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Non-Moro IP Inclusion in Education Governance: Historical Notes on Institutional Policies and IP Population in MSU-IIT, Iligan City

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a historical overview of institutional initiatives concerning the inclusion of Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples as indicators of good governance in education. This underscores the importance of not only integrated but an inclusive education for every student from both the mainstream and the margins. Gleaned from the experience of MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), this study elaborates the following: (1) what are the policies and programs contributing to the inclusion of Non-Moro IPs in MSU-IIT, and (2) how MSU-IIT administered the Non-Moro IP population and what are the challenges encountered. This research utilized qualitative methods with data coming from MSU-IIT offices and online databases, corroborated with purposive-snowball interviews. Discussions show that the IP students have faced a number of obstacles that have interfered with their college experience, whether they relate to admissions or retention including dropping out of classes, financial constraints and struggle in major coursework leading to the necessary improvement on their overall scholastic performance. MSU-IIT has also responded to the challenge of exclusion through, but not limited to, the General Education Program, the Five-Year Development Plan covering Education and Student Support Pillars, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) Policy, and other academic and non-academic pathway initiatives.

KEYWORDS

Non-Moro IPs,
Inclusive
Education, Iligan
City, Integration,
MSU-IIT

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples' education has long been identified as a key priority area in the Philippines based on the arrayed national laws and policies that were promulgated to effect integration. Besides this state agenda are the international promotions against discrimination in education by UNDRIP, UNESCO and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the Indigenous Peoples. While these created opportunities to receive education on paper, it is yet to probe if IPs are actually included in admission policies in higher education and to check their turn-outs in terms of retention and completion. This is a matter of policy priority which can only be achieved through good and effective governance (GIZ, 2022).

Existing literature shows that indicators of good governance in education include policies and programs that uphold the rights of the students coming from both the mainstream and the margins. Kadir (2019) argued that good governance in education is also "...concerned with how a school system composes policies, produces funds and expend funds, teacher preparation for teaching, scheming curricula and administration of school population" (p.2). In the case of the Philippines, De Guzman (2003) specifically identified some programs from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) such as the *Expanded Access to Educational Opportunities* which features financial assistance programs catering different sectors including students and tertiary faculty members from cultural communities. Another program is the *Greater Access to Educational Services*, an education assessment scheme that recognizes knowledge, skills and prior learning obtained by individuals from non-formal and informal educational experiences.

Previous studies also revealed that policy formulation concerning inclusive education for the IPs must also engage the non-IP stakeholders. Burm (2019) exemplified the case of Canada that introduced an education policy with their Inuit population, which also supported the non-IP educators "...in increasing their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, so they can begin to integrate Indigenous material and teaching methods into their classrooms in respectful and meaningful ways" (p.73). In the Philippines however, despite that the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) is considered a landmark legislation, limitations are still existent in mechanisms and in promoting awareness even amongst IPs and its stakeholders on its inclusive framework and provisions. Eduardo and Gabriel (2021) cited the Dumagat experience in the provinces of Nueva Ecija and Aurora, whose dismal state in education led them to the perception that IPRA rights are more of a tokenism to the IPs. The right to education is not fully enjoyed because of socioeconomic injustices and the educators are not also trained in most IP curricula. ADB (2012), citing Thorat (2006), further noted that the steep access and participation in higher education is also due in part to the demanding and restrictive characters of scholarships as privilege grants for admission. Failure to avail such prerogative will introduce the students to the annual entrance examinations where competition is extremely high, and failure to pass these tests means slim chances and opportunities to experience university education. As found out by Simeon, et.al (2017) and Otano, et.al (2022), these scenarios were experienced by the IP students in MSU-IIT who divulged that in

recent years, issues and challenges have emerged such as the application of standardized entrance examinations regardless of their capacities and preparations as IP examinees. In non-curricular concerns, IP students felt socioculturally excluded with the lack of student organization inside the campus, not to mention the transportation and financial difficulties faced even before the examination and admission. Their findings that were based on the IP students' lived experiences however lack the perspectives of MSU-IIT and the insights of its administrators on inclusive education. Reviewing the school policies on inclusive education for the IPs is therefore the task at hand, in the context of MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), an educational hub in Southern Philippines which is home to the country's largest IP population. While MSU-IIT has long been extending its meaningful programs and services to the general populace as its mission, this present inquiry focuses on how marginalized communities, such as the IPs, are reasonably accommodated in the University.

