



CULTURAL SENSITIVITY LEVELS AMONG SELECTED PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN AURORA PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the levels of cultural sensitivity among selected private schools in Aurora Province, particularly in the context of implementing DepEd Order No. 51, s.2014 – Guidelines on the Conduct of Activities and Use of Materials Involving Aspects of Indigenous Peoples. Given Aurora’s rich cultural diversity and the presence of indigenous communities, the research underscores the importance of fostering inclusive educational environments that respect and reflect students varied cultural identities. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study surveyed teaching, non-teaching, and administrative personnel from various private institutions to assess their demographic profiles, awareness of the DepEd order, implementation levels, and culturally responsive practices. Findings revealed that most respondents are young, predominantly female, and hold bachelor's degrees, with teaching personnel forming the majority. Administrators exhibited the highest awareness and implementation levels across cultural sensitivity indicators, while non-teaching staff consistently scored the lowest. Statistical analyses indicated that job position significantly influenced cultural sensitivity awareness and practices, whereas other demographic variables showed limited effects. The study concludes that although cultural sensitivity is moderately observed across schools, gaps remain in training, policy standardization, and community engagement – especially among non-teaching personnel and leadership roles. As a result, a strategic action plan was developed to address these gaps, recommending institutional reforms, cultural education committees, teacher training, and strengthened partnerships with indigenous communities. The study highlights the critical role of private schools in advancing inclusive education and preserving Aurora’s cultural heritage by embedding cultural sensitivity in school systems, practices, and curricula.

KEYWORDS: *Cultural Sensitivity, Private Schools, Aurora Province, Indigenous Peoples, Deped Order No. 51, S. 2014, Inclusive Education, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Educational Equity, Cultural Awareness*

1. INTRODUCTION

The legal and educational frameworks in the Philippines, such as Republic Act No. 10908 and DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2014, emphasize the importance of inclusive education that respects indigenous histories. While these mandates are primarily directed at public schools, private institutions must also embrace these principles to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students.

By revisiting the Guideline on the Conduct of Activities and Use of Material Involving Aspects of Indigenous People (DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2014), and examining how private schools are implementing their guidelines, this study seeks to provide insights into existing practices.

When educators acknowledge and affirm students' cultural identities, they foster a sense of belonging that is vital for student engagement and participation. This sense of belonging can lead to lower dropout rates, improved attendance, and heightened motivation for academic success (Banks & Banks, 2019).

Culturally responsive teaching does not only affirm students' identities but also actively works to dismantle stereotypes and biases, fostering a learning environment built on mutual respect and understanding among peers (Ladson-Billings, 2022).

DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2014, and the Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012) promote inclusivity and respect for cultural diversity, even though these are not enforceable requirements for private schools (Philippine Constitution, 1987; RA 10533; RA 8371).

In the Philippines, initiatives like the Teacher Education Curriculum for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (TECDI)



aim to address the gaps in teacher preparedness by integrating cultural sensitivity training into teacher education programs (Bulaong & Salas, 2020).

There is a need for school-community partnerships to develop culturally relevant curricula and stronger policies supporting Indigenous knowledge in education (Dalida & Lantican, 2021).

Private schools, which face distinct challenges due to different regulatory frameworks, require further study, especially in Aurora Province (Ramos, 2023).

2. OBJECTIVES

This study aims at describing the cultural sensitivity levels among private schools in the Aurora Province in light of DepEd Order No. 51, s.2014 to inform a tailored action plan.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. How may the personal metrics of the respondents be described in terms of:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. sex;
 - 1.3. civil status;
 - 1.4. highest educational attainment; and
 - 1.5. position?
2. How may the respondents' level of awareness of DepEd Order No. 51, s.2014 be described in terms of:
 - 2.1. cultural presentations, festivals, and similar activities;
 - 2.2. use of indigenous clothing and related paraphernalia;
 - 2.3. use of community artifacts;
 - 2.4. use of community symbols; and
 - 2.5. publications, videos, and other related materials?
3. Are there significant relationships between the personal metric variables of the respondents and their level of awareness of DepEd Order No. 51, s.2014?
4. How may the level of implementation of DepEd Order No. 51, s.2014 be described in terms of:
 - 4.1. cultural presentations, festivals, and similar activities;
 - 4.2. use of indigenous clothing and related paraphernalia;
 - 4.3. use of community artifacts;
 - 4.4. use of community symbols; and
 - 4.5. publications, videos, and other related materials?
5. How may the culturally sensitive practices of the respondents be described in terms of:
 - 5.1. cultural sensitivity in teaching practices;
 - 5.2. respect for indigenous knowledge and traditions;
 - 5.3. culturally appropriate use of materials and resources; and
 - 5.4. collaboration and community engagement?
6. Are there significant differences between the description given by the respondents on their cultural sensitivity practices when grouped according to their personal metric variables?
7. Based on the findings of the study, what strategic action plan may be proposed?

