagat in Cabog have already stopped wasting their time going to their NCIP office who has not helped them with their several requests. The DSWD in Dingalan only paid the miscellaneous fees of the Grade 7 students after meeting rigid requirements of the agency. The chieftain of Singawan similarly expressed the lack of support of the Mayor's Office and all the agencies so they resorted to requesting from LPU.

Lack of food sustenance

All IPs complain about the food scarcity in their areas. They have been used to gathering food which has already been slowly depleted from their ancestral domain. Their usual food fares are sweet potato or kamote or kamotengkahoy. Not only are these easily grown freely in the mountainside, they do not need maintenance. Since the introduction of rice in their food fare, the IPs took a liking to it but do not have the capacity to plant rice. They would rather buy commercial rice rather than grow them.

Lately, they resorted to planting rice adopting upland farming (Agta in Dionuan; Batak in Tagnaya but in very few quantities) and the other crops those they just gather from the mountain (Dumagat in Masla). Rice is already a more preferred staple than the root crops. It is not anymore surprising to see the IPs roam the mountains with a pot for cooking rice. Their other food fare is mostly grilled fish or any edible plant without need for pot ware.

Lack of financing to sustain education needs

Education entails expenses required by schools in varied ways. The IPs in remote areas does not have a cash economy. The little cash that they "earn" either from selling bananas or coconuts are usually spent on rice. It is unfortunate that some teachers do not maximize materials from the community for their learning requirements. For example, a parent in Masla (her child studies in the nearby elementary school) has to commute to town to buy materials required by the teacher. The round trip fare would cost her PHP 200. Her daughter's project has to do with beads. If the teacher is more creative, she could ask for beads' substitutes in their surroundings. Normally there is no returning jeep on the same day. Hence, traveling back the next day, the mother lost a day to do other things unless she takes the "habalhabal" (motor bike) which will cost her PHP300 round trip.

IPs are unassertive and shy in class

All teachers in the IP territories covered by the study are non IPs. Their usual description of the IP children is that they are very shy and thus are not assertive in class to a point that they are sometimes branded as lazy. Yet, they themselves have a common answer to these observations. IP children often times have not eaten before going to school. On top of that they have to walk long distances to and from school. By the time they reach school, they have no more energy to participate in activities which teachers might mistake for laziness or shyness. Younger children are used to being tagged along by their families wherever they go. Hence, when they are left to their devices in school, these children could not

individually function. Reasons for passivity may be attributed to lack of food supplement, tiredness in hiking and not understanding the teachers' medium of instruction. Some parents observe that if the teacher is of their own kind, they become more active. These were reported by the language mentors composed of parents assisting the teacher translate their lessons into their mother tongue.

Collaborative Initiatives

From the community requests, LPU in coordination with other stakeholders shared resources to arrive at these initiatives:

Deployment of language mentors to the non-fluent teacher

As part of the initiatives in implementing the K to 12 program, not only is access emphasized, so is equity and relevance. One levelling current education policy favourable to the IPs are the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. LPU requested language mentors to act as community teachers (fluent mother tongue speakers but not licensed teachers- in the absence of IP i.e. Dumagat, Agta, Batak teachers) to assist the regular teachers. The mother tongue curriculum is on its second year of implementation by DepED. Since the teachers assigned in the IP schools are non-fluent - speakers, the assisting community teachers were deployed to fill in the gap. The impact cannot be readily measured during these initial implementation periods but there are indications that these work positively for the IP.

The non IP teacher assigned in Masla has this to say when asked how he prepares his lessons for the IPs:

Kailangang alamín ang lenguahe, tapos ay laging creative. Pag sinabining creative sakanila, kailangan mong alamin yung mgabagay namadal silang matututo. A teacher has to learn their language, be creative and to know what are familiar to them which they can easily start within the learning process.