With these, the general questions of this research are the following: (1) what are the policies and programs contributing to the inclusion of Non-Moro IPs in the University? and (2) how has the University been administering the Non-Moro IP students inside the campus and what are the challenges encountered? It is hoped that the knowledge produced through this research will underscore the importance of not only integrated but an inclusive education for every student coming from both the mainstream and the margins. As a balancing act, this study not only acknowledges the accounts of the IPs for college aspirations but also documents how national-line agencies like MSU-IIT are working towards its realization. The gaps that will be presented by these historical notes may serve as a guide for future policymakers in their continuing efforts. It is worthy to note however that despite the research being guided by the elements of good education governance as stated by Kadir (2019), the paper does not cover the expenditure of funds, and curriculum preparation and delivery, thus teachers and non-IP students' experiences pertaining to the topic are not discussed. Historical notes are only about MSU-IIT policies and IP population, with the latter furtherly discussed following Risteska, et.al (2010) who described the inclusion/administration of the IPs students in terms of the following: a) admission and enrolment b) attendance and completion; and c) attainment of maximum abilities. The IP population herein is presented as qualitative data to describe historical changes of their numbers during admission and enrollment over a specified period of time.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in MSU-IIT, one of the 11 campuses in the Mindanao State University System (MSUS). Located in Iligan City, Northern Mindanao, it provides quality education not only to the Settlers and Moros but also to the Non-Moro IPs whose inclusion in education is the main inquiry of this paper. As mentioned also, this paper does not focus on the intricacies of policy analysis, but rather, a historical overview on the programs and initiatives in MSU-IIT.

Hence, historical methods were employed through archival documentation complemented with oral history. Reviewed primary documents were from MSU-IIT offices such as the Office of Institute Secretary (OIS), the Center for Information and Communication Technology (CICT), Office of Student Development Services (OSDS formerly Department of Student Affairs, and even information from the official university website.

This study has interviewed a total of 14 key-informants (7 teaching and non-teaching personnel; 5 IP students; and 1 IP staff from the LGU-IPMR). Selecting the research participants followed the purposive-snowball sampling procedure and personal and virtual interviews with them were set from November 2022-May 2024. Prior consents were obtained which informed the purpose of the study and the nature of data to be collected. Interview transcripts also served as sources and all data were subjected to the standard external and internal criticisms. No personal data of Non-Moro IP students and school administrators were used in this paper without their expressed consent. In terms of the IP students' individual profiling, this study was only permitted to secure the general list of ethnic groups from where they belong. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, MSU-IIT does not authorize access to other personal information.

Lastly, this study is not covered by the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), particularly under the provisions of Administrative Order 01, s. 2012, Section 7, "The Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) and Customary Laws (CLs) Research and Documentation Guidelines of 2012." Noting cultural sensitivity, this paper does not encompass discussions on their traditional knowledge, culture, and heritage. This paper only cites the experiences of Non-Moro IP students in MSU-IIT as an integral component for policy formulation, adoption, and implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Non-Moro IPs and National Mandates on Integration and Inclusive Education: A Historical Overview

The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA) or RA 8371 defines the Indigenous Peoples (IP)/Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICC) in the Philippines as "homogenous societies that have continuously lived as organized community since time immemorial that became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. The ICCs/IPs include peoples who are regarded as indigenous at the time of the colonization or the establishment of the present state" (Official Gazette, Republic Act No. 8371, <https://shorturl.at/jDW17>). In Mindanao context, Rodil (1973), sorted the indigenous groups in the region into three: the indigenous Christians (e.g. Iliganon), the Lumad, and the Moros - the latter two being collective terms for its native and Islamized peoples, respectively. Many do not recognize the Moros as IPs as the term is popularly identified only with the Lumad.

Apparently, the NCIP included seven Moro groups in their IP listing while there are 18 for the non-Moro IPs which are the following: Subanen, B'laan, T'boli, Mandaya, Mansaka, Tiruray, Higaonon, Manobo, Bagobo, Bukidnon, Tagakaolo, Ubo, Banwaon, Kalagan, Dibabawon, Talaandig, Mamanwa and Manguangan. They also make up the largest number of IPs in the country (Cariño, 2012, 4-5).

