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Teachers' beliefs in providing education to indigenous learners: meaning, context and purpose

Creencias de los maestros en proporcionar educación a los estudiantes indígenas: significado, contexto y propósito

Crenças dos professores em fornecer educação aos alunos indígenas: significado, contexto e propósito

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the beliefs of teachers teaching Bagobo- Tagabawa learners in five remote secondary schools in Davao del Sur. It sought to understand beliefs as well as the factors that shaped these beliefs. Sentiment analysis was also done to further understand the nature of these beliefs. Using convergent parallel mixed method, the researcher conducted a survey to 48 teachers, 3 sets of focus group discussions and 14 in-depth interviews. Results indicated that the teachers held both learner- centered and non- learner centered beliefs about learners and learning and teaching. They also portrayed roles in the classroom as educator, counsellor, controller, resource provider, second parents and learners. Cultural context, institutional context, self- awareness, self- reflection and personal beliefs, prior experiences, teacher education preparation and learners' needs, interest and performance were the factors that shaped teachers' beliefs. Teachers and IP learners conveyed the following sentiments: angry, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness surprise and trust during the interviews.

Keywords: Teachers' Beliefs, Cultural context, Institutional context, Self- Awareness, Self- Reflection and Personal Beliefs, Prior Experiences, Teacher Education Preparation.

RESUMEN

Este estudio determinó las creencias de los profesores que enseñan a los estudiantes bagobo-tagabawa en cinco escuelas secundarias remotas en Davao del Sur. Trató de entender las creencias, así como los factores que dieron forma a estas creencias. También se hizo un análisis del sentimiento para comprender mejor la naturaleza de estas creencias. Utilizando un método mixto paralelo convergente, el investigador realizó una encuesta a 48 profesores, 3 conjuntos de discusiones de grupos focales y 14 entrevistas en profundidad. Los resultados indicaron que los maestros tenían creencias centradas en el aprendizaje y no aprendices centradas en los estudiantes y el aprendizaje y la enseñanza. También describieron roles en el aula como educador, consejero, controlador, proveedor de recursos, segundo padre y estudiantes. El contexto cultural, el contexto institucional, la autoconciencia, la autorreflexión y las creencias personales, las experiencias previas, la preparación de la educación del profesorado y las necesidades, el interés y el desempeño de los alumnos fueron los factores que dieron forma a las creencias de los maestros. Los profesores y los estudiantes de P.I. transmitieron los siguientes sentimientos: enojo, anticipación, disgusto, miedo, alegría, tristeza sorpresa y confianza durante las entrevistas.

Palabras clave: Creencias del profesorado, contexto cultural, contexto institucional, autoconciencia, autorreflexión y creencias personales, experiencias previas, preparación de la educación del profesorado.

RESUMO

Este estudo determinou as crenças dos professores que ensinam alunos de Bagobo-Tagabawa em cinco escolas secundárias remotas em Davao del Sur.Buscou compreender as crenças, bem como os fatores que moldaram essas crenças. A análise do sentimento também foi feita para entender melhor a natureza dessas crenças.Utilizando método misto paralelo convergente, o pesquisador realizou uma pesquisa com 48 professores, 3 conjuntos de discussões em grupo focal e 14 entrevistas aprofundadas. Os resultados indicaram que os professores possuíam crenças centradas no aluno e não-aprendizes centradas nos alunos e na aprendizagem e no ensino. Também retrataram papéis em sala de aula como educador, conselheiro, controlador, provedor de recursos, segundo pais e alunos. Contexto cultural, contexto institucional, autoconsciência, autorreflexão e crenças pessoais, experiências prévias, preparação da formação de professores e necessidades dos alunos, interesse e desempenho foram os fatores que moldaram as crenças dos professores. Professores e aprendizes de IP transmitiram os seguintes sentimentos: raiva, antecipação, nojo, medo, alegria, tristeza surpresa e confiança durante as entrevistas.

Palavras-chave: Crenças dos Professores, Contexto Cultural, Contexto Institucional, Autoconsciência, Autorreflexão e Crenças Pessoais, Experiências Prévias, Preparação da Formação de Professores.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers came from different background and orientation. Thus, they formed fixed beliefs in teaching. Teachers had different upbringings in the family, school and community which could be the reasons of why they hold different values and beliefs concerning teaching and learning processes. These beliefs formed their teaching profession as well as their teaching practices.

Most researches have discounted the implication of distinguishing the actual factors that form beliefs and motives in classroom interactions (Saydee, 2014). Teachers have no connection with the IP learners and they have deficit beliefs about learners from cultural backgrounds (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Maher (2009) stated that IP learners are not connected with their non- IP teachers and these teachers have inadequate thinking on how complex and challenging IP students learn (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009). A shift in teachers' practices and educational innovation can only be attained when teachers' beliefs are also changed (Kennedy, 1996).

These facts directed the need for this study. It described teachers' beliefs as important components of the learning process, how teachers view learners and learning and teaching and their roles as teachers, the probable aspects that shape these beliefs and the sentiments of both teachers and learners in the indigenous setting.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' beliefs who were teaching Indigenous learners in the remote schools, the factors that shape said beliefs as well as their sentiments in teaching.

