

Promoting Cultural Sensitivity in Supporting Learners with Special Needs Within Indigenous Communities

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the current practices and strategies employed by teachers in promoting culturally responsive education for Indigenous LSEN. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive method, the research explored the extent of special education and cultural competence training among teachers, the integration of Indigenous knowledge in curriculum design, the level of community engagement in the educational process, and the policy measures needed to bridge existing gaps. Findings indicated that while teachers acknowledge the importance of cultural training, they often felt inadequately prepared to effectively integrate Indigenous perspectives into special education, schools lacked sufficient professional development opportunities in cultural competence and existing curricula failed to reflect Indigenous knowledge and traditions, and community involvement remained inconsistent which limit the impact of culturally relevant educational approaches. Moreover, systemic issues such as resource shortages, infrastructure limitations, and cultural conflicts further hindered effective instruction. Notably, teachers with higher educational attainment and longer experience reported greater exposure to special education and cultural diversity training, while newer teachers received less preparation in these areas. To address these challenges, the study recommended mandatory training in both cultural competence and special education, stronger institutional support for cultural conflict resolution, enhanced community engagement strategies, equitable resource distribution, and collaborative policy development with Indigenous communities. By implementing these measures, schools could foster a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment, ultimately improving educational outcomes for Indigenous LSEN.

KEYWORDS: cultural sensitivity, special education, Indigenous communities, inclusive education, learners with special needs (LSEN)

I. INTRODUCTION

A major modernization trend in education was the integration of learning as applied to some extremely important segment of learners with special needs (LSEN) in many countries all around the world.

Based on the report of Eduardo and Gabriel (2021), the right to education was not limited to those who could afford it but a right that everyone had, regardless of language or religion, skin color, birth circumstances, or social origin, regardless of political views, economic status, or personal beliefs. To eradicate and prevent discrimination in education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sponsored the Convention Against Discrimination in Education in December 1960. They further revealed that the Philippines also promoted and protected IPs' (Indigenous Cultural Communities') access to education.

Internationalization of education has also embraced education for learners with disabilities through the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). These frameworks supported the integration of learners with disability in school systems in order that such learners might not be locked out of education systems. However, when it came to IP communities, inclusion meant not only acceptance of disabilities but also understanding and implementation of the cultural values, beliefs and processes. The relationship between culture and special education was quite entwined as teachers needed to understand not only cultural norms but effective teaching practices for the learners with special needs.

Kaplan and Celik (2023) claimed that in the UK, minority ethnic groups constituted a substantial segment of the learner population, reflecting the increasing diversity within the education system. These groups accounted for 34.5% of learners in general education schools and 31% in special education schools, highlighting the need for culturally inclusive practices across all levels of education. The presence of such diversity underscored the importance of equipping teachers with cultural sensitivity and competence to address the unique needs and experiences of learners from varied ethnic backgrounds.

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In the Philippine context, the right of IPs to education was stipulated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 or the Republic Act No. 8371 that recognized, protected, and promoted indigenous cultural communities' rights, established a national commission on indigenous peoples, established mechanisms, and approved funds for various purposes. Additionally, the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) initiative by the Department of Education was DepEd's response to the right of indigenous peoples (IP) to a basic education that respected their identities, was sensitive to their context, and highlighted the importance of their indigenous knowledge, skills, and other facets of their cultural heritage.

Philippine education had advanced significantly in terms of the institutionalization of indigenous education. In fact, Cucio and Roldan (2020) revealed that the Philippine government, under the direction of its Department of Education (DepEd), launched an ambitious program to support inclusive education among the country's indigenous peoples after years of extensive consultation and cooperation among education stakeholders. The curricular structure was put into place in 2015, and the underlying policy, known as the Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPED) structure, was formalized in 2011. The program is a clear expression of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997's cultural and educational elements. Each indigenous group's distinctive characteristics were taken into consideration by the IPED Framework, which required the creation of instructional materials that mirrored these characteristics. They further stated that discrimination, a lack of social chances, and income disparities were all fundamentally related to vulnerable groups' inability to receive high-quality education, such as learners from minority, ethnic, religious, or tribal groups. Learners and young people from minority immigrant or ethnic backgrounds typically faced disadvantages because they found it difficult to join in civic life, find productive jobs, and obtain political representation.

The government also put in place Republic Act No. 11650, or the Inclusive Education Act, that supported the goal of promoting cultural sensitivity in addressing the needs of learners with special needs (LSEN), especially within indigenous communities. The law mandated the development of an inclusive education system where all learners regardless of disability received appropriate support within the general education system, without discrimination. RA 11650 emphasizes equitable access to quality education, individualized learning plans, and the involvement of families and communities which are crucial for addressing the unique cultural and educational needs of indigenous learners with special needs. By promoting multidisciplinary support teams and requiring schools to recognize the diverse backgrounds of learners, the law aligns with culturally sensitive approaches that respect indigenous knowledge systems, values, and languages. In essence, RA 11650 provided a legal foundation for integrating inclusive and culturally respectful practices in education. It encouraged teachers and institutions to adapt support strategies that were not only disability-responsive but also culturally appropriate, making it highly relevant to the study's aim of supporting learners with special needs (LSEN) within indigenous communities (Republic of the Philippines, 2022).