Lessons can thus be facilitated if he is assisted by the fluent speaker while he is learning the language. In a case study on the use of Kadazandusun language in Malaysia, "committed individuals who are well-versed in the Kadazandusun language voluntarily assist the CDC in developing teaching materials to be used in schools." [16]. The strategy of bringing in a fluent speaker in the teaching process has been extensively discussed and as Hinton [17] concludes in her experience with the IPs in Northern Arizona, "The teacher-learner should work with a fluent elder to learn the language necessary for a given lesson. ...for the non-fluent teacher there is a great deal of preparation to do in advance of the lesson. But the reward comes both inside and outside the classroom, when you hear the children greeting each other or otherwise using their ancestral language out in the air."

LPU is funded by AUSAID through DepED to run a mother tongue based curriculum hence, these deployments as one strategy has been readily met.

Infrastructure: classrooms, community libraries, boat, toilets

As requested, all stakeholders contributed to needed material support where they could. The communities offered labour and lumber materials as their counterparts. DENR allowed flexibilities on cutting selected lumber within the ancestral domains as long as they are used for education purposes. The Mayor's office in General Nakar, Quezon provided truckloads of gravel and sand. In Quirino, Assissi Foundation coursed the construction of the schools through the NCIP office so there is a staff that assisted the IPs construct their classrooms. The LPU library has been supplying books for the community-established libraries in Masla, Cabog and lately in Paglitaw; a sturdy boat has just been turned over to the Dumagat of Singawan. Chairs and tables have been furnished by LPU in Masla while those of Tagnaya were provided by the DepED in Palawan. All these materials give a semblance of confidence to pupils who have not been used to concrete structures in an environment surrounded by temporarily built huts. The schools became centers where they gather as a group. Not only did it function for educational purposes but also as a unifying place where socializations and gatherings are held.

Facilitation of DepED recognition of informal schools / mission schools

DepED has a policy that schools are built if there are about 60 enrollees. There is an allowance for lesser if these are multi-grades. As can be gleaned from the population of remote areas, the population of children of school age do not even reach the minimum. Multi grades cannot also be done when there is no school established earlier so that some will already be in higher levels. In fact, when the school was opened in Masla, there are 10-14 years old children who have to be registered as grade 1 for the first time. A similar situation happened in Paglitaw where the oldest Grade 1 student recorded was aged 22 and because it is the first time that a school is built, the 22 year old enrolled with his younger siblings (ages 5 and above) and they became classmates.

Some NGOs and church-based organizations put up schools specifically in Palawan but because these schools did not register with DepED since there are many requirements needed for it to be put up, they functioned as schools with their own programs. Even if they graduated from these mission schools, their school records are not officially recognized by DepED so there is no way that they can advance when they transfer or enrol in a DepED school.

LPU learned from these scenarios so in a series of meetings with appropriate authorities the school established in Masla had to be processed for DepED recognition. Since there is a DepED recognized school 45 minutes away from Masla, this school became the mother school of the former until such time that it can meet the standard requirements provided. Masla then is an extension of Sablang elementary school but Masla retains its uniqueness as an IP school as agreed upon by the local school board and the parents of Masla.

All the Palawan schools were facilitated with their respective DepED superintendents in a series of meetings held. By June 2013, Tagnipa, Nanabu&Tagnaya received temporary DepED recognition so that all school children who are enrolled starting this school year are DepED recognized with supervision by the nearest public elementary schools namely: Malabusog elementary school (for Tagnipa), Caramay elementary school for Nanabu) and Concepcion elementary school.(for Tagnaya).

Paglitaw has been recognized by DepED through the local school board in Antipolo. In fact, it already has an official independent item as Paglitaw Primary school with its teacher also certified as a regular teacher. The Agta schools have been DepED recognized since 2006 with the joint efforts of NCIP, DepED, the governor's office and the local communities.

The facilitation of the DepED recognition was also made possible through mobilization fund provided by AusAID PRIME project by whose authority the DepED superintendents in the areas joined crucial and urgent meetings.

