The Assistance Component of the Work Program of U.P. Integrated School: A Qualitative Evaluation

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Thematic analysis of data gathered through formal and informal interviews, focus group discussion, analysis of documents, triangulation, and member checking showed that the program provided the students with experience to develop special interests, skills and values while rendering services to the school. All students of the Assistance Component agreed that the program was a learning gain. The students, learning coordinators, cooperating persons, and alumni perceived the program orientation as an adequate means to enhance student awareness of the program goals. The students' understanding of the program was manifested through their output and attitude towards the assigned tasks. Some students greatly enjoyed doing these tasks while others experienced dissatisfaction. The problems generally encountered were conflict of schedule between the students and their cooperating persons, lack of awareness of the goals and expectations of the Work Program, and lack of proper attitude and prerequisite skills among the students.

Introduction

The University of the Philippines Integrated School (UPIS) developed the Work Program in AY 1979–1980 to provide grade 10 students the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills and to "explore in a relatively controlled environment their preferred occupational roles and related lifestyles" (UPIS Catalogue 2002, p. 2). The Work Program has four components: Assistance Component, Media Center, Science Learning Center, and Practical Arts Center.

The Assistance Component (AC) aims to develop special interests and skills while rendering services to the school. UPIS grade 10 students can choose to assist in one semester the school Clinic, Library, Guidance, Office, Research, and Teacher Assistance sections. They may opt to enroll in a section for one quarter (30 hours) and in another section for another 30 hours, or spend the entire 60 hours in only one section. Students are individually assigned to assist a cooperating person who may be a UPIS teacher, nurse, librarian, guidance counselor, or member of the administrative/research staff.

Since its implementation in 1979, two surveys gathered student feedback on the pilot classes of the Assistance Component. These were conducted by two groups of UPIS high school students enrolled in the elective Statistics. Abalajon, et al. (1980) and Duba, et al. (1981) distributed questionnaires to their co-students in the AC program in AYs 1979-80 and 1980-81, respectively. Both groups reported that most of the students signed up in the AC program to gain knowledge and experience.

Abalajon, et al. found that the students chose the AC component because of lack of interest in the other offered electives, curiosity, desire to be of service to the school, and teacher influence. Duba's group added that the students wanted to lessen their academic load and to apply what they learned in their electives. Majority of the respondents in the student surveys had an idea of the activities that they would be undertaking in the program. They agreed that possessing good typing skills and ability to deal with different types of persons were most helpful in undertaking their assigned work. They rated as "moderately achieved" the extent to which the AC Program attained its goals. The most common gains were experience, new knowledge/skills, and new friends/ acquaintances. Student participants also mentioned self-awareness, correct work habits, discipline, ability to deal with people, and development of desirable values such as cooperation, respect for superiors, and resourcefulness.

Abalajon, et al. (1980) disclosed that the students found the AC schedule too late in the afternoon and not flexible. On the contrary, Duba, et al. (1981) found that the schedule was just right for their respondents. However, the students agreed that the course was too short and one quarter spent in a section was not enough. Abalajon's group also mentioned that the working atmosphere of AC Program was fairly encouraging to students and that the services the students rendered were very useful to the school and were very much appreciated.

Purposes and Method

The present study aimed to assess the implementation of the Assistance Component of the UPIS Work Program through qualitative analysis. It sought to find out (1) how the AC students, cooperating persons (CPs), learning coordinators (LCs), and alumni perceive these activities: orientation, assignment of AC sections, assignment and monitoring of AC activities, and evaluation of students' performance and attitude; (2) what problems were encountered and how these problems were resolved; and (3) the extent to which the AC program has attained its objective of providing the students with experiences to develop special interests and skills and desirable work attitudes.

The study employed multiple investigators, different sources of data and varied data collection methods such as formal and informal interviews, focus group discussions, analysis of documents and previous studies conducted, and observations. Triangulation and member checking were also employed for validity and reliability.

The 66 subjects of the study included 27 (41%) students in the AC Program in the first semester of AY 2003-04, 29 (44%) cooperating persons, 2 (3%) learning coordinators, and 8 (12%) UPIS alumni. Sampling was done using proportional allocation to ensure that all six AC sections were represented and that each of the eight departments in the teaching section had at least two representatives, one from the elementary and the other from high school. The alumni included some college students and some professionals; two of them were serving as CPs.

An interview guide for AC students and a parallel guide question for CPs were developed as were similar guides for the alumni and LC respondents. The interview schedules had three main parts: (1) on the perceptions on four aspects of the AC program - the orientation, assigning of students, monitoring of activities and evaluation; (2) on the attainment of AC goals; and (3) on the problems encountered in program implementation.

