



Article

Reviving the Past, Teaching the Future: The Role of Philippine Cultural Heritage in Curriculum Development of Teacher Education Programs

Focus

Aniza C. Gadaza¹, Alma B. Manera², Sharmina Dais Santos³, Cherry B. Alih³, Reymarie M. Caban⁴, and Alnadzma U. Tulawie⁵

¹Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University ²Cagayan State University ³Mindanao State University, Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography ⁴Apayao State College ⁵Sulu State University

Correspondence: agadaza@dmmmsu.edu.ph

Abstract

In this context of change, the infusion of cultural heritage in teacher education programs has become a key to pedagogical relevance, teacher identity development, and inclusion. This paper examined how Filipino cultural heritage, which include indigenous knowledge, values, oral traditions, and historical narratives, is manifested in the curricula of the teacher education programs of a number of HEIs. Through qualitative thematic analysis from interviews with teacher educators as well as with pre-service teachers, the study finds three main results. First, a number of lecturers are emergently domesticating curriculum by integrating cultural modules and community resources; however, the depth of integration varies. Second, cultural heritage heavily influences teachers' teaching identity and, by extension, their teacher identity, therefore having consequences for classroom management, moral instruction, and learner participation. Third, since the development of cultural and heritage mapping, indigenous studies centers, and community immersions, institutional practices for conserving culture have influenced creative culturally relevant curricula. Yet, the study also finds continuing struggle in mediating cultural relevance with standards-based academic expectations, pointing to continued systemic need for reform. The results also call for systemic alignment of policies, faculty development, and curriculum redesign that would promote cultural heritage as a central aspect of teacher preparation rather than symbolic inclusion. In this manner, HEIs develop as cultivators of educators who would be functioning in a global context but whose roots were grounded deeply on Filipino cultural identity.

Keywords: Intercultural Education, Higher Education, Philippines, Lived Experiences, Institutional Frameworks, Intercultural Competence.

Suggested citation:

Gadaza, A., Manera, A., Santos, S., Alih, C., Caban, R., & Tulawie., A. (2025). Reviving the Past, Teaching the Future: The Role of Philippine Cultural Heritage in Curriculum Development of Teacher Education Programs Focus. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, 7(SI2), 80-97. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iSI2.169>

Publisher's Note: IJCHR stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Introduction

In today's fast globalizing and digitalized world, education's nature and function (apart from disseminating knowledge) have changed from simple physical transport of ideas and resources to anchor points of geopolitical identity and culture. In the case of the Philippines, where diverse indigenous traditions, colonial pasts, and becoming-national histories collide, an equally urgent need arises to insert cultural education into teacher training programs. Teachers are not just the bearers of information but also cultural transmitters, responsible for passing down values, traditions, and local knowledge to the next generation. Consequently, immersion of Philippine cultural heritage in higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly in teacher education, is a *sine qua non* to promoting national identity and the relevance of education.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines advocates for developing culturally competent teachers who are sensitive to local culture yet dynamic and competitive in the world (CHED Memorandum Order No. 74, s. 2017). Nonetheless, today's learning environment tends to foreground coaching pedagogy and international benchmarking competencies from the West, pushing aside indigenous knowledge systems and cultural narratives (Dacuan, 2019). This imbalance begs critical questions about the cultural responsiveness of teacher education regarding the extent to which it mirrors, honors, and protects Filipino heritage.

While JHE research studies on heritage education in basic education (Esteban & Prill-Brett, 2017) or the integration of localized content in social studies (Nery & Talavera, 2021) are shedding light on certain aspects, there is a paucity of research on how Philippine cultural heritage is strategically and substantively incorporated into the curriculum design of teacher education programs. This gap is vast in pedagogical training, where future teachers need to learn theoretical and methodological instruments and develop cultural sensitivity, historical grounding, and recognition of indigenous knowledge.

The study fills that gap by examining the influence of cultural preservation strategies on the design of teacher education programs in HEIs. It aims to ascertain the effect of cultural heritage, which includes traditions, oral histories, indigenous practices, and local values, in developing pedagogical frameworks, syllabus content, and teaching methods. By focusing on the teacher, educator, and the student teacher, this study also intends to describe and understand how lived experiences of cultural heritage are conceptualized and interpreted in their professional formation.

