

Lived Experiences of ALS Learners on Blended Learning at Dolores National High School

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Abstract— The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners engaged in blended learning. Five (5) learners with an Alternative Learning System (ALS) from Dolores National High School were included in a purposeful sampling. Unstructured interviews were used in the study of phenomenological research design to examine the data analysis. Thematic Analysis was used in the study as a method of qualitative data analysis. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners will be able to pursue their study because of the opportunity that the ALS program supplied and give satisfaction which is one of the common special benefits of blended learning. Additionally, they can make the most of their time because they are only required to complete modules during the whole academic year. They can use this time for their obligations and priorities. Despite the difficulties they faced due to their distance from school and difficulty in transportation, they were able to overcome these challenges and will make time for their desire to retake the course with high morale and self-confidence as a reap of their achievements.

Keywords— Alternative learning system (ALS), Lived experiences, Senior High School learners.

I. INTRODUCTION

Many children and adults have struggled to finish their education because of a number of circumstances. According to recent data, 3.7 million children between the ages of 16 and 24 and 3.1 million young adults between the ages of 25 and 30 do not currently attend school, making up 23% of those between the ages of 15 and 30. It shows that not every Filipino youngster succeeds in finishing their schooling. The Alternative Learning System (ALS), a separate educational track for children who did not finish their basic education through the conventional school system, was established by the Department of Education. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) emphasizes functional literacy abilities in addition to preparing students for the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test (Pascual et al., 2022).

The ALS program is a non-formal education program that aims to provide basic education to out-of-school youth and adults who were not able to finish their basic education. It offers a second chance to individuals who were not able to

attend formal schooling due to financial and personal reasons. The Dolores National High School is one of the public schools in the province of Eastern Samar that offers ALS. There are two major programs of ALS that are being implemented by the Department of Education through the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS). One is the Basic Literacy Program and the other is the Education Program Accreditation and Equivalency (A & E). Both programs are modular and flexible, which means that learning can take place anytime, anywhere depending on the convenience and availability of the learners. However, every Filipino has the right to free basic education, established ALS to provide all young Filipinos the chance to complete basic education in a mode that fits their distinct situations and needs.

This research study aims to explore the lived experiences of ALS learners at Dolores National High School in the implementation of blended learning. It seeks to understand the challenges and opportunities that ALS learners encounter in blended learning, and how they cope with the demands of blended learning. This research study is significant as it can provide insights on how to improve the delivery of blended learning in ALS, and how to make blended learning more accessible to learners who have limited access to technology.

Objectives of the study

This research study is conducted to determine the difficulties, challenges, and effectiveness of their academic performance through blended learning among ALS learners at Dolores National High School.

Hence, it will answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of ALS learners during the implementation of blended learning?
2. What are the benefits experienced by ALS learners in blended learning?
3. What are the perceptions of ALS learners toward blended learning?

Significance of the Study

The results of this research study will be beneficial to the following:

Learners – The study can provide a better understanding of the benefits and challenges of blended learning in ALS education. The findings of the study may help learners develop strategies to cope with the difficulties they face while studying through blended learning. Additionally, the study can provide valuable insights to the learners on how blended learning can improve their learning outcomes.

Teachers – The study can provide insights into the effectiveness of blended learning in improving the teaching and learning process. The study can also help teachers design appropriate instructional strategies that can cater to the needs of ALS students.

Parents – The study can provide valuable insights into how blended learning can positively impact their children's learning outcomes. It can also encourage parents to support their children's learning through blended learning by providing them with the necessary resources and technology.

Future Researchers – The study can serve as a valuable source of information and a basis for further research on blended learning in ALS education. It may contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks that can guide future research on blended learning in ALS education.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This research study will focus on the lived experiences of ALS learners who are currently enrolled in a blended-learning program of the Department of Education. It will explore the challenges, opportunities, and benefits of blended learning from the perspective of the learners. The research study has some limitations and delimitations that should be considered. First, the research study will only focus on the experiences of ALS learners through blended learning at Dolores National High School, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other schools or educational contexts. Secondly, the research study will be conducted in the English language, which may limit the participation of learners who have limited English proficiency.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that will anchor this research is the Humanistic Theory of Carl Rogers (1961). This theory emphasizes the importance of the individual's personal growth and self-actualization. In the context of ALS, students may face challenges to their self-esteem and self-efficacy due to their previous educational experiences and social status. Humanistic theory suggests that education should focus on the development of the whole person, including their emotional and social needs, to promote personal growth. Identified some gaps needing reforms as follows: low participation and passing rates, lack of skills training for procurement of better jobs in the future, shortage of budget, and a mixture of participants exhibiting different states and drives (Igarashi, 2018).