The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted over a four-week period. Interview guides were constantly modified as data gathering proceeded so as not to miss any concern; the four researchers used the interview schedules. only as guides so as not to deviate from the focus of the study. All interviews and FGDs were tape recorded except telephone interviews and upon the CPs' request not to record the interview. Because of time constraints, interviews were transcribed in full; in the course of data analysis, the tapes were repeatedly played as needed. The team of researchers also observed the weekly plenary sessions of AC program, as well as the actual AC sessions with the CPs. Moreover, the team browsed the student journals for better insights on the program.

The data gathered from the interviews were interpreted through thematic analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990) by coding strips of information at two levels: the primary level where the data were identified, grouped and coded according to content categories or different aspects of the program; and the secondary levels where the categories were related to themes that emerged from the data.

Discussion of Results

Perceptions on the AC Program

<u>On the Orientation</u>: Orientations on the AC Program were held at the start of each semester. The views of the AC students, cooperating persons and alumni on the orientation were categorized into two major themes: (1) the orientation as a means to enhance students' awareness of the goals and objectives of the AC Program and to explain what is expected of an AC student, and (2) the orientation as a venue to help students make decisions.

Majority of the students stressed that they were aware of the goals and objectives of the Program since the orientation given by the LCs emphasized the objectives and scope of the AC Program, the expectations of the six AC sections, and the duties and responsibilities of the AC students. Among the comments given were:

> *"Diniscuss ... kung saan magtatrabaho at tapos kung ano ang pwedeng ipa-gawa sa amin, mga sakop, mga dapat..."* (It was discussed...where to work and what tasks could be assigned... what must be done and could be done.)
>
> *"Hindi kayo ST [student teachers], assistant lang..."* (You aren't STs, you're assistants only...)
>
> *"Huwag bibili ng pagkain ng teachers, bawal!"* (Do not buy food for the teachers, it's prohibited!)
>
> *"Nagbigay din ng tips* (Tips were given) *on how to become effective and how to cope with the schedule of the teacher."*

In addition, the course requirements and grading system were explained. Proper attitude towards work was likewise emphasized.

> *"Huwag maglakwatsa... para matulungan sina Ma'am, yung nagha-handle sa amin, matulungan din naming mapadali ang trabaho para if ever meron dapat madaliin, hindi sila masyadong nape-pressure."* (Do not roam around...to be able to help Ma'am and the others who handle us. We can help them ease their work so that if there is something to finish at once, they will not be pressured too much.)

Also stressed during orientation was the students' selection of work area, or which AC section to enroll in. Application letters to the chosen CPs were then drafted by the students. The final letters were noted by LCs and endorsed by the department heads.

> *"... Pinapili po kami kung ano ang gusto naming AC section."* (...We were made to choose what we wanted.)
>
> *"Dapat may requirements at prerequisites."* (We must have requirements and prerequisites.)

The students pointed out that their LCs were able to give sufficient briefing on the AC Program during the orientation. When interviewed, most of the students did not specifically state the main goals of the AC program as enumerated in the documents. They expressed the goals in terms of what they experienced, like development of skills and leadership qualities, assisting the CPs and exposure to work, and how they perceived the AC program to prepare them for their future.

> *"To prepare students sa task na ipu-pursue sa college... Kunwari, gusto mo maging teacher o doctor ..."* (Prepare students to tasks that will be pursued in college... For example, you want to be a teacher or a doctor ...)
>
> *"Para matulungan po sa pag-apply ng job."* (To be helped when applying for a job.)
>
> *"Para ma-apply ang pinag-aralan sa iskul."* (To be able to apply what was learned in school.)
>
> *"Para ma-expose sa actual na trabaho. Habang bata pa lang inihahanda na sa trabaho."* (To be exposed to actual work. While still young, [we are] being prepared for work).

The goals mentioned by the AC students were confirmed by some CPs: "To assist CP in case s/he is absent."

> *"Para ma-experience ang work ng ina-assist nila."* (To experience the work of the person they are assisting.)

The alumni responses were more focused on the preparation of students for work.

> "To produce graduates ready to work."
>
> "It helps us see what we want to pursue in college."
>
> 'It's something about *na kung hindi gra-graduate, at least may background na for work."* (If we will not graduate, at least we already have background for work.)
>
> Only one mentioned about development of proper attitude: "*Tinuruan kami kung ano ang dapat na attitude."* (We were taught the proper attitude.)

According to some CPs, the understanding of the program goals by the AC students was manifested in their output and attendance during AC sessions.

> *"...Lahat ng pinapagawa, natatapos on time... May* positive attitude towards work." (All that were assigned were finished on time... There's a positive attitude towards work manifested in accepting what's assigned to her and doing good in the assigned task."

> *Depende sa estudyante, may mga bata na makatapos lang ng assignments... May mga batang pulido ang trabaho. Minsan naman, inuulit ko pa."* (It depends on the student ...there are students who would just finish their assignments for the sake of finishing. There are children whose work are very good. Sometimes, I had to repeat their work.)