1. What is the demographic profile of the teachers teaching in remote schools in terms of:
    1.1 Age
    1.2 Total Years of Teaching
    1.3 Years of Teaching in the School
    1.4 Sex
    1.5 Membership in Indigenous Group
2. To what extent do the teachers teaching IP learners agree with the following domains of:
    2.1 learners- centered beliefs
    2.2 non- learners- centered beliefs
        2.2.1 about learners
        2.2.2 about learning and teaching
3. How do teachers in indigenous setting view the following:
    3.1 Learners

    3.2   Learning and Teaching

    3.3   Role of Teachers

4. What are the experiences of the teachers about the following factors that influence their beliefs?

    4.1   cultural context

    4.2   institutional context

    4.3   self- awareness, self- reflection and personal beliefs

    4.4   prior experience

    4.5   teacher education preparation

    4.6   learners' needs, interest and performance

5. What are the sentiments of the teachers and Indigenous learners?

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Two theories served as the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

This study was linked to the **belief theory**. It was developed by Rokeach (1968) which described a person's belief as any form of thought based from the words and actions of a person. All actions are formed based on beliefs.

It also used the **Critical Theory** of Fay (1987) which focused on human empowerment despite race and class. Critical theory explained that human beings build meanings based from their interaction in the environment and with other human beings (Crotty, 1998; Preissle & Grants, 2004). This is useful in the study because this research identified as to what extent do teachers' beliefs are influenced by the factors which are the cultural context, institutional context, self-awareness, self- reflection and personal beliefs, prior experience, teacher education program and learners' needs, interest and performance. These foundations of beliefs are the outcomes from interacting with other individuals and with the community.

3 METHODS

This chapter presents the design, sampling method, instrument, procedures and data analysis of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher utilized the mixed method to have a full grasp of their beliefs. It used Convergent Parallel Mixed Method, a type of mixed method design which combined both quantitative and qualitative data to provide wide-ranged answers to the problem. The researcher collected both form of data at the same time and then mixed the information in the explanation of the overall results of the study (Creswell, 2014).

3.2. Respondents and Sampling

The participants were the teachers teaching in the far-flung schools of Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur with 96 to 100% IP learners.

For the quantitative problems 1 and 2, the teachers answered the Teacher Belief Survey Form. Total enumeration sampling was used. All the teachers in the indigenous school setting were taken as a sample since their population was only 48.

On the other hand, for qualitative problems 3,4 and 5, focus group discussion for teachers and another focus group discussion for learners were conducted. In- Depth Interview was also set

for teachers, school heads and indigenous learners. In this data gathering methods, purposive sampling was utilized.

The teachers who were included in FGD and IDI were teachers whose number of teaching experience in the school was three (3) years and above. These teachers were already accustomed with the school culture and with the indigenous learners as well. These teachers were non- IPs.

The learners who were selected as participants for in- depth interview and focus group discussion were the Bagobo- Tagabawa learners and they have been studying in the school for three (3) years and above. These learners had already observed how their teachers taught and treated them in school.

3.3 Research Instrument

The researcher utilized the Teacher Belief Survey online instrument of McCombs, B. L. & Whisler, J. S. (1997) from the University of Denver Research Institute was used.

The questionnaire used the 4- item Likert Scale; 4- Strongly Agree, 3- Somewhat Agree, 2- Somewhat Disagree and 1- Strongly Disagree. It consists of thirty-five (35) statements and it includes items that reflect both learner and non- learner centered beliefs. There are fourteen (14) items for learner centered beliefs about learners, learning and teaching, nine (9) items for non- learner centered beliefs about learners and twelve (12) items for non- learner centered beliefs about learning and teaching. The teacher- participants also answered a brief demographic survey; age, sex, number of years in teaching, number of years in teaching in a school with IPs and IP membership.

This questionnaire was validated by five (5) experts prior to the conduct of the study. After the validity of the instruments, the researcher conducted pilot testing of the survey questionnaire. Based on the result, the questionnaire had a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.841. It had a high value for acceptability and the questionnaire passed the internal consistency analysis and there was no need to modify the statements in the questionnaire.

Moreover, to answer the third, fourth and fifth problems, the researcher conducted an in- depth interview (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD). For the In- Depth Interview (IDI), the researcher utilized the semi- structured interview in which this made a balance between the flexibility of an open- ended interview and the focus of a structure interview. The researcher prepared guide questions, however, she also asked follow up questions in case of clarification and addition of thoughts. It uncovered rich data and answers of the statement of the problems.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher made sure to abide with the ethical principles in conducting the research since this study involved learners who were below 18 years old and they belonged to Indigenous Group. The paper was submitted to an accredited Review Ethics Committee for review and for their clearance to conduct the study.

The researcher asked permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao del Sur and from the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) to conduct the study in the five public secondary schools.

Thereafter, equipped with the approval of the Superintendent and from the NCIP and the clearance from the accredited Review Ethics Committee, the researcher visited the school heads for their permission too.

Before the teacher- respondents answered the survey, they were asked to sign the consent form. For the FGD and IDI, the researcher obtained consent from the interviewee and assent form for the minor participants.

When the conduct of the survey, in-depth interview, focus group discussion and data analysis were done, the researcher worked on the Data Audit. Each study participant was given a copy of the results for them to review and confirm the correctness and validity of the data collected (James, 2016). However, due to COVID- 19 pandemic, not all interview participants had signed the Certificate of No Objection.

The researcher also presented the results to the Indigenous People's office in Sta. Cruz and with the members of National Commission on Indigenous People before the finalization of the paper. The IP Mandatory Representative of NCIP and the Tribal Chieftains and elders signed the Certificate of No Objection Form which verified the results of this study.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

To determine the teachers' demographic profile which was the first research problem, mean and percentage were used. To determine teachers' beliefs on learners and learning and teaching which was the research problem 2, net agreement was used to interpret the results.

Qualitative Data Analysis

To answer questions 3 and 4, the researcher utilized the R Qualitative Data Analysis (RQDA) software. This is a free software which the researcher performed the coding, categorization and thematic analysis.

