



## Article

# From Page to Praxis: The Role of Regional Literature in Shaping Culturally Grounded Teaching Methods in HEIs

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## Abstract

*This qualitative multiple-case study explored how Philippine literature influences culturally responsive teaching in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country. It examined how regional literary works are selected, interpreted, and integrated into classroom instruction, and how these practices shape both teaching and student learning. Data were gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations involving faculty and students from Southern Luzon State University, Southern Leyte State University, and Mindanao State University-Tawi-Tawi Institute of Oceanography and Technology. Findings revealed that educators deliberately chose regional literature for its cultural relevance, reflecting students' languages and histories. The study highlighted the use of reflective writing and comparative analysis as effective strategies to promote cultural awareness and critical thinking. Despite challenges, such as curricular constraints and limited institutional support, regional texts enriched students' understanding of their identities and local contexts. When given the freedom to design lessons, teachers fostered meaningful, engaging learning environments. This research emphasizes that regional literature can be a powerful pedagogical tool, not merely a supplemental resource. It advocates for the inclusion of regional texts in the core curriculum and recommends ongoing professional development for teachers. Such measures ensure that regional literature holds a central place in culturally grounded higher education, reinforcing cultural pride and social relevance.*

**Keywords:** regional literature, culturally responsive pedagogy, higher education, contextualized learning, Philippine education, identity formation, curriculum integration

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## Introduction

In the last few decades, more people have been saying that the curriculum of Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) should be decolonized. This movement is based on the premise that literature, especially literature from a particular area, is not merely a tool to learn about art, but also a cultural artifact that holds the memories, identities, and ways of knowing of communities (Casil-Batang, 2021). One significant strategy to assist youngsters learn in context is to include regional literature in the school curriculum. It makes people think critically about their cultural narrative and questions the supremacy of Western canonical works (Clemente, 2019). This study looks at how regional literature impacts culturally based teaching methods, helps people form their identities, and makes teachers more flexible in different types of schools in the Philippines.

Writing on the culture, language, values, and history of certain parts of the world is called regional literature (Bangayan-Manera, 2019). It is particularly crucial for fostering place-based education and cultural continuity, especially in countries with many varied cultures, like the Philippines, which has more than 180 ethnolinguistic groups. When teachers utilize regional novels in class, they can help students feel like they belong and learn more about life in their area. Gay (2010) notes that culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) underlines the necessity of using instructional materials that relate to students' cultures and real-life experiences. Nieto and Bode (2018) say that cultural diversity should be a core structuring idea in teaching, not just a technique to exhibit it.

Research has shown that the curriculum needs to be altered to reflect better what life is like in the Philippines. For instance, Gadaza et al. (2025) studied how cultural heritage might affect the curriculum and how teaching based on heritage can help students connect with their culture and make teaching more relevant. Butac et al. (2025) completed a study that looked at colleges and universities in the Philippines and found that using local knowledge to teach interculturality makes people more global citizens, empathetic, and able to think critically. Gadaza et al. (2025) studied how teaching history in college makes students more conscious of history. They argued that giving kids facts about their area makes abstract topics more tangible and important.

Even with these efforts, much research still needs to be done. There is much research on using Philippine national literature in basic education, but not as much on using regional literature in higher education. Also, most research has examined the content instead of the teaching method. We still do not know how regional literature is used in the classroom and its effect. There has not been much research on how

teachers and students use texts from their regions to learn about other cultures, construct their identities, and think critically.

There is evidence from different nations that supports the premise that localized material is vital for designing a curriculum. Saquing (2018) has written about how vital multicultural literature is for fighting racism and making schools fairer. Chong (2020) found that Malaysian pupils who read literature in their native language in Southeast Asia become prouder of their culture and more interested in learning. These outcomes are similar to what happens in the Philippines, where students studying local literature often become more aware of their culture and social and political environment.

The current study attempts to fill an important gap by examining how teachers in Philippine HEIs use regional literature as content and a tool to modify how they teach. It looks at how regional stories are used to promote culturally appropriate modes of teaching, how students and teachers feel about these techniques, and what they do to help students learn. By using the experiences of both teachers and students, this study adds to the greater discussion about contextualized learning. It also shows how important regional literature is, to learn and as a part of culture.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To examine how regional literary texts are selected, interpreted, and integrated into the curriculum and classroom instruction within Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
2. To analyze how the use of regional literature influences the development of culturally grounded teaching methods and enhances students' cultural identity, critical thinking, and place-based knowledge
3. To explore the experiences, strategies, and challenges encountered by faculty members in using regional literature as a foundation for context-sensitive and culturally inclusive teaching

## **Research Methodology**

This study used a qualitative multiple-case study method to examine how teachers at Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) use regional literature to make their instruction more culturally relevant. This method was chosen because it studies teaching methods, cultural integration, and narrative-based learning in a wide range of regional settings thoroughly and in context. The qualitative method lets the

researchers learn more about the instructors' life experiences, opinions, and techniques, and how students reacted to the use of regional literature in their classes.