However, these also presented challenges, such as the need for inclusive teaching strategies, culturally responsive curricula, and fostering an environment where every learner felt valued and understood. Globally, education institutions were trying to establish diversity in education, but major voids existed so far as mapping the cultural difference in the IPs Organizations were concerned. The implementation of culturally appropriate education for LSEN remained limited despite the existence of official policies including the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 and Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) initiative by the Department of Education. Teachers in the Philippines received general education training and were not specialized in Disability and Cultural Diversity. As a result, learners with learning disabilities in IP communities were marginalized because their learning processes were informed by instructors who were themselves unaware of the cultural realities and learning difficulties faced by such learners.

The researcher, being part of the Blaan tribe (one of the ethnic groups in the Philippines) and having taught for six years in an IP school, was conversant with the issues affecting learners in these areas. The past working experience of the researcher had given her a great understanding about the role of culturally appropriate strategies in teaching LSEN. This affiliation to her origin and her working capacity was the driving force in selecting this topic.

Thus, the main objective of this study was to discuss how cultural sensitivity could improve education and learning among LSEN within indigenous communities in Koronadal City, South Cotabato. Specifically, it aimed to evaluate the current practice and engagement of the teachers for the implementation of LSEN in Indigenous communities and how culture affected their intervention; describe the temperatures that hindered teachers in delivering culturally reflective education to LSEN such as lack of resource, cultural clash, and unfolding of Indigenous cultures; examined perceived deficiencies in teacher-training curricula regarding both special education and multicultural education with reference to capacities to meet Indigenous learners' needs; and suggest ways of consisting cultural relevance into special education so as to enhance learning experiences and achievements of LSEN in Indigenous populations.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, ethnic group, highest educational attainment, and years of teaching experience in indigenous communities?

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2. What is the extent of current practices employed by teachers in Indigenous communities to support learners with special needs (LSEN) in terms of training and knowledge on special education and cultural diversity, available resources and infrastructure, cultural conflicts encountered in delivering education, and level of community involvement in supporting education?
3. What is the extent to which strategies are utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs (LSEN) in Indigenous communities in terms of teacher training focused on both special education and cultural competence, curriculum design that incorporates Indigenous knowledge and practices, active engagement of Indigenous communities in the educational process, and policy recommendations to address gaps in special education for Indigenous learners?
4. Is there a significant difference in the practices and cultural sensitivity employed by teachers in supporting learners with special needs (LSEN) in Indigenous communities when grouped according to their profile?

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized descriptive quantitative research design to establish the existing practices, barriers, and measures of teachers to teach learners with special needs (LSEN) within first nations communities. The respondents of the study consisted of 45 selected teachers who worked in Indigenous Peoples (IP) schools in Koronadal City, South Cotabato who were specifically chosen due to their direct involvement in educating learners from Indigenous communities. Their experiences and perspectives were crucial to understanding the current practices, challenges, and strategies related to promoting cultural sensitivity and supporting learners with special needs within these communities. In this study, a carefully designed researcher-made questionnaire was employed as the research instrument.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of age

Age (in years)	F	%
21-30	6	13.3
31-40	28	62.2
41-50	11	24.4
51-60	0	0
Total	45	100

Majority of teacher-respondents (62.2%) are aged 31–40, indicating a predominance of mid-career educators likely equipped with both experience and adaptability in supporting learners with special educational needs (LSEN) in indigenous communities. The low percentage of younger teachers (13.3%) and absence of those aged 51–60 suggest potential gaps in both fresh pedagogical approaches and experienced mentorship. These findings highlight the importance of ongoing professional development and cross-generational collaboration to ensure effective, inclusive, and culturally responsive education for LSEN learners.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of gender

Gender	F	%
Male	11	24.4
Female	34	75.6
Total	45	100

Majority of teacher-respondents are female (75.6%), reflecting the common trend of female dominance in the teaching profession, particularly in elementary education. The lower proportion of male teachers (24.4%) highlights a gender imbalance, though their presence remains vital for providing diverse role models and perspectives in inclusive classrooms. This distribution underscores the need to promote gender diversity among educators to foster more balanced, empathetic, and culturally responsive support for learners with special educational needs (LSEN), especially in indigenous communities.