The theoretical frameworks of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and Decolonial Theory (Mignolo, 2007) provide important analytical

lenses for analyzing this investigation. Culturally responsive teaching takes account of the wellspring of cultural knowledge, the life experiences, and the performance styles of diverse students as the best evidence for teaching them effectively. By contrast, decolonial theory questions the universality of Eurocentric forms of knowing in education and calls for attention to local, indigenous, and marginalized knowledges. Through these lenses, this study can question whether the teacher education curricula can be reformulated to be more inclusive, culturally responsive to Filipino contexts, and sensitive to local communities' educational needs and aspirations.

The value of this study is that it may provide insights for curriculum writers, teacher educators, and educational policymakers on the extent to which cultural heritage can be integrated into pre-service teacher education. In bringing to light best practices, exceptional challenges, and field-level voices, this research offers a more locally grounded and culturally responsive education. It also contributes to the expanding corpus of knowledge supporting the call for decolonizing education and thus for developing pedagogical spaces that promote, protect, and sustain cultural heritage in the work of nation-building.

Research Objectives

To gain a thorough understanding of how intercultural competence is being integrated into Philippine higher education institutions, several research objectives are necessary to guide the investigation.

1. Uncovering the Lived Experiences of Intercultural Education in Philippine HEIs
2. Exploring the Pedagogical Narratives Shaping Intercultural Competence
3. Mapping the Intercultural Landscape through case study analysis.

Research Methods

1. To explore how Philippine cultural heritage is integrated into the curriculum design of teacher education programs in higher education institutions (HEIs).
2. To investigate the perceptions and experiences of teacher educators and pre-service teachers regarding the role of cultural heritage in shaping pedagogical competencies.
3. To analyze the influence of institutional cultural preservation efforts on the development of contextually responsive and future-oriented pedagogical frameworks.

This objective investigates how HEIs' efforts to preserve and promote cultural heritage—through community engagement, research, and cultural activities—inform

the development of culturally grounded, innovative, and globally relevant teacher training programs. It also explores how these efforts shape educational goals that balance national identity with global competencies.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research design, adopting a phenomenological method to investigate the infusion of Philippine cultural heritage into the curriculum development of teacher education programs in the selected higher education institutions. The phenomenological method was deemed appropriate for this study, as it provided a deep insight into the perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of the curriculum developers, teacher educators, and pre-service teachers in the context of cultural heritage in pedagogical training. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. A purposive sampling method was applied to select participants with experience with curriculum planning, instruction, or curriculum narrative concerning heritage-based education. Those included faculty in the teacher education schools and colleges, curriculum designers, and student teachers from three public HEIs that were regarded for their cultural protection and heritage activities. Data was sourced based on the evidence sought, scrutinizing the participants who matched the selection criteria. Interviews were designed to request participants to share stories of their classroom and institutional practices. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and through video calls following participants' availability and the university's health protocols. All interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Data were manually coded from the transcripts, and emergent themes were spotted through iterative readings. The themes were then organized into broader classes according to the study's goals. Triangulation was utilized during data collection to support data credibility and take-outs contrasting multiple data highlights for validation, educators, students, and institutional records. Ethical considerations were considered in the data collection process. Informed consent was acquired from the participants, and their privacy and confidentiality were guaranteed. Participants were also notified that they had the right to opt out of participating at any time. The research complied with the university's research ethical guidelines.

Data Analysis and Results

How Philippine cultural heritage is incorporated into the teacher education curriculum in higher education institutions

As the field of Philippine higher education continues to evolve, there is an increasing realization that cultural heritage should be incorporated in the various aspects of the curriculum, most importantly in teacher education. In the preparation of prospective teachers into facilitators of learning and transmitters of culture, integration of the Filipinos' indigenous traditions, practices, historical accounts and cultural values in their academic preparation is necessary. On the one hand, such integration contributes to building a more conscious nation, and on the other hand, to maintaining educational approaches closer to learners' socio-cultural contexts. However, the level and quality of this integration differ greatly among higher education institutions (HEIs), indicating both good practices and considerable challenges. This paper attempts to investigate how the Philippine cultural heritage vis-à-vis teacher education as it filters into the curriculum designs of these teacher education institutions, the mechanisms utilized, the challenges faced, and the prospects for developing a responsive teacher education in a culturally pluralistic system.

