



The Socio-Cultural Life of the Ifugao of Chaja, Mayoyao, Ifugao, Philippines: It's Educational Implication

Reyes Agnes S.

Philippine Normal University, Isabela Campus Alicia, Isabela, PHILIPPINES

Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 19th December 2013, revised 7th January 2014, accepted 13th February 2014

Abstract

The study endeavored to find out the socio-cultural beliefs and practices of the Ifugao of Chaja particularly along courtship, marriage, pregnancy, child-birth, infant care and child-rearing, adolescence, adulthood/old age, and death and burial. It also looked into the characteristics of this group of people in terms of age, sex, civil status, occupation, place of origin, religion, educational attainment and number of children and to find out the implications of their beliefs and practices to education. The descriptive study method was employed to achieve the purpose of this study. Tape recorder, still and video camera were used to document the respondents' socio-cultural practices. Structured and unstructured interview and participant observation were conducted to confirm and validate the data gathered. Documentary analysis was employed to draw vital information on the origin of the Ifugao and the community where they live. Among the Ifugao, there are peculiar rituals, beliefs and practices on the variables investigated that are consistently observed in the different stages of their life despite the advent of science and technology and the influence of certain culture and religion.

Keywords: Socio-cultural life, beliefs and practices, Ifugao.

Introduction

People all throughout the world, regardless of their origin and geographical set up, possess their own peculiar way of living. The people of the west are different from the people of the east. What distinguishes them is not by their biological-genetic force alone but by their culture. Each nation holds its own socio-cultural identity that makes it feel superior over the other or vice versa.

The Philippines is a nation blessed with several ethnic groups. It was colonized by eastern and western countries with varied culture. This condition makes the Filipinos socially and culturally different.

The Filipino culture is a product of the eastern and western colonization. The Bayanihan and close family ties among the Filipinos were contributed by the Malay and Chinese forefathers. The piousness of the Filipinos is a trace of the Spanish introduction of Christianity. Generally, Filipinos are known for being hospitable.

Culture and society are interrelated; one does not exist without the other¹. A society is composed of interacting individuals and interacting groups sharing a common culture. A society is a geographical aggregate consisting of individual who live a common life and of groups interrelated with one another. The members are dependent on one another for survival, and they developed a sense of group identity or unity. Holding the society together is a social organization which gives order and meaning to the social relationship between individuals or groups.

Beliefs embody man's perception and conviction about reality and include the primitive man's concept, idea of the universe as well as the scientist's empirical view of the world – the result from his experiences about the physical, biological and social world in which he lives. Beliefs like superstitions, riddles, philosophy, theology, technology, art, and sciences are usually incorporated into the whole vast body of knowledge which has been accumulated through time some of the ideas are not scientifically proven but are considered facts by those who hold them².

Education is always rooted in some ways in the beliefs and values of a culture. Society has no alternative, but to transmit its own cultural values unless culture reconstruction or planned innovation is intended or unless there is such crucial division in it.

Educational institutions do not exist in a vacuum; they interact with the society of which they are a part. The cultural patterns of identifiable groups of people are reflected in their perception of the role and function of education, in turn, these cultural patterns have an effect in learning and the acquisition of skills important to survival and self-fulfillment. Most important to education is an understanding of the influences that the subcultures and social classes have on the socialization and education of their members³.

Education has proven its role in the maintenance of life and culture of the society. It is quite unimaginable to visualize the world without the integrative influence of education on just about every aspects of human life. This fact is forcefully brought to reality when one takes a look at the life of minority groups where one sees a culture that has remained glued to the past despite the overwhelming change in scenario unfolding before them.

The government has always shown the concern and interest to uplift the quality of life of the Filipino irrespective of their ethnic origin. The fundamental law of the land of the Philippines highly supported the promotion and development of the indigenous people's privileges and rights.

The aim of the constitution is to involve these communities in the development of the nation. The Ifugao group is one of the indigenous cultural communities. This cultural community group settled in Chaja, Mayoyao, Ifugao and were clothed with several beliefs and practice which served as social standards of the community.