Commission on National Integration and the Creation of MSUS (1950s-1960s)

Predating the historic passage of IPRA in 1997, there were already precursors that acknowledged the IPs through the state's integrationist policies. The Commission on National Integration (CNI) was established in 1957, out of the Bureau of Non-Christian tribes during the American colonial period. This recognized the need to unify and integrate the people, as a result of the growing "disenchantment" of the Non-Moro IP with the National Government's programs (Jubair, 1999, 124). This law opened the floodgates of opportunities to all the national cultural communities of the country. The provisions of the law were administered by the CNI, which was a creation of the law itself. However, because of its gigantic tasks, limited funding and poor administration, the agency found itself unable to carry out its mandate fully. More than ten years later, the CNI dissolved. When this agency was dissolved, the responsibility of educational integration and advancement was passed on to Mindanao State University (MSU) (Jubair, 1999).

As amended, MSU was created under Republic Act No. 1387 enacted on June 18, 1955 by the Philippine Congress. On September 1, 1961, it was formally established in Marawi City with Dr. Antonio Isidro as its founding president (Isidro, 1968). The 1954 Congressional Committee conceptualized it as a social laboratory for national integration.

Moreover, under section No. 17, all scholarship funds intended for the non-Christian tribes provided for under any law or Executive Order shall be transferred to MSU. Its disposition according to such law shall be handed by the Board of Regents. Any scholarship funds designated for Non-Christian tribes as specified in any law or Executive Order will be moved to MSU as outlined in the Republic Act 1893.

The MSUS is the only university system in the Philippines with a special mandate of integrating the cultural communities, providing them with opportunities for quality and relevant public education for their self-development and manpower skills and technical know-how for economic development (Senate Bill No. 1224).

Based on the creation and mandates of the MSU system, MSU-IIT has its own focus particularly on technology and science (Republic Act No. 5363). In an interview with the Board Secretary II/OIS, Selah Lemma Mae O. Cabasag noted that MSU-IIT has a distinct role that is focused on technology and science, whereas the chartered mandate of MSU-Marawi was to achieve integration. Examining the university's mandate and policies is necessary in order to integrate students and take admissions into consideration without limiting their accommodations (Personal communication, May 7, 2024).

PANAMIN, ONCC/OSCCs, and the 1987 Constitution (1970s-1980s)

Matters concerning IPs were placed under the Office of the President with the appointment of the Presidential Assistant on National Minorities (PANAMIN) in 1968. The authority of PANAMIN was enhanced by PD No. 1414 in 1978, mandating the 'national minorities' to formally register with the national government to gain recognition. While Marcos decreed retention of the term "national minority," it introduced the use of "ethnic groups" to refer to IPs for the first time. Similarly, the policy principle contained in the legislation appears to have slightly deviated from indigenous peoples' past perspectives.

The P.D. 1414 highlights a complex relationship between the state and IPs, in terms of lands and resources but still, the administration by then still aimed for integration despite the shift in strategies (Calde, 2017). PANAMIN was then dissolved in 1985, and the Office of Northern/Southern Cultural Communities (ONCC/OSCC) was established. This time, the emphasis is on the cultural distinctions of the ICCs.

The recognition of IPs was also determined through the Philippine Constitution's concept of "integration." Both the 1973 and 1987 versions called for the mainstreaming of IPs in the body politic through the supposed improvement of their socioeconomic conditions. The 1973 Philippine Constitution restates the government policy on the national minorities: (a) Act XV, Sec. 11, the State shall consider the customs, traditions, beliefs and interest of national cultural communities, in the formulation and implementation of state policies; and (b) Act XV, Sec. 9 (2) further states that Filipino culture shall be preserved and developed for national identity.

Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (1990s-2000s)

In 1997, IPRA also known as Republic Act 8371, was created to serve as one of the legal bases for institutions to provide a strong policy formulation for the IP's Right to Education. Section 4, Rule VII, Part VI of the IRR mandates the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to consult and collaborate with the stakeholders including CHED. This also includes public and private institutions towards the development of appropriate programs and projects. In terms of education, Section 25 of IPRA guarantees that IPs/ICCs have the right to the government's basic services. Section 28 of the said law speaks of integrated system of education that implies, "The State shall, through the NCIP, provide a complete, adequate and integrated system of education, relevant to the needs of the children and young people of ICCs/IPs" (Official Gazette, Republic Act No. 8371, <https://shorturl.at/jDW17>).

