

# **Mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in higher education: The Philippines' 2019 policy change**

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## **高等教育における地域・民族固有の知の主流化 ー フィリピンの2019年の政策の変更 ー**

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### **Abstract**

Among the current debates is how schools achieve inclusive education and provide for the special needs of concerned learners at the same time, such as the people with disabilities, and the indigenous peoples to combat alienation and discrimination in schools. The Philippine government enacted the Integrated History Act of 2016, a law that integrates Muslim and indigenous peoples' studies in the Philippine basic education curricula, and the issued Memorandum Order No. 2-2019, which integrates indigenous knowledge in formal higher education. This study analyzes how the Philippines changed its policy on promoting indigenous knowledge in the national higher education curricula and identifies international and domestic drivers that led to the educational reform. A series of systematic reviews of policy documents and previous studies, policy formulation analysis using the Actor-Centered Institutionalism framework, and in-depth online interviews were conducted for the study. It is revealed that the rising awareness and relevance of indigenous peoples' rights agenda around the world, fulfilling global commitments on Education for All, and the role of indigenous people's initiatives via mass protests, and emerging political participation of indigenous citizens in key areas of the government played a huge role in heightening the attention of the Philippine government to consider modifying the country's national curricula by adopting culture-based learning curricula of existing indigenous schools.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

With the subsequent enforcement of the *World Declaration on Education for All* (EFA) in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, education has been reintroduced as a vital international human right and global norm. The concern on educating the indigenous peoples started only recently when discourses on issues of land rights and self-determination emerged. With the subsequent adoption and ratification of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, the indigenous peoples' education was declared a fundamental human right. The movement marked the rising awareness of indigenous peoples in the development agenda. However, the indigenous peoples continue to face marginalization as they continue to experience higher school dropout rates compared to non-indigenous peoples (UNICEF, 2011). This led to discourses on educating the indigenous peoples. Among the major debates in line with educating the indigenous peoples is the debate between assimilation and specialized means of education. Concerned educators are either pushing to integrate them into the mainstream society to enjoy academic competencies and knowledge of what has been offered based on national standards of the mainstream (UNICEF, n.d.; UNESCO, 1994; Booth & Ainscow, 2002, pp. 4-5, 35; Gordon, 1964, p. 35; Leite, 2014; Shwed, et al., 2018, p. 1-2) or to specialize them to meet the preservation of their cultural identity, knowledge and give enough representation of the cultural and social wellbeing of their communities (Florian, 2019, p. 696; Cole, 2011, p. 118; Munns, et al., 2013, p. 3). EFA remains to be a challenge with the recent adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under Goal 4: quality education. Thus, there is a lack of discussion on the importance of addressing the strategy of introducing indigenous knowledge in mainstream education systems, especially in the agenda of higher education.

This study seeks to find the importance of mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in a national curriculum that can fill the knowledge gap on providing special education needs of indigenous peoples, while at the same time providing mainstream education to meet academic competencies. The Philippines is worth analyzing as it is among the first countries in Asia to pass a law recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples through the *Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997* (IPRA), ten years before the establishment of UNDRIP. The country is currently combatting a series of armed conflicts and systemic discrimination against national minorities in the Mindanao region. Among the responses of the government are peace dialogues and reforming the education system that adapts national minorities' knowledge systems with the support of international cooperation of donor countries such as Japan, Germany, and Australia. Through the issuance of Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 2-2019 (CMO2), the country has made policy reforms approving the integration of indigenous knowledge in higher education.

