

A Proposed Theory for the Pedagogic Practices in Alternative Learning System (ALS)

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Abstract

This study explored the pedagogic practices on modalities in facilitating instruction and assessing learning employed for the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults as group of learners in the ALS and consequently propose a theory along these dimensions. Data were obtained from 18 purposively chosen programs-implementers through semi-structured, observations of class activities, and field notes. These were analyzed through Charmaz' framework on grounded theory data analyses. Results of the findings showed that educational goods and services are delivered through flexible modalities specifically face-to-face aided with modern technologies and home visitation aided with traditional technologies. Assessment in learning, on the other hand, is realized in multi-modal fashion specifically through performance-based, module-based, and portfolio assessment formats. These findings point towards a theoretical conception that the delivery of educational good and services is unique and dependent on the circumstance, condition, and situation of the target learners and assessing the learners' learning is actualized in a multi-modal fashion in response and recognition of the learners' diversity, diverse learning needs and teaching and learning environment. With these theoretical conceptions, the Granular Learning Theory is proposed. The basic tenet of the theory is that instructional delivery and assessment in learning are case-dependent.

Keywords: assessment of learning in the ALS, modalities of learning in the ALS, proposed pedagogic theory in the implementation of the ALS

1. Introduction

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) is the Philippine government's response to reach out and consequently provide quality education to all Filipinos across ages, genders, cultures, ethnicities, and economic strata, who, for various reasons, were unable to complete the state-prescribed basic education cycle. Among its target groups include the non-literate adults, abused children, non-literate families, Out-of-School Youths (OSYs), Indigenous Peoples (IPs), Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), among others. As an alternative learning delivery, it is credited as parallel to the country's formal basic education system which advances and develops the learners' academic needs and skills respectively. The ALS is also the government's answer to its commitments to various programs initiated by international organizations like the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that promotes curbing global illiteracy rate through access to quality education (Department of Education (DepEd), 2017).

Undeniably, bulk of scientific publications on ALS exist. Among those studied were the impact of its program like the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) to the lives of its enrollees including the young mothers, tribe members, and the OSYs. Findings from various studies revealed that their attendance to the program resulted to character formation, re-integration to mainstream society, local employment and enrollment in college (Apaio et al. 2014; Moralista & Delariarte, 2014; Dayon *et al.*, 2016; Enriquez, 2013; Labarrete, 2020). Other studies were on teaching resources effectiveness. The digital module developed by the Melgar twins (2019) focused on skills development in various learning areas including science, mathematics, language, reading, and digital literacy was reported to be

technically sound, learners-friendly, practical, and responsive to the actual learners' needs. These qualities earned merit of its usage in teaching ALS learners across programs. Similarly, Labarrete (2021), reported that the modules he developed anchored on the principles of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory were useful for teaching a course in Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Alternative Learning System (PB-DALS) program although said instructional resources necessitate validation.

Finally, several other reviewed literatures point towards a multitude of teaching and learning concerns hounding the ALS. The World Bank, for example, commended the significant increase in enrolment in the ALS from 2005-2014; it is worrisome on the decline of passers in the A&E test among its program completers (World Bank Report No: AUS14891, 2016). Azardon & Nato, (2015); Pinca, (2015); Fernandez, (2013); and Abasolo (2017), correlated this concern to the teachers' usage of unauthentic and localized assessment tools, lack to absence of community-based teaching and learning materials, proximity of the Community Learning Centers (CLCs) to the target learners, and unfounded choice of teaching strategies respectively. However, Labarrete (2019a) and Labarrete (2019b), believed that the learners' poor reading, study, and writing skills could have contributed to the above-mentioned concern.

Unarguably, scientific knowledge about ALS is rich. However, it is evident from the surveyed literature that none is focused on theory development in relation to its pedagogic practices focused on the modalities of instruction and assessment in learning. As such, in its absence and in consideration with the diversity of the nature of learners and their unique learning environment, it is then imperative that a study on this dimension be conducted. As such, the purpose of this paper was to thoroughly examine these practices involving the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults towards proposing a theory along this context.

2. Objective of the Study

This study explored the pedagogic practices on *modalities in facilitating instruction and assessing learning employed for the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults* as group of learners in the ALS and consequently propose a theory along these dimensions.