Theme 1.1: Intentional Localization of Curriculum Content through Cultural Modules and Indigenous Knowledge Integration

Filipino cultural heritage is now being promoted in the education system by focusing on the context of Filipino history concerning Filipino culture. The curriculum from elementary to tertiary levels is being reviewed and revised. Localization entails that contents are rewritten and reloaded to become recognizable within regional identities, indigenous worldviews, and historical narratives to the local community. This is congruent with culturally responsive teaching and advances the decolonizing of the curriculum.

Responses from Participants:

A curriculum head from a state university shared, *"We revised our course syllabi to include topics on local epics, indigenous teaching methods, and cultural celebrations specific to our region. For example, in our Teaching Social Studies subject, students explore local heroes and oral traditions rather than relying on national figures. (Participant 2)* Another faculty member added, *"We also invited local culture bearers and historians to co-facilitate learning sessions—this gave students a grounded and authentic experience of their heritage."* (Participant 11)

These processes indicate deliberate consideration for valuing and promoting local knowledge systems. Using culturally situated content, they are maintaining their

heritage and preparing future educators to engage in pedagogy with a cultural lens. Nevertheless, the degree of localized studies differs from one institution to another, reflecting leadership, faculty specialization, and regional identity awareness.

Theme 1.2: Symbolic Inclusion of Heritage Themes without Deep Pedagogical Integration

While cultural heritage themes appear in course descriptions or institutional mission statements, their implementation in actual instruction tends to be superficial. Cultural content is sometimes presented as add-ons or isolated topics rather than integrated components of a broader pedagogical framework.

Responses from Participants:

A pre-service teacher remarked, *"We had a lesson on 'Filipino values and festivals, but it felt like a one-time topic. It was not connected to how we plan lessons or understand student diversity."* (Participant 9) Similarly, one faculty member noted, *"There are modules that mention 'Bayanihan' or 'Pamana,' but these are not linked to learning outcomes or assessment."* (Participant 5)

This indicates a mismatch between curricular goals and classroom practice. Symbolic inclusion of heritage elements may be a form of institutional alignment (or aspiration to this). However, its effect on teacher identity-building will likely be reduced without deep embedding in pedagogical practices. A Stronger Curriculum Development Process. More explicit is the need for a more deliberate and robust process for curriculum development that includes cultural learning outcomes, assessments, and pedagogical models embedded within culture.

Theme 1.3: Constraints in Institutional Support, Resources, and Faculty Training

Efforts to integrate Philippine cultural heritage into teacher education curricula face numerous institutional challenges, including limited access to local references, inadequate faculty training in heritage-based instruction, and insufficient support for interdisciplinary collaboration. Some HEIs also struggle with the tension between global competitiveness and national cultural preservation.

Responses from Participants:

One curriculum planner admitted, *"We want to incorporate local culture, but the references are scarce. Most of the textbooks are imported or generalized. It is hard to teach local literature without a formal archive or translated material."* (Participant 10) Another faculty member shared, *"Some professors still feel uncomfortable teaching indigenous content because they were not trained. We need more workshops and capacity-building on approaching this sensitively and correctly."* (Participant 3)

These limitations reflect structural barriers that hinder meaningful cultural integration in teacher education. While the willingness is present in many HEIs, sustainability requires institutional commitment through research funding, partnerships with local communities, and continuous professional development for faculty. Moreover, balancing promoting local cultural identity and meeting global academic standards remains a key challenge.

Integrating Philippine cultural heritage into teacher education curricula in HEIs exists on a spectrum, from genuine localization efforts to tokenistic representations. While some institutions have successfully developed culturally rooted programs through partnerships with local communities and interdisciplinary innovation, others struggle with depth, consistency, and resources. This highlights the need for a national framework or policy that supports culturally responsive teacher education and bridges the gap between curriculum design and practice.

The perspectives and experiences of teacher educators and pre-service teachers on how cultural heritage influences their teaching competencies.

Knowing how Sunday school teacher educators and pre-service teachers perceived and lived experiences of such things is an important means of assessing how Filipino cultural heritage influences pedagogical competencies. As teachers and learners, their experiences are explored to highlight the impact of students' cultural awareness, national identity, and heritage appreciation on their instructional discourse construction in classrooms and their educational understandings. In a multilingual, multicultural, and historically rich country such as the Philippines, these cultural dimensions are not tangential; they are a core feature of an education that is meaningful, inclusive, and locally contextualized. Nevertheless, despite its acknowledged importance, teachers often struggle to reconcile heritage-based praxis with programmed curricula and global standards. This research explores how cultural heritage is ingrained or entrenched in educators' professional identification, orientation, strategies, and ambitions as they prepare to educate future generations.