A study⁴ was conducted about the cultural beliefs and practices of the Dumagats in Norzagaray, Bulacan. She focused her research on their practices as regards childbirth, marriage, death, religion, and health. She found out that the ethnic group still retains their traditional indigenous culture without so much changes made. It is at this point that the researcher, a social science teacher, was motivated to conduct a similar study about the Ifugaos' culture and find out its educational implication. This study will help her explain and illustrate in a more realistic approach the way Ifugao developed and retained such inherent cultural beliefs and practices in her class discussion.

Statement of the Problem: This study sought to describe and analyze the socio – cultural life of the Ifugao of Chaja, Mayoyao, Ifugao. Specifically, this work sought to find answers to the following sub – problems:

What are the socio – cultural beliefs and practices of the Ifugao of Chaja, Mayoyao, Ifugao as observed in the different life stages? i. Courtship, ii. Marriage, iii. Pregnancy, iv. Childbirth, v. Childcare/child-rearing, vi. Adolescence, vii. Adulthood, viii. Death and Burial.

Do the beliefs and practices as a people hinder their development in education?

What are the implications of the Ifugao's beliefs and practices to education in terms of the following: i. Attitude, ii. Coping Mechanism, iii. Motivation, iv. Learning Processes.

Conceptual Framework: Educational is an integral aspect of community affairs. An important relationship exists between skills and knowledge learned at school and those absorbed at home and community. Educators should look beyond the school and the people within. It should, likewise, consider the cultural context of education in order to understand the problems and aspirations and in order that learning inside the four walls of the classroom can be made more relevant and meaningful.

Education plays an important role in the modification and transmission of culture. This assumption necessitates both formal and non-formal program which are complementary and parallel, functional relevant to and cognizant of existing cultural patterns of a community.

The measure of the effectiveness of any educational system is its capacity to meet and satisfy human needs. These may be categorized as social, emotional, moral, and spiritual. Since human needs are largely anchored in the sources other than the schools, colleges and universities, educators should be aware of the condition existing in the community. These are sources which includes man's interaction with members of the family, kin, friends, and acquaintances; with institution like the church, government bureaucracy, clubs and business concerns; and with the media like the newspapers, magazines, journals, books, televisions, radios, and motion pictures.

All of these sources widely influence in forming opinions, attitudes, values, and behavior among people.

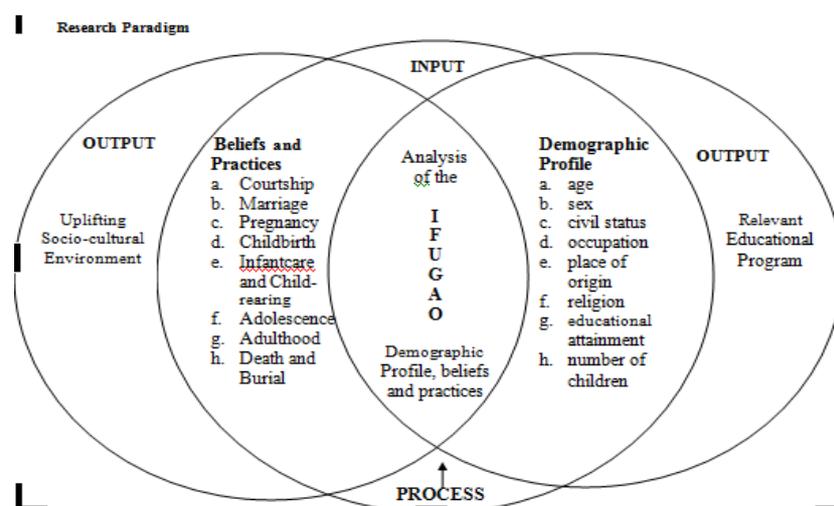


Figure-1
 Research Paradigm

The above paradigm shows the interrelationship of Beliefs and Practices of the Ifugao to the Socio-Cultural Environment and Educational Program

The research diagram shows the input of the study, which are the demographic profile of the respondents and their beliefs and practices on courtship, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, child care / child rearing, adolescence adulthood and death and burial. These beliefs and practices of the Ifugao may perpetuate their inherent cultural heritage. They might in a way influence educative processes and social interactions among the members of the society through insistent of ones belief or practice. In the modification of behavior and social interaction, the beliefs and practices and the demographic profile of the Ifugao play a great role. These beliefs and practices have existed in the community, has been accepted and used as standard of living and basis of community life.