3. Methods and Materials

The PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults are among the group of learners enrolled in the Basic Literacy and Accreditation and Equivalency for Elementary and Junior High School Certification ALS programs. Implementers of these programs respond accordingly considering the diversity of the education needs and unique teaching and learning environments of the learners in each group. To answer the objective, the pedagogic practices on *modalities in facilitating instruction and assessing learning as employed in the cases of the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults* were explored. Data obtained for each case were then anchored as bases for generating the proposed theory. There were 18 purposively chosen programs-implementers who consented to become informants. Of this number, 12 handles the PDLs, three the IPs, and 3 the Non-Literate Adults. Data were collected through extensive observations of class activities, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. The interview guide was validated through content expert validation. Revisions were made based on recommendations of the five ALS programs-implementers not involved in the study. Afterward, an inter-rater validity was inputted to SPSS version 23. Cohen's kappa coefficient was used to ensure the level of agreement of the raters. The kappa statistics resulted in 1.0 or a perfect level of agreement. Meanwhile, the analyses of the data from the ground were guided with the procedures advanced by Charmaz (2008). Thus, initial codes representing the informants' innovative term that captures meanings relative to their pedagogic practices on modalities in learning delivery and assessment in learning were generated through a line-by-line coding method. The generated codes were then referred for focused and subsequently and axial coding. Afterwards, results of the axial coding were subjected for categories generation, and, in turn, were anchored as basis for themes generation. The themes served as bases for theoretical conception. The results of the findings from the analyses made were presented to the informants for verification.

4. Results and Discussions

This section presents the description of the three cases and the results of the analyses made on the vignettes provided by the informants on modalities in facilitating instruction and assessment in learning.

4.1 Case Descriptions: PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults

The PDLs, or learners in conflict with the law, are enrollees under the ALS Behind Bars program. They are specifically enrolled in the Basic Literacy and Accreditation and Equivalency for Elementary and Junior High School

Certification. The program aims to transform the PDLs regardless of their gender, age, crimes committed, and previous educational attainment become functional members of the mainstream society after serving their respective prison terms. These PDLs are stationed in three main government-controlled jail facilities and two rehabilitation centers spread out across municipalities in the Eastern Visayas region. Literacy and skills training are the core of their education. Overall, there are 12 programs-implementers tasked to facilitate instruction in these facilities and centers. All of them have units in master's degree, had been in the service for six years, enjoying teacher 3 academic rank, and had attended for over 32-hours equivalent of various professional development activities. The multi-purpose halls located within the compounds of these facilities and centers serve as instructional rooms. Generally, the learning environment, nature of the learners, and program's expectations served as the context in the learning delivery and in assessing their learning.

Meanwhile, the Sama-Badjaos are enrollees under the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) program of the ALS. This group of IPs resides in one of the remote municipalities in Eastern Visayas region of the Philippines. Instruction for these learners is two-fold: literacy and skills development meant for employment. As of academic year 2021, there are 98 officially enrolled learners of varying ages, genders, and grade levels. Education services for this group is facilitated by three programs-implementers. All of them reside along the shorelines and classes are recited in a bamboo-walled instructional room erected by their Local Government Unit (LGU).

Finally, the Non-Literate Adults are enrollees of ALS in its program called Out-of-School Adults (OSA). Instruction is concentrated on the development of the learners' reading, writing, and counting skills. Generally, female enrollees are married and are engage in household help, farming, gardening, and delicacy baking while the male enrollees are into local wine gathering, farming, construction help, and village tanods or peacekeepers. There are three programs-implementers in charge of facilitating instruction for this group which is recited in their home residences and community cottages.

4.2 On the Pedagogical Practices in Facilitating Instruction Across Three Cases

To determine the modalities employed by the programs-implementers in facilitating instruction in all three cases, they were asked this question: What modalities do you employ to facilitate instruction with your PDL, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults learners? Elucidate your answer. As it is, the process started with initial coding. Across these cases, there were 36 codes generated. When focused coding was applied, these were reduced to 21. Said data were carefully subjected to constant comparisons. Considerably, 12 codes were generated from the axially coded data. These were then categorized to two: onsite visitation aided with modern technology-based instructional tools and home visitation aided with traditional-based learning materials. In the context of this study, the former refers to the reporting of the programs-implementers to the jail facilities, rehabilitation centers and erected instructional room by the LGU for the IPs. These modalities are employed because obviously learners are not allowed to leave the vicinities of these areas and as mechanism employed to ensure the attendance of the IP. The latter, on the other hand, means the pre-arrangement entered into by the programs-implementers and non-literate adults' and the proximity of the learners' homes and the many economic activities they need to do before they could attend to academic activities.