For the fifth research problem, no guide questions were prepared because the analysis of the sentiments of the teachers teaching indigenous learners was based from the script. This was done using the Sentiment Analysis created by the National Research Council (NRC) of Canada Emotion Lexicon. It is a collection of lexicons with a list of English words and their associations with eight (8) basic emotions; anger, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, joy and disgust and the two (2) sentiments which are negative and positive. This analysis filters negative words to avoid bias and misinterpretation. It is developed with wide array of applications and can be used in a multitude of contexts such as sentiment analysis. It is used widely for analyzing sentiments and it is used by Twitter, Instagram and other social media to identify sentiments of the respondents. In this study, both the sentiments of the teachers and learners were considered.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Profile

There were 48 teacher- respondents. Majority (37 or 77%) were female and 11 or 23% were male. There were 32 (67%) teachers who were Non- IPs and 16 (33%) IPs; 14 of them were Bagobo- Tagabawa and 2 were Igorot.

The oldest teacher was 54 years old while the youngest 21. The longest teaching experience was 23 years and the lowest 3 months. The highest number of years in teaching in the highlands was 22 years while the lowest was 3 months.

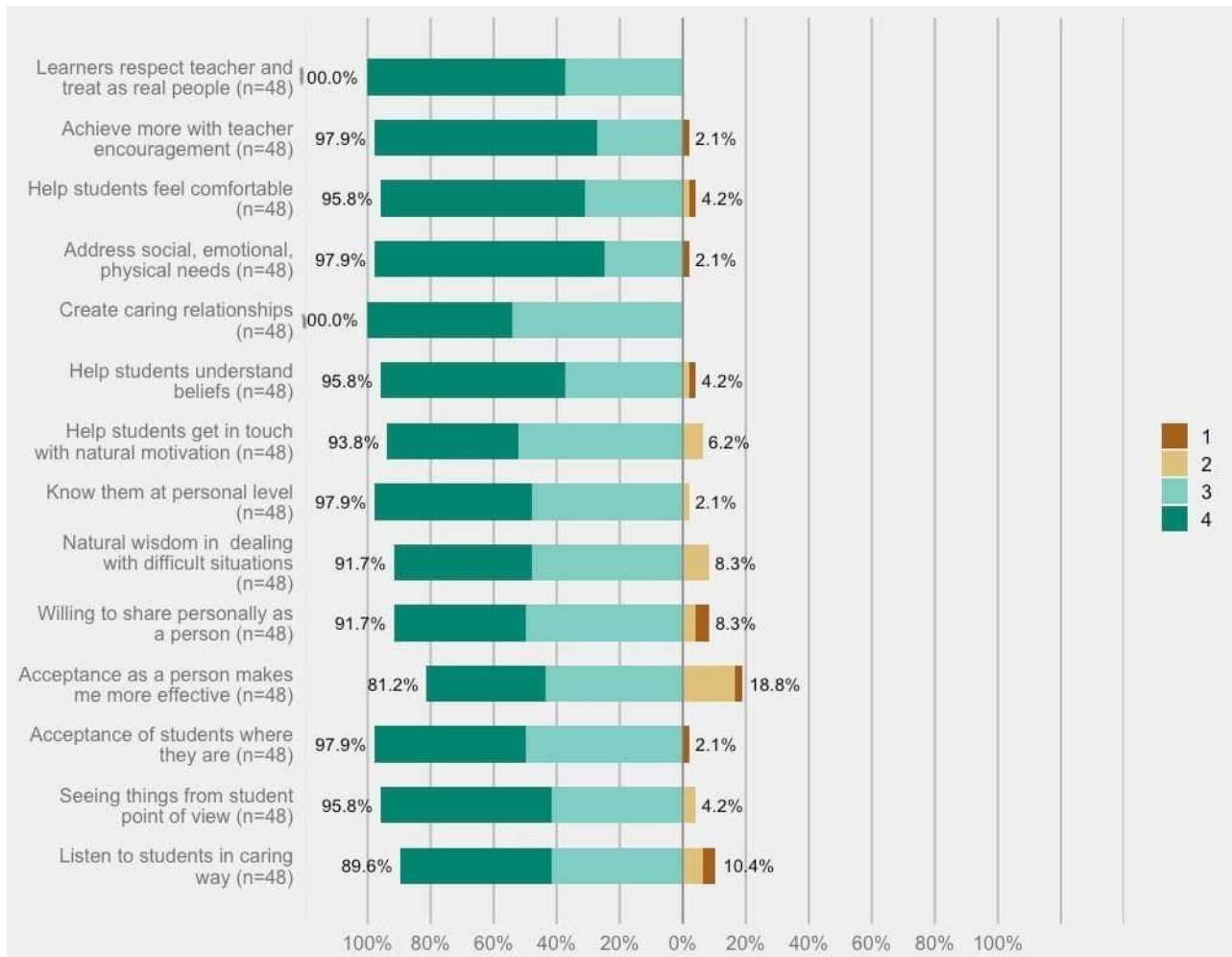## Teachers' Affirmation on Learner- Centered Beliefs

Figure 1. Extent of Affirmation of Teachers on Learner- Centered Domains about Learners and Learning and Teaching

Figure 1 shows the extent of affirmation of teachers on learner- centered beliefs about learners and learning and teaching.

The net agreement on all the learner- centered domains was high. Two indicators got perfect ratings (e.g. learners respect teachers and treating them as real people as well as creating caring relations.)   Receiving almost perfect scores were: achieving more with teacher encouragement (97.9%), addressing social, emotional, and physical needs), and knowing them in a personal manner.   At the 90% levels of agreement were "helping students get in touch with natural motivation, natural wisdom in dealing with difficult situations, willingness to share personally as a person", and "seeing things from student point of view."   The lowest score was "acceptance as a person makes the teacher more effective".