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research Design

Qualitative research design, specifically the phenomenological approach is suitable for this study on Lived Experiences of ALS-Learners through Blended Learning at Dolores National High School. Phenomenology aims to explore how individuals experience and perceive the world around them (Creswell, 2014). This approach experience on gaining a deeper understanding of the participant's subjective experiences and perspectives, allowing the researchers to develop a rich and detailed description of the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994).

The use of a phenomenological approach in this research study allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of ALS students with blended learning. It enables the researcher to gain a better understanding of the student's perspectives, how they perceive and experience blended learning, and what challenges they face. This approach also allows the researcher to identify and describe the meaning and essence of the student's experiences with blended learning, providing valuable insights that can inform the development of effective blended learning programs.

Locale of the Study

The respondents of this study will be grade 11 senior high school ALS learners enrolled in Dolores National High School during the academic year 2022-2023. This school was chosen because it's one of the few schools in the area that offers an ALS program and has implemented blended learning.

Respondents of the Study

The following characteristics of respondents in the study are the following:

1. Senior High School Grade 11 learners
2. Any Strand
3. Enrolled in the ALS program

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide contained open-ended questions that aimed to elicit the research respondents' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in the blended learning setup. The researcher chooses an interview as their instrument because the research design is phenomenology, phenomenology focuses on the experiences of a person. In an open-ended question, the participants supply an answer. This question does not constrain individual responses. It is ideal when the researcher does not know the response possibilities and wants to explore the options. Further, open-ended questions allow participants to create responses within their cultural and social experiences instead of the researcher's experience (Neuman, 2000). To gather the experiences and challenges of ALS students, the researcher will conduct an interview with ALS students.

Reflexivity

It is important to maintain neutrality in the findings by avoiding any manipulation or alteration of the data provided by our respondents. It is essential not to introduce any biases when collecting data from them and to allow them to answer questions freely without any pressure to provide specific responses.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher has considered some ethical issues while conducting this research. The researcher keeps all the personal details of ALS learners confidential. This will protect their privacy and make them feel secure. To protect their privacy, I use a pseudonym as a replacement for ALS learners' names.

The researcher also records and arranges the data in the proper way. The data results will be collected and conducted without any manipulation.

The researcher will explain the research clearly using simple terms to the ALS learners. This is to respect the ALS learners' rights as our participants. Furthermore, the researcher, will not threaten or force the ALS learners to participate in this research. Lastly, they have the freedom to withdraw if they want to.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through the semi-structured questionnaire with the ALS learners. It will be conducted in a private and comfortable setting of their respective classrooms and the research will be presented to the respondents. Every respondent will be asked for their consent. The respondents have given their time to answer the questionnaire. All the information from the respondents will be collected.

In order to ensure that the participants were treated properly and the data collected was handled appropriately, the researcher will take the following actions;

Step 1. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, the researcher sought permission from the school principal of Dolores National High School by writing a formal request letter to ensure that the participant's privacy and confidentiality were protected throughout the research process.

Step 2. A letter of consent was sent to the parents of the ALS learners. Learner-respondents whose parents consented but declined to participate were not forced to do so.

Step 3. The researcher explicitly explained to the respondent participants that their involvement in the research was confidential and that all data collected would be kept secure and solely used for the purpose of the study.

Step 4. The questionnaire was personally administered to the participants by the researchers, collected the questionnaires immediately upon completion to ensure a high response rate.