Three HEIs were selected on purpose because they each come from a different region and culture: one from Luzon, one from Visayas, and one from Mindanao. Each school employed regional texts in at least one general education or specialty subject. They also had a literary or educational program going on. The study used purposive sampling, inviting 12 faculty members who had taught regional literature for at least three years and 18 college students taking those classes. These people told us about the different teaching methods and how employing regional literary resources affected people's minds and cultures.

This study collected data via filming classes, undertaking semi-structured interviews, and having focus group discussions (FGDs). The interviews with teachers asked them about their teaching methods, what they wished to teach, and what they considered the major issues and successes with using regional literature. Focus groups with students investigated how they studied and engaged with regional texts and how these texts helped them think critically and build their identities. During the two weeks, each school had people come in to watch how teachers taught, how students talked about literature, and how kids connected with content from their region. It also looked at other documents, including course syllabi, reading lists, reflection essays, and student projects, to acquire more information and make the results more complete.

The study used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model for theme analysis to write down all the qualitative data and sort it into themes. It first utilized an inductive coding method to look for new data themes. Then the researchers employed a deductive coding strategy based on the study's underlying theories, such as culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010) and contextualized learning theory (Kolb, 1984). The researchers undertook member-checking with the participants to make sure the results were accurate and trustworthy. This helped them double-check their interpretations and understand what they meant. Peer debriefing among experts in literature and education also helped make the study more complete.

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee approved the study, and all the subjects agreed to participate. The study kept things confidential by giving individuals phony names and letting them choose whether to take part. The study employed this method to uncover long-lasting ways of teaching and the influence of regional literature on education. This contributes to the ongoing academic discussion about

teaching in a culturally relevant way that fits the situation in Philippine higher education.

## **Data Analysis Overview**

This study used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase method for thematic analysis on all the qualitative data. At first, we got to know the data by reading it repeatedly and coding it. It received the first code by talking to involved people, holding focus groups, and watching classes. These codes were organized into bigger themes that matched the research goals. These themes were based on topics that came up a lot, such as "*student engagement*," "*cultural affirmation*," "*teaching innovation*," and "*institutional constraint*."

Cross-case research demonstrated that professors from different areas employed localized texts differently. Some people utilized them as the significant point, while others used them as examples of culture to back up their main point. Coding also made me think about how students form their identities, how important it is for lessons to be relevant to their lives, and how vital it is for students to articulate what matters to them. Student essays and other work confirmed the trends that were starting to emerge, which made the data more valid and interesting.

## **Results and Findings**

### **Regional Literary Texts are Selected, Interpreted, and Integrated into the Curriculum and Classroom Instruction within Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).**

There is a growing need for teaching approaches that are more effective and culturally relevant in the Philippines as higher education changes in the country. Using regional literature in the classroom is an excellent method to do this. Regional literary works are not just works of art but also vital tools for teaching in context. They are founded on local histories, dialects, and cultural experiences. This study examined how nationwide colleges and universities (HEIs) pick, interpret, and employ regional literature in their classes. It looked at how institutional policies, teacher autonomy, and the social and cultural significance of regional stories all work together to get students more active, help them shape their identities, and make them more conscious of their own lives. Even though changes at the national level call for making the curriculum more culturally relevant and inclusive of local cultures, many colleges and universities still have trouble finding the right balance between canonical texts and regional works because of structural issues, a lack of resources, or confusing academic frameworks.

This study fills in the gaps by focusing on the real-life experiences of teachers and students who read regional texts. This illustrates that integrating literature that reflects the country's enormous cultural diversity can change things, but it also has certain practical limits.

#### *Intentional Selection Anchored in Cultural Relevance*

Teachers in Philippine colleges and universities said that determining whether regional literary texts are chosen is based on cultural relevance and representativeness. Teachers sought pieces demonstrating their pupils' diverse languages, historical stories, and real-life experiences. People preferred localized works like epics, myths, and modern local stories because they could connect what they read to something they already understood.