Theme 2.1: Cultural Heritage as a Foundation of Teaching Identity and Instructional Philosophy

The personal and professional identities of teacher educators and PSTs are deeply anchored in Philippine culture and tradition. Heritage is not only to be passed on as content, but it is to be raised as a lived tradition of who they are and what is right and wrong to them in the classroom. Embedded in community-oriented traditions, indigenous forms of knowledge, and enduring social comportments, Filipino culture

provides educators with an essential prism to examine their roles as teachers and preservers of national identity. Their identity construction is heavily embedded within their cultural experiences since childhood in their home or learning environments. It influences their values, pedagogical approach, and educational philosophies, and even directs their methodology for managing a classroom, discipleship, and character education. To further the internalization of and reorient teaching toward cultural heritage in ways that are holistic, empathetic, and based on the learner, such that teaching is firmly anchored on values such as the pakikipagkapwa, utang na loob, bayanihan, and malasakit.

Responses from Participants:

One teacher educator from a public university reflected, *"I grew up surrounded by local traditions, fiestas, rituals, oral stories, and now, these are central to how I view teaching. I always tell my students that understanding our culture helps us understand how learners think and behave. You cannot teach effectively if you do not recognize who they are."* (Participant 5) Another teacher-trainer emphasized the role of language and spirituality, stating, *"Even the way we speak, pray, and narrate stories carries deep cultural meaning. I bring these into my lectures not just to teach facts, but to shape values."*

A pre-service teacher echoed similar sentiments, saying, *"Learning about Filipino values like pakikipagkapwa and bayanihan helped me realize that teaching is not just academic work but about building relationships and community. When I teach, I am not just transferring knowledge, I am sharing who I am as a Filipino."*

These sentiments reflect a view that cultural heritage is woven into the professional soul of the educator. Their pedagogic philosophies are not only bound with theoretical constructions but ultimately rooted in cultural memory and collective identity. This grounding helps enable them to nurture through a culturally responsive lens. A lens that honors diversity, views moral development as central, and is community in nature. When teachers see themselves as channels of culture, their teaching becomes a task transcending the mere transfer of technical content; it becomes a commitment to cultural affirmation and nation-building. However, what is acknowledged is not the kind of culture of pedagogy we must grow up with inside ourselves, by which I mean, not dogmas we have to live up to, or perpetrate, but ways of thinking about what pedagogy can be that count. In contexts where standardized assessments and Western models of teaching and learning are prevalent, these culturally grounded pedagogies are in danger of becoming marginalized. Consequently, teacher educators must affirm and build on this background by including structured reflective activities, field immersions, and coursework validating

Filipino identity. Moreover, doing so elevates the premise that good pedagogy is grounded in evidence and must be culturally relevant.

Theme 2.2: Cultural Practices as Pedagogical Resources for Engagement and Inclusion

Folktales, traditional arts, rituals, native games, and community customs are significant to both preservation and pedagogical activities of Filipino culture. Such practices enhance pedagogy by creating culturally relevant portals for learning. Teachers and pre-service teachers have acknowledged that culturally relevant content increases student interest, especially in low socioeconomic status, urban, and/or indigenous regions. These methods affirm students lived experiences and identities, creating inclusive and empowering classrooms. Incorporating cultural practices as pedagogical resources eulogizes learner heritage and fosters critical thinking, collaboration, and valuing. These practices are consistent with constructivist and culturally responsive pedagogy that connect learning to the students' socio-cultural context.

