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The Implication of the Beliefs and Practices of the Calinga of Northern Luzon, Philippines to Indigenous Peoples Education

ABSTRACT: *The study attempts to identify, describe, and document the beliefs and practices in the life of the Calinga in San Mariano, Isabela across the different life stages from birth to death, and its implication to indigenous education. Ethnographic research method and participant observation as technique were utilized in data gathering with the assistance of the NCIP (National Commission on Indigenous People) in the conduct of conference and disclosure, and output validation. Full immersion period was done for half a year. Findings based on the observations, immersion, interviews, and documentary analysis of data about the Calinga revealed that there are important socio-cultural beliefs and practices attached in each life stage that are unique from other ethnic groups. Unfortunately, these socio-cultural identities were gradually vanishing, due to the advent of modernization. To preserve their heritage, this paper is of great help to understand their culture better and sustain their viable cultural practices through indigenous education. Educators and policy makers should use this study in educational reforms, crafting resolutions and programs for the preservation and conservation of their culture. The younger Calinga generation should imbibe more appreciation for their culture and urge them to continuously practice it and revive their fading cultural identities for posterity.*

KEY WORDS: *Beliefs; Practices; Indigenous; Education.*

INTRODUCTION

International and local advocacy on the rights of indigenous peoples during the past two decades focused some attention on their situation. In June 1989, the General Conference of ILO (International Labour

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Organization) adopted the Convention Concerning the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. Known as ILO Convention 169, it is considered as the only international legal document devoted purely to indigenous peoples so far (Lacson & Sevilla, 2007; Henriksen, 2008; Lavoie *et al.*, 2016).

In the Philippines, the 1987 Constitution mandates that, “*The State recognizes and promotes the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development*”, under article II, section 22. This constitutional mandate of the rights of the ICCs (Indigenous Cultural Communities) and IPs (Indigenous Peoples) were shaped by Republic Act No.8371, also known as Indigenous Peoples Rights Act or IPRA Law. Thus, the State is bound to consider the customs, traditions, beliefs, and interests of indigenous cultural communities in the formulation and implementation of the state policies and programs with full respect to the dignity, uniqueness, and human rights (De Leon & De Leon, Jr., 2014; Atienza *ed.*, 2019).¹

In the Philippine Educational System, Republic Act No.10533 also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which institutionalized the K-12 Curriculum stipulated the Department of Education to allow schools to localize, indigenize, and enhance instructions based on the existing socio-cultural settings in the locality; and the creation of locally produced teaching and instructional materials, which is culture-sensitive in nature which is inclined with the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)’ socio-cultural integration of 2015 (de Guzman, 2003; De Leon & De Leon, Jr., 2014; Tullao, Jr., Borromeo & Cabuay, 2015).

The Province of Isabela is homed for numerous indigenous cultural communities and indigenous people, one of these are the Calingas. Thus, this study is an attempt to identify, describe, document, and analyze the socio-cultural life of the Calingas – an indigenous people in San Mariano, Isabela, and its implication to education. In particular, this study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

Firstly, identify, describe, and document the socio-cultural life and practices of the Calingas in Minanga, San Mariano, Isabela as to the following stages of life: (1) Conception and pregnancy; (2) Birth and infancy; (3) Childhood and child rearing; (4) Puberty and adolescence; (5) Courtship and marriage; (6) Old age; and (7) Death and burial.

Secondly, draw the implications of the socio-cultural life of the Calingas to Indigenous Education.

¹See also, for example, “Republic Act No.8371 – An Act to recognize, protect and promote the right of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples, creating a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, establishing implementing mechanisms, appropriating funds therefore, and for other purposes”. *Unpublished Document*. Manila, Philippines: Owned by Authors.

Conceptual Framework. “Filipino culture shall be preserved and developed for national identity”. This maxim is parallel to the provision in Article II, section 22 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which recognizes the existence and the rights of the Indigenous Cultural Communities and it was strengthened by Article XII, section 5. The welfare of indigenous peoples in our country has been the focus of various laws like Republic Act No.8371 or the IPRA (Indigenous Peoples Rights Act) Law, which specifies and strengthens the rights of IP (Indigenous People) in national development and preservation of their culture (De Leon & De Leon, Jr., 2014; Tullao, Jr., Borromeo & Cabuay, 2015; *Ibidem* with footnote 1).

Careful analysis of the socio-cultural life of the Calinga is an essential part of understanding how our society and culture grows as an individual passes through the different developmental stages of life. Thus, the necessity to describe and document the socio-cultural life of the Calinga of San Mariano is a way to give meaning and appreciate our cultural heritage, foster nationalism, and impinge awareness among Filipinos.

The Philippine educational system is beset with challenges to help society localize and indigenize education by framing a policy that caters a culture-sensitive and responsive educational program to the cultural communities (*cf* de Guzman, 2003; Nicolas, 2014; Popov *et al.* eds., 2021).