In the teaching learning processes, the beliefs and practices of the people in the community cannot be ignored. Good rapport between the learners and the teacher creates a classroom climate where instructional activities could be accomplished. School activities and programs could also be carried out smoothly and supported by the people in an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance of what the people are. People in the community extend their full assistance if educators know how to appreciate them. In this case, an exemplary social relation among the teachers and the community people which is very important in the educational system become very evident. Their demographic profile also influences how the Ifugao accept their existing cultural beliefs and practices that will affect social relations and educative processes. The background of the learner has to be considered to suit classroom activities and create an environment for everyone to feel the sense of belonging. The profile of the community needs to be examined to conform to educational plans, programs and activities to the needs of the people. This will create a better community relation. So that within the community where the school is, everybody works together to carry out school programs and activities without necessarily uprooting them from their cultural heritage. To build a socio – cultural environment that would uplift the Ifugao from their traditional cultural beliefs and practices that are detrimental, they need the assistance of educators. Educational planners play an important role in discerning a curriculum that would fit them.

Methodology

Research Design: The method employed was the descriptive case study to gather the necessary data needed for this research. A case study is characterized by an intensive study of a person, group, organization, institution or a problem⁵. This approach leads to qualitative analysis. The case study method was used to describe, inquire deeper and examine the existing socio - cultural beliefs and practices of the Ifugao from birth to death and its implication to education.

Selection and Description of Respondents: All Ifugao of Chaja, Mayoyao, Ifugao are the respondents of the study. The old folks and the adolescent Ifugao were the source of all information regarding the Ifugao traditional beliefs and practices as observed and done from birth to death. The Ifugao served as the subject of intense observations of the study. They were observed in different events, occasions and life situations in Chaja as factors that affect learning processes.

Data Gathering Instruments: For this study, the researcher considered both primary and secondary sources which include the following:

Questionnaire: This was employed to collect personal information concerning the subjects and the socio-cultural beliefs and practices as observed and done from birth to death. The instrument is made up of two parts. The first part consists of items on personal circumstances of the Ifugao such as sex, age, civil status, educational attainment, religion, number of children, place of origin, and occupation. The second part consists of an unstructured questionnaire seeking data about the beliefs and practices of the Ifugao in barangay Chaja, Mayoyao, Ifugao. Items that were included in the questionnaire were based on the result of reviews of records and documents compiled on the Ifugao and the preliminary interview and survey that was conducted among those identified members who are knowledgeable of the Ifugao. The questionnaire was translated into the Ifugao dialect for clearer understanding of the questions and to be able to get authentic and relevant responses. This has been done with the help of the researcher's Ifugao key informants who are fluent in the languages used by the respondents. The key informants were trained by the researcher to facilitate data gathering needed for the study.

Documentary Analysis: An intensive review of documentary materials and readings about the Ifugao was made to enrich the researcher's knowledge of her respondents and be able to identify the relevant cultural beliefs and practices that were needed to facilitate the conduct of the unstructured interview of the study.

Interview Guide: The researcher used an interview guide to investigate the existing socio-cultural beliefs and practices of the respondents. The interview was conducted in Chaja at all times during the day and whenever the respondents were available. During the interviews a tape recorder was used to record the oral responses of the respondents to assure accuracy and authenticity of the information gathered. The taped responses were in the native dialect, in Filipino, in English and other dialects.

The interview included a wide range of topics relevant to the study.