### 1.2 Objectives of the study

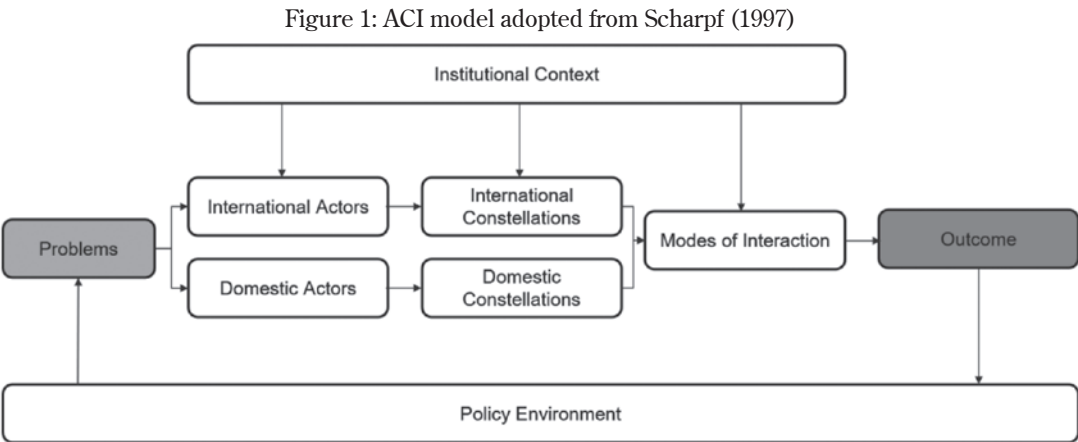
This study investigates how the Philippines changed its policy to integrate indigenous knowledge in higher education. It seeks to identify the international and domestic drivers that led to the policy

change. On the other hand, this study also argues that mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in the national curriculum is supplementary towards promoting cultural diversity in line with the current challenge to realize EFA and the ongoing agenda to achieve SDG 4. As the study focuses on identifying how the policy change was carried out, it focuses on laying out the possible process that prompted the Philippine government changed its policy which promotes indigenous knowledge in mainstream higher education in 2019.

1.3 Methodology and theoretical framework of the study

This study utilized qualitative research methods such as a series of secondary data reviews and policy analysis to review policy documents, reports, and previous studies on the Philippines indigenous peoples-related laws, and education systems. This is through browsing from public online resources published by CHED and the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines. Access to further documents not available on the websites was requested through the Philippine Government’s *eFOI* (E-Freedom of Information) database. As the study tackles policy formulation studies, the Actor Centered Institutionalism (ACI) framework as proposed by Scharpf (1997) is used to guide the framing and organization of research findings (see Figure 1).

1.3.1 ACI framework



ACI is a framework that provides an organizing system which explains a social phenomenon (i.e., policy change) through observing *Actors* as a ‘proximate cause’, and *Institutional Context* as a ‘remote cause’ (Scharpf, 1997; pp. 30, 37; Mayntz & Scharpf, 1995, pp. 46-47). In this framework, the focus is on the three main elements: *Actors*, *Constellations*, and *Modes of Interaction*. To briefly explain these, *Actors* are those that are determined and driven by the given *Institutional Context*. *Constellations* consist of players, strategy options, and preferences over outcomes. Lastly, *Modes of Interaction* are modes shaped and largely influenced by the *Institutional Context*. According to

Scharpf (1997, p. 45-47), policy change can take place in one of the following: (1) *unilateral action*, in which the interaction went off smoothly without any contestations nor conflict; (2) *negotiated agreement*, in which contestations likely happened but the end aspirations of *Actors* were achieved in the *Outcome*; (3) *majority vote*, which involved a democratic way of joining the public opinion in making the policy change, rather than appointed stakeholders and people with initiatives; and (4) *hierarchical direction*, which involved chosen or appointed higher stakeholders to dictate or be able to change the directions of the policy.

ACI has been utilized effectively to study policy changes and convergences. In a study by Witte (2004), ACI has been utilized to investigate the patterns of two-tiered study structures in European higher education systems and found the similarities and differences of institutional changes in the context of the Bologna Process. The framework also facilitated further understanding whether such identified changes “contribute to the convergence of European higher education systems” (p. 406), and “provide a more detailed account of the dynamics of the policy formulation phase” brought from the interaction of *Actors* (p. 409). In a study on agricultural policy change, Coleman (2001) utilized ACI to investigate political struggles experienced by examining policy change models in Australia, Canada, and USA (p. 221).

### 1.3.2 Interviews

This study also conducted in-depth interviews with key actors involved in the policy change. Informants were recruited and contacted through email and interviewed via Zoom video conference. Before the interview, the informants were asked whether it is possible to record the interviews for consent. Such recordings were transcribed, and transcripts were used for coding analysis and data organization via NVivo. The author was able to conduct five (5) in-depth online interviews for the study. Participants’ names were anonymized for the protection of their identity and privacy. The languages used were both Tagalog and English. Selected remarks from the transcripts were translated to English by the author. Below is the profile of participants for this study (see Table 1).