#### *Participant Response:*

*"I ensure that the texts I use reflect the region's language and values. For instance, we use Ilocano poems or Cebuano short stories because students resonate with them. It bridges the gap between literature and lived experience."* (Participant 3, Faculty, Luzon)

This theme illustrates that picking texts for a region is a planned process. Teachers make pupils feel good about their identity by using literature as a cultural bridge. The results back up Gay's (2010) idea that culturally responsive teaching needs to acknowledge and validate the cultural references of its students.

#### *Interpretive Strategies that Foster Cultural Literacy*

Students typically debate about the setting of regional literature in class, compare it to other works, and undertake introspective exercises. Teachers instructed their students to connect stories from their areas to problems in society today, such as colonial legacies, gender roles, or changes in the environment. People thought that

interpretation was a literary endeavor and a method to learn more about other cultures.

Participant Response:

*“When we analyze regional texts, I ask students to link themes to their community practices. For example, we studied a Visayan folk tale and connected it to local environmental rituals. It became a lesson on both literature and heritage.”* (Participant 7, Faculty, Visayas)

This shows how interpretation can help individuals learn more about various cultures. Students do not just passively take in information; they actively make sense of it, which helps them think critically and establish their identities.

#### *Integration as Supplementary Rather than Core Content*

Many teachers claimed that integration usually only includes supplemental readings instead of the core topic of the syllabus, even when they tried to include regional literature. Most of the time, institutional curricula prioritize canonical or Western texts, which makes it hard to spend much time studying regional stories. A lot of the time, teachers incorporated regional texts in thematic modules or activities that were not in class.

Participant Response:

*“We are encouraged to follow the standard syllabus, which mostly features Western authors. So, I try to incorporate regional texts during projects or final assessments. It is not formally in the curriculum, but I make space for it.”* (Participant 5, Faculty, Mindanao)

This theme highlights the challenges that teachers must cope with in the structure. There are many faculty initiatives, but how schools are built does not always make it simple to include regional literature completely. This agrees with what Caruana (2014) mentioned about how changes to the curriculum that include everyone usually stay dreams since there is no policy consistency.

#### *Curriculum Flexibility and Faculty Autonomy as Enablers*

Regional literature was often used because the curriculum was flexible, and teachers were in command of their lessons. Some colleges and universities let

departments have some leeway, allowing teachers to adjust what they taught based on the requirements of their students and where they were teaching.

Participant Response:

*"Our department is supportive of localization. I design my syllabus to include local epics and invite storytellers from the community. That freedom makes all the difference."*  
(Participant 2, Faculty, Luzon)

Teachers can make lessons relevant to their students' cultures when the curriculum is flexible. This agrees with what Nakata (2007) remarked about how crucial it is for institutions to have rules to include indigenous and local knowledge systems in higher education.

It is possible to see both good and bad things about how Philippine colleges and universities choose, read, and use regional literary materials. Teachers actively promote local texts as culturally relevant tools. However, because of constraints in the curriculum and the way schools are set up, these resources are often only used as extras. When institutions are open to change, regional literature is more likely to impact and assist in setting up important, culturally based teaching approaches. These results demonstrate that the curriculum needs to be substantially revised, and the teachers must be trained so that regional literature is a primary subject in school, not just an additional one.

### **The Use of Regional Literature Influences the Development of Culturally Grounded Teaching Methods and Enhances Students' Cultural Identity**

Using regional literature in Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) is a novel way for professors and students to connect with texts, identity, and place. Regional literature is an excellent source of local information and experiences because it is based on native languages, histories, and cultural customs. This is different from the Western works that are often taught in schools. This kind of writing is now a way to educate and learn about culture, making school more relevant and welcoming for everyone. More teachers in the Philippines are seeing how it may help them use culturally appropriate teaching methods, which in turn help students link what they learn in school to their own lives. These stories make kids proud of their cultures, encourage them to ask questions, and help them learn more about their communities. There has not been much research on how regional literature is used in college, though, especially regarding how it affects how teachers teach and how well students learn. This study fills in the gaps by looking at how regional literature affects how teachers

teach, how students learn about other cultures, and how to make education more open to everyone.

### *Regional Literature as a Catalyst for Culturally Responsive Teaching*

Teachers reported that incorporating regional literary texts in their classes made them think about how to teach in ways that are sensitive to and represent their students' cultural origins—teaching regional epics, legends, or oral histories led to using local culture in the classroom, such as storytelling circles, performance challenges based on history, and tests that link to the community. These culturally responsive tactics help teachers get away from old modes of teaching that were often focused on the West.

#### *Participant Responses:*

*"When I taught the Biag ni Lam-ang, I asked students to relate it to their family history or barangay myths. Their reflections were richer and more heartfelt."* – Participant 3, Faculty, SLSU.