Observation and Immersion: To get an accurate and a real feel, and a candid picture of the Ifugao's beliefs and practices

from birth to death, it was necessary for the researcher to stay in the place of study on different times. She visited during the school December break, utilized the long vacation in the summer time. Important visits were made when special occasions were celebrated that occurs during the time frame of the study. The researcher was an intent participant-observer not only to validate respondents' verbal and written responses but to make personal contact which is the basis of the very important first hand observations to be done with the respondents in their day to day activities. The researcher braved rugged terrain, unholy hours of travel, discomfort and very meager equipment and materials in order to get all data needed for the study.

Data Gathering Procedure: Before the formal conduct of the study, a well-planned preliminary survey on the research locale was conducted by the researcher. Before the preliminary survey was made a letter requesting permission to conduct the initial activities and the final study in barangay Chaja, Mayoyao, Ifugao was personally handed by the researcher to the municipal mayor and barangay captain. It is perceived that the Ifugao has deep reverence for the traditional beliefs and practices and therefore must be equally respected by outsiders.

The questionnaires were both structured and unstructured. The interviews were made with the subjects by the researcher and her selected key informants who are members of the tribe, literate, and therefore fluent in the Ifugao dialect. They were selected based on their genuine interest to help the researcher, their educational background which should be at least college level, as a member of the Ifugao tribe and have relatives in the place. They were trained by the researcher for this particular task to gather the necessary information needed for the study. They were with the researcher during the interview sessions to facilitate the discussion especially when the researcher needed to be clarified on responses and what the respondents wanted to bring out or what the researcher wanted to elicit from the clients. They also assisted the researcher in the distribution and collection of questionnaires for data on personal circumstances. A well-translated questionnaire was made as gauged from the kind of data gathered. The items were read to the respondents who were illiterate. Almost three fourths of the respondents were literate. The factuality of the information gathered through the instrument was validated through informal interviews with identified knowledgeable elders and others who live in the community. Unlimited observation of adolescents and their behaviors was conducted.

Data Analysis Procedure: The researcher described and analyzed the data on existing cultural beliefs and practices of the Ifugao through the frequency distribution and percentage analyses and narrative interpretation of observations derived from read and learned concepts and theories of socio-cultural life. The implication of the identified beliefs and practices to education were analyzed from the observations of and interviews made with the Ifugao.

Results and Discussion

Findings: From the data gathered the following significant findings were drawn:

Beliefs and Practices in the Life Cycle of the Ifugao: For the Ifugao, courting is traditionally initiated by the male as manifesting their high respect for a woman. Picnics are social opportunities for getting to know each other. Traditionally, if the woman accepts the offer of love of the man she allows the man to stay with her in the *alang* during the courtship stage.



Figure-2
Courtship

“Alang”



Figure-3
Marriage

Marriage: Marriage among the Ifugao is traditionally arranged by parents and elders of the community. The Ifugao wedding is a well-established ritual in Chaja interwoven with traditional ceremonies and rites and requires material and financial offerings in the observance of the ceremonies. Generally this occasion is very expensive and pompous, a kinship matter as manifested in the coming together of relatives, friends and the community people. Disputes among and between relatives are set aside when this occasion is celebrated.

The present generation is perceived to have been acculturated with modern Christian and westernized wedding ceremonies.

Pregnancy: The pregnancy period among the Ifugao has taboos if *phalla-o* is not yet performed. There are no specific pre-natal care practices except the *phalla-o*.



Figure-4
Pregnancy

Childbirth: There are beliefs and practices observed during childbirth. These are observed in both the wife's and the husband's activities. A woman with experience in child delivery assists the mother if available. Native and indigenous instruments are used to cut the umbilical cord of an Ifugao infant. Post-natal beliefs and practices are observed like the proper physical care of the mother and the disposal of the placenta and umbilical cord of the newly born.



Figure-5
Childbirth

“A tree where placenta and umbilical cord are usually hung to predict climbing prowess of the Ifugao when he grows up.”