Integrated History Act of 2016 and CMO No. 2, series of 2019

In an attempt to create an inclusive curriculum that accounts for all Filipinos, the State has sponsored the Republic Act No. 10908 of 2016, also known as Integrated History Act. This law aims for the inclusion of Filipino-Muslim and Indigenous Peoples' history, culture, and identity in the study of Philippine history in both basic and higher education.

Another landmark legislation is the CMO No. 2, s. 2019 or the 'Integration of Indigenous Peoples' (IP) Studies/Education into the Relevant Higher Education Curricula. This is in accordance with the pertinent provisions of RA No. 7722, otherwise known as the 'Higher Education Act of 1994'. CHED has approved the offering of IP studies/education with the purpose of addressing issues confronting the country's indigenous communities as stipulated in the Integrated History Act. Through this, all public and private higher education institutions are enjoined to offer IP-related studies in higher education subjects such as history, social sciences, political sciences, sociology, humanities, and many more.

***MSU-IIT Policies and Programs on Inclusive Education
General Education Program***

The General Education program of MSU-IIT started in the 1970s before it was lodged to the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS) in 2001 (Roscom, May 7, 2024). Its transition to CASS Special General Education Night Program, popularly called as 'Ged-Ed', was then designed for students who did not reach the cut-off score in the MSU Systems Admission and Scholarship Examination (SASE) in the different regular courses offered in the Institute. Nevertheless, the offering of 'Gen-Ed' is also a form of community service from the University because it provides opportunities for quality education at a very affordable price as compared to other schools and colleges. Because of the program's effective mechanism, MSU-IIT demonstrates the State mandate of protecting and promoting the right of all citizens to quality education, as stipulated in the Philippine constitution. Despite the scarcity of records, former Coordinator of Gen-Ed, Assoc. Prof. Manolita Regalado, vaguely recalled that there were a handful of indigenous students admitted in the program (Personal Communication, 2022). This by then became one of the initiatives of MSU-IIT in accommodating indigenous students regardless of the SASE results.

Promotion and Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Through the efforts of CASS in 2019, there was a proposal in creating an office specifically intended not just on the preservation and promotion of the rich cultural heritage but also, in amplifying the unheard voices of the indigenous peoples in Mindanao. Through BOR Resolution No. 151, series of 2020, this proposed office was approved and granted to operate under the name, Mindanao History, Heritage, and Indigenous Learning Center (MHHILC). In 2023, MHHILC was renamed as Mindanao Heritage and Indigenous Research Center (MHIRC).

Without much difference from the previous epithet, the Center conforms to the concept of inclusivity by pursuing initiatives for the development of indigenous communities. Serving as a platform, the Center has initiated educational engagements as means of preserving the traditional knowledge and material culture of IPs through fora, exhibits, documentation of indigenous language for instructional materials, among others. This is in collaboration with NCIP and the Higaonon communities in Opol, Misamis Oriental and Iligan, Lanao del Norte.

Five-Year Development Plan (5YDP)

In 2022, MSU-IIT lays down six vision pillars that align with the mandates of the MSU System. This also adheres to the goals of the Philippines as outlined in AmBisyon Natin 2040 and the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. Among these, the Education pillar of MSU-IIT is formulated for enhanced quality of its academic programs through improved access to and inclusion in tertiary and advanced education. From zero to less visibility before, it is projected by 2026 that there will be an increasing quantity of indigenous students admitted in the University, four times than the baseline 40 (MSU-IIT Five Year Strategic Roadmap, 2022).

Another vital pillar is on Student Support which prompted MSU-IIT in setting out policy implementations in 2022 which includes the inclusivity in admission policies and scholarship schemes through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Services (OVCSS) and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (OVCAA) (MSU-IIT Five Year Strategic Roadmap, 2022, p. 30). MSU-IIT is certainly guided by the Strategic Objective 3 of the 5YDP in nurturing an inclusive campus atmosphere that appreciates and promotes individuality, diversity, and equality (MSU-IIT Five Year Strategic Roadmap, 2022, p. 32).

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Framework/Policy

The MSU Board of Regents approved MSU-IIT's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) Policy on December 12, 2023. This policy serves as a significant step in promoting diversity and ensuring equal opportunities in the University. Under its Article IV, Declaration of Principles, the University is also committed in recognizing the importance of representation not just on the student bodies, but also amongst the faculty and staff to enhance cross-cultural competencies. These necessitate programs and services that are also accessible and equitable to all individuals such as the marginalized. Notably under Article V and Article IX, indigenous students are identified as among the beneficiaries of the support services and resources addressing their specific needs, and this includes various financial aid options and scholarships (Proposed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Policy, BOR Resolution No. 59, 2023).