Table 1: Profile of Informants

Participant	Institution/Organization/Affiliation	Role/Position
A	National Coalition for Indigenous Higher Education (NICHE)	Technical Working Group (TWG) Member for CMO2
B	CHED	Technical Committee Head for Anthropology/Professor
C	CHED	Technical Committee Member for History/TWG Member for CMO2
D	Forum Civil Peace Service (ForumZFD)	Project Officer/TWG Member for CMO2
E	Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	Staff in charge (Mindanao Section)

## **2. The policy change towards mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in higher education in the Philippines**

This section discusses the findings, of the study and is structured into three divisions. Findings were gathered from secondary data review and policy analysis. The first division further discusses the case of the Philippines' legal framework on indigenous peoples. The next division discusses the international and domestic factors that led to the educational policy change.

### **2.1 The Philippines indigenous peoples' education policies**

Major constituents of the policy movements are the two education agencies, DepEd and CHED. DepEd mainly handles the primary and secondary education sector while CHED handles the higher education sector. Both DepEd and CHED play an intertwined role in facilitating educational reforms. DepEd holds an influential position in providing policy directions to CHED. DepEd issues Department Orders which are issuances of policies drafted, deliberated, and released from the Department. The earliest direct and official response of DepEd working with the indigenous peoples' education matters was in 2008 when they issued Department Order No. 16 (DO16), also known as the *Indigenous Peoples' Education Technical Working Group*. DO16 also marked the early beginnings of the *Indigenous Peoples' Education* (IPEd) movement as it manifested a breakthrough that had involved key players such as indigenous peoples, researchers, and experts of indigenous knowledge to work on such initiatives. In the following years, DepEd adopted the IPEd Framework, dedicated to crafting policy formulations and curricula evaluation for indigenous-related education programs at the national level. Finally, in 2015, DepEd adopted the IPEd Curriculum which was supplemental towards the issuance of CMO2 four years later.

In support of such initiatives, the Philippine Government enacted the *Integrated History Act of 2016* (IHA) as a move towards crafting a curriculum "for an inclusive and integrative study of the Philippine history, including the writing, printing, and publication of textbook and other reading materials" (Philippine Government, 2016). IHA was also crafted as a response towards peacebuilding and social development efforts in Mindanao, where Muslim communities and most indigenous groups are located and ongoing issues such as armed conflict have occurred. It is deemed to be among the strategies of the government to recognize and promote awareness and inclusivity for the people of Mindanao (B & C, personal communication, 2021). This law resulted in multiple issuances of education policy reforms, one of which was the CMO2.

Nonetheless, the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the IHA was an afterthought. Participant C, a Member of the History Committee from CHED, mentioned that IHA was originally intended to focus solely on integrating Muslim studies and/or education in the basic and higher education curricula in response to the ongoing peace processes in Mindanao. During the drafting of IHA headed by Senator Juan Edgardo Angara, he was to evaluate the draft and consequently make a position paper about his assessment. He questioned why the proceeding went on to just include Muslim groups in Mindanao when the island group consists of not only Muslim groups but also

non-Muslim indigenous populations (C, personal communication, 2021). Mindanao comprises diverse societies and holds the most populous indigenous peoples in the Philippines, accounting for 61% of the total indigenous peoples' population (UN Development Programme, 2013).

CMO2 is the order that officially mandates the mainstreaming of indigenous knowledge in formal higher education through offering indigenous peoples' studies or education in the curricula of higher education institutions including public and private colleges and universities in the country. It is among the implementing initiatives complying with the provisions of IHA to address issues on indigenous peoples and communities and affirm indigenous peoples' rights to "ancestral domains, self-governance and empowerment, social justice, human rights, and rights to cultural identity" (CHED, 2019). Among the key schemes of this Order is integrating concepts, topics, and contexts into higher education courses such as in the social sciences and humanities, and inclusion of readings about indigenous peoples and Muslims in the General Education curriculum, especially in the Philippine History course. While CMO2 exhibits a promising start to nationally integrate indigenous studies and/or education in the higher education curricula, however, the Order was criticized to be premature due to lack of sanctions and in-depth provisions for including them in the curriculum for other disciplines (C & D, personal communication, 2021).

## **2.2 International factors**

### **2.2.1 Fulfilling global commitments**

The Philippines was largely influenced by the global norms initiated by the United Nations (UN) through its global commitments and recommendations. The country was among the early signatories of international agreements particularly the *International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*.