Table 3 Frequency and percentage distribution of the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of ethnic group

Ethnic Group	F	%
Blaan	34	75.6
Cebuano	0	0
Ilonggo	9	20.0
Tboli	2	4.4
Other	0	0
Total	45	100

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Majority of teacher-respondents (75.6%) belong to the Blaan ethnic group, with no representation from Cebuano or other ethnicities, indicating limited ethnic diversity within the teaching workforce. This strong representation of indigenous teachers suggests a deep cultural alignment with the learners, which can enhance culturally sensitive support for LSEN. However, the absence of other ethnic groups also highlights the need for inclusive training and collaboration to ensure all educators are prepared to address the diverse needs of learners in multicultural or indigenous contexts.

Table 4 Frequency and percentage distribution of the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of highest educational attainment

Highest Educational Attainment	F	%
Bachelor's Degree	15	33.3
Master's Degree (units only)	25	55.6
Master's Degree (completed)	4	8.9
Doctorate (units only)	1	2.2
Doctorate (completed)	0	0
Total	45	100

Majority of teacher-respondents (55.6%) have earned units toward a master's degree, reflecting a strong interest in professional growth despite challenges in completing graduate studies. Only 2.2% have taken doctoral units, and none have completed a doctorate, indicating limited advancement at the doctoral level. While the high rate of graduate-level engagement suggests potential for enhanced inclusive and culturally responsive teaching, the findings also highlight the need for continued professional development in special education and cultural competence, especially in indigenous contexts.

Table 5 Frequency and percentage distribution of the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of years of teaching experience

Teaching Experience (in years)	F	%
1-5 years	8	17.8
6-10 years	20	44.4
11-15 years	17	37.8
16-20 years	0	0
More than 20 years	0	0
Total	45	100

Majority of teacher-respondents (44.4%) have 6–10 years of teaching experience, indicating a strong mid-career group likely familiar with inclusive practices for LSEN in indigenous communities. Notably, there are no respondents with 16 or more years of experience, suggesting a lack of veteran teachers and a potential gap in mentorship and institutional memory. This absence underscores the need for strategies that support teacher retention, capacity building, and the transfer of culturally responsive practices aligned with RA 11650.

Table 6. Mean and standard deviation of the extent of current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs in terms of training and knowledge on special education and cultural diversity

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Description and Adjectival Interpretation
1. I have received formal training on special education specific to Indigenous learners with special needs.	2.2444	1.20897	Disagree – Moderate Low
2. I am confident in applying culturally sensitive strategies in my teaching.	2.7778	.97442	Agree – Moderate High
3. The training I received is sufficient to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous learners with special needs.	2.5556	1.01255	Agree – Moderate High
4. I regularly update my knowledge on both special education and cultural diversity.	2.8667	1.01354	Agree – Moderate High
5. I feel equipped to recognize and address cultural differences in my classroom.	2.8667	1.01354	Agree – Moderate High
6. My school provides opportunities for professional development in cultural competence.	2.4222	.96505	Disagree – Moderate Low
7. Training on Indigenous cultures should be mandatory for teachers in Indigenous communities.	3.5778	.62118	Strongly Agree – High

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OVERALL MEAN	2.7587	0.9862	Agree – Moderate High
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There is a significant gap between teachers' recognition of the need for cultural training and the formal preparation they receive. The highest-rated item (Mean = 3.5778) shows strong agreement that training on Indigenous cultures should be mandatory, while the lowest-rated item (Mean = 2.2444) reflects a lack of formal training specific to Indigenous learners with special needs. These findings highlight the need for improved institutional support and targeted professional development aligned with RA 11650 to ensure culturally responsive and inclusive education in Indigenous communities.

Table 7. Mean and standard deviation of the extent of current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs in terms of available resources and infrastructure

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Description and Adjectival Interpretation
1. My school has sufficient resources to support learners with special needs (LSEN) in Indigenous communities.	1.3333	.60302	Disagree – Moderate Low
2. The infrastructure in my school is adequate to accommodate LSEN from Indigenous communities.	1.6444	.71209	Disagree – Moderate Low
3. I have access to culturally relevant teaching materials that support LSEN.	2.1778	.68387	Disagree – Moderate Low
4. There is a lack of specialized tools or equipment for LSEN in Indigenous communities.	3.5556	.62361	Strongly Agree – High
5. There is sufficient funding available to support culturally sensitive education for LSEN.	3.6000	.53936	Strongly Agree – High
6. I am able to modify resources to better fit the needs of LSEN in my classroom.	3.1778	.64979	Agree – Moderate High
7. The availability of resources directly affects my ability to implement culturally sensitive teaching strategies.	3.4667	.69413	Strongly Agree – High
OVERALL MEAN	2.7079	0.6461	Agree – Moderate High

There is a significant disconnection between perceived funding availability and the actual adequacy of resources for supporting LSEN in Indigenous communities. While the highest-rated item (Mean = 3.6000) reflects teachers' belief that sufficient funding exists for culturally sensitive education, the lowest-rated item (Mean = 1.3333) indicates strong disagreement regarding the presence of adequate school resources. This gap suggests inefficiencies in resource allocation and underscores the urgent need for improved distribution, infrastructure development, and provision of culturally appropriate materials to support inclusive education effectively.