Administration of School Population: IP Students in Focus
Admission and Enrolment in MSU-IIT

School administration is not all about policy formulation and implementation but it is also about providing solutions for students' issues and problems "...leading eventually to the progress of the community and upgrading its level" (Badarna and Ashour, 2016, 182). According to Dr. David N. Almarez, the *raison d'être* of MSU-IIT may be to provide quality and inclusive education, but many IP students are still excluded because of socioeconomic reasons, which administrators must be concerned about. The former Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, emphasized the value of administering students from admission to graduation which is essential in education governance (personal communication, April 16, 2024).

In MSU-IIT, the DSA was supplanted with the creation of the OVCSS under BOR Resolution No. 50, series of 2019, in compliance to CHED Memorandum Order No. 09 s. 2013 that enhances the policies and guidelines on Student Affairs and Services (Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Services (OVCSS), <https://www.msuiit.edu.ph/offices/ovcss/index.php>). Dr. Marie Joy D. Banawa, the inaugural Vice Chancellor in 2019 believes that greater attention should be invested in students through enhanced learning experience and holistic development (personal communication, May 7, 2024). OVCSS monitors student services that include scholarships, tutorials, guidance and counseling, student housing, student organizations, student discipline, sports, cultural activities, health wellness and food services (Overview, OVCSS, para. 4), albeit none are designed to meet the unique socio-economic needs of IP students. Ms. Selah Cabasag of OIS cited that MSU-IIT has neither student data nor scholarship for IPs because MSU-IIT has been inclusive for everyone. MSU-main campus records their numbers as basis for admission and scholarship slots reserved for Moros and IP students under Cultural Groups Scholarship (CG) (Cabasag, personal communication, May 6, 2024; Banawa, PC, May 7, 2024). Less wonder, databases of MSU-IIT have presented little to no information on the IP student population since 1968. The OIS staff member further explained the limited space of MSU-IIT as much as it wanted to accommodate more. Thus, University admission has been prioritized to SASE passers - whether they are IPs or not.

According to the IT Officer of CICT, Mr. Richard Micubo, all this time, MSU-IIT has not kept admission and enrollment records of IP students (personal communication, May 7, 2024). What the CICT and OUR have are estimations based on SASE application forms. From this process, Mr. Micubo provided the following information on SASE IP takers, passers and enrollees for four preceding academic years, as well as records on SASE applicants representing various ethnic groups, including Subanen, B'laan, T'boli, Mandaya, Mansaka, Tiruray, Higaonon, Manobo, Bagobo, Bukidnon, Tagakaolo, Ubo, Banwaon, Kalagan, Dibabawon, Talaandig, Mamanwa and Manguangan (data retrieved from MSU-IIT Information and Communication Technology Center, 2022).

Table 1. Non-Moro IP Takers, Passers and Enrollees (2018-2022)
 Source: CICT, 2023

Academic Year	No. of Takers	Passers	Enrolled
2018-2019	562	246	125
2019-2020	873	225	102
2020-2021	784	187	60
2022-2023	789	561	34

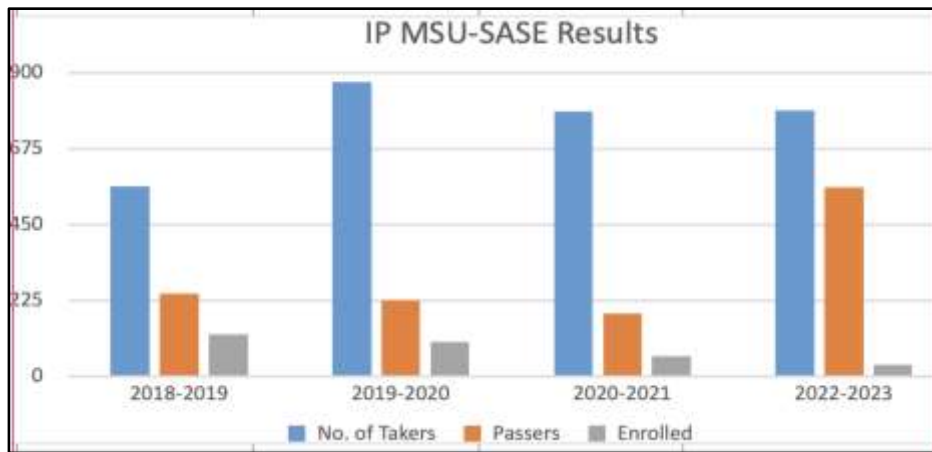


Figure 1. Graphical Representation of SASE Data of IP Takers
 (Source: CICT, 2023)