With the recent adoption of the SDGs, among the compliances is the establishment of the SDG-Education Steering Committee led by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the following year after adopting *Education 2030 Framework for Action* in 2015. The Steering Committee holds a "multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism for SDG 4" (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2019) which aims to support countries in the "realization of the global education goals and targets (SDG4Education2030, n.d.). In 2018, the Philippines formally became part of the Steering Committee Group IV (Asia Pacific) for three years, partnering with Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SDG4Education2030, 2019, p. 2).

Apart from international conventions and human rights, UNESCO plays an influential role in mainstreaming education as an international human right. Ten years after the EFA Declaration, the World Education Forum adopted the *2000 Dakar Framework EFA* in 2000. The framework mentions a goal dedicated for the indigenous peoples is in Section 7-ii: "ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free, and compulsory primary education of good quality" (UNESCO, 2000, p. 7). In compliance with the commitment, DepEd formed the National EFA Committee

(NEC) and released an EFA national action plan. The key objective of the plan was to enhance the Philippine education system by 2015, following the EFA framework that meets the basic educational needs of all learners. In 2009, DepEd formed a regional committee on EFA, which was in charge in translating information into regional/local languages, and reviewing and evaluating regional programs and projects of schools (DepEd, 2009).

### **2.2.2 Educational cooperation**

Educational cooperation via official development assistance (ODA) is among the key factors towards the realization of providing indigenous peoples' education. According to Participant C, actors that were often mentioned include embassies such as Japan and Germany, as these are arguably countries whose state policies have peacebuilding and extensively include Aborigines' and/or indigenous peoples' rights in their agenda. These embassies were known for educational initiatives such as funding schools, particularly in the Mindanao division. The following are selected foreign aid agencies that significantly supported the promotion of indigenous education and peacebuilding process via educational cooperation to the country.

#### **2.2.2.1 Japan**

Two of the central actors involved are the Japanese Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and JICA. Japan's ODA was once centered on infrastructure and irrigation systems support in the Philippines in the late 1970s, as well as their narrowed focus on higher and vocational education projects years before the declaration of the EFA (JICA, 2010). A series of paradigm shifts happened when EFA was largely declared around the world in 1990. Soon after learning from the *UN Development Programme Human Development Report* of 1994 and the *World Summit for Social Development* in 1995, the Japanese Government considered the concept of human security as the guiding principle of their ODA charter (Sato, 2004). At present, Japan's ODA projects and initiatives remain centered on advocating for human security, serving as their "important notion that integrates three approaches in education: realizing human rights, sustainable development, and world peace" (JICA, 2010, p. 3).

As part of strengthening the bilateral relations between Japan and the Philippines, former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi announced the launching of the Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao in 2002. Back then, the Philippines was in the middle of the All-Out War between state forces and rebel troops. In 2006, Japan launched *Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development* (J-BIRD). J-BIRD is the culminating project focusing on the development and peace process in conflicted areas in Mindanao. Through Loan Aid, the Japanese Government launched a co-funded project with JICA called *Social Fund for Peace and Development*, focusing on conflicted areas in Mindanao. This allowed them to construct various infrastructures such as elementary and high school facilities (The Embassy of Japan in the Philippines, 2012). Another initiative by JICA on peace education projects was the community-based technical-

vocational program in various indigenous communities (JICA, 2016). Through the J-BIRD initiative, the Japanese Government had also worked alongside CHED and Japanese universities such as Osaka University on developing indigenous schools, allowing them to “integrate the Moros and indigenous peoples in the mainstream Philippine society” (C & D, personal communication, 2021). However, because of the ongoing transition of the Bangsamoro government that formally started in 2019, JICA has lately been inactive in providing aid in the education sector. Instead, they have been focusing on the building of the new government, agriculture, community development, and local industry development of the Bangsamoro region (E, personal communication, 2021).

#### **2.2.2.2 Germany**

Forum Civil Peace Service (ForumZFD) started engaging in the Philippines in 2007 when they were recognized as a sending organization by the German Government in the preceding year. Learning from the ongoing massive and decade conflict issues in Mindanao, ForumZFD established peace work through engaging as a bridge between autonomous movements in Mindanao and the Philippine Government.