Table 8. Mean and standard deviation of the extent of current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs in terms of cultural conflicts encountered in delivering education

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Description and Adjectival Interpretation
1. I frequently encounter cultural conflicts between school practices and Indigenous traditions.	2.6222	.77720	Agree – Moderate High
2. Cultural differences sometimes hinder my ability to deliver effective lessons.	1.8444	.76739	Disagree – Moderate Low
3. I receive adequate support in resolving cultural conflicts within the classroom.	2.0000	.79772	Disagree – Moderate Low
4. My learners' families often have differing cultural expectations from the school system.	3.2000	.72614	Agree – Moderate High
5. I feel well-prepared to navigate cultural conflicts that may arise in my classroom.	3.6222	.49031	Strongly Agree – High
6. Cultural misunderstandings between teachers and learners are common in my school.	2.7333	.86340	Agree – Moderate High
7. Resolving cultural conflicts requires more school-wide initiatives for cultural integration.	3.5333	.66058	Strongly Agree – High
OVERALL MEAN	2.7949	0.713	Agree – Moderate High

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Teachers in Indigenous communities feel confident in managing cultural conflicts while teaching LSEN, as indicated by the highest-rated item (Mean = 3.6222), reflecting strong agreement and consistent responses. In contrast, the lowest-rated item (Mean = 1.8444) suggests teachers do not see cultural differences as significant barriers to instruction, highlighting their adaptability and resilience. Despite this confidence, the findings emphasize the need for structured institutional support, targeted training, and stronger community engagement to further strengthen culturally inclusive education practices.

Table 9. Mean and standard deviation of the extent of current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs in terms of level of community involvement in supporting education

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal and Description and Adjectival Interpretation
1. The Indigenous community is actively involved in school-related activities.	2.5333	.84208	Agree – Moderate High
2. I regularly collaborate with Indigenous elders or community leaders to support my teaching.	2.6667	.79772	Agree – Moderate High
3. Parents of Indigenous learners with special needs are engaged in their learners' education.	2.3111	.84805	Disagree – Moderate Low
4. Community involvement has a positive impact on the educational outcomes of LSEN.	3.3111	.84805	Strongly Agree – High
5. My school organizes community engagement activities that support Indigenous learners.	3.1111	.83182	Agree – Moderate High
6. Indigenous community members provide valuable cultural insights that enhance my teaching.	2.9111	.73306	Agree – Moderate High
7. A stronger connection between the school and the community would improve learning outcomes for LSEN.	3.3556	.74332	Strongly Agree – High
OVERALL MEAN	2.8856	0.797	Agree – Moderate High

Teachers believe strengthening school-community connections can significantly improve learning outcomes for LSEN, as reflected by the highest-rated item (Mean = 3.3556). However, the lowest-rated item (Mean = 2.3111) indicates low parental involvement in the education of Indigenous LSEN, pointing to a critical gap in family engagement. Overall, while community collaboration is valued, the findings highlight the need for stronger school-family partnerships and greater integration of Indigenous knowledge to support inclusive education effectively.

Table 10. Mean and standard deviation of the extent of strategies utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs in indigenous communities in terms of teacher training focused on both special education and cultural competence

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal and Description and Adjectival Interpretation
1. I have received formal training on special education specific to Indigenous learners with special needs.	1.8667	.78625	Disagree – Moderate Low
2. I am confident in applying culturally sensitive strategies in my teaching.	2.7778	.59882	Agree – Moderate High
3. The training I received is sufficient to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous learners with special needs.	3.2444	.57031	Agree – Moderate High
4. I regularly update my knowledge on both special education and cultural diversity.	3.1556	.73718	Agree – Moderate High
5. I feel equipped to recognize and address cultural differences in my classroom.	3.5111	.54864	Strongly Agree – High
6. My school provides opportunities for professional development in cultural competence.	2.2889	.81526	Disagree – Moderate Low
7. Training on Indigenous cultures should be mandatory for teachers in Indigenous communities.	3.5556	.50252	Strongly Agree – High
OVERALL MEAN	2.9143	0.6616	Agree – Moderate High

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There is a strong consensus among teachers that training on Indigenous cultures should be mandatory (Mean = 3.5556), reflecting widespread support for culturally responsive education. However, the lowest-rated item (Mean = 1.8667) reveals that most teachers have not received formal training specific to Indigenous learners with special needs, indicating a significant gap in professional preparation. These findings underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms, including mandatory cultural competence training and targeted professional development, to better equip teachers in supporting LSEN in Indigenous communities.