The net agreement on all the domains of non- learner centered beliefs about learners is not as high as learner centered domain. For instance, a few teachers (16.6%) agreed that it is impossible to work with students who refuse to learn. There were also few (4.2%) who agreed that they should not be expected to work with learners who consistently cause problems in class.

Teachers' Affirmation on Non- Learner-Centered Beliefs about learners
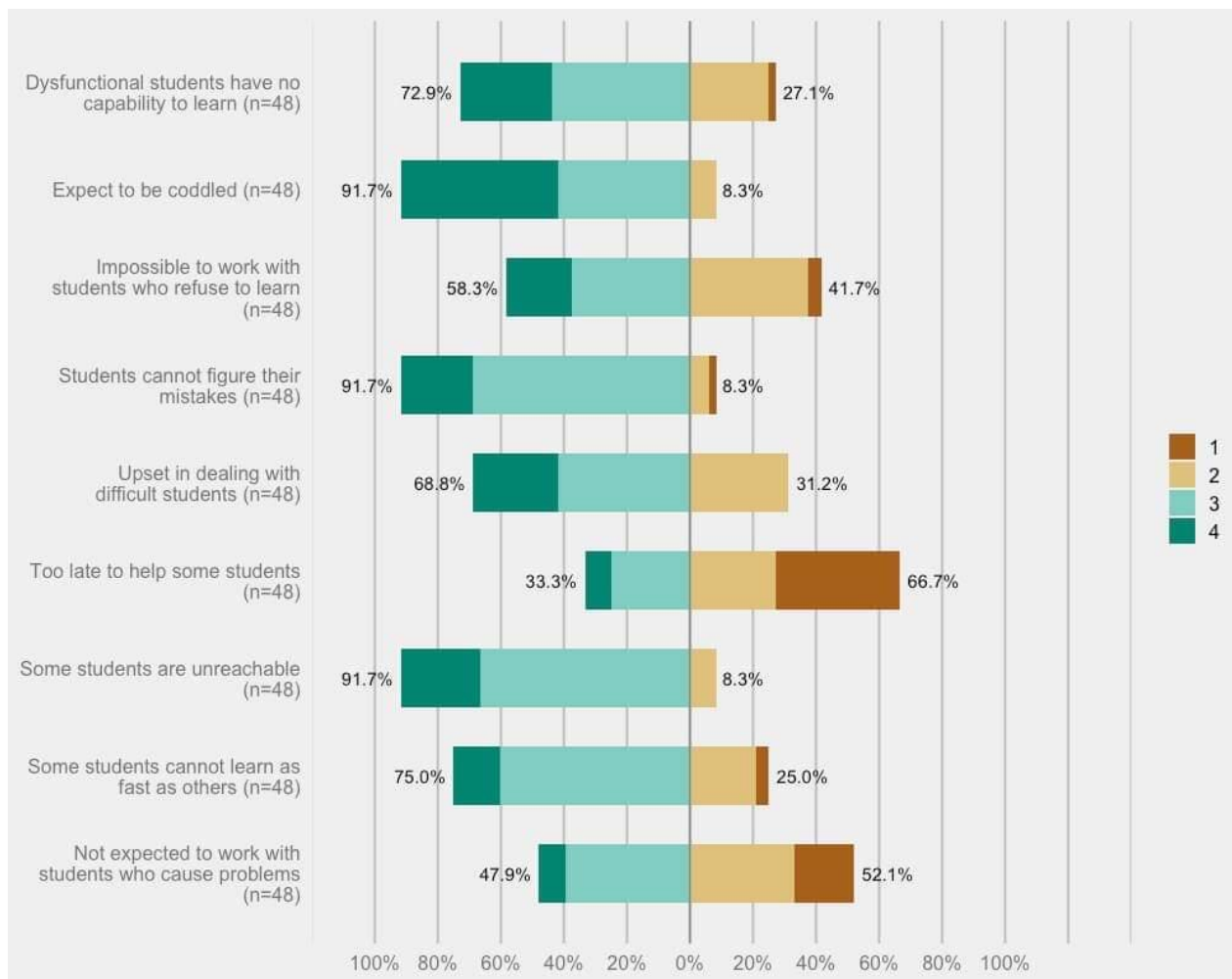

Figure 2. Extent of Affirmation of Teachers on Non- Learner Centered Domains about Learners

Figure 2 shows the extent of affirmation of the teachers on non- learner centered beliefs. The data shows that the teachers still held some non- learner centered beliefs about the learners. The data reveals that most teachers (83.4%) agreed that too many learners expect to be coddled in school, that they cannot figure their mistakes, and that they are unreachable. Some even thought that dysfunctional students have no capability to learn, and that some cannot learn as fast as others. There were ambivalent beliefs on being upset in dealing with difficult students, and that they are not expected to work with difficult students. Many though agreed that it is too late to help the students.

Teachers' Agreement on Non- Learner Centered Beliefs about learning and teaching

Figure 3 shows the extent of affirmation of teachers on non- learner centered beliefs about learning and teaching. It shows that the teachers held non- learner centered beliefs about learning and teaching. The net agreement of the teachers to the domains under non- learner centered beliefs on learning and teaching was relatively high when compared with non- learner centered beliefs about learners.

All teachers agreed that the most important job as a teacher is to help learners meet class standards to succeed and that teachers should teach learners to follow rules and to do what is

expected of them. This suggests that in these domains, the teachers held non-learner centered beliefs about learning and teaching.

High ratings were also noted on being responsible for what students learn and how they learn, the need to be in control of the direction of learning, knowing the subject matter well, needing to go back to basics if necessary, and being responsible to keep feelings to themselves.

