EXTENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM

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Abstract

The alternative learning system (ALS) provides Filipinos a chance to have access to complete, free primary education in a mode that fits their distinct situation and needs. In this context, this paper aimed to determine the extent of ALS implementation regarding accreditation and equivalency (A&E) and basic literacy program (BLP). The study used a descriptive research design and a validated research-made questionnaire to collect the needed data. The respondents of the survey were learners in the four community learning centers. The ensuing results showed that the ALS program has been fully implemented. Thus far, they provided opportunities for out-of-school youth and adult learners to develop basic and functional literacy skills and access equivalent pathways to complete primary education. The data on the comparative analysis on the extent of ALS implementation in the accreditation and equivalency program (A&E) shows that the variables being mentioned do not vary significantly to their level of knowledge on the implementation and have no bearing on their perception of the program while data on the extent of implementation of ALS on BLP, three of the variables above like age, distance away from learning centers, and family monthly income does not vary significantly to their level of knowledge on the program. This implies that their perception of the basic concept of BLP and some of their profile will not be affected and have no bearing. In contrast, sex varies significantly in their perception of the program. The difference was the sincerity between a man and a woman in dealing with concepts. This implies girls are more enthusiastic about dealing with new ideas and learning new things. These findings call for intensive advocacy of the ALS implementers to the out-of-school youth and adults in every barangay for full inclusion and implementation of the program to respond to the Millennium Developmental Goals (Education for All) so that nobody is left behind. ALS implementers should have campaign advocacy to ALS learners on the essence and importance of the programs of ALS to help individuals in the community to uplift their living.

Keywords: Alternative Learning System, Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Program, Basic Literacy Program (BLP), Negros Oriental, Philippines

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Introduction

Rationale

Alternative Learning System is a parallel learning system in the Philippines that provides a practical option to the existing formal education instruction, encompassing both the non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills. Anent to DepEd Order No. 13, series of 2019, aims to ensure that the implementation of enhanced ALS 2.0 by the central office, regional and schools division offices, and other ALS program implementers and stakeholders are strategically, efficiently, and effectively managed. Alternative Learning System provides opportunities for out-of-school youth and adult (OSYA) learners to develop basic and functional literacy skills and to access equivalent pathways to complete primary education.

Ambat (2017) pointed out that the new ALS curriculum hopes to dispel the notion of disparity between ALS graduates and graduates from the formal system, noting that it now gives equivalency options and alternative programs similar to formal schooling that will allow learners to move and transfer seamlessly from one education system to exact standards and competencies are set to both in the K-12 curriculum to achieve the goal of producing holistically developed Filipinos with 21st-century skills, DepEd (2017). The program has two different ways of conducting instruction: school-based and community-based. Instructions on the school-based program for ALS are conducted on school campuses; in the community-based program, lesson delivery is conducted in community halls or private places. The ALS program follows uniform lesson modules covering the six learning strands for all academic subjects.

The Department of Education in the Division of Negros Oriental has successfully implemented the two major programs in the Alternative Learning System, the Basic Literacy Program (BLP), which aim to eradicate illiteracy among out-of-school youth and adults (in extreme cases school-aged children) by developing basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy, and the Accreditation & Equivalency (A&E) both elementary and secondary level.

Two major programs have been implemented like any other district in the Division. As recorded for the school year 2018 - 2019, Basic Literacy Program (BLP) has 11 completers out of 13 enrollees, while in Accreditation and Equivalency Program (A&E), 80 completers took the test and 77 got the passing rate out of 94 enrollees. Despite its high passing rate, the District has not been spared challenges and problems in the implementation, such as the difficulty in recruiting learners, especially in the Basic Literacy Program (BLP), owing to shyness and indifferences, behavioral issues like

absenteeism, negative thoughts from the parents and even barangay officials.

For this reason, the researchers decided to study the extent of implementation of the major programs in the Alternative Learning System, particularly in the basic literacy and accreditation and equivalency program.