Responses from Participants:

A faculty member from a regional state university said, *"I use local folktales and songs in teaching literacy. It helps bridge abstract concepts to students' real-life experiences, especially those from indigenous communities. They become more responsive and confident."*

Another teacher educator added, *"When I teach pedagogy, I use examples from our rituals like pagdadasal sa patay or pamamanhikan. These rituals teach respect, social roles, and empathy—qualities teachers must understand."*

A pre-service teacher shared, *"In my demo teaching, I incorporated the concept of pagtutulungan to explain teamwork in group activities. Students related to it immediately, and it encouraged more participation."*

These responses show how teaching something meaningful to students can be magical. Drawing from the learners' cultural background, educators establish a space of recognition where students can perceive and feel themselves. A cultural consonance also helps facilitate understanding, retention, and emotional bonding with content. This holistic approach provides a way to overcome educational injustice issues, particularly in the multicultural and multilingual classroom, where regular approaches tend to ghettoize populations of non-dominant cultural groups. These approaches also foster the transformation of the teacher from mere transmitters of knowledge to facilitators of dialogic and experiential learning that leads to a more profound grasp of the Filipino world view. However, despite the need for these practices in the field, they are still mainly done on an ad hoc basis, at the discretion of individual instructors, and the responsibility for giving teachers sufficient strategies to

create a social just classroom environment does not belong to teacher education programs. Making these culturally rooted practices institutionalized will help to guarantee their sustainability and scalability across fit educational contexts.

Theme 2.3: Tensions Between Cultural Appreciation and Academic Expectations

While teacher educators and pre-service teachers appreciate cultural heritage, they face challenges when applying such appreciation within rigid administrative guidelines. This includes common educational standards for learning outcomes, mandatory curriculum content, exam content, and international educational standards emphasizing technical knowledge over contextual relevance. This is the tension in which teachers find themselves: if everyone assumes integration of culture is optional and peripheral, not structural or critical. The growing focus on internationalization, digitalization, and English-medium instruction sometimes marginalizes heritage-based content, which is viewed as less “competitive” or quantifiable. Consequently, cultural education often gets short shrift or is superficially integrated into teacher training programs.

Responses from Participants:

A teacher educator expressed, *“Sometimes, we want to focus on local culture, but we are also pressured to prepare students for licensure exams and international teaching standards. It is hard to do both when time and content are limited.”*

Another faculty member added, *“There is a mismatch, on paper, we claim to be culturally responsive, but our assessments and training still prioritize global frameworks over local realities.”*

A pre-service teacher noted, *“We were taught about multicultural education and inclusive pedagogy, but not always about how to systematically connect it with our own Filipino culture.”*

This understanding can help identify systemic challenges that limit cultural heritage’s full and rich integration in teacher education. While cultural layers are traditionally recognized in mission statements and beginning courses, they are not developed, organized, or sustained through the program. The present education system believes more in adding rather than integrating cultural knowledge. This disjunct provides a source of confusion to the pre-service teachers as they attempt to reconcile their heritage with systems of standardized academic measurement. To close this gap, curriculum reform would need to be based on aligning national education growth aspirations with cultural relevance through the integration of cultural content into the professional subjects in education, setting licensure standards in line with locally relevant cultural competencies, and investing in the training of the faculty

towards authentic heritage-based pedagogy. Only through such reforms can the symbolic inclusion of cultural appreciation be raised to a level of essential contributions to pedagogical excellence.

Examination of the experiences of Philippine national culture for teacher educators and pre-service teachers indicates that it has a considerable impact on teaching identity, teaching ideology, and classroom pedagogy. Although pedagogical use of cultural practices is being deployed actively to motivate learners and cultivate inclusiveness, systemic barriers such as standardized curriculum and academic demands often hamper its application. These tensions highlight the importance of policy and curricular reforms acknowledging cultural relevance as core—not peripheral—to teacher preparation. By institutionalizing context-based approaches and integrating them with national mandates, the HEIs can produce an educator generation that is globally competent and deeply rooted in the Filipino masses' values, histories, and traditions.

The Influence of Institutional Cultural Preservation

As Philippine HEIs are accustomed to defining themselves as sites for intellectual formation and the conservation of culture, cultural preservation has substantial implications for how our teacher education development and delivery programs are framed. These efforts, from community-based cultural mapping and heritage festivals to establishing indigenous knowledge centers, are more than just symbolic recognition. They inform the generation of pedagogical models founded on Filipino ethos while adapting to the requirements of a globalized education. This research investigates how institutionalized cultural preservation endeavors such as this shape the trajectory of locally relevant and future-oriented teacher education curricula. The article considers how HEIs attempt to reconcile the preservation of national identity by preparing educators with global teaching competencies. By understanding this, the term has much to contribute to the search for how to embed heritage within the experience and learning of teacher training, creating effective teachers in multicultural classrooms, and connected to the nation's cultural narratives.