From an average of 16,000 SASE takers who indicated MSU-IIT as their campus of choice (Office of the Campus Secretary, MSU-IIT, 2024), the above-shown figures present that in AY 2018-2019, out of 562 IP takers, only 246 passed, equivalent to 1.53% of the total examinees. In AY 2019-2020, only 1.40% of the SASE passers were IPs; in AY 2020-2021 is 1.16% while in AY 2022-2023, the data show the highest number with 561 passers who are IPs (3.5%). The spike in this period must be due to the resumption of SASE testing and face-to-face learning mode, after the two-year pandemic. It is unfortunate to note though that only 34 of the 561 passers actually enrolled out of the almost 3,000 freshmen enrollees in the First Semester of AY 2022-2023. In its entirety, out of the 12, 233 students in MSU-IIT in 2022, 387 students belong to the indigenous groups, in which 158 are Non-Moro IPs (Students, Annual Report MSU-IIT, 2022). The latter comprises 1.29% of the total student population.

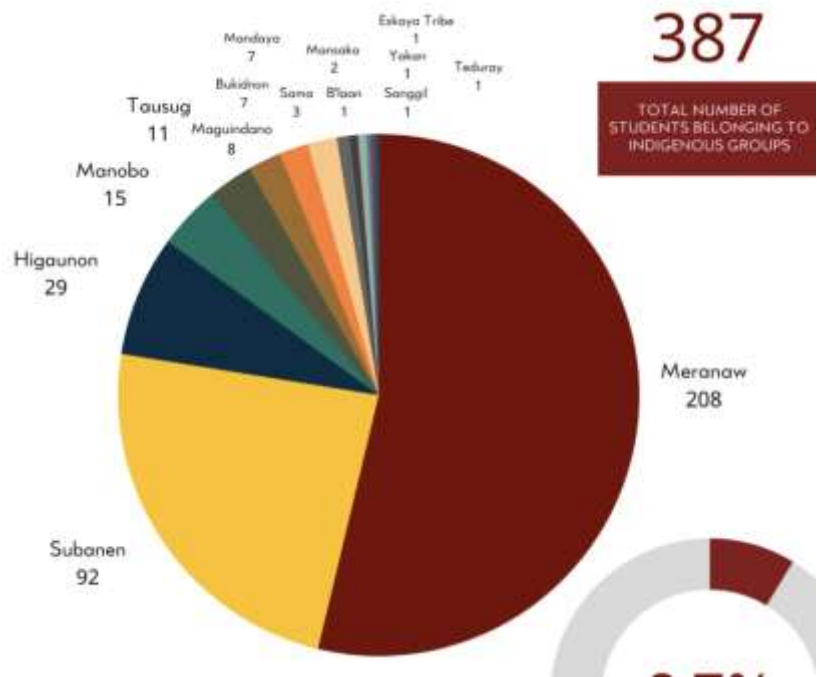


Figure 2. Students belonging to Moro and Non-Moro IPs in AY 2022-2023
 (Source: MSU-IIT Annual Report 2022)

The Non-Moro IP students that are a fraction of the populace is actually a numerical progress from the enrolment figures of the 1960s. The first classes that opened on June 13, 1962 with 282 students (Loable, 2008) in MSU-main campus had no IPs. Prof. Melvin Roscom, former DSA Director, recalled that in their pioneering batch, only Moros from the Tausug, Meranaw, Sama groups were present (personal communication, May 7, 2024). And in MSU-IIT, since 1968, IP student population is relatively invisible until computerization started in 1996 and student records are gradually imported to the electronic School Management System or eSMS (Annual Report MSU-IIT, 2021, p. 61) Even since then, MSU-IIT Annual reports show the number of students and their distributions only in terms of region, religion and sex, but not their ethnic or IP affiliations. As mentioned in the preceding section, the year 2022 seems to be a turning point for the conceptualization of the EDI framework. Its BOR approval in 2023 poses a change on how the admission process will proceed with its recognition of the diversity of the students. OIS reported that in the academic year 2024-2025, 10% of SASE applicants will be screened for admission based on different criteria including indigenesness, that is to say:

“Admissions based on the application of the University’s EDI Policy shall be admitted using the following criteria: SASE rating (25%); High School Grades General Average (10%); Financial Status (25%); EDI policy and other protected characteristics (indigenouness, gender) that warrant recognition and support (40%) (para. 19).”