Infant Care and Child-rearing: Infant care and child-rearing among the Ifugao are observed to have modifications. However, belief in the healing power of the spirits through a gathering with a praying group is still practiced today. The use of *he'loy* in carrying infants and children is still practiced.

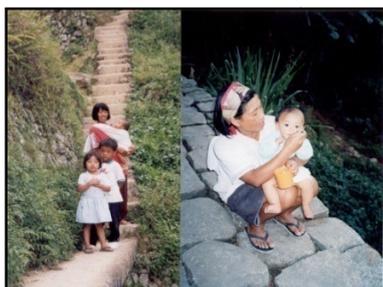


Figure-6
Infant Care and Child-rearing

Ifugao children are taught the fundamental values of obedience and respect for the elders; malice and the use of vulgar language are strictly prohibited. Children are trained to do some household chores. Training given to the girls is distinctly different from the training given to the boys.

Adolescence: A teenage Ifugao is presented with pieces of advice and given training in the performance of household chores, proper behavior in public and proper relationship with the opposite sex. The only practice observed during menstruation is that there must be no menstrual-stains on the girl's dress because this embarrasses the family. There is no practice of circumcision among the Ifugao boys. It was only practiced during the early 70's. There are no traditional beliefs and practice accorded to circumcision.



Figure-7
Adolescence

“Ifugao love to come together and enjoy each other's company. Boys with boys, girls with girls.”

Adulthood/Old Age: An adult Ifugao is highly respected. He is considered authority in the community when it comes to decision-making. Adult Ifugaos are still active in community affairs and social gatherings. The adult Ifugao still performs hard work in the field.



Figure-8
Adulthood/Old Age

“Much care is extended to sick adult Ifugaos by the members of the community”

Death and Burial: Beliefs and practices are very evident in the death and burial of the Ifugao. *Ammuhu* is performed before the corpse is placed inside the coffin. The dead body is transferred from one house to another depending on the number of children she/he has or on the wish of relatives who may want to receive the body. Material or financial assistance is given to the family of the dead person every time he or she is transferred from one house to another. For every meal, pigs are butchered to feed the people during the wake. During the vigil, both traditional and Christian religious ceremonies and activities are performed.

There is no specific location for a burial place. On the second day after the interment *alaguit* is performed.



Figure-9
Death and Burial

Nacu 1989⁴, in her study, Cultural Beliefs and Practices of the Dumagats in Norzagaray still retain their indigenous culture on childbirth, marriage, death, religion and health but have not noticeable changed. The present study also found out that the Ifugao still adhere to some of their indigenous culture but observed to have some modifications in the present practices.

As to the beliefs and practices that hinder their development in education: As observed by the researcher, during the celebration of social occasions in Chaja, school children and youth were there to grace the occasion even during class hours. Seldom you see a pupil in Chaja Primary School during wedding, interment, thanksgiving and other social occasions in the place and neighboring barangays. This shows that they are

giving more importance to some of their beliefs and practices rather than going to school and learn.

Social occasions are very expensive celebration to them and attended by almost all Ifugao who learned about it even without invitation. The celebrants are willing to spend beyond their means and even up to the extent of borrowing goods or money from their friends just to give warm accommodation to their visitors. This belief and practice impede economic progress among the Ifugao. This sometimes causes them not to send their children to school.

Socio – Cultural Life of the Ifugao: Their Implication to Education: Based on the data gathered from the questionnaire, interviews observation, and immersion with the Ifugao right in their own community, There are important socio – cultural beliefs, values and practices that are unique of this ethnic group. When these are carefully identified, one can say that the Ifugao culture is very beautiful and rich. There are implications of these socio – cultural beliefs and practices to education. The Ifugao culture has its own origin. However, since it is necessary that every Filipino should maximize his contribution to the growth of his country. The aim of education should be to help people understand themselves and their culture better. With that, they can engage themselves seriously in the task of nation building. It is here, too, where education is expected to come in and effect positive changes.