Theme 3.1: Institutionalization of Culture-Based Programs as Catalysts for Curriculum Innovation

A few HEIs may have institutionalized culture-based initiatives, including heritage festivals, indigenous studies, community immersion activities, and research institutions related to local knowledge systems. Not only do these programs function as cultural repositories, but they also become sites for curriculum development and

pedagogical experimentation. Those who have been part of the said projects noted teaching materials, community-based content, and situation-driven teaching processes that mirror the living situations of the Filipino learners, as inspired by cultural preservation.

Responses from Participants:

A university extension coordinator stated, *"Our partnership with local communities through our cultural mapping project has led us to create new instructional modules grounded in the actual traditions of the region. Our curriculum now uses these to teach Araling Panlipunan and Filipino."*

Another faculty member shared, *"Through our Center for Indigenous Knowledge, we developed teaching guides on local rituals, oral literature, and traditional ecological knowledge. This shifted how we design lesson plans, from abstract theory to lived cultural experiences"*.

These examples demonstrate that when cultural preservation is invested, the result is more beneficial than just cultural events, whose impact runs through pedagogical transformation. When grounded in real cultural environments, curriculum innovations at HEIs create teacher education courses that are academically based and socially and culturally relevant. Integrating this kind of curriculum aims to produce teachers who are mindful of the communities they are teaching and can design meaningful, inspired learning experiences for their students.

Theme 2: Community Engagement as a Pedagogical Laboratory for Future Teachers

Such institutions, where communities are partners in preserving indigenous knowledge, tend to grant thousands of students of education non-theoretical learning experiences. Community Practice: Some, such as community-based learning, where future teachers participate in rituals of the local or indigenous community, document oral and local traditions, or help with local cultural events, offer an enlightening "real-life" laboratory to understand context, diversity, and the cultural roots of the pedagogy.

Responses from Participants:

One pre-service teacher said, *"We were sent to a community that still practices their indigenous dances and storytelling. Being there helped me realize how culture shapes how people learn, relate, and teach. It made me rethink my teaching strategies."*

Another educator reflected, *"Community engagement is more than outreach; it is a living curriculum. The learners teach us as much as we teach them. It is where we see culture in action."*

Community engagement refocuses the students as cultural participants, not just knowledge recipients. It is a tool that can enable teacher trainees to perceive the dynamic interdependence of education and society. Such experiences frequently produce humility, cross-cultural sensitivity, and a refreshed respect for alternative learning systems, which are important for teachers in an increasingly multicultural and globalized world. Schools incorporating service into their curriculum are building models for moving students toward a curriculum that combines social utility with intellectual rigor.

Theme 3: Balancing National Identity Formation with Global Teaching Competencies

Consequently, one of the most important roles of the institution for cultural preservation is the formation of an educational model which, on the one hand, educates national sensitivities and consciousness and, on the other hand, provides global competencies. Institutions that value culture-based education do not reject global trends but accept dynamic changes without compromising the Filipino heritage and culture. This two-pronged approach allows teachers to teach with cultural comfort and flexibility in international and cross-cultural contexts.

Responses from Participants:

A teacher educator remarked, *“We teach our students to value Filipino culture, but we also prepare them to teach abroad or in multicultural settings. So, how can you carry Filipino values like malasakit or pakikipagkapwa into an international classroom?”* (Participant 12)

A program head explained, *“Our teacher training program is based on cultural relevance, but we also align our learning outcomes with UNESCO’s global competencies, critical thinking, intercultural dialogue, and sustainability. It is not a contradiction; it is a synergy.”* (Participant 8)

These comments resonate with a sophisticated view of education in the 21st century. According to Levine, institutions today no longer frame cultural heritage and global competence as antithetical but cast them as complementary. This conceptual model allows preparing future teachers to teach in a culturally relevant way while addressing global issues, including diversity, inclusivity, mobility, and digital advances. HEISTs that strike this balance are not only preserving culture, but they are also future proofing their teacher education programs.

Discussion

This study presents a multi-dimensional terrain, including Philippine cultural heritage in TEPIs and HEIs. Three key design principles were found: the evolutionary

localization of the curriculum, the development of teaching identity and pedagogy through heritage, and the transformative power of the institutional cultural maintenance initiatives found. These revelations affirm that despite recognizing the importance of Filipino cultural heritage in educator preparation, how it is applied and enacted is wildly inconsistent across contexts, as I alluded to earlier, depicting both innovative practices and systemic constraints.