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to systematically assess the implementation of DepEd Order No. 51, s.2014. Using structured surveys, the study collected measurable data on respondents' demographics and cultural sensitivity levels. Statistical analysis was applied to identify patterns, correlations, and differences among groups, ensuring objective, valid, and reliable results. This approach allowed findings to be generalized, providing a strong evidence-based foundation for proposing an action plan to enhance cultural sensitivity practices in private schools within the framework of Educational Management.

3.1. Sampling Procedure

To ensure the collection of data that were both reliable and representative, the study employed a stratified sampling method. This approach guaranteed that respondents from various demographic backgrounds—such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and job position—were included, providing a well-rounded perspective on cultural sensitivity. The selection prioritized respondents with varying lengths of experience and across different subject areas



to reflect the breadth of educational contexts wherein cultural sensitivity played a role. This diversity was critical to understanding how individual and institutional factors influenced both the awareness and implementation of cultural sensitivity initiatives. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to target actively employed individuals, as they were directly engaged with current educational practices. Respondents were invited to participate voluntarily, and their anonymity was assured, fostering an environment conducive to honest and candid responses. This methodical approach to respondent selection did not only enrich the quality of the data gathered but also ensured that the study provided valuable insights into the current state of cultural sensitivity in private schools and the effectiveness of DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2014. The table that follows presents the study’s distribution of respondents.

3.2. Respondents

The respondents of this study comprised educators and administrators from selected private schools in Aurora Province. These respondents, including teachers, non-teaching personnel, principals and other school administrators, played a pivotal role in shaping the educational environment and ensuring the implementation of cultural sensitivity practices within their institutions. By involving individuals who were directly responsible for policy application and classroom interaction, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of how DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2014, was being interpreted and applied in day-to-day educational activities. This focus on a diverse group of educational leaders ensured that the study had addressed cultural sensitivity at both administrative and instructional levels, reflecting the depth of implementation across different facets of the school environment.

Distribution of Respondents

School	Administrative Personnel	Teaching Personnel	Non-Teaching Personnel
School A	6	132	46
School B	2	22	12
School C	2	19	2
School D	2	16	7
School E	3	29	9
School F	2	3	1
School G	2	22	2
Total	19	243	79

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Personal Metrics of the Respondents

The respondents consist mainly of a young workforce, with the highest concentration on aged 25-29 (30.50%) and a significant female majority (73.61%), reflecting the dominance of women in the education sector. Most respondents (84.16%) hold a bachelor’s degree, while only a small percentage have advanced degrees (12.61% master’s, 3.23% doctorate). Additionally, the majority (71.26%) are teaching personnel, with fewer in non-teaching (23.17%) and administrative (5.57%) roles, indicating limited representation in leadership positions.

4.2. Respondents’ Level of Awareness of DepEd Order No. 51, s.2014

Administrators demonstrate the highest cultural awareness across multiple categories, particularly in appreciating culture (3.53), seeking permission for artifacts (3.26), and avoiding stereotyping in publications (3.32), while teaching personnel followed closely behind, showing strong awareness in respecting sacred elements (3.37) and indigenous clothing (3.11). Non-teaching personnel consistently score the lowest, particularly in avoiding commercialization (2.76), modifying indigenous garments (2.70), and recognizing cultural misrepresentation (2.52), indicating a need for further awareness initiatives. Despite varying levels of awareness, all respondent groups fall within the "Moderately Aware" category in the use of indigenous clothing, artifacts, community symbols, and media materials, highlighting areas for improvement in cultural sensitivity training.

4.3. Relationships between the Personal Metric Variables of the Respondents and their Level of Awareness

Position shows the most significant correlation with awareness of cultural presentations ($r = -0.172, p = 0.001$) and community symbols ($r = -0.142, p = 0.008$), indicating that individuals in higher positions tend to have lower awareness of these aspects. This suggests that leadership roles do not necessarily equate to greater engagement with cultural sensitivity initiatives. Meanwhile, age, sex, civil status, and educational attainment do not show statistically significant correlations with cultural awareness.



4.4. Level of Implementation of DepEd Order No. 51, s.2014

The implementation of cultural presentations, indigenous clothing guidelines, and community artifact use is generally at a moderate level across all respondent groups, with administrators demonstrating the highest adherence, followed by teaching and non-teaching personnel. Administrators fully implement key aspects such as dignified cultural appreciation (3.37) and ensuring community approval for artifacts (3.16), while non-teaching personnel show the weakest implementation, particularly in seeking permission for indigenous clothing (2.70) and understanding artifact origins (2.56). While teaching personnel maintain consistent implementation, their strongest adherence is seen in respecting indigenous attire (3.21) and promoting community respect in publications (3.13).