Table 11. Mean and standard deviation of the extent of strategies utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs in indigenous communities in terms of curriculum design incorporating indigenous knowledge and practices

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal and Adjectival Interpretation
1. The current curriculum incorporates sufficient Indigenous knowledge and practices.	2.1333	.72614	Disagree – Moderate Low
2. More Indigenous cultural elements should be included in the curriculum.	3.2000	.62523	Agree – Moderate High
3. Incorporating Indigenous practices into the curriculum enhances the learning of LSEN.	2.7333	1.11600	Agree – Moderate High
4. The curriculum should be adapted to better reflect the cultural context of Indigenous communities.	3.3778	.80591	Strongly Agree – High
5. Curriculum flexibility allows me to integrate culturally relevant materials.	3.1778	.77720	Agree – Moderate High
6. Teachers should be involved in the design of culturally inclusive curricula.	3.4667	.50452	Strongly Agree – High
7. Indigenous knowledge is underutilized in the current special education curriculum.	3.5333	.54772	Strongly Agree – High
OVERALL MEAN	3.089	0.753	Agree – Moderate High

There is a strong consensus among teachers that Indigenous knowledge is not adequately integrated into the special education curriculum, as reflected in the highest-rated item (Mean = 3.5333). The lowest-rated item (Mean = 2.1333) further supports this view, with teachers disagreeing that current curricula sufficiently incorporate Indigenous practices. These findings highlight a clear need for curriculum reform, increased teacher involvement, and stronger institutional support to create a more culturally responsive and inclusive education system for Indigenous learners with special needs.

Table 12. Mean and standard deviation of the extent of strategies utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs in indigenous communities in terms of active engagement of indigenous communities in the educational process

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal and Adjectival Interpretation
1. Indigenous communities should be more involved in the development of educational programs.	2.8444	.97597	Agree – Moderate High
2. Engaging community members improves the relevance of educational practices for LSEN.	3.0889	.90006	Agree – Moderate High
3. I regularly seek input from community members to ensure my teaching is culturally appropriate.	3.0444	.82450	Agree – Moderate High
4. The engagement of Indigenous elders and leaders enhances the cultural relevance of lessons.	2.9556	.73718	Agree – Moderate High
5. Parents and guardians should be more actively involved in school activities for LSEN.	3.5556	.54588	Strongly Agree – High
6. Building stronger partnerships with the community will improve educational outcomes for LSEN.	3.4667	.50452	Strongly Agree – High
7. The school's collaboration with the Indigenous community is crucial for educational success.	3.3778	.64979	Strongly Agree – High
OVERALL MEAN	3.1905	0.7522	Agree – Moderate High

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There is a strong teacher agreement that parents and guardians should be more actively involved in school activities for LSEN (Mean = 3.5556), emphasizing the importance of family engagement in education. While teachers also agree that Indigenous communities should play a greater role in developing educational programs (Mean = 2.8444), the wider variation in responses suggests inconsistent implementation across schools. Overall, the findings underscore the need for stronger, more consistent partnerships between schools, families, and Indigenous communities to promote culturally responsive and inclusive education for learners with special needs.

Table 13. Mean and standard deviation of the extent of strategies utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs in indigenous communities in terms of policy recommendations to address gaps in special education for indigenous learners

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Description and Adjectival Interpretation
1. Current policies do not adequately address the needs of LSEN in Indigenous communities.	3.1778	.61381	Agree – Moderate High
2. Policy changes should focus on increasing funding for culturally sensitive programs.	3.2222	.67044	Agree – Moderate High
3. Teacher training policies should mandate cultural competence as part of certification.	3.2667	.44721	Strongly Agree – High
4. Educational policies should require a curriculum that reflects Indigenous cultural values.	3.4889	.72683	Strongly Agree – High
5. Policies must prioritize access to resources and support for Indigenous LSEN.	3.4444	.50252	Strongly Agree – High
6. Collaborative policymaking with Indigenous communities would improve educational outcomes.	3.1111	.68165	Agree – Moderate High
7. Stronger policies for teacher support in Indigenous contexts are needed.	3.5333	.54772	Strongly Agree – High
OVERALL MEAN	3.3206	0.5986	Strongly Agree – High

There is a strong teacher agreement on the urgent need for stronger policies to support those working with LSEN in Indigenous communities (Mean = 3.5333), highlighting a clear call for systemic reform. While teachers also agree on the value of collaborative policymaking with Indigenous communities (Mean = 3.1111), the slightly lower mean and higher variability suggest mixed views on its implementation. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of culturally responsive policies, increased funding, targeted teacher training, and inclusive collaboration to enhance educational outcomes for Indigenous learners with special needs.