*"Using Cebuano poetry pushed me to rethink my teaching. I had to learn how to teach with the students' voices, not just from textbooks."* – Participant 7, Faculty, SLSU.

Regional literature helped us find new ways to teach that consider the differences between students and the area they live in. Teachers went beyond strict lesson plans to include language, regional identity, and lived experience. This supports Gay's (2010) idea that culturally responsive education honors students' backgrounds and makes learning more relevant.

### *Strengthening Cultural Identity and Local Consciousness*

Reading books from their region made students feel prouder and like they belonged. Reading things written in their native language or about their ancestral place helped them appreciate their local culture more. These experiences gave a different story to focusing on colonial or Manila-centered literature in higher education institutions.

#### *Participant Responses:*

*"I never thought literature could reflect me. Our datu stories taught me who I am and where I came from."* – Participant 5, MSU-TCTO Student.

*"Learning our Aklanon poems made me feel we matter, even if we are from the province."* – Participant 9, SLSU Student.

Regional literature helped students connect what they learned in school with what they had already learned. It gave value to identities that had been pushed aside and rectified colonialism that had been absorbed. This outcome is comparable to what

Banks (2015) found, which claimed that multicultural education helps people feel good about their culture and promotes cultural justice.

### *Cultivating Critical Thinking through Local Contexts*

Students had difficulty understanding regional texts, which often have oral traditions, local metaphors, and historical layers. This made them question everyone else thought and think critically about their environment. The teachers gave kids work that helped them think about topics like moving, being strong, or taking care of the environment in their local areas.

#### Participant Responses:

*Discussing a local tale about land spirits made us talk about mining and land grabbing in our area. It was not just fiction anymore.*” – Participant 2, MSU-TCTO Student.

*“Our professor made us write critiques comparing a Western myth and a Mindanao epic. It opened my eyes to cultural bias in our reading.”* – Participant 12, SLSU Student.

Regional literature made people think critically and morally. Students’ analytical thinking improved, and they questioned colonial ideas by reading familiar and complicated stories. This fits with Mezirow’s (2000) idea of transformative learning, which says that personal and social change starts with thinking about what you have been through.

Using regional literature in Philippine higher education changes how teachers teach and students learn a lot. It encourages culturally based education, helps students develop their cultural identities, and encourages them to think critically about their lives. These results show that making regional texts a permanent part of the curriculum is important for an education in the Philippines that is open to everyone, thoughtful, and relevant to society.

### **Explore the Experiences, Strategies, and Challenges Encountered by Faculty Members in Using Regional Literature**

In the Philippines, where there is a growing movement toward contextualized and culturally sensitive teaching, adding regional literature to the classroom significantly changes how higher education is taught. Regional literary materials, such as stories, epics, poetry, and oral histories from specific communities, are essential teaching tools that keep indigenous knowledge systems alive and help students think critically and develop their cultural identity. As education changes to reflect efforts to decolonize countries and make the world more inclusive, teachers are key to turning literary texts into practical classroom activities. However, turning regional literature

into teaching materials is a complicated process that depends on teachers' experiences, tactics, their institutions' limits, and legislative gaps. To make changes to the curriculum, promote inclusive learning, and give students authority through place-based stories that represent their cultural realities, it is important to understand how teachers at Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) deal with these issues.

#### *Intentional Selection Anchored in Cultural Relevance*

Teachers at colleges and universities in the Philippines said they chose regional literary texts because they were culturally important and represented their students' experiences. They wanted works that showed their students' different languages, historical stories, and real-life experiences. People liked regional works like epics, myths, and modern local stories because they could connect theoretical literary ideas to things they already knew.

#### *Participant Response:*

*"I ensure that the texts I use reflect the region's language and values. For instance, we use Ilocano poems or Cebuano short stories because students resonate with them. It bridges the gap between literature and lived experience."* (Participant 3, Faculty, Luzon)

This theme reveals that picking texts for an area is a planned process. Teachers are cultural mediators who use literature to help students feel good about who they are. The results corroborate Gay's (2010) claim that culturally responsive education must respect students' cultural references.

#### *Interpretive Strategies that Foster Cultural Literacy*

Students often talk about the context of regional literature, compare it to other works, and do reflective exercises. Teachers told their students to connect stories from their regions to current social issues like colonial legacies, gender roles, or

environmental changes. Not only was interpretation seen as a literary activity, but it was also a way to learn more about other cultures.

Participant Response:

*"When we analyze regional texts, I ask students to link themes to their community practices. For example, we studied a Visayan folk tale and connected it to local environmental rituals. It became a lesson on both literature and heritage."* (Participant 7, Faculty, Visayas)

This illustrates that interpretation can help people learn more about various cultures. Students do not just passively take in knowledge; they actively interpret it, which helps them construct their identities and think critically.