The manifestation of student understanding of the AC Program goals could not be verified by CPs who themselves were not properly oriented about the program.

> "Not sure... I'm not aware of the goals."
>
> "I can't see the manifestation ... not aware of the goals of AC."

It was noted that the LCs gave a formal orientation on the goals of the AC Program and on the objectives of the specific AC sections. On the other hand, the CPs who made an effort to do the same did it in passing only because they assumed that the LCs made such an orientation already. The CPs generally gave an informal and a more specific orientation on the tasks to be accomplished in each particular section.

On Assigning Students to AC Sections. The students, LCs and CPs were interviewed on how students were assigned to a particular AC section. Three themes emerged from their responses: (1) the electives taken, the AC section assignment, and the intended courses of the students were not always aligned; (2) the rule on AC prerequisite electives was not strictly followed; and (3) the student's personal choice, the electives taken, and his/her intended career were always considered in assigning him/her to a particular AC section.

About half of the student respondents took up electives that were attuned to their AC Program. For example, some of those who enlisted in the Research and Guidance sections took up the elective Statistics and the elective Personality Development & Leadership Training, respectively. Those enrolled in the Teacher Assistance Section, particularly in the English and Science departments, had taken Business Communication and Selected Topics in Biology, respectively. These electives were found to be related to their intended career.

Some students took electives which were not related to their AC sections, although they considered these electives as a preparation for their intended

> *"In a way, kasi yung Business Communication, nakatulong sa paggawa ng resume."* (In a way, because Business Communication is a help in making our resume.)
>
> *"Kasi ang English medium, kahit saan ka pumunta, working here and abroad, ginagamit ay English..."* (Because English is the medium, anywhere you go, whether you work here or abroad, English is being used...)

Some students were assigned to AC sections not directly in line with their intended courses because of lack of CPs, inability to meet the minimum grade required by a specific department for a course in the teaching section, and other unavoidable circumstances such as CPs taking a leave of absence at the start of the semester.

"I was rejected by the Math Department because *hindi umabot ang grade ko sa grade requirement.*" (My grade did not meet the grade requirement).

"Gusto ko sana sa PA [Practical Arts] kaya lang may naka-assign na." (I wanted PA but somebody was already assigned there.)

"*Ang nangyari sa akin, kung sino ang walang AC, iyon na lang ang ibinigay sa akin.*" (What happened was that those who had no AC were assigned to me.)

Certain electives were required but were not strictly implemented. For example, the Guidance Section specified that their AC students take the Personality Development & Leadership Training (PDLT) first. However, the students interviewed in this area did not enroll in such a course and instead took up either Drafting and Practical Law, or Environmental Science and Electronics. Students in the Office/Record Section were required to take Business Communication but some AC students assigned there did not take this prerequisite elective.

The students' personal choice for their CPs was also given priority in assignments. In fact, some students had informally signified their intention to assist their CPs even prior to enrolling in the Work Program. They were given the freedom to choose their own CPs and to stay with their CPs for two quarters, or to shift to another CP in the second quarter.   More often than not, they stayed because of the good relationship they had established with their CPs. They also wanted to avoid another adjustment in work.

"*Adjusted na ako. Pag mag-shift, susulat uli ng application letter at mag-a-adjust na naman.*" (I had already adjusted. If I were to shift, I would have to write an application letter again and undergo another adjustment.)

"*Masaya dito... di mahirap ang trabaho, di masungit ang CP,... nakakapag-chika-chika pa sa mga kaibigan at ka-vibes na ang mga ST [student teacher].*" (I'm happy here, the work is not difficult, the CP is not grouchy. I can talk to friends anytime and I can get along with the STs.)

Other reasons that the students gave for not shifting to another AC section in the second quarter were convenience (no need to transfer from one campus to the other), the condition of the place (air conditioned work area), their experiences with their CP, and the grade given to them by their CPs in the first quarter.

On Monitoring of AC Activities. The discussion in this theme is divided into two: (1) the different tasks assigned to the AC students, and (2) the method of monitoring these tasks.

The students and alumni were asked what they did during AC time. Table 1 shows that the students performed varied tasks that were somewhat similar to the activities that the CPs assigned to them and what the alumni remembered doing. Three themes emerged from the interviews: (1) a task can be a source of enjoyment, dissatisfaction, and learning for the AC students; (2) the allowable student tasks for each AC section was not very clear to the students; and (3) some CPs share the services of their AC students with other teachers.