Table 14. One-way ANOVA test on the significant difference in the current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs when grouped according to age

Current Practices	Age Group	Mean Extent	Computed f – value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Training and Knowledge on Special Education and Cultural Diversity	21-30 years	17.00	.653	.526	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	31-40 years	19.75				
	41-50 years	19.45				
	51-60 Years	0				
Available Resources and Infrastructure	21-30 years	18.83	.438	.649	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	31-40 years	19.18				
	41-50 years	18.45				
	51-60 Years	0				
Cultural Conflicts	21-30 years	19.00	.436	.649	Accept Ho	Not Significant

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Encountered in Delivering Education	31-40 years	19.54				
	41-50 years	19.91				
	51-60 Years	0				
Level of Community Involvement in Supporting Education	21-30 years	22.50	3.041	.058	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	31-40 years	19.36				
	41-50 years	21.10				
	51-60 Years	0				

Teacher age does not significantly influence current practices in supporting LSEN in Indigenous communities across areas such as training, resources, cultural conflicts, and community involvement. The highest F-value ($F = 3.041$, $p = 0.058$) for community involvement approaches significance, suggesting a potential area for further investigation. Overall, the findings imply that systemic factors—such as institutional policies and resource availability—likely play a more critical role than age in shaping teacher practices, reflecting equitable access to training and support across age groups.

Table 15. T-test on the significant difference in the current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs when grouped according to gender

Current Practices	Mean Extent		Computed t-value	A	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
	Male	Female					
Training and Knowledge on Special Education and Cultural Diversity	19.55	19.24	.166	.05	.869	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Available Resources and Infrastructure	19.00	18.94	.077	.05	.939	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Cultural Conflicts Encountered in Delivering Education	19.18	19.68	-.746	.05	.460	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Level of Community Involvement in Supporting Education	20.09	20.24	-.125	.05	.901	Accept Ho	Not Significant

There are no significant gender-based differences in teaching practices supporting LSEN in Indigenous communities. The lowest t-value ($t = 0.077$, $p = 0.939$) in resources and infrastructure indicates near-total agreement between male and female teachers, while the highest t-value ($t = -0.746$, $p = 0.460$) in cultural conflicts also falls well above the threshold for significance. These findings suggest that gender does not influence teachers' experiences or practices, pointing instead to institutional policies, training, and community engagement as more impactful factors.

Table 16. One-way ANOVA test on the significant difference in the current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs when grouped according to ethnic group

Current Practices	Ethnic Group	Mean Extent	Computed f – value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Training and Knowledge on Special Education and	Blaan	19.65	.394	.677	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Cebuano	0				
	Ilonggo	17.89				
	Tboli	20.00				

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Cultural Diversity	Other	0				
Available Resources and Infrastructure	Blaan	18.88	.429	.654	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Cebuano	0				
	Ilonggo	19.44				
	Tboli	18.00				
	Other	0				
Cultural Conflicts Encountered in Delivering Education	Blaan	19.32	1.064	.354	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Cebuano	0				
	Ilonggo	20.33				
	Tboli	20.00				
	Other	0				
Level of Community Involvement in Supporting Education	Blaan	19.88	1.021	.369	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Cebuano	0				
	Ilonggo	20.78				
	Tboli	23.00				
	Other	0				

There are no significant differences in teaching practices for LSEN when grouped by ethnic background. The lowest F-value ($F = 0.394$, $p = 0.677$) for training and knowledge indicates strong uniformity across ethnic groups, suggesting equitable access to professional development. The highest F-value ($F = 1.064$, $p = 0.354$) for cultural conflicts, while still statistically insignificant, points to slight variability in experiences. Overall, the results suggest that ethnic background does not significantly influence teachers' training, resource access, or experiences in supporting learners with special needs in Indigenous communities.

Table 17. One-way ANOVA test on the significant difference in the current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs when grouped according to highest educational attainment

Current Practices	Educational Attainment	Mean Extent	Computed f – value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Training and Knowledge on Special Education and Cultural Diversity	Bachelor's Degree	16.67	3.086	.038	Reject Ho	Significant
	Master's Degree (units only)	21.16				
	Master's Degree (completed)	16.75				
	Doctorate (units only)	23.00				
	Doctorate (completed)	0				
Available Resources and Infrastructure	Bachelor's Degree	18.80	.758	.524	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Master's Degree (units only)	18.92				
	Master's Degree (completed)	20.25				
	Doctorate (units only)	17.00				
	Doctorate (completed)	0				
Cultural Conflicts Encountered in Delivering Education	Bachelor's Degree	19.07	1.846	.154	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Master's Degree (units only)	19.52				
	Master's Degree (completed)	21.50				
	Doctorate (units only)	20.00				
	Doctorate (completed)	0				
Level of Community Involvement	Bachelor's Degree	20.13	.665	.578	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Master's Degree (units only)	20.24				

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in Supporting Education	Master's Degree (completed)	21.25				
	Doctorate (units only)	16.00				
	Doctorate (completed)	0				

Educational attainment significantly affects teachers' training and knowledge in special education and cultural diversity ($F = 3.086$, $p = 0.038$), with those holding Doctorate units reporting the highest levels of training. This suggests a positive correlation between higher academic qualifications and preparedness in key instructional areas. However, the lowest F-value ($F = 0.665$, $p = 0.578$) for community involvement indicates minimal variation across educational levels, suggesting that perceptions of community engagement and other practices are consistent regardless of academic background. Overall, the findings highlight the value of advanced education for teacher training, while emphasizing the need for systemic solutions to address broader challenges in supporting LSEN.