Slightly lower ratings are noted among knowing more than students, and not allowing mistakes with students. The net agreement of 62.4% is lower compared to the teachers' net agreement in other domains under the non- learner centered beliefs on learning and teaching.
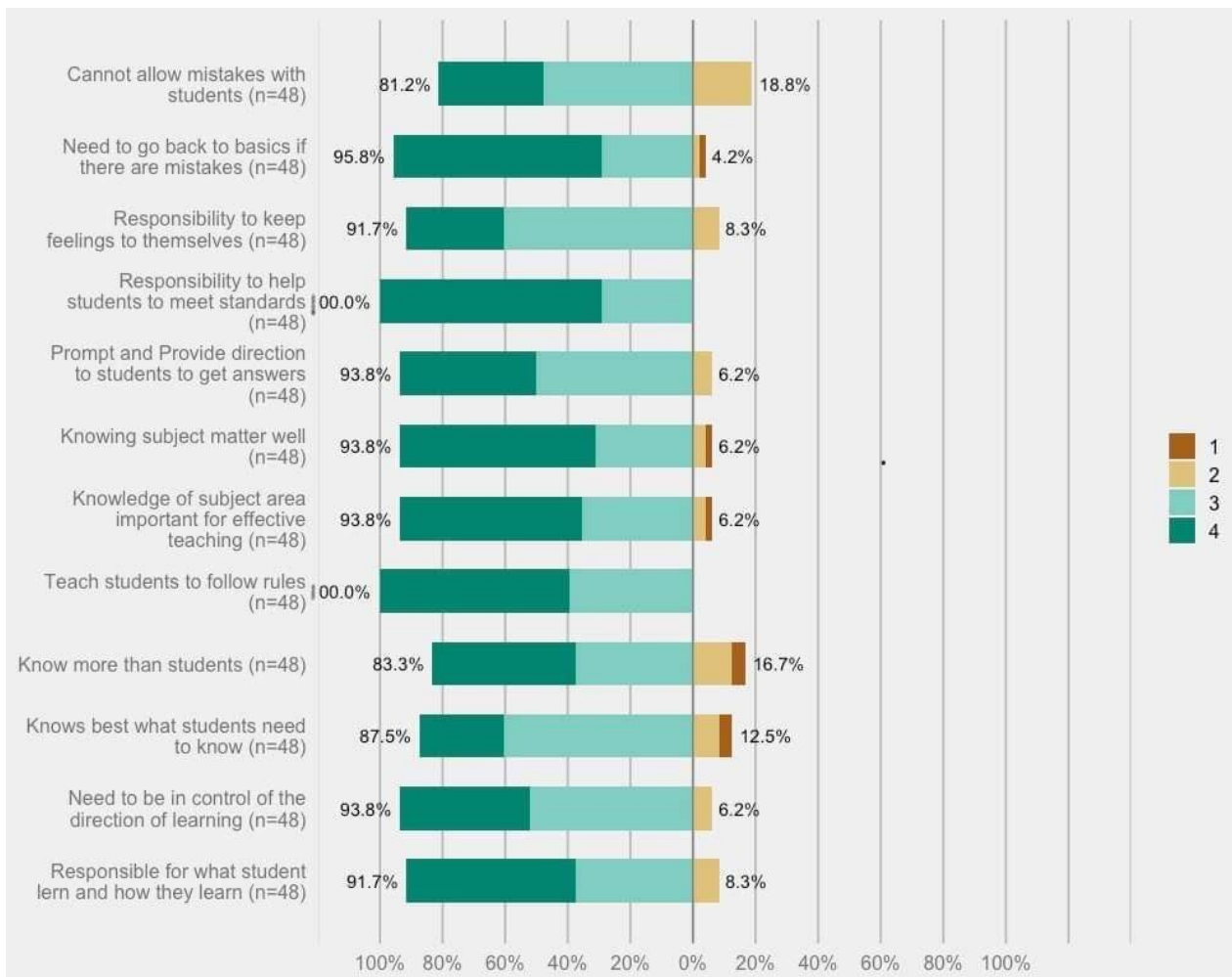

Figure 3. Extent of Affirmation of Teachers on Non- Learner Centered Domains about Learning and Teaching
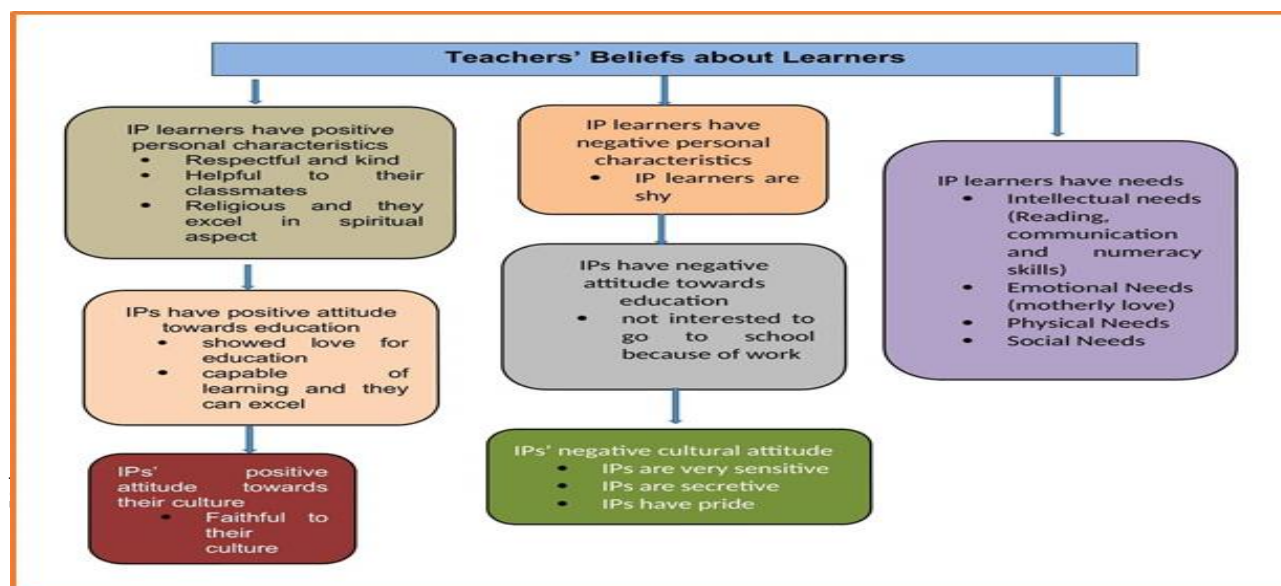
Teachers' Beliefs about Learners