ForumZFD, in partnership with CHED, conducted a massive project of integrating Mindanao histories and narratives into the Philippine education system. They have partnered with CHED and added along with different education scholars, experts, Muslims, and indigenous peoples’ NGOs and advocates to discuss how to integrate their knowledge into the curricula. This project is entitled, *Mindanao Histories and Studies* (MHS). The reason it is called “Mindanao” is to tackle the issue geographically and ‘inclusively’ (D, personal communication, 2021). This is in line with the ongoing peacebuilding initiatives of the organization that coincided with the contemporary conflict issues happening in Mindanao, such as the Martial Law from 2017-2019, and a couple of other armed conflict issues experienced by the people in Mindanao, such as para-militarization, closure of indigenous schools and the Marawi siege. In 2019, they have successfully produced *Roadmap Book*. The book is a product of several meetings and knowledge sharing among educators, Muslims, and indigenous peoples’ public and private sector, including the Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process. It is a detailed step-by-step guide on how Mindanao histories can be integrated into the education system. It also considers the challenges of implementing the *MHS Roadmap* due to the ongoing Bangsamoro transition and the systemic discrimination embedded within the education system.

#### **2.2.2.3 Australia**

The Australian Government was mentioned to have a great contribution to the indigenous peoples and Muslim communities in the Philippines (B & C, personal communication, 2021). This is because like the Philippines, Australia also has comprehensive national policies on their Aborigine populations. The program was entitled *The Philippines Response to Indigenous Peoples’ and Muslim Education Program* (PRIME), a collaborative project between the Australian and

the Philippine Government launched in 2011-2014, centered on the principle of the Theory of Change (Australian Government, 2014, p. 18). Theory of Change is the primary framework of the Australian Government in the implementation and evaluation of PRIME to promote change in the education sector. The key objective of the program was to improve the indigenous peoples and Muslim education systems. This was in line with the Australian Government's bilateral project in the Philippines, *Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao* (p. 4). The project produced indigenized materials used for promoting awareness in basic educational institutions. They claimed that PRIME has contributed to the "increased engagement by indigenous and Muslim communities in the education" (p. 8).

## **2.3 Domestic factors**

### **2.3.1 Social movements and initiatives of indigenous peoples**

In response to the lack of government social services, systemic discrimination and land grabbing and dispossession faced by the indigenous peoples, the indigenous peoples have led initiatives for social movements to heighten the government's attention towards combatting alienation and discrimination among the indigenous sectors. They have employed several responses. These are the establishment of indigenous schools, mass protests and campaigns, and emerging political participation in governance.

Firstly, the establishment of community-based indigenous schools. Schools have become the response of indigenous social movements to the lack of access to education and their aspirations on quality education that drove them for their human development and self-reliance. Among the notable schools is the *Tribal Filipino Program of Surigao del Sur* (TRIFPSS), established in 1998, the pioneering community-based education program for and by the *Lumad* (local term for 'indigenous') communities in Surigao del Sur. The success of establishing TRIFPSS led to more numerous and sporadic establishment of various indigenous-led schools. Another notable indigenous-led school is the *Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development Lumad School* (ALCADEV), established in 2004 as an "alternative learning system providing secondary education to the indigenous youth" (ALCADEV, n.d.).

Secondly, the indigenous peoples have organized large-scale protests and campaigns. Among the notable massive protests led by a network of indigenous peoples was the *Lakbayan ng Pambansang Minorya* (the National Minorities' Journey), or shortly *Manilakbayan*. *Manilakbayan* is a massive social movement of rallies and campaigns aimed to raise awareness in the capital and draw attention from the Philippine Government over the height of indigenous peoples' plight and killings in the early 2010s and demand for changes in the laws and policies such as in the education sector. *Manilakbayan* has also gained traction and media coverage in the national and international scale. In 2017, indigenous leaders had a chance to sit with DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones for a dialogue regarding the militarization and displacement of Lumad communities and schools during the ongoing Martial Law in Mindanao, and the Marawi siege.

Thirdly, the indigenous peoples have become instrumental in the policy development of IPRA, and its succeeding policy outputs such as the IHA and subsequently the CMO2. Participants B & C remarked that they have worked hand in hand and maintained close connections with the indigenous elders for research and consultations of the development of indigenous education curricula (B & C, personal communication, 2021). Their voices, representation, and involvement in education and policy research and crafting are influential which paved a streamlined way of the policy change. Among the challenges, however, are the human rights violations against indigenous peoples such as killings by the military, the bombing of schools, and the abovementioned red-tagging by the State's security forces. OHCHR Commissioner recommended that the government must design their responses that are grounded in human rights approaches and be guided with "meaningful dialogue" with perpetrators of violence (OHCHR, 2020).