Cultural Heritage and its localization & pedagogical integration

First, many HEIs are localizing their curriculum by incorporating cultural modules and indigenous knowledge (Theme 1). This strategy is consistent with culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010) and uses students' cultural funds of knowledge, experiences, and frames of reference to enhance learning experiences. As is observed in the study, some HEIs are purposefully working to update syllabi, incorporate the histories from their local area, and engage cultural bearers in their teachings. This is consistent with Dela Cruz (2020), who suggests that using regional patrimony in the lessons would lead to learner engagement and community consciousness. Moreover, Banks and Banks (2019) emphasize that multicultural education should be more than just a form of shallow celebration; it should also be accompanied by curricular transformation, exactly as one sees in schools that implement more than gestural quests for inclusion.

However, Theme 1.2 also indicates a divergence between the curriculum's aspirations and the classroom's realities. Much like cultural inclusivity, it is mainly symbolic, written into syllabi or mission statements, but not bridged into a meaningful pedagogical praxis. This coincides with criticism of superficial multiculturalism (Nieto, 2010), arguing against the risks of "heroes and holidays" when not disrupting master narratives or fostering critical cultural knowledge. The lack of consistent implementation is further complicated by institutional barriers, such as the absence of localized resources, minimal training, and contrasting academic priorities, highlighted in Theme 1.3. These results reflect the research of Alangui (2018), who emphasized the structural marginalization of indigenous knowledge in formal education and the critical importance of training faculty and creating cultural resources.

Heritage as Basis of Educator Identity and Teaching Philosophy

The second set of findings highlights how cultural inheritance affects educators' professional identities and beliefs. For numerous teacher educators and pre-service teachers, cultural experiences (ritual, oral traditions, social values) are not just content, but help shape the moral geography of practice. This confirms that of Ladson-Billings

(1995), culturally relevant pedagogy, in that educators do not sufficiently know their students' cultural identities and backgrounds. However, many believe cultural knowledge needs to be part of a larger philosophy to validate identity and encourage success.

The participants' self-reflection on Theme 2.1 indicates that Filipino values such as pakikipagkapwa, bayanihan, and malasakit play a significant role in classroom management, relationships with their students, and the planning of the lessons. These values shape a holistic and community-based approach to teaching, which, as stressed by Mendoza and Ignacio (2021), can prosper as part of Filipino cultural values for character and values education. However, institutional backing for this internalized pedagogy is scarce. Such identity-respecting pedagogies may risk subsuming by technical or global models that are not anchored in culture and available within a curriculum to support such teaching.

Additionally, Theme 2.2 demonstrates the function of cultural practices as instructional strategies toward inclusion and student engagement. Teachers' utilization of folktales, indigenous games, and local practices fits into constructivist pedagogical models (Vygotsky, 1978), which suggest that learners construct knowledge through culturally mediated experiences. Such culturally anchored adaptations not only facilitate cognitive development but also validate learners' identities, particularly those of students from marginalized populations. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, as referenced in Paris (2012), aims to foster and extend the cultural behavior in communities rather than absorb them by the dominant ones. In their instruction, the study participants represent this kind of approach. However, this individualistic approach to integration points to the fact that cultural pedagogy is not yet firmly established in the teacher education curriculum.

Curriculum Innovation as a Service to the Preservation of Institutional Culture

The importance of institutions in protecting culture is the third thematic dimension, by which these guidelines contribute to the development of curricula and the creation of teachers. It is worth noting that many HEIs have moved beyond the symbolic of culture recognition to institutionalize community-based heritage programs, form indigenous knowledge centers, and embed cultural engagement within the curriculum. By these measures, HEIs become cultural transfer and innovation agents. Castillo and Dizon (2019) cited that institutionalized cultural

preservation is a fertile terrain for exploring pedagogical experimentation, resource development anchored, and heritage-related curriculum reform.