The life ways of the Ifugao have their implications to education in the following aspects:

Attitude: Education is expected to redirect the Ifugao’s unquestioning obedience to their beliefs and practices. It should help them appreciate their culture, identify the strengths of their values and the weaknesses of their beliefs and practices.

Coping Mechanism: The supernatural world of the Ifugao is a great challenge to education. Their strong beliefs in spirits and superstition remain a hindrance in adopting new ways of behaving and coping. Any educational program and strategy must be geared towards these beliefs and practices for better understanding and looking at these with more scientific meaning and explanation rather than simply believing in it.

Attitude and Coping Mechanism: Education needs to improve the Ifugao’s concept of human and social development. Here, the Ifugao must be assisted and helped to admit their uniqueness as an ethnic group and acknowledge their similarities with other people in terms of growth and development from birth to death. Understanding the several life stages will help them accept what they are, their roles and their changing needs that they have to cope with.

Education must be able to liberate them from their wrong concept of some health practices and very expensive wedding and death celebrations. The idea of cleanliness and in disposing

off must be necessary instilled to them. The idea of consulting a doctor and midwife instead of *mumfuni* or quack doctor should be developed. Education must make them aware of the possible dangers of using indigenous materials during delivery like in the cutting of umbilical cord of the child. More healthful childcare must be introduced to them. Non – formal education could play an important role in responding to the health needs of the Ifugao.

Motivation: Education has a role in training this ethnic group to be a strong force in developing the society. Educational programs, therefore, must be responsive to the needs of the Ifugao to prepare them to accept change. This will make them adapt to new and better ways of living. Finally, education must be able to encourage or motivate them to adopt new ideas and ways of living.

Learning Processes: Education should look into the curriculum that fits the needs and conditions of the Ifugao to facilitate learning processes. This might encourage them to go to school rather than to attend social occasions. This may even give them better appreciation to education.

The beliefs and practices of the Ifugao in the different life stages may pose a great challenge to education particularly in its role in social transformation.

This study poses a great challenge to education as a social institution and as a vehicle for social transformation. From the data, significant insights may be used as practical guidelines in the development of specific educational intervention programs and strategies.

Conclusion

On the basis of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions are derived. i. The cultural beliefs and practices in the different life stages can be modified through the help education. ii. Some identified beliefs and practices of the Ifugao impede their economic and educational development. iii. The Ifugaos ‘unquestioning obedience to their beliefs and practices affect their attitude toward education. iv. Education can assist and help the Ifugao to identify their strengths and weaknesses of their culture particularly on their practice of a very expensive celebrations, health and sanitation. v. Education can motivate the Ifugao through preparing them to accept change. vi. Education can provide an alternative education or indigenize the curriculum for better learning processes among the Ifugao. vii. These cultural beliefs and practices may pose a great challenge to education particularly in its role in social transformation.

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Table-1
Glossary of Local Terms

Alaguit	it is an Ifugao practice to be performed a day after internment to give peace to the spirit of the dead.
Alang	an Ifugao native multi – purpose house.
Ammuhu	it an announcement made by the elders to inform the community that someone dies.
Bayanihan	it means cooperation.
Buni	it is a prayer intended for the kaniao.
Funo	it refers to the traditional wedding rites.
Funong	it is a verbal parental agreement.
He’loy	it is a blanket used to carry a child.
Ipad	it is an occasion or party for husband and wife to determine their marriage life and to ask for children from the Deities.
Kaniao	it is a ritual performed to ask for blessings, protection, revenge, seeking for the truth, to drive away evil spirits, to determine ones luck, for thanksgiving, for healing of the sick and others.
Mumfuni	the person who performs the kaniao.
Muntapeng	this refers to the native way of constructing terraces.
Phalla–o	it is an Ifugao practice to be done during pregnancy to determine the luck of the mother and child during the delivery.
Phu–ar	it is the bringing of the corpse to the home of his relatives and have a vigil for one night.
Umiha	it is the narration of the life experiences of the dead while the wake is going on.
Tikhaw	It is an occasion for success and gladness.