Linking the community with government agencies

It takes time, patience and logistics to follow up papers in the processing for legitimacy of the schools. However, there are community leaders tapped to do the convincing at the local level at the same time that LPU similarly works for their recognition at the national or higher level.

One reason for the fast facilitation of the schools is the readiness of the community to comply with what they can provide. On top of compliance with the established schools, support such as the needed trainings for teachers, medical treatment, financial aid of students for tuition and miscellaneous fees, school supplies, books and others were continuously provided as long as there are donors.

Capability building/ confidence building

Supports to communities in various forms depend on what are needed by them and what the partners can supply. LPU has regularly provided tutorials, skills training from cooking to hollow-block making to even doing participatory research. These are general activities collectively done but some are fast learners so individually they assess where they can be skilled at. For example, after having participated in the construction of classrooms, about 3 of the community members are now able to make hollow blocks and are left to do the blocks without supervision in the ensuing constructions. The women are being trained to discover which vegetables they can grow in their backyard after trying communal gardening to determine which plants survive what type of soil and what they can manage to produce. Until these community members can successfully see the outcomes of their trainings can they believe that they can improve the quality of their lives.

When adults are trained these are passed on to the children. As observed, both adults and children are hungry for any form of interaction. The shyness seen before the interventions has disappeared. Perhaps the biggest contribution to IP education is the valuing of parents of their potentials and abilities to be able to improve their own lives for the sake of their children.

In their study of 12 primary schools in Sydney, Australia Harrison and Greenfield [12] highlighted the strong collaboration between the school and community. They observed how one school involved adults reporting that "the teachers here stated that having a person who knows how to communicate effectively with parents, and is able to phone and speak with them, helps to maintain the school's 96 percent Aboriginal attendance in 2008, They added that the inspirational leadership of the school executive also makes it happen."

Financing basic school supplies, library books and uniforms

To boost the morale of IP pupils who are often discriminated against because of their having no school materials to use and donning dirty clothes, LPU mobilized its students to adopt the pupils in their fund raising activities. Since fund raising is seasonal and dependent on the college students' have organized

themselves in a semester, materials sometimes are delivered during the middle of the school year. Fortunately, there is a continuing support as LPU has institutionalized the spirit of volunteerism in its various activities. Other organizations like the TV networks that disseminate information about the IPs' school needs have gained positive results. When the Batak were televised by GMA 7 in one of its programs specifically featuring the Tagnaya community, 3 groups visited them and donated school supplies, mosquito nets for the families and solar lamps.

Donations have been continuous all year round prioritizing the elementary graders. Individual chief executives in Palawan were also tapped to share what they can and some donated rice instead of school materials. The materials are not only for the pupils but also for the teachers as some DepED teachers are just given allowances by the local government unit from PHP 3,000 to 4,000 a month.

Livelihood and education

IPs depends on the forest and the waters for their livelihood. Education as structured cannot fit into their mobile lives and view of time. They tried to adjust by settling near or where the school is located but they cannot sustain this "compromise" when there is no food. It is not as though they have complicated food requirements. In fact, their diet is simple- root crops and river fish that are regularly derived from their waters. The problem is that these have become scarcer.

How does this food gathering practice relate to obtaining an education? The IPs brings along with them their children as they scour for food wherever they find them. They would stay there for some time then move on again to another area once they felt they already have saturated the area. This had been the practice in the past. For those who decided to settle because they realized the need to comply with the school standards on attendance, there is much relegation of their cultural ways. Yet, the IPs realized that their aspirations for their children should be prioritized.

The case of the Tagnaya Batak becomes interesting because as compared to the others who are dependent on forest and farm subsistence, these Batak have a secondary source of income which are the fees they receive dancing for tourists.