Theme 3.1 shows how institution-level programs such as community immersion and indigenous knowledge centers have generated localized learning packages and teaching plans that mirror lived experiences. This is consistent with Alangui and Salazar (2014), who proposed contextualized and indigenized curricula grounded in local cultural contexts to promote local relevancy and critical consciousness. As outlined in Theme 3.2, community-based learning offers prospective teachers authentic in-situ experiences of various learning systems. This experiential learning is consistent with Freire's (1970) view of critical pedagogy, where dialogue and mobilization with communities enrich educators' understandings of social realities and democratize knowledge production.

Finally, Theme 3.3 discusses the tension between promoting national cultural identity and training for global-minded educators. This conflict is in line with Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) concept of *venularization*, which is the local and global coming together in remaking educational subjectivities and practices. HEIs capable of successfully mediating this gap show that cultural rootedness does not have to be traded off against global relevance. Instead, a hybrid approach- one in which Filipino values contribute toward global competencies- prepares educators for national service and international involvement.

Conclusions

Embedding Philippine cultural heritage in teacher education programs offers a fertile, though challenging, and transforming terrain that offers both possibilities and potentialities. This study highlights that the cultural heritage, Filipino values, indigenous knowledge systems, and community-based practices are not just add-on content but a cornerstone in developing the teaching identity, instructional philosophy, and pedagogical creativity. Results indicate that though some institutions of higher learning have successfully integrated culturally relevant modules, localized curricular constructs, and community learning, others are entrenched in symbolic inclusion, insufficient training of academics, and systemic pressures brought on by standardized and global prescriptions.

Teacher educators and pre-service teachers recognize the critical role of cultural heritage in fostering inclusive, empathetic, and contextually responsive pedagogies. When culturally responsive, that is, when employing local stories, ceremonies, and traditional wisdom, cultural embeddedness encourages commitment, makes forming values possible, and honors different learner identities. Despite this, the

mainstreaming of these practices is patchy, ad-hoc, and predominantly driven by good practice at an individual level rather than being incorporated into a systematic curriculum policy and teacher training infrastructure.

Institutional investments in cultural preservation, most notably through establishing heritage centers, cultural mapping, and local community immersion, have also been a galvanizing force for forward-thinking, culturally relevant curricula. They also show that local identity construction and global teaching competence are not in contradiction but in harmony and that a cross-fertilization between natively grounded and globally flexible teachers can occur.

Therefore, educational policy shifts, resource creation, and faculty preparation must be enhanced to support and expand the depth of cultural integration in teacher education. By institutionalizing culturally grounded pedagogies that are attuned to national and international standards yet grounded on Filipino learners' and teachers lived experiences, HEIs can contribute to the preparation of generations of teachers who teach not only with competence but with cultural integrity, profound patriotism, and the like

References

- [1] Alangui, W. V. (2018). Building stone walls: A case study from the Philippines. In Numeracy as social practice (pp. 40–58). Routledge.
- [2] Alangui, W., & Salazar, Z. (2014). Indigenous knowledge and curriculum transformation. University of the Philippines Press.
- [3] Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (2019). Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives (10th ed.). Wiley.
- [4] Castillo, L. A., & Dizon, R. A. (2019). Cultural heritage and higher education: A model for curriculum innovation in the Philippines. *Journal of Higher Education Research Disciplines*, 2(1), 1–12.
- [5] CHED Memorandum Order No. 74, s. 2017. Policies, standards, and guidelines for Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) programs.
- [6] Dacuan, L. (2019). Decolonizing education in the Philippines: An analysis of Indigenous knowledge integration in teacher training. *Philippine Journal of Education Studies*, 10(2), 45–60.
- [7] Dela Cruz, M. E. (2020). Localizing the curriculum: A pathway to cultural empowerment. *Philippine Normal University Research Journal*, 15(2), 100–115.

- [8] Esteban, R. C., & Prill-Brett, J. (2017). Heritage education for cultural sustainability: Perspectives from Northern Luzon, Philippines. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 45(1), 89–112.
- [9] Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder.
- [10] Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- [11] Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491.
- [12] Mendoza, R. V., & Ignacio, R. D. (2021). Filipino values as a framework for inclusive values education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences*, 8(2), 45–52.
- [13] Mignolo, W. D. (2007). Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 449–514.
- [14] Nery, M., & Talavera, R. (2021). Localization of curriculum content in Philippine social studies education. *Journal of Local Studies*, 9(1), 25–38.
- [15] Nieto, S. (2010). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities*. Teachers College Press.
- [16] Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93–97.
- [17] Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. Routledge.
- [18] Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.