Figure 4. Emergent Themes on Teachers' Beliefs on Learners

Teachers' belief that every student has the ability to learn and make progress is essential. Even if they belong to an indigenous group, teachers have to bring out the best and capabilities of these students. According to Ladson-Billings (1994), teachers who shaped an environment where learners are actively engaging are teachers who had positive beliefs on the ability and success of the students. Such teachers remind students that they are capable. They create a learning situation in which children have an opportunity to succeed.
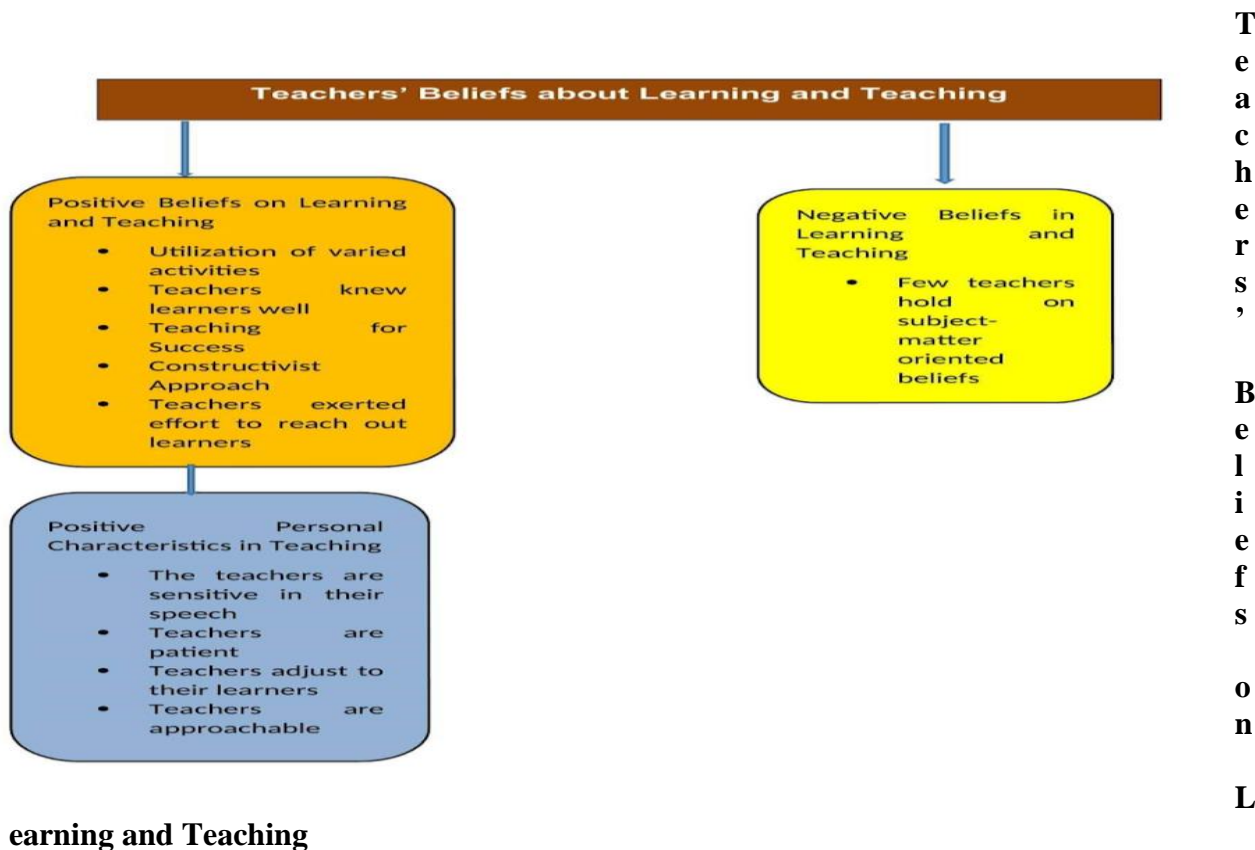

Teachers' Beliefs about Learning and Teaching

Positive Beliefs on Learning and Teaching
- Utilization of varied activities
- Teachers knew learners well
- Teaching for Success
- Constructivist Approach
- Teachers exerted effort to reach out learners

Negative Beliefs in Learning and Teaching
- Few teachers hold on subject-matter oriented beliefs

Positive Personal Characteristics in Teaching
- The teachers are sensitive in their speech
- Teachers are patient
- Teachers adjust to their learners
- Teachers are approachable

Teachers' Beliefs on Learning and Teaching

Figure 5. Emergent Themes on Teachers' Beliefs on Learning and Teaching

These concepts on the teachers' positive characteristics are also congruent to the study of Lasley & Matezynsk (1997). The teachers need to have patience to adjust with the students and enhance their strengths and lessen their weaknesses. This is very true for teachers who are in highlands because they adjusted to their learners since both teachers and learners came from different cultural backgrounds.