### **2.3.2 National coalitions**

Coalition in this context consists of two or more local organizations sharing similar principles and advocacies. Among the major coalitional actors are the *Coalition for Indigenous People's Rights and Ancestral Domains* (CIPRAD) and the *National Coalition for Indigenous Higher Education* (NICHE).

CIPRAD was a collective unit of indigenous peoples' organizations, civil society groups, and concerning non-governmental organizations for the advancement of social awareness and promotion of indigenous peoples' human rights on the national scale. CIPRAD was the initiator of IPRA (Damaso, et al., 1998). The initial aim was to form an overarching document that protects the rights of indigenous peoples for their ancestral lands and domains. Collective efforts of policy development have also facilitated the streamlined process of policy change. Thus, with the formation of CIPRAD which consists of indigenous NGOs, ethnic group leaders, and the sponsorship of the Senate, the IPRA was successfully passed and signed into law by former president Fidel Ramos in 1997.

NICHE, on the other hand, was established in 2010. It was a consortium of indigenous peoples' organizations, advocates, researchers, private and state universities, and colleges who are advocating for indigenous peoples' higher education. Participant A commented that the coalition was instrumental in the policymaking and development of IHA and the issuance of CMO2. The coalition was also able to draft and establish a resolution called NICHE Declaration in 2017. Among the key features of the NICHE Declaration include, but are not limited to, promoting indigenous peoples' access to higher education, and have CHED become the effective leader of such realization (NICHE, 2017). During their fifth National Assembly in 2018, they invited CHED Chairperson Prospero de Vera to attend the assembly. During that time, the Board Members of NICHE were able to sit with de Vera and had a fruitful negotiation on integrating indigenous knowledge in the higher education curricula. On the last day of the Assembly, de Vera delivered a keynote speech, indicating that CHED will soon be issuing a memorandum concerning the integration of indigenous knowledge into formal higher education (A, personal communication, 2021).

### 2.3.3 Legal framework

The indigenous peoples had several attempts to request DepEd to review and revise the national curriculum and education policies to cater to their needs. Among the initial responses of DepEd was to hold a *National Assembly on Indigenous Education* in 2005. This Assembly formally marked the founding of the Indigenous Peoples' Education movement, or shortly known as IPed (Victor & Yano, 2018, p. 137). In the assembly, DepEd invited indigenous groups and advocates, along with education scholars and experts to discuss the key features of IPed. A few years later in 2009, DepEd and indigenous peoples and advocates gathered to discuss and consult each other for the comprehensive policy directions. Although the progress was slow and easy-going, luckily the IPed movement continued to progress.

In 2013, the Philippine Government had a major policy change through the enactment of the *Enhanced Basic Education Act*, which increased the number of basic education years from 10 to 12, adding 2 more years of secondary education in the national school system. This system has henceforth entitled the *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Program* (K-12) for the country to be on par with the internationalization, and regional integration towards basic education. In 2015, DepEd adopted the IPed Framework to enhance and localize K-12 programs catering to the needs of indigenous peoples and communities (DepEd, 2016). IPed is a policy framework as a response to achieving EFA goals and visions and was formerly as a response to the then MDG 2 to meet the basic learnings of the indigenous peoples. IPed was preceded by the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Curriculum (DepEd, 2015, p. 2) and developed by existing schools and organizations with successful practices in indigenous education. IPed also strengthened the policy environment towards crafting the succeeding policies such as the IHA and its implementing programs such as CMO2.