RESEARCH PARADIGM AND METHODOLOGY

The socio-cultural life of the Calinga of Northern Luzon, Philippines includes the different life stages, cultural practices, beliefs, and behavioral pattern as an individual undergoes conception and pregnancy, birth and infancy, childhood and childrearing practices, puberty and adolescence, courtship and marriage, old age, death and burial.

The identified socio-cultural life practices of the Calinga of Northern Luzon, Philippines were described and documented to come-up with implications to indigenous education and the formulation of an integrated and outcomes-based syllabus for indigenous education. See figure 1.

Ethnographic research method and participant observation as technique were utilized in data gathering with the assistance of NCIP (National Commission on Indigenous People) in the conduct of conference and disclosure, and output validation. Immersion period was started on the month of March 2014 to December 2014 (Sampa, 2013; Geronimo, Cabansag & Reyes, 2016).²

²See also, for example, “NCIP Administrative Order No.1, Series of 2012: The General Guidelines on the Documentation of Indigenous Knowledge Beliefs and Practices”. *Unpublished Document*. Manila, Philippines: Owned by Authors.

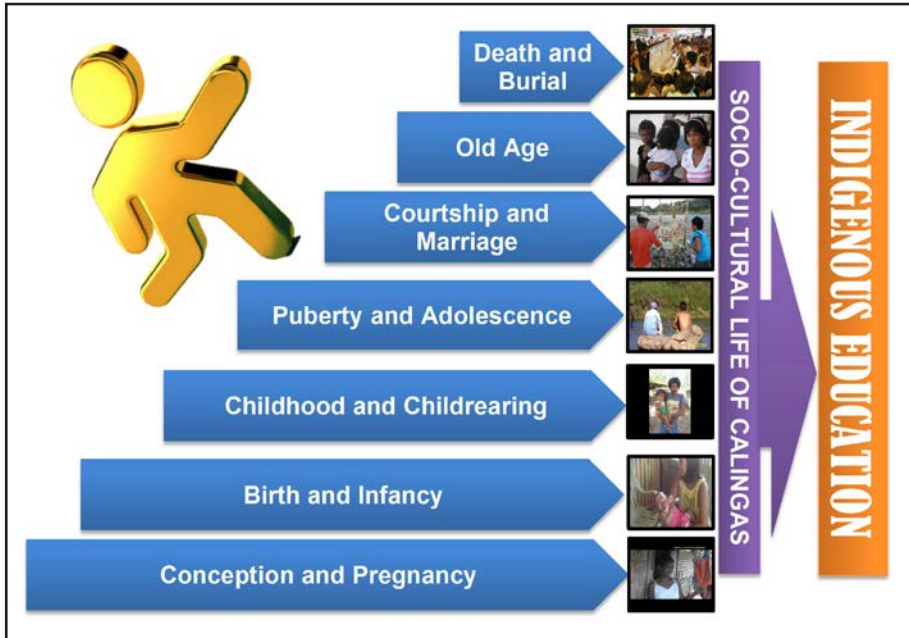


Figure 1:
The Schematic Diagram of the Socio-Cultural Beliefs and Practices of the Calinga in Northern Luzon, Philippines

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings show that a pregnant Calinga consults their elders, *albuaryos*, *palteras* or the *hilot* on what to do, they could determine the sexuality of the unborn child. They strongly believe in *anitos* and other unseen spirits. Protection to the unborn and pregnant is very much affiliated to Calinga, they put *an-anib* and engage in *pinading*. Giving birth is done by a *paltera*, for them, the newly born child symbolizes *swerte*, the baby's umbilical cord and *cadcaddua* are removed and cut by an *iwas* and placed on a *bingcan* and buried on the ground parallel to the rain gutter of the house. See picture 1.

Any member of the family is entitled to give name for the newly born child, *siruc-latuc* is performed by the elders of the tribe with the family members, the first child of the family is celebrated with great festivity during the ceremony of *alsung* and *assaranao*. When a certain Calinga child is sick, they believe that it is caused by the *bunog*, elders will perform *bugue* to expel the *bunog* or use herbal medicines and take a short prayer to cure the child's illness, *an-anib* is being worn or placed to the child for protection.



Picture 1:

Ngilin is a cross-sign (made of bamboo nodules) used as *an-anib* to drive away unwanted spirits, a sign of Christian influence to Calinga beliefs.



Picture 2:

A Calinga woman carries her baby around their house in the morning to nourish the child with the heat of the sun.



Picture 3:

A Calinga father carries his daughter signifies that males are also engaged in childrearing and responsible parenting.