Step 5. After the participants had completed the questionnaire, the researcher tallied, computed, and analyzed the data collected from the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis will be applied in the study using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through a data set (such as transcripts from in-depth interviews or focus groups) and

identifying patterns in meaning across the data to derive themes. So, once the data are labeled, the analysis will be conducted in the open group discussion. Then, the responses of the participants will be classified into different themes with their specific thoughts.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Experiences of ALS Learners in Blended Learning

This segment of the study features the answers of the five (5) participants to the qualitative question What are the experiences of ALS learners during the implementation of blended learning? so, here are the responses of the participants:

Participant 1

"I have been an ALS learner in the times of blended learning for almost one (1) year now. And I can say that my overall experience is only about answering the modules weekly. During the implementation of blended learning, one thing that has challenged me is the interview that requires everyone to be an ALS. When I was already accepted, I thought I would have a hard time being an ALS learner but I was wrong because all I had to do was to answer modules since that time was the pandemic".

Participant 2

"When I was in grade 8 level, I decided to stop and made a decision to take ALS and hopefully I got accepted it took me one (1) year of being an ALS learner and answering tons of modules every week but I don't know what year was it ended. During my whole year of being an ALS learner, the only responsibilities I had were answering modules. That time I didn't feel a hard time since I was only at home and I had enough time to answer".

Participant 3

"I have been participating in blended learning as an ALS learner for almost a year now. When I stopped my studies, I was in grade 9 at that time my family helped me and suggested that I should take ALS for me since I wasted the years and let it pass. It takes me one year to be an ALS learner and a year of answering modules every week. It wasn't easy for me at first because it was a pandemic but I was thankful that all I needed was to answer modules every week. It was great because sometimes even though I'm late taking modules they have considerations so I have a lot of time to answer and prioritize it".

Participant 4

"I've been with the ALS program in the realm of blended learning approach for almost eleven (11) months now. The overall experience I got as an ALS learner is I was responsible for answering and returning modules weekly, and that was the schedule. I didn't have a lot of challenges and hard times I encountered in blended learning being ALS because I was just in our house and all I had to do was to answer modules. Even if it is blended learning we don't experience online classes while having modular".

Participant 5

"I've been an ALS learner in the times of blended learning for one (1) year and as to what I expected in the first place, the only thing that I'd experience being an ALS learner, was just

answering modules every week bringing back and kind of enjoyed it that I'll never experience a hard time in learning. There was nothing else to do so I had a lot of time to answer the modules. And it helps me in my expenses in studying to decreased even more".

Looking at the responses of the participants, the overall experience of the ALS learner during the implementation of blended learning and what is common to their experience is:

1. Answering Modules – ALS program during the implementation of blended learning, the ALS learner was only doing modular learning. They were enjoying this kind of mode of learning because they had a lot to answer in the modules since the schedule of taking and returning is weekly.

To summarize the answers of five (5) participants, the first theme formulated and presented here:

First Theme – Experiences of ALS learners during the implementation of blended learning

Blended learning helps to enhance the educational experiences and outcomes of ALS Learners, promoting their access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.

Benefits Experience of ALS Learners

The segment of the study features the answers of the five (5) participants to the qualitative question What are the benefits experienced by ALS learners in blended learning? so, here are the responses of the participants:

Participant 1

"Because of this kind of program given by the government, I was able to be at the grade level where I was supposed to be based on my age and capacity. Just like now, I'm already in grade 12 participating in blended learning where I started to continue my study in grade 11 after I finished in ALS. So, I'm very thankful because this program really helps me. I learned a lot, especially in balancing my time but at first, it was hard taking responsibility as a son and as a learner."

Participant 2

"The best benefit I got in being an ALS learner, is my studies get easier because instead of continuing from grade 8 to grade 10 I enrolled in ALS and I've been in grade 11 already participating in blended learning and that is where I am supposed to be. And so, it helps me in my expenses for studying decreased even more. But now as I joined blended learning as being ALS learner, some learnings that I have learned some things from the modules as well as from my teachers. When you're an ALS learner, the modules are taken and returned weekly, sometimes I do it at night or in the morning when I don't have much to do. And now that is what I'm doing, still balancing my time being a learner and a daughter responsibilities".