Literature Review

Alternative Learning System is a free education program implemented by the Department of education (DepEd). The study by Pilar (2015) was conducted to investigate the lived experiences of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in Bacolod City, Philippines. It conceptualized that education can be flexible according to the needs of the learners; thus, education can go beyond borders. It is recommended that the ALS students' performance and development be monitored to be ready to take the ALS accreditation and equivalency test. Therefore, these ALS students need to be provided with quality education beyond the classroom.

The Alternative Learning System was an option for those who wanted to improve their quality of living and rise beyond poverty. Apao et al. (2014) conducted a study using the qualitative-quantitative research design to assess the implementation of the alternative learning system program along with the provision of life skills, increased literacy, and quality of living. The Alternative Learning System A&E program effectively cultivated the recipients' life skills. The program improved the quality of living of the respondents as they continued their pursuit of meaning and significance in life. It proved that students still learn and acquire lifelong competencies even outside the walls of the formal school system.

Atillano et al. (2016) discussed that Instructional managers should look into the factors contributing to the learning motivation of ALS learners in involving themselves in school or any instructional program. Alternative Learning System providers should also revisit and review the programs and balance out the relationship between the learners' ability and the appropriateness, complexity, and demands of the tasks given to them, as the relationship of these factors is crucial in bridging the willingness of the learners needed for an achievement outcome. Examining the topics to see if they are relevant to the student's general educational needs would also help in pursuing policy changes in the curricula and other programs of study. This makes it necessary for instructional managers to find out how to make their students interested in their lessons and keep them motivated to study.

Mateo (2017) reiterates that the new K-12 Enhanced Curriculum, strengthens the ALS program and gives out-of-school youth better learning opportunities outside the formal education system. Further, Mateo (2017) pointed out that Philippine education is true to its mandate that every learner (will be) included. With this new curriculum, we hope that ALS learners (will) have the same quality of education so they can avail themselves of the four exits of K-12: higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, or middle-level skills development. Nonetheless, the thriving initiatives of the Department of Education and all implementers could help in the continuing development of ALS.

Furthermore, ALS is beset with funding support issues, provision of support facilities from the national budget, the sufficiency of learning resources, integration of

livelihood and employment opportunities, and the lack of interest of the out-of-school youths (Deped, 2018). It is relevant to the present study as much as the focus is on the extent of challenges of the Secondary A & E passers facing the challenges. Ambat (2017), pointed out that the new ALS curriculum hopes to dispel the notion of disparity between ALS graduates and graduates from the formal system, noting that it now gives equivalency options and alternative program similar to formal schooling that will allow learners to move and transfer seamlessly from one education system to same standards and competencies are set to both in the K-12 curriculum to achieve the goal of producing holistically developed Filipinos with 21st century skills, DepEd (2017).

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the extent of implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) during the school year 2019-2020. In addition, this study aimed to determine 1) the extent of ALS implementation in terms of Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E)) and Basic Literacy Program (BLP); and 2) the significant difference, if any, in the implementation of ALS based on groupings by age, sex, the distance from the community learning center, and family income.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the extent of implementation of ALS when grouped according to the aforementioned variables.

Theoretical Underpinnings

According to Malcolm Knowles, adults need to know why they need to learn, that experiential learning is better for them, that problem solving is a good approach to learning for adults, and that when there is immediate value in the topic, they learn best. The foundation of Knowles theory is that adults need to experience more to learn more. The more situations an adult encounters in life, the better he is equipped to overcome them because he learns from them.

Along with the mentioned theory, Andragogy, or the science of adult learning, emerged and is founded in a core set of adult learning principles that apply to all adult learning situations. Adults are self-directed and expect to take responsibility for decisions (Taylor, 2008).

There are six core principles of Andragogy. The learners need to know the self-concept of the learner, prior experiences of the learner, readiness to learn, orientation to learning and problem-solving, and motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2005).