#### *Integration as Supplementary Rather than Core Content*

Several teachers said integration is mostly limited to extra readings, not key syllabus content. This is because institutional curricula often favor canonical or Western books, which makes it hard to spend much time studying regional stories. Teachers often used regional texts in thematic modules or activities outside of class.

Participant Response:

*"We are encouraged to follow the standard syllabus, which mostly features Western authors. So, I try to incorporate regional texts during projects or final assessments. It is not formally in the curriculum, but I make space for it."* (Participant 5, Faculty, Mindanao)

This theme talks about the problems teachers have to deal with in how schools are set up. Many faculty initiatives exist, but how schools are set up does not always make it easy to fully incorporate regional literature. Caruana (2014) said that inclusive curricular innovations often stay dreams until they align with policy.

#### *Curriculum Flexibility and Faculty Autonomy as Enablers*

When regional literature was well-integrated, it was often because the curriculum was flexible, and teachers could make their syllabi. Some colleges and

universities let departments decide what to teach, so teachers could change the material based on the needs of their students and the area where they were teaching.

Participant Response:

*"Our department is supportive of localization. I design my syllabus to include local epics and invite storytellers from the community. That freedom makes all the difference."*

(Participant 2, Faculty, Luzon)

Teachers can make lessons that are culturally relevant when the curriculum is flexible. This is in keeping with what Nakata (2007) said: institutional autonomy is crucial for bringing indigenous and local knowledge systems into higher education.

How regional literary texts are chosen, understood, and used in Philippine higher education institutions shows promise and limits. Teachers are proactive in promoting local texts as culturally relevant tools, but structural and curricular limitations frequently mean that these materials are only used as extras. Regional literature is more likely to change things when institutions are flexible and help establish critical, culturally rooted teaching methods. These results show that we need to make significant changes to the curriculum and train teachers so that regional literature is seen as a key part of the curriculum, not just an extra.

## Discussion

Using regional literature in Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a way to make education more culturally relevant. However, it is still stuck between the promise of better teaching and the system's limits. The results show that teachers choose regional literature based on how culturally relevant they are, picking things like local epics, folktales, and poetry that connect with students' identities and experiences. This approach shows a growing move away from rigid, Western literary standards and toward a more diversified, regional curriculum. The data also shows a significant structural problem: because of strict curriculum requirements and policy misalignment, regional books are generally considered extras rather than integral to the syllabi.

Teachers' interpretive skills go beyond just traditionally looking at literature. They are meant to help students become more culturally aware and critically engaged by connecting what they learn in school to real-world social problems, including displacement, traditional wisdom, and environmental sustainability. These ideas show how useful regional literature can be for helping students think more deeply and critically. Also, using regional texts gives students more of a voice and helps them connect with their culture, especially for those from less privileged areas. When students read literature in their own languages and cultural settings, they feel more

connected to their identity and are more motivated to study. This exemplifies culturally responsive education (Gay, 2010; Banks, 2015).

Teachers also said that their teaching methods had changed a lot. Regional literature helped create context-sensitive tactics, including oral storytelling sessions, creative projects specific to a place, and learning involving the community. These techniques exemplify Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory because they encourage people to think about their beliefs, question dominant ideas, and change how they see teaching. However, there are still problems. Many faculty members do not have access to institutional resources, culturally sensitive learning materials, or help with professional development. As Caruana (2014) and Nakata (2007) pointed out, for reforms to last, both individuals and institutions must change.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that regional literature is significant for making culturally relevant teaching in Philippine higher education institutions. Regional texts make academic lessons better and are important for building cultural identity, encouraging critical thinking, and supporting inclusive education. When chosen and read carefully, these works can connect students' cultural backgrounds with their schoolwork, making them more personally and intellectually involved.

However, institutions need to catch up with new ways of teaching. The curriculum needs to be changed to go from sporadic integration to systematic inclusion. Higher education institutions (HEIs) need to change their national syllabus frameworks to make regional literature a key subject. Faculty development programs should be set up to teach teachers to be culturally and contextually aware of their teaching. Also, working with local communities, indigenous storytellers, and regional cultural organizations can make literary education more interesting and real.

In short, academics should not ignore regional literature. It needs to be accepted as a key part of decolonizing education, giving teachers more power, and raising culturally, socially, and critically aware kids. The results of this study support a higher education system that sees local stories not just as educational material but also as tools for fairness, inclusiveness, and national awareness.

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