Goulet (2001) also observed several qualities possessed by effective First Nations teachers. To strengthen the teacher- student relationship, teachers are warm and caring and possess sensitivity, humor, and trust. They also used humor and often laughed with their students.

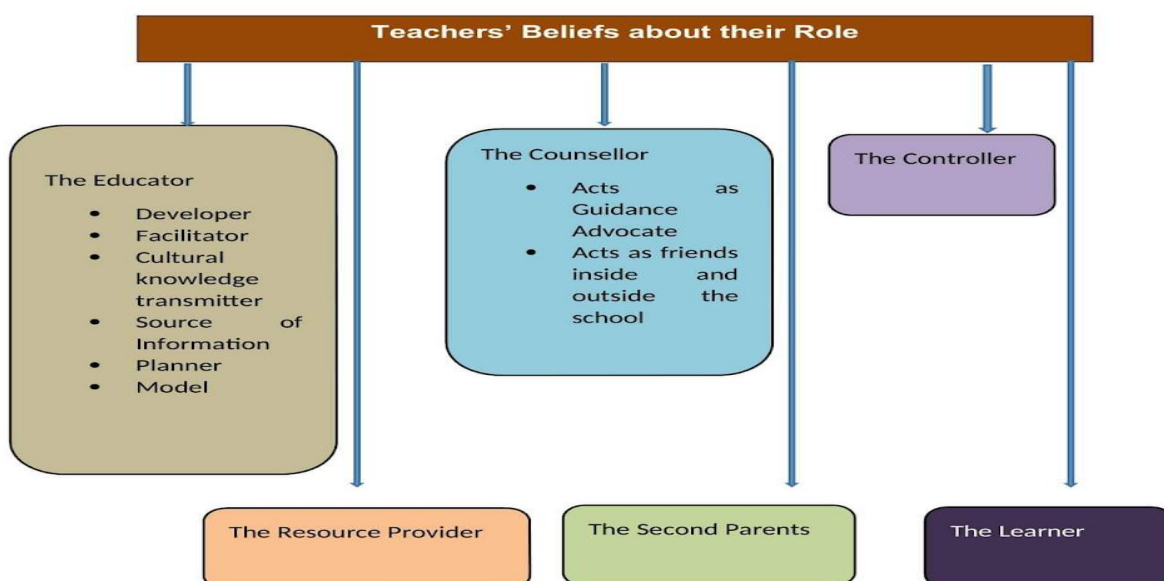**Teachers' Beliefs about their Role as Teachers**

Figure 6. Emergent Themes on Teachers' Beliefs on their Role as Teachers

The teachers in an indigenous learning environment portrayed different roles. The result corresponds to the study of Talbot (2014) who noted that meeting the needs of the learners became a challenge.

Teachers are facilitators of the learning process (Larenas, Hernandez, Neira, Suarez & Navarrete, 2013; Wang, 2016; and James, 2016). Teacher should be cultural knowledge transmitters and intercultural professionals (Wang, 2016).

This result is supported by the study of Samuelowicz & Bain (2001) that the teachers' main role also is to have the ability to explain or bring the subject matter to the students (Samuelowicz & Bain,2001). Teachers are also role model (Pop, 2008).

In addition, Wang (2016) stated that one of the prominent roles of the teachers in the classroom is being a friend and teachers should help students to overcome difficulties (James, 2016). Also, teachers have similar roles with the parents (Pratt et al., 1999).

On the other hand, the teacher is the authority with respect to the social norms that operate in the classroom (Beswick, 2007).

Lastly, teachers are learners. Brown and Frazier (2001) stated that teachers are active learners who also shape their own understanding.

Factors that Shape Teachers' Beliefs

The factors that shaped teachers' beliefs were cultural context, institutional context, self-awareness, self-reflection and personal beliefs, prior experiences, teacher education preparation and learners' needs, interest and performance.

Cultural context included community problems, cultural differences and language difficulty. The community where the school is situated shapes teachers' beliefs on learners and teaching and learning. The teachers' exposure to the community is necessary.

Institutional context included positive implementation of the curriculum, implementation of activities and teachers' time for collaboration. Negative institutional context included implementation of the curriculum, administrative support and guidelines from the Department of Education. The school, its activities, programs and administration influenced teachers' beliefs in teaching and learning.

Self-awareness, self-reflection and personal beliefs shaped teachers' beliefs. Reflective learning improved teachers. The personal point of view of teachers also influenced their beliefs.

Prior experiences included influence of former teachers, experience with other culture, previous teaching experience and experiences in the family. The teachers in highland schools brought with them their different experiences as they interacted with the IP learners.

Pre-service education also shaped teachers' beliefs. The teachers' exposure to different learners enhanced their teaching.