Over the years, many non-formal and informal educational options emerged initially as remedial responses to meeting the basic literacy needs of people that the school system had failed to equip with the necessary basic education. It has been increasing that the diverse educational needs of different social groups are legitimate and urgent to meet. Yet, the mainstream public schools, even in the best circumstances, are largely unable to meet these educational needs, even as effective non-schooling methodologies for meeting these different needs have rapidly developed (Pellegrino,

2006).

Knowles and Taylor's theories served as the anchor of this study. They brought forth solutions to remedy adult dropouts, illiterates, and out-of-school youth who want to become useful members of society.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research design to determine the extent of ALS implementation. Descriptive research studies status and is widely used in education, nutrition, epidemiology, and the behavioral sciences. Its value is based on the premise that problems can be solved and practices improved through observation, analysis, and description. Owen (2017) wrote that the most common descriptive research method is the survey, which includes questionnaires, personal interviews, phone surveys, and normative surveys.

Study Respondents

The respondents of this study were 80 ALS secondary learners in the four (4) Community Learning Centers (CLCs). Respondents were collectively considered to avoid biases in their responses. Moreover, total population or complete enumeration was employed for the respondents who were asked to answer the questionnaire.

Instruments

The study used a self-made instrument that had undergone validity (validity index = 4.92 interpreted as excellent) and reliability (reliability index = .851 interpreted as good) to gather the needed data. The instruments were divided into two parts: Part 1 contains queries on respondents' profiles such as age, sex, distance of home to CLC, and average family monthly income. Part 2 is the questionnaire comprising 30 items on the extent of implementation of ALS major programs.

Procedure for Data Collection

A letter request addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent for the conduct of the study within the District was sent for approval after determining the validity and reliability of the instrument. Upon approval, letter requests were sent to the district supervisor. The researchers, after securing the approval, conducted the study by directly explaining its aim to the respondents, giving them the questionnaire, and carefully guiding them. At the same time, they filled it out, provided the requested information, and retrieved the surveys. The respondents received assurances that the information collected would be kept private.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

A descriptive-analytical scheme was used to determine the extent of implementation of ALS on the following major programs in terms of Accreditation and Equivalency Program (A&E) and Basic Literacy Program (BLP) with mean as its

statistical tool. On the other hand, a comparative analytical scheme was used to test the significant difference in the extent of ALS implementation when grouped according to the aforementioned variables with the Mann-Whitney U test as its statistical tool. Finally, the following rating scale and description were utilized in interpreting the results: 4.50 - 5.00 = Very Great Extent; 3.50 - 4.49 = Great Extent; 2.50 – 3.49 = Moderate Extent; 1.50 – 2.49 = Low Extent; 1.00 – 1.49 = Very Low Extent.

Ethical Considerations

Subject respondents were adequately informed about the research, the purpose of the study, and the data collection process under the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Furthermore, it was explained to them that participation is voluntary; they can freely withdraw from the study whenever they feel a false sense of security. The researchers ensured that all data obtained would be kept confidential. Paper documents containing participants' personal data are kept in locked areas, and documents are never left unattended in public places. When data is no longer required for the research, it is shredded before being discarded.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the objectives of the study.

Extent of Knowledge on the Implementation of ALS when grouped according to Accreditation and Equivalency Program (A&E) and Basic Literacy Program (BLP)

Table 1
Extent of Implementation of ALS when Respondents were Grouped according to A&E and BLP

Areas	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Accreditation and Equivalency Program (A&E)			
1. It is a program that provides a certification of learning for out-of-school children, youth, and adults who cannot get an education in the formal school system.	4.95	.21932	Very High Extent
2. Is a paper and pencil test designed to measure the competencies of those who have neither attended nor finished elementary or secondary education in the formal school system.	4.68	.52229	Very High Extent
3. Is a program aimed at providing an alternative learning pathway for out-of-school youth and adults.	4.86	.41319	Very High Extent
4. Is an entry level assessment and counselling of learners.	4.84	.37124	Very High Extent
5. Uses a truly non-formal curriculum based on six learning strands	4.51	.57355	Very High Extent
6. Is a program that constitutes the needs of learners who are working but deserve to go to the next level of learning development	4.51	.65591	Very High Extent
7. Is a program intended for ALS learners	4.63	.48718	Very High Extent