The child is barbered by a known skilled member of the family, the hair is placed on a plastic sheet or lift on a book. When a Calinga woman experiences her first menstrual flow, she is not allowed to wash her underwear stained with her first blood with soap nor detergent, should not be squeezed nor twisted in opposite directions because of the belief that she might suffer from dysmenorrhea, she has to wash her face with the water used in washing her stained underwear for they believe that it will eliminate or remove their *taramidum* (pimples) and she have to wash her genitalia on the flowing river to cleanse it. See picture 2.

Male Calinga undergo circumcision done at the riverside during summer vacations, there was no anesthetic material used, they are required to chew guava leaves, after which is the removal of the penis' foreskin by a sharp knife, the chewed guava leaves will be applied to the penis to sanitize and patch up the pain. When a Calinga boy likes a girl, he will court her together with the parents of the girl and should serve at the house of the girl. During engagement, they practice *umul-uli* and give *sab-ong* and perform *Cagon* as preconditions to wedding, church wedding and mass wedding is done. Most of the old folks assume responsibilities in performing several rituals, it is customary for them to celebrate feast during harvest and planting seasons. See picture 3.

Calingas have a series of rituals connecting to the important moments in the agricultural cycle of upland rice planting and harvesting, Calinga's form of livelihood are farming and fishing. Farmlands and riverbanks are important elements of their ritual practices. The first ritual is *Bau-ang* (*Bawang*), lots of foods were prepared by the Calinga, incantations and merriments are done to invite *anitos* and to bribe the *bunog* for them not to cause harm, pestilence and give favorable health among the Calingas. The last ritual in their agricultural cycle is *Awatan*, for this ritual a lot of foods were prepared to be offered to the ancestors and the *bunog*. *Gangsa* (flat gong) made up of copper or iron material is used as a percussion instrument but due to the advent of modern musical instruments, guitar was used in replaced for the absence of *Gangsa*. See picture 4.

When a Calinga died, they lay him down on the *tuhlud*, he is dressed-up with his favorite dress, if he is a rich man, and he is dressed with *Barong Tagalog*. Before putting the dead on his grave, he will be blessed by the priest or the elders of the tribe, they will open his coffin and the family members will leave him a *bilin* (message) reminding the dead person not to scare them. As observed during internment they practice *pavalung*. See picture 5.

After the burial, the family members and relatives are required have *gulgul*. Calinga in Minanga practice *pasiam* and 40-days of the dead, they offer *padasal* (prayers) during these days and serve foods like *binallai*,



Picture 4:
Calingas prepare the *Bau-ang* ritual site, foods and a *balsa* before the start of incantations during twilight and nightfall on the riverside.



Picture 5:
Modern internment were also observed, the priest gives his final blessings to the dead until the burial site. The grave is also blessed with holy water.

inatata, patupat, deco (malagkit), and tapuy or other wines and put some *wari* or *atang* with lighted candle for the dead person. See picture 6.

Results show that Calinga have rich cultural identities different from other ethnic groups particularly in pregnancy, birth, childrearing, puberty, courtship, marriage, old age, death and burial practices, but saddening to note that these beliefs and practices are gradually fading because of the advent of modernization and Christianization.

These cultural beliefs and practices pose a great challenge to indigenous education particularly in the creation of an instructional material about their lifeways and a proposed curriculum. See picture 7.

The Socio-Cultural Implications to Indigenous Education. Based from the observations, immersion, interviews, and documentary analysis of data about the Calinga in North Luzon, Philippines, there are important socio-cultural beliefs, values, and practices possessed by this cultural community that are unique from other ethnic groups. When these are carefully identified, we can say that the Calinga culture is very beautiful and rich.

There are implications of these socio-cultural beliefs and practices to indigenous education. The aim of indigenous education is to help people understand themselves and their culture better. With that, they can engage themselves seriously in the task of nation building, which this study envisioned and expected to come-up and effect positive changes.

Policy Makers. From the identified socio-cultural lifeways, beliefs, and practices of the Calinga, policy-makers such as government and non-government organizations could use this study in the conduct of extension projects, outreach programs and literacy trainings or initiate ordinances or resolutions to give immediate remedial measures on how to preserve and conserve the unique and viable cultural practices of Calinga, particularly in the municipality of San Mariano, Isabela to recognize the importance of this marginalized group and serve as cultural pride of the place.

Isabela State University, San Mariano Campus. To institutionalize and educate the younger generations in San Mariano and other nearby municipalities, the instructors and educators in the place can use the formulated outcome-based syllabus and instructional material in the Philippine Society and Culture subject offered at Isabela State University, San Mariano Campus that would greatly help them educate the students on the lifeways and cultural practice of the Calinga and to propagate their culture by educating them on their own culture.