Participant 3

"I'm really thankful for this program, I was able to go to the grade level that I belong and it was really a great opportunity for the best benefit. When I'm still an ALS learner, since we're just answering modules, I can still manage my time in all of

my responsibilities at home. This time that I'm participating in blended learning, will teach me to adjust the time that I used to be. It helps me in controlling my time with my family and work.

Participant 4

"My particular benefits as an ALS learner, I will be able to continue my study again and be able to be at the grade level where I am supposed to be based on my capacity and age. Blended learning helps me to learn a lot of things, especially in the management of time. It was hard at first but in the long run, I was only answering modules every week and after that doing nothing, when you manage your time correctly you can easily handle whatever responsibilities you have to your work, family, and study."

Participant 5

"First of all, I'm thankful that they gave me this kind of opportunity to study in ALS because even though I've stopped for two (2) years in my studies I was able to continue it. I've learned that being an ALS learner is the thing that could be proud of because without ALS I couldn't graduate my junior high school. It does really help me now that I joined back in blended learning. In blended learning, it supported my ability to manage my responsibilities and priorities in life. I can control the things that I need to do and what is not needed so that my time cannot be wasted. It was difficult at first because I am also a daughter and at the same time a student waking up early and going to school then going back home as a daughter".

Looking at the responses of the participants, they do get particular benefits in being ALS learners in blended learning that can be deduced:

1. Be able to be at the grade level they belong – The ALS program gives chances to those out-of-school youth and students who decided to stop their studies. It helps the participants to not give up on achieving their dreams to continue studying despite their age and their capacity.
2. Supported their ability to manage their time – as a learner and at the same time as a daughter at home, every one of them has their own responsibilities and priorities in life. But even in blended learning, they were able to perform their duties inside their home and classrooms. They learned the importance of time management.

To summarize the answers of five (5) participants, the second theme was created and presented here

Second Theme – Benefits of blended learning to the ALS learners

Particularly benefits that ALS learners given and provided to all out-of-school youth and to those who stopped their studies helps in giving chances to continue someone's dream.

Perception of ALS Learners towards Blended Learning

This segment of the study features the answers of the five (5) participants to the qualitative question "What are the perceptions of ALS learners toward blended learning?" Here are the responses of the participants:

Participant 1

“ALS program is really good at their teaching and learning approach towards us ALS learners. This school program provides opportunities to those out-of-school youth and adults, especially me who stopped studying but because of this program, I will still be able to continue studying. I’ve learned a lot in my one (1) year experience of being ALS even though were just in modular that time was pandemic but it does really help me so much. In comparing the effectiveness of blended learning to a traditional classroom setting in terms of meeting my learning needs, for me, it’s just the same. Blended learning also helps improve my learning outcomes but not all, I think it’s better in a traditional classroom setting because if there someone will be in front of you teaching a lesson and meeting other people that you’ll call “classmates” which is great. But I also like this blended learning as an ALS learner because I only answer modules once a week.”

Participant 2

“In the times of blended learning as an ALS learner, well it’s not hard to understand the teaching style they perform and so easily got the important learning even were just in modular amidst of pandemic were experiencing. And for me, it’s way better and greater if you’re studying in the traditional classroom setting with a teacher standing in front of you teaching and discussing the lesson you’ll need to learn because here, you will be better met and taught better. Unlike in being an ALS learner a in blended learning approach, you’ll just gonna answer modules and all you have is that I can only meet some of my co-ALS learners once when there are important tasks in this program. But still, I’m highly satisfied with this program”.

Participant 3

“So, since that time was pandemic the year I got into the ALS program, it was kinda hard for me to understand those modules they are giving to us. I can’t say that I easily learned to that kind of learning. but I know it would be great if only the world was in good condition. I know they’ll give us more ways to learn and show us their teaching style rather than giving those modules. When I decided to continue my studies, this program was the only thing I knew that could help me bring to what grade I was supposed to be. If only I didn’t stop studying, then I would not be having a hard time just answering modules and getting a bit of learning. it will be great of course if you’re studying rather than answering modules at home. Blended learning helps me, yes but if we talked about comparing blended learning to the traditional classroom setting then I’ll choose the traditional classroom setting I know that I’ve learned a lot on it.”