## 3. Analysis and Discussion

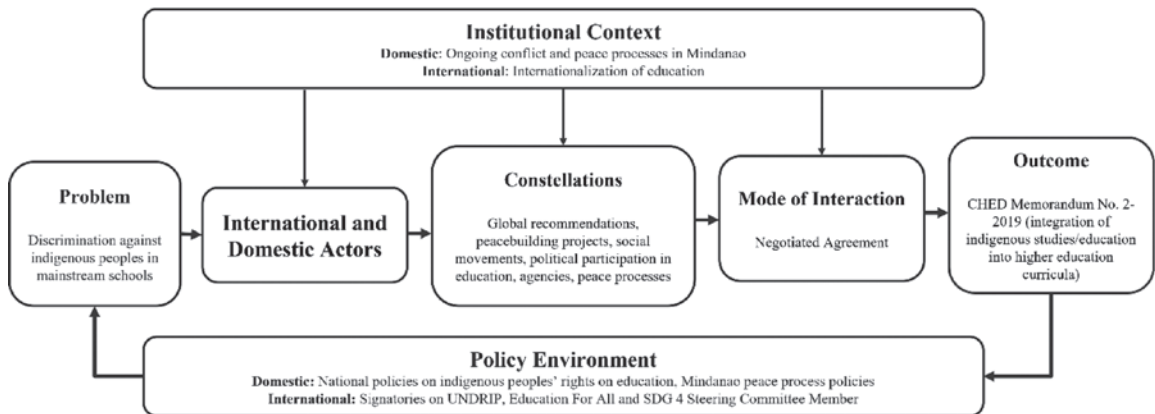
This section discusses the analyses and interpretations created based on the results of the study gathered from secondary data reviews and interviews. As the policy was established via public interest-oriented way, ACI framework was utilized as it is argued to be appropriate in researching policy formulations that were facilitated by actors involved affected by institutions of a given system.

### 3.1 Describing policy change

The policy formulation was organized and understood through ACI diagram as exhibited above (figure 2). The core entities are *Problem, Actors, Constellations, Modes of Interaction* and *Outcome*. The peripheral entities are the *Institutional Context* and *Policy Environment*.

*Institutional Context.* *Institutional Context* sets the circumstances that form the policy setting, venue, or landscape which directly or indirectly affect and influence Actors in the process of policy formulation. There are two great groups: the Domestic and International institutional contexts. The key Domestic Context includes the Philippines' ongoing conflict and peace processes in Mindanao such as the Bangsamoro transitioning. On the other hand, the International Context is the EFA

Figure 2: Diagram of the policy process using ACI framework



agenda and the ongoing internationalization of education.

*Problem.* As revealed, the Philippines faces several indigenous issues, particularly their lack of access to education, thereby the indicated *Problem* is indigenous peoples' discrimination issues in mainstream schools. Participant A, who founded NICHE, remarked that indigenous peoples aspired to have an education that: (1) has a curriculum that reflects their indigenous ways, knowledge, and understanding; (2) equips them the awareness to go back and serve their communities; and (3) instills the importance of preserving their cultural identity and protecting their ancestral lands because, for them, "land is life" (A, personal communication, 2021).

*International and Domestic Actors.* The analysis suggests that organizations, coalitions, and institutions involved in the policy change as established in the previous section were the *Actors*. The international actors are those that have influenced the Philippine Government in the external level. The UN, and ODA countries such as Japan, Australia and Germany are among the instrumental actors in the international level. On the other hand, among the domestic actors are the indigenous peoples, national coalitions such as CIPRAD and NICHE, DepEd and CHED.

*Constellations.* Scharpf (1997, p. 44) explains that *Constellations* are a composition of strategy options, as well as the preferences over these outcomes. Thus, the *Actors' Constellations* are suggested to be composed of series of international commitments, social movements, and internal projects for peacebuilding. For instance, international actors employed their soft power and influence of human security (Japan), conflict resolution (Germany) and theory of change (Australia) to upscale human development through their educational cooperation in Mindanao. In the domestic level, the locals such as indigenous peoples organized massive social movements to heighten the attention of the Government. Advocates formed national coalitions to support the aim of the indigenous communities in education. People who are closely involved in indigenous issues such as the Participants A, B and C, likely contribute direct influence on education agencies to reevaluate said educational policies.

*Modes of Interaction.* As previously noted from Scharpf (1997, p. 47), there are four possible

modes: *unilateral action*, *negotiated agreement*, *majority vote* and *hierarchical direction*. It is revealed that *negotiated agreement* is the most prevailing means of interaction employed by the *Actors* and their *Constellations* due to the dialogues and negotiations involved with the Philippine Government.

*Outcome.* The *Outcome* in this process is CMO2, which encapsulates the policy that approved the mainstreaming of indigenous knowledge in higher education.

*Policy Environment.* In this context, it is the setting that is influenced by the *Outcome* and influences the *Problem* in the future. Factors in the Policy Environment include two groups: the Domestic and International Policy Environments. The Domestic level contains the comprehensive legal framework that the Philippines has such as IHA, DepEd orders and CMO2. The International level contains the global commitments to which the Philippines is a signatory.