Kung may bisitakamingmagaputi, nagpapalabas kami... yungsayawtaposyung costume naming na Batak talaga.... Bininigyan din kami [ng pera]. May entrance [sa Batak center].. Kung may offer sa amin sa bayan, dun din kami- When we have foreign tourist visitors, we perform with our Batak costumes ... they gave us money. There is now an entrance fee. If we are asked to perform in town, we go...(Pugahan report- Tagnaya)

May entrance na po kami ngayon.... 2000 po yung entrance namin... Entrance lang po naming yungbinibigaynila.... Minsanpag nag donate pa sila sa amin... yun po tinatanggap naming... Lahat po kami pinaghahati-hatanyun.. We now request an entrance fee for 2000 pesos. They just give us this fee... But sometimes they give us extra fees.. then we receive it and all of us will divide this donation. (Pugahan report-Tagnaya)

Magkaroon ng magandangtrabaho at makapatapos ng pag-aaral ko Sila. For my children to have a good job in the future if I have to provide an education for them (Pugahan report- Singawan)
Dancing for tourists may have its cultural pitfalls. Their costumes are "modernized" to make these more attractive but these misrepresent them.

The initial establishment of an ecological sanctuary

Most initiatives done are immediate but continuous such as the DepED recognition of schools. Recognition is merely an entitlement but it has to be sustained. Others like infrastructures are similarly situated where these are all provided once then subjected to maintenance and expansion later. Other initiatives like capability building shall also continue to ensure impact but these are dependent on community progress and needs. If an IP education has to survive on a long term basis, there is need for the school site to be developed into an ecological sanctuary that will serve as the "classroom" for IPs. This initiative is only tried initially with Masla considering that it has already reached the final stage of its obtaining its own Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT). If the ancestral domain as espoused by DepED becomes the "classroom" of the IPs, it should be preserved for that purpose. Masla residents through an arrangement made with the NCIP and LPU agreed to have its school site and the adjoining resources be used for IP education purposes. This is a long term project but it is hoped to help in sustaining the already planted IP education beginnings in the area. Replication of this ecological sanctuary initiative may be suggested later with other IP school sites. Table 2 summarizes the above initiatives for easier referencing.

All community requests were supported depending on the circumstances surrounding the nature of the engagements such that the support may not be uniform to all. The following factors affected what could have been a more cohesive and impactful collaboration if there were not much limitations : (1)

Distance of the sites from LPU especially Tagnaya in Palawan (2) Capabilities of the communities in providing counterparts (3) Cooperation of the communities' respective LGU officials (4) Support of local and regional DepED officials (5) Availability of line agencies within the areas such as NCIP, DSWD (6) Availability and ease of delivery of needed resources for school constructions such as lumber, sand and gravel, Cogon/ Nipa grass, bamboo, rattan etc (7) Cost of personnel and materials (8) Weather conditions (9) Availability of volunteers – usually during weekends and holidays (10) Security advisories- for example, election month is avoided for obvious reasons. Table 2 shows a summary of the collective involvement of all stakeholders with the community.

IP education thus far hinges on access and equity as the basic framework for obtaining quality education. Access and equity are inseparable conditions and are inextricably linked where access provides the wherewithal for the happening of a desired goal and equity makes such goal insure the inclusion of the culturally and linguistically diverse IPs on equal footing with dominant groups in society. The Oxford dictionary defines accessibility as "capable of being used, entered or reached", and as "open to the influence of" This implies that access is more than the availability of services. It assumes provision of services in a way that is both responsive to the needs of users and open to the participation in planning of services by underserved groups. Estacio and Marks [5] stress the "responsive to the needs of users" by using PAR where collaborative efforts between the researcher and the community are needed to "identify an area of concern to that community, generate knowledge about that issue, and plan and carry out actions meant to address the issue in some substantive way" [18]. IPs often times say when confronted with what they will do to a particular issue "*gagawinnaminsamaabot ng amingmakakaya*" (we will do what we can to the best of our ability) is a way of levelling up where the partners should analyse within its context, otherwise expectations may be high or low that frustrate both parties when plans do not work out.