The teachers considered IP learners' needs, interest and performance as they taught the learners. This required an ample time to observe and know the learners better so that the teachers may identify their needs, interest and how they perform. These also shaped teachers' beliefs.
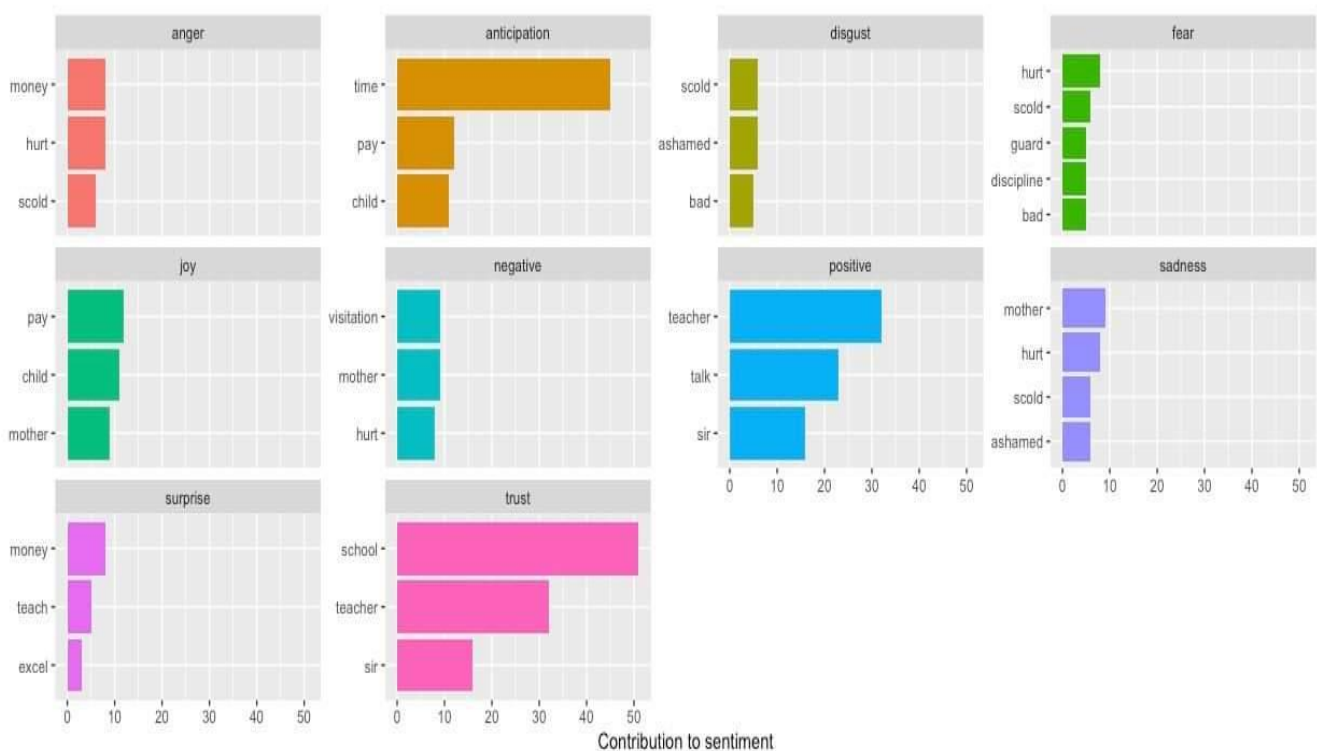
Sentiments of Teachers and Learners

Figure 7. Word Cloud Visualization of Teachers and Learners' Sentiments

The word cloud visualization in Figure 7 shows that the teachers and learners had developed both negative and positive sentiments in teaching the indigenous learners. They also developed different emotions in the teaching and learning process. The teachers who are in the indigenous setting felt both negative and positive sentiments. Both teacher and learners felt anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness surprise and trust.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based from the quantitative and qualitative data, the teachers in highland schools held both learner- centered beliefs and non- learner centered beliefs about learners and learning and teaching. However, the net agreement of teachers to the domains of learner- centered beliefs about learners and learning was higher compared to their net agreement to the domains of non- learner centered beliefs about learners and learning and teaching.

The teachers believed that IPs had positive and negative personal characteristics, positive and negative attitude towards education and positive and negative attitude towards their culture. They also believed that the IP learners had intellectual, emotional, physical and social needs. These needs should be addressed by the teachers so that the learners will stay in school.

The teachers had positive beliefs on learning and teaching. They also possessed positive personal characteristics in teaching. However, few teachers also held non- learner- centered beliefs about learning and teaching. For instance, few teachers held subject- matter oriented beliefs. They believed that knowing the subject well is the most important element of effective teaching. This calls for a need to re- orient the teachers on learner- centered domains and how to facilitate learning.

The teachers believed that they portrayed different roles as teachers in the classroom. These roles were educator, counsellor, controller, resource provider, second parents and learners.

Cultural context, institutional context, self- awareness, self- reflection and personal beliefs, prior experience, teacher education preparation and learners' needs, interest and performance are the factors that shaped teachers' beliefs. These factors were predisposition to the teachers' actions in the classroom.

The teachers and learners had different sentiments. They had both negative and positive sentiments. Sentiments like angry, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness surprise and trust are felt by the teachers and learners. The situations of IPs as well as their attitude influenced these sentiments. On the other hand, the teachers and the economic situations affected the IPs' sentiments. The teachers should have complete acceptance of the IPs. They should always consider their learners' ways.

In addition, this research is only limited to teachers' beliefs about IP learners, learning and teaching and their role as well and how those six (6) factors shaped said beliefs. The sample size and sampling technique which was purposive sampling for FGD and IDI were considered as limitations of the study. It could yield a definite generalization about teachers' beliefs but it could not be true for all teachers. This study was only focused on Bagobo- Tagabawa learners. The results, findings and conclusion may not be true to teachers teaching other tribes in Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur or other tribes around the globe. However, the findings may be helpful to show the individuality of teachers and how various factors have influenced their beliefs about learners, learning and teaching.

This study can be replicated with larger sample size and with other tribes as well. Future researches and follow- up studies can also explore learners' beliefs about themselves, about learning

and teaching and about the role of their teachers. In this way, there can be a comparison if there is a mismatch or a gap on the beliefs of the teachers and learners.

Teachers from this study revealed that IP teachers can understand IP learners. Hence, there is also a need to have a separate study if teachers who belong to IP have the same beliefs with the IP learners. Through this, it can be understood if the IP teachers and IP learners have a connection that non- IP teachers do not have.

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