Table 18. One-way ANOVA test on the significant difference in the current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs when grouped according to years of teaching experience

Current Practices	Teaching Experience	Mean Extent	Computed f – value	p-value	Decision Ho	Interpretation
Training and Knowledge on Special Education and Cultural Diversity	1-5 Years	15.75	3.086	.038	Reject Ho	Significant
	6-10 years	18.95				
	11-15 years	21.41				
	16-20 Years	0				
Available Resources and Infrastructure	1-5 Years	18.75	.758	.524	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	6-10 years	19.35				
	11-15 years	18.59				
	16-20 Years	0				
Cultural Conflicts Encountered in Delivering Education	1-5 Years	19.13	1.846	.154	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	6-10 years	19.80				
	11-15 years	19.47				
	16-20 Years	0				
Level of Community Involvement in Supporting Education	1-5 Years	19.13	.665	.578	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	6-10 years	20.00				
	11-15 years	20.94				
	16-20 Years	0				

Teaching experience significantly influences training and knowledge in special education and cultural diversity ($F = 3.086$, $p = 0.038$), with teachers having 11–15 years of experience reporting the highest levels of preparation, while those with only 1–5 years report the least. This suggests that professional development opportunities increase with experience. In contrast, the lowest F-value ($F = 0.758$, $p = 0.524$) in available resources and infrastructure indicates that access to resources is consistent across all experience levels, likely driven by institutional factors rather than individual tenure. These findings underscore the importance of targeted early-career training and suggest that broader systemic reforms are needed to address persistent challenges in resource access and community engagement for teachers supporting LSEN in Indigenous communities.

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Table 19. One-way ANOVA test on the significant difference in the strategies utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs in indigenous communities when grouped according to age

Strategies to Enhance Cultural Sensitivity	Age Group	Mean Extent	Computed f – value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher Training Focused on Special Education and Cultural Competence	21-30 years	20.83	.193	.825	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	31-40 years	20.25				
	41-50 years	20.55				
	51-60 Years	0				
Curriculum Design Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Practices	21-30 years	21.50	.162	.851	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	31-40 years	21.82				
	41-50 years	21.18				
	51-60 Years	0				
Active Engagement of Indigenous Communities in the Educational Process	21-30 years	23.67	.951	.394	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	31-40 years	22.36				
	41-50 years	21.55				
	51-60 years	0				
Policy Recommendations to Address Gaps in Special Education for Indigenous Learners	21-30 years	24.00	.468	.630	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	31-40 years	23.29				
	41-50 years	22.73				
	51-60 years	0				

Age does not significantly affect the strategies teachers use to enhance cultural sensitivity and improve educational outcomes for LSEN in Indigenous communities. The highest F-value ($F = 0.951$, $p = 0.394$) for community engagement and the lowest F-value ($F = 0.162$, $p = 0.851$) for Indigenous curriculum integration both fall well above the threshold for significance, indicating consistent practices across age groups. These findings suggest that culturally responsive strategies are shaped more by institutional policies and training programs than by teacher age, underscoring the need for inclusive and continuous professional development for educators of all ages.

Table 20. T-test on the significant difference in the current practices employed by teachers in indigenous communities to support learners with special needs when grouped according to gender

Strategies to Enhance Cultural Sensitivity	Mean Extent		Computed t- value	α	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
	Male	Female					
Teacher Training Focused on Special Education and Cultural Competence	21.18	20.15	1.350	.05	.184	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Curriculum Design Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Practices	21.28	21.74	-.419	.05	.677	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Active Engagement of Indigenous Communities in the Educational Process	21.64	22.56	-.875	.05	.386	Accept Ho	Not Significant

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Policy Recommendations to Address Gaps in Special Education for Indigenous Learners	22.45	23.50	-1.170	05	.248	Accept Ho	Not Significant
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There is no statistically significant gender-based differences in the strategies used to improve cultural sensitivity and support LSEN in Indigenous communities. The highest t-value ($t = 1.350$, $p = 0.184$) for teacher training and the lowest ($t = -0.419$, $p = 0.677$) for Indigenous curriculum integration both indicate consistent practices among male and female teachers. These findings suggest that culturally responsive strategies are driven more by institutional policies, training programs, and shared community values than by gender, emphasizing the need for equitable access to professional development and collaborative opportunities for all educators.