who completed the cycle of learning the six learning strands

8. This program allows school dropouts to complete elementary and high school education outside the formal school system.	4.48	.59481	High Extent
9. Caters those who left the formal school system or have no access to schools.	4.49	.57355	High Extent
10. Passers are also given the option to enroll as Grade 11 in any public or recognized private school offering Senior High School (SHS).	4.76	.42824	Very High Extent
11. Is conducted in school-based or community-based	4.69	.51788	Very High Extent
12. It empowers Filipino out-of-school youth and adults to continue to learn on their own so they may improve their quality of life and that of their family, community, and country.	4.70	.53722	Very High Extent
13. It is an alternative to regular classroom study, where learners can choose schedules at their convenience.	4.29	.65976	High Extent
14. Seek to assess the capacity of the learners' academic performance in preparation for the next educational journey.	4.45	.50063	High Extent
15. Evaluate learners on their preparation for college.	4.48	.79516	High Extent
Overall Mean	**4.62**	**.25378**	**Very High Extent**
Basic Literacy Program (BLP)			
1. Aimed at eradicating illiteracy among out-of-school youth and adults.	4.71	.74958	Very High Extent
2. Is an intensive community-based training for illiterate out-of-school youth and adults who are willing to learn basic literacy skills.	4.84	.56128	Very High Extent
3. It Is composed of three basic literacy skills: the ability to read with comprehension, the ability to compute simple equations, creative thinking, and problem-solving.	4.48	.57313	High Extent
4. It Is categorized into Basic reader, Neo-literate reader, and post-literate reader.	4.48	.50253	High Extent
5. A program for people who opt to go back to the formal school system and just about anybody who would want to continue learning.	4.69	.56465	Very High Extent
6. Intends to enhance the reading capabilities of every learner.	4.44	.54758	High Extent
7. Addresses comprehension, solving simple numeracy problems, and writing and speaking in one's language.	4.49	.57355	High Extent
8. Is part of the mandate of DepEd to	4.56	.77694	Very High Extent

quality education through fluency and
numeracy.

9. Completers may enroll to A & E Program ot mainstream to formal school.	4.43	.63195	High Extent
10. Target learners are the illiterate, out-of-school children, youth, and adults.	4.75	.43574	Very High Extent
11. Provides every individual with in-depth understanding of basic comprehension and counting	5.00	.00000	Very High Extent
12. School dropouts in lower elementary are able to complete elementary and high school education outside the formal school system.	4.69	.46644	Very High Extent
13. It Has been popularly a form of ability to read, write, and do basic arithmetic.	4.84	.46235	Very High Extent
14. It is used for the initial learning of reading and writing. adults who have never been to school need to go through.	4.43	.52229	High Extent
15. Provides every Filipino learners to prepare themselves in the world of competition.	4.33	.61160	High Extent
Overall Mean	**4.61**	**.26249**	**Very High Extent**

Table 1 summarizes the analysis of the extent of knowledge on the implementation of ALS when grouped according to the following major programs: Accreditation and Equivalency Program (A&E) and Basic Literacy Program (BLP). In the area under the accreditation and equivalency program or A&E, the respondents have a full grasp of knowledge of its implementation because they rated it with a composite value of 4.62 or a very high extent. The respondents have high extent on the implementation of A&E as well as the content of the program. It is worthwhile to note that the ALS learners were equipped with knowledge from their implementers on the program's purpose. Though all the items were rated very high extent, other items like 8,9,13 and 14 were rated high extent only by the learners.

The result implies that there is a need for a little push by the ALS implementers to advocate more and inform further the learners on the essence of the following contents: first, the opportunity for dropout learners to enroll outside the formal setting, second is that ALS should cater learners outside the formal context and lastly is that learners can choose their schedule.