Table 2. *Initiatives facilitated by LPU with the community other stakeholders with corresponding results for the 17 months' implementation period (January 2012- July 2013)*

Initiatives	1 C	2 S	3 M	4 D	5 T	6 P	Results
1. Provision of language mentors to the non- fluent regular teacher		X	X	X	X	X	Deployed 8 language mentors in 5 schools for the K-2 classes
2. Infrastructure:							Increased enrollment from a total of 125 in SY 2012-2013 to a total of 174 in school year 2013-2014 for the 6 schools; Dumagat scholars in Dingalan remained at . Increased deployment of DepEd regular teachers supervised by Principals in all the schools
• Classroom			X		X		
• Community Library	X		X		X		
• Boat (For school)		X					
• Toilet			X		X		
• Computer units	X						
3. Facilitation of DepED recognition of the informal or mission schools catering to IPs			X		X	X	Newly established Tagnaya Primary School is now recognized as an extension of Concepcion ES; KPJPL in Masla is extension of Sablang ES; Paglitaw is now an independent DepED School
4. Linking the community with Government agencies such as							Deployment of teachers, Principals, ALS classes (DepED); allocation of school sites in the ancestral domain (NCIP) ; No restrictions on lumber cut for school use (DENR); allowances for Pantawid program for qualified pupils in all areas(DSWD); deployed teachers with allowances and pledges for future infrastructure (LGUs); teacher trainings & learning materials with allowances of community teachers (PRIME)
• Mayor's Office (LGUs)	X		X		X		
• NCIP	X	X	X		X		
• DepED/PRIME/ALS	X	X	X	X	X	X	
• DSWD			X				
• Others (DENR)			X				
5. Capability Building: Tutorials, Read-along, study skills, art work & other related activities	X	X	X	X	X	X	Of the top 10 readers of Grade 1 students assessed in Sablang elementary school, 7 are IPs. (Assessments are still being developed for the IP schools hence, others cannot be evaluated)

6. School Supplies/ Uniforms							Parents used their money for food instead of allocating for allowances in Masla and Cabog for uniforms & school supplies. It was supposed to improve school attendance (evaluation-on-going)
• Uniforms	X		X				
• School supplies	X	X	X	X	X	X	
7. Livelihood activities							As identified, provision of schools, school supplies, teachers are not enough to sustain the program. Livelihood activities were identified to help augment family income. Observations reveal better attendance. Again, evaluation is not substantial at this point.
• Communal gardening			X				
• Skills training	X		X				
• Provision of Farming and construction tools	X		X				
8. Ecological sanctuary (long-term)			X				The putting up of an ecological sanctuary is to model the school site as the IP classroom preserved in its abundant state with unpolluted air and rivers & streams. (requires long- term evaluation)
• Tree Planting			X				
• Water system			X				
• Landscaping			X				

Legend: 1. Cabog, Aurora 2. Singawan, Aurora 3. Masla, Quezon 4. Dionuan, Quirino 5. Tagnaya, Palawan 6. Paglitaw Rizal

Equity on one hand borrowing from the research work of health practitioners who studied aboriginals in Australia and Canada refers to the fair and just distribution of resources. The concept of equity differs from that of equality; the measure of health care equity for instance is not that everyone receives the same service, or the same number of services, but that the service provided is based on need. In Canada, equity is generally described as "equal access (or equal service) for equal need". It is recognized that those who are sicker, or face greater risk to health, should receive a greater intensity of service, and it follows that lower income groups should receive more services.

Clearly, IPs who have been left out from deliveries of basic services such as education and health where they have been prioritized suffer from inequities. Internationally, IPs is secured to "acquire education at all levels on at least an equal footing with the rest of the national community" [20]. Some countries like Australia, Canada and the U.S. have legislated as a "social inclusion" framework in all their government agenda.