Considerably, based on the categories that have surfaced, flexible learning modality emerged as the main theme. In the context of this study, two sub-themes emerged which are about the specific modalities employed by the program's implementers: face-to-face aided with modern technologies and home visitation aided with traditional technologies. The former is utilized as a modality to deliver instructional services involving the PDLs and IPs learners, while, the latter for non-literate adults. These modalities are attuned to UNESCO's Flexible Learning Strategies (FLS). In its digital library, FLS is defined as an umbrella term synonymous with various alternative educational programs aimed at reaching out the most marginalized Out of School Children (OOSC). FLS represents a deviation from a fractional approach to the provision of education for the educationally excluded towards more systematic and flexible interventions designed to match the needs and circumstances of OOSC. Its main thrust is to ensure that, regardless of mode, duration, and location or delivered in a formal or non-formal system, excluded individuals can acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills. Additionally, FLS will provide OOSC with the competencies and life skills required to live safe and dignified lives and put inclusive education into practice characterized as reaching the unreached, equity and inclusivity, equivalency, intensive quality learning, and global citizenship and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2019).

4.3 Theoretical Conception

Data gathered on the ground and subjected for analysis yielded a theoretical conception that the framework utilized by the ALS programs-implementers in delivering its educational good and services is unique and dependent on the circumstance, condition, and situation of its target learners.

4.3.1 On the Pedagogic Practices in Assessing Learning Across Three Cases

To determine the assessment in learning practices of the programs-implementers, they were asked this question: How do you assess the PDLs, IPs, and the Non-Literate Adults learning? Elucidate your answer. Data obtained from the ground were then coded. Across three cases, results of the open or initial coding generated 12 codes. When focused coding was applied, these were reduced to 7. Said data were carefully subjected to constant comparisons. Considerably, five codes emerged from the axial coding conducted. These were then categorized to three: performance-based, module-based, and portfolio assessment formats. In the context of this study, performance-based assessment is carried by asking the PDLs and the to demonstrate specific skills and competencies during culminating activities for a specific celebration like the Reading Month, Buwan ng Wika, United Nations Week, English Month, among others. The many activities include oratorical activities, literary dance interpretation, dramatization, and spelling bee. These activities are carried out in the covered court converted as instructional space located within the facilities and centers. In the case of the IPs, this assessment format is realized as formative assessment. Programs-implementers usually aske the Sama-Badjaos to role-play a specific ritual observed by the tribe like the “kinawin”, a marriage ritual dance, and compose mother tongue-based jingles. These activities intend to enhance the learners’ self-confidence, communication skills, and embrace a rich cultural identity. Afterwards, a series of discussions on the performance shown are conducted. This assessment format though is not actualized with the non-literate adults.

According to Shermis & Di Vesta (2011) explained that performance assessment is a subclass of alternative assessment. It is an exercise by which learners demonstrate specific skills and competencies per agreed standards and proficiency or excellence. In addition, Miller et al. (2009) listed several advantages when using performance tasks. These are: 1) encourage the development of complex understandings and skills; 2) measure complex learning outcomes that cannot be measured by other means; 3) provide a means for assessing process and product as well as the products that result from performing a task, and 4) implement approaches that are implemented by modern learning theories. In DepEd Memorandum Order No. 8, s. 2015, this assessment format, is considered a component of summative assessment which allows learners to demonstrate their skills and competencies uniquely. When utilized, learners are expected to create products or perform activities like skills demonstrations, group presentations, oral work, multimedia presentations, and research projects. Rosaroso and Rosaroso (2015) reported that the utilization of this assessment format made the learners motivated and self-regulated while it enabled teachers to locate their strengths and weaknesses and monitor academic growth and progress.

Meanwhile, module-based assessment actually refers to the utilization of objective and subjective test types which are found in the modules utilized as one of the instructional tools across three cases. Short quizzes, short response, multiple choice, binary test type, written reports, and essays are among the common formats included in the modules. Obviously, these are traditional assessment types yet considered by the programs-implementers as critical in gauging the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults learning. The utilization of these assessment formats is encouraged by the DepEd especially when developing the cognitive process dimension. As suggested by Anderson and Krathwohl and adapted by the agency, this dimension includes remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The purpose of the written work component is to ensure that students can express skills and concepts and strengthen their test-taking skills (DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015).