This “revolutionary admission reform” that provides special consideration to IP applicants is also an opportunity for MSU-IIT to finally determine their population and monitor their progress inside the campus. A prospective issue however looms on the horizon and that is the emergence of “fake IPs” carrying NCIP certificates, that may be secured through deception (Bae Wilma Bado, personal communication, August 11, 2023).

Attendance and Completion of Formal Education

In an interview with the University Registrar, Mr. Ricardo Enguito confirmed that at present, MSU-IIT is yet to develop a tracking application in the eSMS (electronic School Management System) for students who have dropped out of classes and have filed official leave of absence (personal communication, May 7, 2024). In other words, MSU-IIT has no way of monitoring IP enrollees whether they have stopped in their studies or have completed their courses. An informal group of IP students named as “*Kabatan-unang Lumad sa MSU-IIT*” co-organized by MHIRC in November 2022 includes IP students who faced such a dilemma. A Higaonon named “Saira” had left school due to financial constraints while Louie Salahay, a a BS Biology Higaonon student, took a rest in the 1st semester of AY 2023-2024 due to academic struggle in major coursework (personal communication, May 8, 2024). Both IP students received program advising and since Mr. Salahay’s leave of absence was administered by OUR; he was able to return to MSU-IIT the following semester. In the same vein, a Higaonon freshman named “Marie” encountered the same academic struggle especially in passing Science and Mathematics major courses but was advised to improve scholastic performance in order to shift to her desired program (personal communication, May 8, 2024).

Financial constraints and academic struggles are seen as few hurdles for many IP students to finish university. As support services to them, OSDS has offered programs on loans, summer employment and student assistantship for financial assistance. In response to academic struggles, the Office of Guidance Counseling, still under OVCSS cluster, has Student Peer Facilitation and Peer Tutorial, as auxiliary services that provide tutorial opportunities to students (“Students”, MSU-IIT Annual Report, 2022, p.57). In 2023, the Center for Learning and Academic Support Services (CLASS) was created to respond to the varying and unique needs of MSU-IIT students, including the IPs. However, it is worthy to note that based on MSU-IIT news archive, CLASS is yet to sponsor an activity or program for IP students (CLASS, December 15, 2023) and PWD students (Buenafe,

OfCom, February 14, 2024). Meanwhile, for many IPs who got admitted in MSU-IIT and graduated with their respective degrees, the primary factor that motivated them to cross the finish line is poverty alleviation. Ms. Jonalyn Alivio, a Higaonon staff member in the Office of the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) of Iligan City shared that perseverance to improve the quality of life helped her graduate. In her experience, institutional support such as the General Education program and the City Mayor's Scholarship contributed for her to finish the Sociology program in 2004 (personal communication, May 9, 2024).

Generally, the IP students who have been interviewed thus far have faced a number of obstacles that have interfered with their college experience, whether they relate to admission or retention. There have been rare cases also where incoming freshmen students were able to secure and have presented NCIP Certifications despite not belonging to the indigenous peoples. Consequently, the University has unconsciously admitted these students. In terms of retention, dropping out of classes, financial constraints, and struggles in major coursework contributed to the need in improving their overall scholastic performance.

Maximizing IP Students' Abilities through Co-Curricular Activities

Learning goes beyond the four-walled classroom and the chalk and talk method. Aside from the cognitive domain, maximizing the students' abilities requires developing the psychomotors skills into elaborate performances. Dr. Rohane M. Derogongan, the Vice Chancellor for Student Services, shared that MSU-IIT has resident groups such as Kalimulan Dance Troupe and the MSU-IIT Integrated Performing Arts Guild (IPAG) as platforms for IP representation through performing arts (personal communication, April 13, 2024), especially that IPs are notably expressive cultures. Although data are not available to ascertain whether there are IP members in the aforementioned performing groups. In recent times, many IP students are also actively involved in university activities that showcase not just their strengths and abilities, but also their rich culture. Such are the recent events in 2023 when the "Kabatan-unang Lumad sa MSU-IIT" was invited by OSDS in February 2023 during the Campus Fair for student organizations. As meaningful as it is, the IP students have the opportunity to be seen, at the same time, occupy a space in a myriad of concerns in the campus. Their IP booth displayed their material culture and encouraged other IIT students in showing their awareness and empathy to the indigenous peoples in five-love languages.