Table 21. One-way ANOVA test on the significant difference in the strategies utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs in indigenous communities when grouped according to ethnic group

Strategies to Enhance Cultural Sensitivity	Ethnic Group	Mean Extent	Computed f - value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher Training Focused on Special Education and Cultural Competence	Blaan	20.24	.371	.693	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Cebuano	0				
	Ilonggo	20.89				
	Tboli	21.00				
	Other	0				
Curriculum Design Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Practices	Blaan	21.62	.153	.859	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Cebuano	0				
	Ilonggo	21.89				
	Tboli	20.50				
	Other	0				
Active Engagement of Indigenous Communities in the Educational Process	Blaan	21.97	1.025	.367	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Cebuano	0				
	Ilonggo	23.56				
	Tboli	23.00				
	Other	0				
Policy Recommendations to Address Gaps in Special Education for Indigenous Learners	Blaan	22.94	1.083	.348	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Cebuano	0				
	Ilonggo	24.00				
	Tboli	25.00				
	Other	0				

There are no significant differences in the strategies used to enhance cultural sensitivity and educational outcomes for LSEN when grouped by ethnic background. The highest F-value ($F = 1.083$, $p = 0.348$) for policy recommendations and the lowest ($F = 0.153$, $p = 0.859$) for curriculum design both indicate uniform practices across ethnic groups. These findings suggest that institutional policies, rather than ethnic identity, guide teacher strategies, reinforcing the importance of equitable access to training, curriculum resources, and policy engagement to ensure all educators are prepared to support Indigenous learners with special needs effectively.

Table 22. One-way ANOVA test on the significant difference in the strategies utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs in indigenous communities when grouped according to highest educational attainment

Strategies to Enhance Cultural Sensitivity	Educational Attainment	Mean Extent	Computed f - value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher Training Focused on	Bachelor's Degree	20.53	.815	.493	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Master's Degree (units	20.60				

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Special Education and Cultural Competence	only)					
	Master's Degree (completed)	19.25				
	Doctorate (units only)	18.00				
	Doctorate (completed)	0				
Curriculum Design Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Practices	Bachelor's Degree	20.27	1.489	.232	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Master's Degree (units only)	22.40				
	Master's Degree (completed)	21.75				
	Doctorate (units only)	22.00				
	Doctorate (completed)	0				
Active Engagement of Indigenous Communities in the Educational Process	Bachelor's Degree	21.67	.378	.769	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Master's Degree (units only)	22.72				
	Master's Degree (completed)	22.25				
	Doctorate (units only)	23.00				
	Doctorate (completed)	0				
Policy Recommendations to Address Gaps in Special Education for Indigenous Learners	Bachelor's Degree	22.87	.887	.456	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	Master's Degree (units only)	23.12				
	Master's Degree (completed)	25.00				
	Doctorate (units only)	25.00				
	Doctorate (completed)	0				

There are no statistically significant differences in the strategies used to enhance cultural sensitivity and support LSEN when grouped by teachers' highest educational attainment. The highest F-value ($F = 1.489$, $p = 0.232$) for curriculum design suggests minor variation across academic levels, while the lowest ($F = 0.378$, $p = 0.769$) for community engagement indicates strong consistency.

Table 23. One-way ANOVA test on the significant difference in the strategies utilized to improve the cultural sensitivity of teachers and enhance educational outcomes for learners with special needs in indigenous communities when grouped according to years of teaching experience

Current Practices	Teaching Experience	Mean Extent	Computed f – value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Training Teacher Training Focused on Special Education and Cultural Competence	1-5 Years	20.88	.596	.555	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	6-10 years	20.00				
	11-15 years	20.65				
	16-20 Years	0				
Curriculum Design Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Practices	1-5 Years	19.50	2.355	.107	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	6-10 years	22.15				
	11-15 years	22.00				
	16-20 Years	0				
Active Engagement of Indigenous Communities in the Educational Process	1-5 Years	21.88	.216	.807	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	6-10 years	22.65				
	11-15 years	22.18				
	16-20 Years	0				
Policy	1-5	24.63	1.726	.190	Accept Ho	Not Significant

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Recommendations to Address Gaps in Special Education for Indigenous Learners	Years					
	6-10 years	22.65				
	11-15 years	23.29				
	16-20 Years	0				

There are no statistically significant differences in culturally responsive strategies used by teachers when grouped by years of experience. The highest F-value ($F = 2.355$, $p = 0.107$) for curriculum design suggests a possible trend of greater involvement among teachers with 6–15 years of experience, while the lowest F-value ($F = 0.216$, $p = 0.807$) for Indigenous community engagement indicates consistent practices across experience levels. These findings imply that institutional policies and standardized training play a larger role than teaching tenure in shaping strategies for supporting LSEN, ensuring equal involvement across all experience levels.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that Indigenous teachers are mostly mid-career, highly educated women, predominantly from the Blaan group, with valuable experience in inclusive education. While teachers recognize the need for cultural and special education training, they often lack sufficient preparation, resources, and institutional support. Key strategies for improvement include mandatory cultural training, integration of Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, stronger school-community partnerships, and collaborative policymaking. Despite similar engagement across age, gender, and ethnicity, training is higher among more experienced and educated teachers. The proposed enhancement plan calls for systemic reforms to foster cultural sensitivity, equity, and inclusive support for Indigenous learners with special needs.

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