4.5. Culturally Sensitive Practices

Cultural sensitivity in teaching practices is most evident among teaching personnel (3.15), who excel in avoiding stereotyping (3.20) and addressing cultural differences (3.20), while administrators show moderate awareness (2.92) and non-teaching personnel score the lowest (2.75). Respect for indigenous knowledge is also moderately observed, with administrative (3.17) and teaching personnel (3.13) showing strong adherence to preserving indigenous rituals, whereas non-teaching personnel struggle the most (2.83), particularly in avoiding commercialization (2.73). Similarly, teaching personnel lead in ensuring the appropriate use of cultural materials (3.14) and fostering community collaboration (2.94), while non-teaching personnel display the weakest engagement (2.59).

4.6. Differences between the Description given by the Respondents on their Cultural Sensitivity Practices when grouped according to their Personal Metric Variables

The MANOVA results indicate that position is the most significant demographic factor influencing culturally sensitive practices among educators in private schools in Aurora Province, particularly in teaching practices ($F = 5.712, p = 0.004$) and collaboration and community engagement ($F = 3.826, p = 0.023$). Other demographic factors, including age, sex, civil status, and highest educational attainment, do not show significant effects on most cultural sensitivity dimensions, though civil status exhibits marginal significance ($F = 2.703, p = 0.068$) in community engagement.

4.7. Proposed Strategic Action Plan

The findings of the research lead to the development of a strategic action plan aimed at enhancing cultural sensitivity in selected private schools in Aurora Province. The plan includes targeted training for educators, the creation of a Cultural Education Committee, and the establishment of institutional guidelines on indigenous clothing, artifacts, and community symbols to ensure culturally appropriate practices. Furthermore, it emphasizes collaboration with indigenous communities through dialogues, immersion programs, and memorandum agreements, reinforcing the integration of cultural sensitivity in teaching practices, school policies, and educational materials.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The demographic profile of the respondents reflects a predominantly young and female-dominated workforce in the education sector, with most holding a bachelor's degree. The limited representation of advanced degree holders suggests opportunities for further professional development. Additionally, the small percentage of administrative personnel indicates a need to strengthen leadership pathways within private schools.
2. Cultural awareness varies across respondent groups, with administrators demonstrating the highest sensitivity, followed by teaching personnel, while non-teaching personnel show the lowest levels. Despite all groups falling under the "Moderately Aware" category, gaps remain in avoiding commercialization and misrepresentation of indigenous culture. These findings highlight the necessity of targeted cultural sensitivity training, particularly for non-teaching personnel.
3. The significant correlation between position and awareness of cultural presentations and community symbols suggests that higher-ranking individuals may be less engaged with cultural sensitivity initiatives. Since other demographic factors do not significantly influence awareness, cultural sensitivity training should be designed for all employees rather than targeting specific groups. This reinforces the need for institutional policies that ensure all personnel, regardless of rank, actively engage in cultural awareness programs.
4. The implementation of cultural sensitivity guidelines is moderate across all respondent groups, with administrators showing the highest adherence. Teaching personnel demonstrate consistent



- implementation, while non-teaching staff exhibit weaker engagement, particularly in seeking permission for indigenous clothing and understanding artifact origins. These findings indicate a need for further reinforcement of cultural sensitivity policies, particularly among non-teaching personnel.
5. Teaching personnel exhibit the strongest cultural sensitivity in their teaching practices, while administrative and non-teaching personnel display moderate to low levels of awareness. Respect for indigenous knowledge and proper use of cultural materials are more evident among teaching personnel, while non-teaching personnel struggle with commercialization and engagement. These results highlight the need for additional training and policies to strengthen cultural sensitivity among all school staff.
 6. The findings confirm that position is the most influential demographic factor affecting cultural sensitivity, particularly in teaching practices and community engagement. Other demographic factors, such as age, sex, and education, have minimal impact, indicating that cultural awareness is shaped more by institutional roles and responsibilities. This suggests that leadership development programs should incorporate cultural sensitivity training to ensure equitable engagement across all school personnel.
 7. The research findings lead to the creation of a strategic action plan that focuses on strengthening cultural sensitivity in private schools. The plan includes targeted training, the formation of a Cultural Education Committee, and institutional guidelines for indigenous clothing, artifacts, and symbols. Additionally, it emphasizes collaboration with indigenous communities to integrate cultural awareness into school policies, teaching practices, and educational materials.

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