### 3.2 Discussion

Among the key takeaways from the policy analysis is that *negotiated agreement* took place because of the ongoing *Institutional Context* occurring in the background, as well as the *Problem* established in the policy process. There were involvements of dialogues and negotiations, and social movements which were the *Constellations* that appeared to be negotiating with the Philippine Government to agree with the *Actors'* public interests and aspirations. There was no involvement of *unilateral action* because, in the beginning, the Philippine Government and *Actors* involved had contrasting understandings of the education system. Although the Philippines is a democratic country, there was no involvement in voting for the policy change to happen because the subject matter at hand is handled by a niche population. These are the selected, concerned bodies involving the education sector, indigenous peoples, advocates, researchers, scholars, and so on. Therefore, crafting educational policy changes that allow the integration of indigenous knowledge does not require voting from the public. Lastly, there was no involvement of hierarchical direction because the policy formulation is involved with multiple bodies and *Actors* working together. *Negotiated agreement* is the mode of interaction because of the cooperation involved between *Actors* in negotiating major stakeholders in DepEd and CHED.

While *Constellations* proved to create huge impact to the change, however, their successes are not guaranteed as they are subject to testing and negotiation among the *Actors*. For instance, Participant A mentioned that there were disagreements in the realization of building the IPed Framework as educators in the past were to be reoriented and retrained for proper implementation of indigenous education. In addition, these educators and practitioners were also to be reoriented with the concept of 'indigenous' itself as it does not entirely exclude or 'other' indigenous peoples but to help realize them about the socio-cultural background of Filipinos, being as a colonized country (A, personal communication, 2021). Another issue tackled was when Participants B and C mentioned the narrowmindedness of existing policymakers in DepEd and CHED due to the ingrained "Luzon-centric" nature of the national curriculum. They also added that such a policy may take a long time to be properly implemented (B & C, personal communication, 2021).

Lastly, the timing of the *Institutional Context* present in the country, involving the transitioning government of Bangsamoro as part of the peace process, and the EFA agenda have set an enabling opportunity for *Actors* to relate their concerns. The initiatives of *International Actors* acted as guidance and peacebuilding facilitators that have directly and indirectly led the policy change through their recommendations and foreign aid assistance. The initiatives of *Domestic Actors* forefronted by indigenous peoples' social movements, supported by national coalitions and educators, and the fruitful negotiated agreements with education stakeholders have resulted in the *Outcome* that there is at present. Come 2019, CMO2 was issued. CMO2 was issued in 2019 due to the following: (1) it is among the implementing acts of IHA; (2) it is linked with the height of 2018 signing of new Bangsamoro transition policies; (3) more attention is given to the massive protests organized and more displacement issues that the indigenous peoples faced.

## **4. Conclusion**

### **4.1 Concluding remarks**

The analytical model of describing the policy change in higher education describes the dynamics of the influence and soft powers employed by *Actors* involved the policy change. Although they appear to be in clash of different approaches, the study reveals the interplay of international and domestic actors' approaches and influences.

It is interesting to note that the collective action of international and domestic actors played a vital role in influencing the Philippine Government to carry on the policy change. It is argued that mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in the higher education system took place in a *negotiated agreement* manner. As manifested in the case of the Philippines, it involved dialogues and negotiations, and social movements that persuaded the Philippine Government to agree with the actors' public aspirations and combat discrimination against Mindanaoans, including the indigenous peoples. Based on the framework employed, it is understood that the enabling *Institutional Context* and *Policy Environment* streamlined the process of negotiation due to the ongoing peace processes and transition of the Bangsamoro government in Mindanao.

Another key factor as to why there is a need for mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in the education curricula is the ongoing rapid globalization of education and the challenge that EFA poses in the global governance of education. The need for mainstreaming indigenous knowledge is a way forward promoting cultural diversity and awareness of indigenous peoples. Mainstreaming indigenous knowledge also stresses the importance of promoting ways to address discrimination and alienation against the people at all levels, including the higher education system.

### **4.2 Scope and limitations**

The present findings must be taken in the context of several potential limitations. The study possesses data that are gathered from the perspectives of members of actors involved in the policy change, including CHED and TWG members. Their views reinforce the need for the involvement

of indigenous peoples in policy directions, consultations, and crafting. However, it is suggested that further interviews with a larger body of policymakers involved in the peacebuilding processes can be done to further explore the connection of peacebuilding and mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in the quest of realizing peaceful and inclusive societies.

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