On the other hand, the extent of the learner respondents on the Basic Literacy Program or BLP was rated to a very high extent, with a composite value of 4.61. It is a very good thing to note that, again, the learner respondents are more knowledgeable regarding the program's content under basic literacy. Thus, the moment they were enrolled in ALS, they embraced what their teachers had taught them: the concept of literacy. Again, almost all items were rated very high, but some were still rated high. A little push is needed in order to reach a higher level. In the context of understanding the two programs with each of their salient features, it is a very positive indication that the learner respondents greatly appreciated the two indicators.

This implies that programs were fully implemented by ALS implementers in this area, and they're really doing their best to cater to the learners' needs. This idea was supported by the study of Grammatica, 2017 entitled "Teacher Efficacy: Pupils' Academic Performance wherein he disclosed that learners learn the best if teachers can orient and use strategies very well.

A Comparative Analysis on the Extent of ALS Implementation on A&E when Respondents were Grouped by Age, Sex, Distance from CLC, and Family Income

Table 2
Significant Difference in the Extent of ALS Implementation on A&E when Respondents were Grouped according to the Variables above

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Mann Whitney U-Test	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	44	4.67	791.00	0.992		Not Significant
	Older	36	4.56				
Sex	Male	44	4.59	652.00	0.173		Not Significant
	Female	36	4.64				
Distance of Home to CLC	Shorter	37	4.59	675.00	0.242	0.05	Not Significant
	Longer	43	4.64				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	47	4.63	697.50	0.443		Not Significant
	Higher	33	4.60				

Table 2 shows the comparative analysis data on the extent of implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) on the accreditation and equivalency program (A&E) when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables. It can be seen in this table that the variables being mentioned do not vary in their knowledge of the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS), specifically on the Accreditation and Equivalency Program (A&E). The p-value is greater than the level of significance.

This implies that sex, age, distance of home to schools, and monthly average income have no bearing on their perception of the program of ALS which is the A&E.

Table 3
Significant Difference in the Extent of ALS Implementation on BLP when Respondents were Grouped according to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Mann Whitney U-Test	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	44	4.67	702.00	0.382		Not Significant
	Older	36	4.53			0.05	
Sex	Male	44	4.57	571.00	0.032		Significant

	Female	36	4.64				
Distance of Home to CLC	Shorter	37	4.57	675.00	0.243	Not Significant
	Longer	43	4.64				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	47	4.63	693.50	0.421	Not Significant
	Higher	33	4.57				

Table 3 shows the data on the comparative analysis of the extent of implementation of the Alternative Learning System on Basic Literacy Program of BLP when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variable. Three of the aforementioned variables, like age, distance of home to learning center, and family monthly income, do not vary significantly to their level of knowledge on the ALS on BLP.

This implies that their perception of the basic concept of BLP and some of their profile won't affect and have no bearing.

On the other hand, sex vary significantly to the perception of the content of the items listed on the Basic Literacy Program. A p-value of 0.032 which is less than the level of significance 0.05. indicates that sex has something to do with their perception about BLP. Its difference was the sincerity between a man and a woman to deal with concepts.

This implies that girls are more enthusiastic in dealing with new concepts and learning new things. On the other hand, men do things sometimes unserious.

Conclusion

The very high extent of ALS implementation both in A&E and BLP speaks volumes about the preparedness and competency of the respondents in implementing the programs. An interesting sidebar to the study results was that demographics like sex, distance away from the community learning center, and family income did not, in any way, affect the way the implementers execute the plan on ALS. Moreover, the study's findings revealed that the ALS implementers are highly motivated despite the difficulties and challenges met along the program's implementation and that learners have a positive attitude coupled with the full support of their parents. These findings call for intensive advocacy of the ALS implementers to the out-of-school youth and adults in every barangay for full inclusion and implementation of the program to respond to the Millennium Developmental Goals (Education for All) that nobody is left behind.

Acknowledgment

Conflict of Interest

In relation to our study titled "Extent of Implementation of the Alternative Learning System," we hereby declare that there are no conflicts of interest. We have no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could be perceived as influencing the outcomes or conclusions of this research. All aspects of the study, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, have been conducted impartially and solely for the advancement of knowledge in this area.

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