Finally, portfolio as an assessment format, refers to the compilation of the best outputs produced by the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults for a specific grading period. These are proofs of what they know and can do. The type used across three cases is called presentation or showcase portfolio. Learners use them to obtain grade and as a requirement for those who intend to take a national examination while the programs-implementers make use of it as proof of a successful teaching and learning engagement that is usually reported to their immediate school heads. In the ALS, portfolio is showcased during Portfolio Day, a culminating activity which honors and recognizes the academic progress of the learners. During this activity, learners are afforded the chance to showcase their achievements to stakeholders like the parents and guardians, DepEd officials, Local Government Unit- Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, ALS alumni, centers and jail facilities management, and the community in general. This activity is hoped to motivate and boost the learners’ morale and at draw financial support from these stakeholders (Valeriano, R., Caliwan, E., and Intong, M., Personal Interview, October 24, 2019). Miller et al. (2009) explained that the type of portfolio used in the ALS is actually a documentation portfolio that provides evidence on the breadth and depth of learning. It is inclusive and need not focus only on a particular strength of the learners. Several studies such as that conducted by Rosaroso (2016); Lucas (2007); Edig & Edig (2017); and Tarun (2011) revealed that portfolio assessment encouraged learners become reflective thinkers, fosters collaboration and cooperation among learners and learning facilitators, ignites motivation, and improved their written and spoken language competence.

Considerably, the categories performance-based, module-based, and portfolio assessment formats served as the bases in generating the theme for the pedagogic practices on assessment in learning as carried out by the programs-implementers which is multi-modal assessment. In the context of this study, it refers to the utilization of mixed assessment formats to assess the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of learning fitted to how instruction is facilitated across the cases of the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults learners. This assessment practice is carried out throughout the episodes of the teaching and learning processes. According to Jewitt (2003) multimodal assessment is an approach that incorporates multiple modes or methods of assessment to gather information about an individual's learning, abilities, and performance. Being such, it utilizes variety of assessment methods to capture the different aspects of the learners' skills and knowledge instead of a single assessment type like written examination. It comes in the form of verbal, written, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. It provides a comprehensive and well-rounded evaluation of individuals' abilities, learning styles, and strengths in recognition of the different ways people understand and express themselves. Its usage results to a more precise representation of the learners' skills and knowledge.

4.4 Theoretical Conception

Data gathered on the ground and subjected for analysis point to a theoretical conception that pedagogic practices in assessing students learning are multi-modal in nature across three cases. This framework is in response and recognition of the learners' diversity, diverse learning needs and teaching and learning environment.

4.4.1 Proposed Theory on the Pedagogic practices in Instructional Modality and Assessment in Learning across Cases: The Granular Learning Theory

ALS aims to provide education to all Filipinos across ages, genders, and demography who failed to complete the mandated basic education cycle for various reasons. The system is home to learners with diverse learning needs and a unique learning environment. Thus, pedagogical practices vary. This study explored the pedagogic practices on modalities in facilitating instruction and assessing learning employed by the programs-implementers involving the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate group of learners and consequently propose a theory along these dimensions. Results of the findings showed that educational goods and services are delivered through flexible modalities specifically face-to-face aided with modern technologies and home visitation aided with traditional technologies. Assessment in learning, on the other hand, is realized in multi-modal fashion.

These findings point towards a theoretical conception that the delivery of educational good and services is unique and dependent on the circumstance, condition, and situation of the target learners and assessing the learners' learning is actualized in a multi-modal fashion in response and recognition of the learners' diversity, diverse learning needs and teaching and learning environment. With these theoretical conceptions, the Granular Learning Theory is proposed. The basic tenet about this theory is that, pedagogic practices in relation to instructional goods and services delivery and in assessing students' learning become meaningful when facilitated granularly as it becomes responsive to the authentic actualities and conditions of the specific group of learners such as those pre-identified in this study

5. Conclusion

This study explored the pedagogic practices on modalities in facilitating instruction and assessing learning employed by the programs-implementers involving the PDLs, IPs, and Non-Literate Adults as group of learners in the ALS and consequently propose a theory along these dimensions. Themes generated for each pedagogic practice point towards a theoretical conception that each is materialized in consideration of the learners' present circumstance, condition, and situation and that in response and recognition of an immense learners' diversity, diverse learning needs and teaching and learning environment. With these as anchors, the Granular Learning Theory is proposed. Among others, it posits that cognition is best acquired and becomes meaningful when facilitated granularly as it becomes responsive to the authentic actualities and conditions of the target ALS learners.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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