Participant 4

“This program that they implemented really helps me in continuing my studies and pursuing my dream. Even though I stopped and missed two (2) grade levels, because of this program I was able to be at the grade level I was supposed to be. I just need to be an ALS learner for almost a year and after that, I can go back to school and continue my study. Being an ALS learner was also great in times of blended learning because that time was the pandemic and the way they give us learning is only by giving modules every week, I was

expecting that we also experience online classes like meeting a teacher with co-ALS learners but sadly we didn’t do that, we don’t experience that. Sometimes I don’t feel that I’m a student and not enjoying answering modules. If I’m gonna choose between blended learning and a traditional classroom setting in terms of the effectiveness of learning, I’ll choose a traditional classroom setting this is a way better for a student to learn. But still, believe that blended learning has improved my learning. This ALS program is giving chances to the people who want to improve their learning, and being an ALS learner, I am totally satisfied.”

Participant 5

“The blended learning as a teaching and learning approach in the ALS program is great because you’ll gonna get a lot of benefits in it, like going to the grade level you’re supposed to be even if you’re an out-of-school youth or someone who stopped in studying you still have the chance to continue your dreams. They give second chances to those who really want to pursue studying and it’s such a great opportunity. Their teaching approach, was also good even though that time was a pandemic, and the way they learned using the modules. We don’t experience face-to-face classes or whatever but still answering those modules helps me learn more also. Blended learning helps me and I can say yes because it has the impact of learning but compared to a traditional classroom setting it’s better”.

Looking at the responses of the participants, they have different perceptions of blended learning that can be deduced:

1. Effective learning – In blended learning, ALS learner enhances their learning engagement even though they just answered modules during that time of the pandemic. Gives them enough time to learn and answer activity worksheets.
2. Low learner participation – Since that time was pandemic the ALS learner in the blended learning approach was not enjoying their way of learning because they were just answering modules every week. And sometimes they don’t feel motivated in answering modules. They don’t meet teachers or even do some online classes to meet some of their co-ALS learners.

To summarize the answers of the five (5) participants, the third theme was created and presented here:

Third Theme – Perceptions of ALS learners towards blended learning

In the blended learning approach experienced by ALS learner have somehow difference in their perceptions towards it, that it can be effective and not effective by the challenges and limitations of blended learning.

IV. SUMMARY

The experiences of ALS learners during the implementation of blended learning.

The findings were classified into major themes that generated ideas on the phenomenon. Answering modules was one of their responsibilities the theme revealed that blended learning helps to enhance their educational experiences and outcomes.

The benefits experienced by ALS learners in blended learning.

The findings were classified into major themes that generated ideas on the phenomenon. One of the beneficial experiences of the ALS learners towards blended learning is to be able to be at the grade level they belong to supported their ability to manage their time because in blended learning they were able to perform their duties inside their homes and classroom.

The perceptions of ALS learners towards blended learning.

The findings were classified into major themes that generated ideas on the phenomenon. They have different perceptions towards blended learning, effective learning in blended learning ALS learner enhance their learning engagement even though they just answer modules in that time of pandemic. Low learner participation since that time was pandemic the ALS learner in the blended learning approach was not enjoyable their way of learning because they were just answering modules every week. The theme revealed that the blended learning approach experienced by ALS learner is somehow different in their perception towards it, that it can be effective and not effective by the challenges and limitations of blended learning.

V. CONCLUSION

In line with the foregoing findings, a conclusion had been drawn and encapsulated by the researcher.

1. Blended learning helps them to enhance their educational experience and outcomes.
2. Be able to be at the grade level they belong, in order to continue studying the same with a traditional classroom setting.
3. The perception of ALS learners towards blended learning is that it can be effective or not effective because of the challenges and limitations of blended learning.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions presented in this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Family should provide continuous encouragement and motivation to ALS learners, acknowledging their efforts and celebrating achievements.
2. Participants or the respondents can share their experiences and insights with others, both within and outside the ALS community. By advocating for ALS education, they can

contribute to raising awareness and promoting support for learners in similar situations.

3. Out-of-school youth should pursue further education beyond the traditional school years no matter how old they are now today. The obstacles encountered by the study participants are insignificant compared to the abundant rewards they can reap from their achievements.

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