Figure 4. IP Booth during the Campus Fair for Student Organizations, February 2023
(Photo taken by the Researchers)

John Dexter Callao, a Subanen Accountancy student, emerged as one of the champions at the the Asia Technological University Network (ATU-NET) Hackathon 2023 held on August 28-30, 2023 at Johor Bahru, Malaysia with their project called "GreenGenius" that is about reforestation initiatives in the ASEAN region that combines technology and sustainability ("MSU-IIT students triumph at ATU-NET Hackathon 2023 in Malaysia," September 2, 2023). In October 2023, during the National Indigenous Peoples Month celebration, Mr. Callao together with a fellow Higaonon student, Ms. Maria Victoria Bado, participated as resource speakers during the IP conversations on inclusive education, increasing awareness about their plight as indigenous students. Their material culture was also promoted during the PagtIPig Exhibit in which IP students provided many display items for cultural appreciation. Both of these events were organized by the Mindanao Heritage and Indigenous Research Center, co-organized by the Department of History through its Project Pasundayag.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study presents a historical overview of the policies, programs, and other initiatives related to the inclusion of Non-Moro IPs in higher education as gleaned from the experience of MSU-IIT. Through a descriptive-narrative approach, this paper also documents how the University framed its reasonable

accommodation of Non-Moro IPs in congruence with the national mandates and other programs, cognizant to the students' needs and aspirations.

Based on the narratives gathered from both teaching and non-teaching personnel, MSU-IIT indeed offers its own strategic role in the integration and/or inclusion of Non-Moro IPs. Using the lens of education governance, MSU-IIT has been delivering relevant institutional initiatives since its creation in the 1960s based on its mandate of integrating cultural communities. As a State University, its mandate and practices are coherent with the government's policies and concept of integration and the provisions on the Right to Education. Other initiatives include the General Education Program, the Five Year Development Plan (2022-2026), and its EDI Framework, and other measures of reasonable accommodation. However, it has difficulty in the identification and monitoring of IP population and in qualifying them to scholarship grants, which are supposed to be given preference to encourage them in completing tertiary education. Heeding to this, the crucial function of MSU-IIT as a social laboratory unit is to be responsive to the diverse needs of the IP students so as not to reduce the leverage for integration through inclusive education.

MSU-IIT by then, has experienced little significant time and effort because of the minimal fundamental knowledge concerning the educational needs, experiences, and sociocultural contexts of Non-Moro IPs. More so, the University has yet to evaluate its curriculum indigenization specific to the interfacing of indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices in classroom instruction. In terms of records, databases of MSU-IIT have presented little to no information on the IP student population making them relatively invisible until enhancements in the management system happened. This resulted in the difficulty of providing specific assistance to the Non-Moro IP students, who are also confronted with structural obstacles affecting their school retention. This conveys the idea that the less visible IP students are simply in survival mode struggling to reconcile individualistic needs with the existing university norms.

Nonetheless, the University dwells to its transformative role by gradually instituting educational and intercultural reforms including that of admission policies through increasing the degree of integration of IP students in education and social science curriculum/programs. To claim their place in the University, educational platforms, support services, and resources have been established by MSU-IIT including scholarships, financial aid, tutorials, guidance and counseling, sports, cultural activities, and other student services.

This study recommends that MSU-IIT should conduct a review not just on the historical development of interventions, but also a comprehensive policy analysis on the integration/inclusion of Non-Moro IPs across the years. This also includes the evaluation/assessment of initiatives or reforms, the need for student representation/organization, and even the would-be impact of the EDI framework/policy. As much as EDI is sparking a glimmer of hope for the university to be more inclusive, but with the involvement of the IP community, education governance in MSU-IIT may also contribute to better curriculum development and better administration of school population.

Cognizant to this, there should also be consistent consultation with the IP traditional leaders, the LGU-IPMR, and the NCIP in times when MSU-IIT is devising culturally-sensitive and inclusive rights-based systemic policies. In the assessment of benefits and effectiveness of such policies and programs, the stakeholders should also be involved in the process at least in the mid-year or before the start of the academic year. Through this, MSU-IIT may explore policy directions and support measures that would also consistently address the reasons for exclusion and retention problems amongst IP students.

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