Philippine Normal University, North Luzon Campus. The identified socio-cultural lifeways of the Calinga can be used by the Calinga IP (Indigenous People) students at Philippine Normal University, North Luzon Campus as the National Center for Teacher Education and dubbed as Indigenous Peoples' Education hub for Northern Philippines for them to understand their culture and teach them how to teach the Calinga culture among Calinga students in the future as part of the indigenous education instituted by the K to 12 Curriculum and inspired by ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)' socio-cultural integration. To



Picture 6:

After the internment, the family members and relatives are required have *gulgul* before entering their house.



Picture 7:

Calingas practice *pasiyam* and 40th day of the dead.

PNU (Philippine Normal University) itself, may use this study and adopt the Calinga culture as one of its extension or adopted communities, to have them closely look the Calinga IPs (Indigenous Peoples) and provide them strategic plan to devise a program or curriculum for them and eventually to cater prospective teaching potentials among the Calinga community that would fit to teach indigenous education among Calinga themselves.

K to 12 Curriculum of the Department of Education (DepEd). DepEd should utilize the findings and implications of this study in the formulation of its National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework for the Calinga IPs (Indigenous Peoples). It shall put in place a policy that would promote the establishment and maintenance of culture-sensitive and responsive educational infrastructures, learning environment and spaces. Documentation and research activities by IPs on their own history, knowledge, practices, and other aspects of cultural heritage shall be encouraged and supported by DepEd as a means of enriching the learning resources available to IP (Indigenous People) communities and the educational system at large. DepEd shall uphold and advocate the protection of the intellectual property rights of IPs in pursuing this policy.

Calinga Cultural Community. The identified socio-cultural practices of the Calinga would develop more appreciation among Calinga themselves

and it will urge them to perpetuate such viable cultural practices without the fear of being discriminated by other ethnic groups and it will gradually eliminate the negative impressions and notions of ethnic groups about Calinga.

National Commission on Indigenous People. Implications of this study could also of benefit to the NCIP (National Commission on Indigenous People) Education to closely develop and foster Calinga culture and organize an effective political or organizational structure among Calinga to guide and govern them well by their own tribal leaders. Calinga must enjoy the fruits of development without the need of uprooting them from their unique lifeways. Thus, the aim of indigenous education is to help them understand their culture better to perpetuate and sustain their viable cultural practices.³

CONCLUSION

Based on the summary of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

Calinga have rich socio-cultural identities which are different from other ethnic groups but most of these are gradually fading because of the advent of modernization and Christianization.

Studying the socio-cultural life of the Calinga is a great help to understand their culture better and sustain their viable cultural practices through indigenous education.

The formulated outcomes-based syllabus in Philippine Society and Culture includes the socio-cultural life of the Calinga would guide instructors and educators on what relevant topics to be included to be studied by Calinga IPs (Indigenous Peoples) and regular students.

The produced findings of the study on the Socio-cultural life of the Calinga would serve as instructional material for them to use and educate them about their culture.

Based from the results, conclusions and implications of the study, the following are recommended:

Policy makers should use this study in crafting resolutions, ordinances and programs for immediate remedial measures on how to preserve and conserve the culture of Calinga.

Instructors, professors and educators should use the formulated Outcomes-based Syllabus in Philippine Society and Culture subject in the IP (Indigenous People) curriculum.

³**Glossary of Local Term:** *An - anib* = amulets like protection, used to cast unseen spirits and shields against harm. *Bugay* = a ritual calling the spirit of the dead to free those spirits he had brought and leave with peace. *Bunog* = refers to the unseen spirit. *Contad* = a ritual used to protect the child from evil spirits. *Infiel* = refers to the native Calinga. *Paltera* = a traditional or local midwife. *Wari* = food offerings to the unseen spirits.

Philippine Normal University, North Luzon Campus should help this community by providing a strategic plan to devise a program for IPs and cater prospective teaching potentials from the Calinga community that would fit to teach indigenous education among them, and formulate a special curriculum for the Calinga IPs (Indigenous Peoples).

DepEd (Department of Education) should adopt this study as a basis for a stronger framework of IP education among Calinga in the K to 12 Curriculum, and develop a policy framework in MTB-MLE (Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education) for Calinga.

The NCIP (National Commission for Indigenous People) should closely monitor, develop and foster of the native Calinga of North Luzon, Philippines.

The ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Community could use this study in the ASEAN socio-cultural integration and its advocacy of bridging culture to culture across ASEAN nations.

The Calinga should develop more appreciation of their culture and should urge to perpetuate their cultural practices to preserve and conserve it by continuously practicing it and reviving their fading cultural identities.

Similar study may be conducted by any interested researcher or from the Calinga community itself to validate further and give credence to the findings of this study.⁴

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⁴**Statement:** We, the undersigned, declare that this article is our academic work; it is not the result of plagiarism, because the sources we cite and refer to are listed in full in the References or Bibliography. We are ready to accept academic sanctions, if what we say is not true and is not in accordance with applicable academic norms.

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