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THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN PRESERVING AND TEACHING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AMONG YOUNG IP LEARNERS

*Dahlia G. Moreno

Philippines.

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*Corresponding Author: Dahlia G. Moreno

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Philippines.

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous storytelling plays a vital role in strengthening culturally responsive education, particularly in Indigenous Peoples (IP)–dominated schools where preserving heritage is central to learning. This study examined the integration of indigenous storytelling among elementary teachers in IP-dominated schools in the 2nd congressional district of the Division of Cotabato, focusing on its pedagogical functions, transmitted values, and sustainability within formal education. A qualitative micro-ethnographic design was employed involving elementary teachers as participants. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that storytelling enhances learner engagements, serves as a cross-curricular pedagogical tool, supports cultural integration and values formation, and contributes to communication and critical thinking. This study concludes that indigenous storytelling strengthens cultural identity and academic learning through culturally responsive education.

INTRODUCTION

Storytelling has long been recognized as a vital medium through which Indigenous communities pass on their traditions, values, and cultural practices to younger generations. For Indigenous Peoples, stories serve not only as entertainment but also as tools for teaching moral lessons, cultural identity, and ecological knowledge. In schools, incorporating storytelling as a pedagogical practice provides an avenue for connecting learners to their heritage while fostering meaningful learning experiences. Scholars emphasize that Indigenous storytelling is central to cultural preservation and educational advancement. Despite the growing recognition of storytelling as a powerful pedagogical tool, limited attention has been given to its role in elementary classrooms. This study examines how

storytelling can serve as a tool for preserving and teaching Indigenous knowledge, contributing to culturally responsive education and empowering IP learners.

METHODS

This study employed qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology, which seeks to interpret the meanings embedded in lived experiences within cultural contexts. The research was conducted at the 2nd Congressional District of the Province of Cotabato, specifically in IP-identified schools located in the municipalities of Arakan, Magpet, President Roxas, and Makilala. The informants were Indigenous Peoples (IP) teachers assigned to these schools, chosen for their direct engagement in teaching IP learners and their unique role in integrating storytelling into instruction. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews using an interview guide anchored on the research questions. The study used purposive, criterion-based sampling to select participants who could provide meaningful insights. The gathered data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring ideas and patterns. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for cultural sensitivity were strictly observed.

RESULTS

The findings revealed that teachers integrate Indigenous storytelling as a powerful lesson entry point to capture attention and prepare students mentally and emotionally for learning. Storytelling also functions as a cross-curricular pedagogical tool, woven into various subjects to explain concepts and make learning more relatable. Furthermore, the practice supports cultural integration and values formation by connecting students to their heritage and promoting Indigenous perspectives. It enhances student engagement and learning skills, fostering participation and improving communication. The study identified that storytelling transmits core moral and social values such as respect, honesty, and cooperation, alongside ecological awareness and interconnectedness. To sustain these practices, participants emphasized the need for institutional curriculum integration, capacity building for teachers, and active engagement with community elders.

DISCUSSION

Integrating Indigenous narratives across various subjects demonstrates that Indigenous knowledge is a foundational way of understanding the world rather than a segregated elective. Educators find that abstract concepts in science or social studies become more tangible when viewed through the lens of traditional lore, mirroring the interconnected nature

of the community's environment. Successful implementation depends on a systemic commitment to culturally responsive infrastructure and community collaboration, as individual efforts must be supported by broader school environments. Establishing clear protocols and evaluation methods rooted in narrative practices, supported by partnerships with local communities, strengthens meaningful classroom application. By positioning Indigenous storytelling as a tool that enhances literacy and critical thinking, policymakers can create structures that mandate culturally responsive teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

The integration of Indigenous storytelling into classroom instruction serves as a vital bridge between formal academic content and the personal lives of students. By utilizing narratives to establish a lesson entry point, educators validate the home culture of the students, foster a sense of belonging, and create an inclusive classroom atmosphere. Ultimately, these findings suggest that the most effective classrooms are those that recognize the power of cultural wisdom as a foundational teaching tool. When teachers treat storytelling as an authentic and respected practice, they honor the heritage of their community while nurturing the critical thinking and curiosity of their students. This approach creates a more cohesive educational experience by dismantling the divide between formal schooling and community identity. Inclusion of Indigenous perspectives is a structural necessity for decolonizing learning environments and cultivating a generation of learners deeply connected to their cultural roots