There is no need to belabour the deprivations that characterize the IPs. What is apparent is that they are not able to secure their rights to basic services because they did not have the capacity to negotiate. It is precisely for this reason that they aspire for their children's education so as not to perpetuate this grave injustice accorded them. The more prudent course to take is to capacitate them through collaborative ways in accessing their entitlements. As Estacio and Marks [5] conclude in their study with the Ayta community who like the Agta, Batak and Dumagat have been moved further up the mountains "unless those in power listen to, empathize with and act upon the concerns of the oppressed, the irony of the existence of impoverished communities within a society which considers itself "humane" will always remain." This calls for a collaborative effort to realize the strategy for building social capital.

Collaboration has been an effective strategy to fill in the gaps for people to advance. Institutions and organizations have chosen to become facilitators or catalysts for social transformation hence, this function of empowerment is not merely lodged in government. The academe as part of civil society is also in the best position to act considering that its business is to provide education.

Collaboration also insures the breaking down of social barriers [4, 21] in order for the IPs to have a voice in the policy changes [6, 7] contributing from their own languages, knowledge, and modes of organization of the activities themselves [22, 23, 24] because, no one entity no matter how endowed can do it alone. Since the legislated support and promulgated policies seem slow in their implementation, IPs have to find means for authorities to know of their plight. Their connecting themselves with other entities to forward their cause is indeed a major leap in the beginning of any desired undertaking and goal. The Agta, Batak and the Dumagat have been doing their collaborations which kept them alive all these years. Murphy and Arenas [24] expressed in its study of how corporations have for a long time disregarded consulting IPs whose lands they have appropriated for themselves showed a reason for IPs to unite. They stated that "increased opportunities for communication and collaboration have empowered indigenous peoples with the tools to build networks and share knowledge among other indigenous groups and with civil society organizations." It would be furthering the IP cause when in time these three groups will bond and share their concerns and aspirations in collective voices.

CONCLUSION

There is this worldview that IP education cannot just look at enrolment, physical structures, tests, assessment tools, and other material needs without looking at the well-being of IPs who have been fending for themselves all these times. As gleaned from the issues and concerns, the IPs still struggle from basic service deliveries, the scarcity of food which for centuries were provided them by a generous environment. Not only has food become scarce, but also their land taken over which is the source of life for them. It is therefore impossible to talk about IP education without delving on discussing their well-being. For a people who have been deprived of much, they also look at what they lack and not what they positively have. When asked about hard issues such as why they have not sent their children to school, they take the blame by saying “*dahilsakahirapan*” (because of poverty). No one said anything about the school being the responsibility of government to provide.

This study reveals a lot about these IP partners who despite what they consider their inadequacies, they were able to support some of their children up to a certain extent. It is clear that an IP education not only looks at the school children as its target but also the adults since these two sets of generations cannot work independently as compared to the more dominant groups. It is also necessary that education and livelihood will have to be supported together. While the IPs are still considering the need to broaden their time perspective to include the long term ones where they simply cannot live only for the present, (food source from the land and waters have become scarce) a rethinking on how these can be replenished for their own consumption shall include how they will capitalize their child's education. They have to understand the compromises to be made with the educational system which system should likewise adjust with them.

Communal sharing is an innate feature exhibited by the IPs among themselves in their daily lives. As these collective efforts are harnessed anytime, it is not uncommon for them to share in other aspects. However, there is a feeling of novelty among them when they are consulted in terms of their views on education, what type of education to teach how it will be taught or why their language is prioritized. Indeed, the feeling evokes one of wonder why they are being asked something that has belonged to so called experts. Perhaps, thinking that they are not in a position to question what has been perpetuated as truth in any form, they find it uplifting albeit still intimidating to even voice their concerns and aspirations to something they think is bigger than themselves. Indeed, education in whatever form is a great leveller. If all stakeholders think with and not for IPs, there is the more certain possibility that the demarcations and boundaries that set people apart may yet be obliterated so that access and equity be applied to more advanced needs.

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