Table 1. Activities Done by AC Students as Mentioned by the AC Students, CPs and Alumni

AC Section	Students' Response	Alumni's response	CPs' Response
Library	Shelving books, shelf-reading, manning the front desk and reserved sections, cutting clippings, working on projects	Shelf-reading, tallying the number of persons coming in and going out of the library	Shelving, making vertical files, cutting clippings, indexing, encoding, working on projects, labeling of shelves, making book pockets
Office	Typing, making cut-outs for the bulletin boards, preparing invitations, arranging files and bills, making list of graduates, delivering letters, checking test papers		Typing, recording, filing, collating papers, posting memos, sorting files
Research	Typing, sorting, collating, shuffling, arranging data chronologically, labeling, cataloguing, fixing evaluation sheets, doing research on the UPIS history and on basic education	Tallying data, recording survey results	Indexing and filing information materials, making bibliographies, cataloguing, photocopying materials, collating instructional materials, doing research on UPIS history, gathering data on Basic Education, looking for feelers for Alipato Journal, surfing the net for research, assisting in sampling for a research, constructing research instruments, assisting in administration of research instruments, tallying teacher evaluation results
Guidance	Compiling records, checking and encoding test results	Encoding survey results	Checking tests, making instructional materials, compiling records, interviewing students, facilitating group guidance activities, tallying of data, preparing bulletin board
Clinic	Arranging medicine cabinet, making cotton balls, cleaning wounds, arranging records in cabinet	Giving first aid, making cotton balls	Getting blood pressure, making the bed, giving first aid, arranging records, logging in of needed information on the child seeking medical attention, graphing records, making bulletin board displays, making cotton balls

AC Section	Students' Response	Alumni's response	CPs' Response
Teacher	Checking papers, recording, making visual aids, facilitating the class activity, observing classes, actual teaching, decorating the room / bulletin boards, watching over the class, computing partial grades, constructing test, gathering different techniques in proving problems in geometry, doing errands/ messenger work, collecting survey forms, constructing/ solving word problems, covering the table in the department, doing test item analysis, making visual aids, collecting for a pool of questions	Checking papers/ module, recording, making of visual aids, transcribing tapes, actual teaching, constructing/ typing test, decorating the bulletin board, giving seatwork, arranging things in the department, assisting students in their activities	Checking papers, recording, preparing instructional materials, doing library work, facilitating the class, computing partial grades, conducting remediation, arranging and classifying forms, gathering of different techniques in proving problems in geometry, doing errands, coaching participants for competition, preparing make-up test, delivering communication, answering phone calls, doing item analysis, peer teaching of foreign students

Majority of the students and alumni found their work easy and enjoyable because the tasks were simple and they were together with their friends.

> *"Enjoy, kasi kasama ko ang close friends ko..."* (Enjoy, because I am with my close friends...)... Easy, no pressure."
>
> *"Masaya kasi nakapag-handle ng actual class."* (I am happy because I handled an actual class.)
>
> *"Madali*, no need for mental exertion.... Easy, because I enjoy!"

Others were overwhelmed by too much work to do and experienced difficulty in checking non-objective tests, compiling, and arranging records.

> "...I feel difficulty when checking papers..."
>
> *"Nauubos ang utak sa pagso-solve ng problem."* (My mind is exhausted in solving problems.)
>
> *"Na-assign ako sa dalawang section pero nagtsi-check ako ng lima (-ng sections).* (I was assigned to two section), but I am checking five sections.")
>
> *"Nahihilo ako sa computer."* (I feel dizzy working on the computer.)
>
> *"Mahirap mag-collate ng* survey forms." (It is difficult to collate survey forms.)
>
> "... I feel bad during compilation of records... *masakit sa ulo dahil lumang-luma na.* (My head aches because the records are too old).

Even if some tasks were a bit difficult, some students saw some advantages in accomplishing them and therefore enjoyed the activities.

> *"Nahihirapan ako sa pag-check ng proving sa geometry…dahil sinundan ko ang sagot ng bawat estudyante…hirap magbigay ng partial point… pero fulfilled ako pagkatapos."* (I find it difficult to check proving in geometry…because I followed the answer of each student…it's difficult to give partial points…but I felt fulfilled afterwards.)
>
> *"Enjoy kahit mahirap…kasi ginugulo ulit ng mga bata ang mga books."* (Enjoy even if it's difficult…because the children disarrange the books again.)
>
> *"…Katulad ng kaibigan ko sa records… Noong una, madali lang, too boring, pero noong marami na s'yang ginagawa, marami na s'yang natututunan, nag-enjoy na rin po siya."* (…Just like my friend in the records section… At first, the tasks were too easy, too boring, but when he was working on many things already, he was learning a lot so he enjoyed already.)
>
> *"Hirap akong mag-check ng test papers sa Math…Ako pa ang gumawa ng answer key…* (It's difficult to check test papers in Math. I do the answer key myself.)
>
> *"Dati hirap na hirap akong mag-intindi pero pagkatapos madali lang pala … Na-refresh ako at advantage pala sa UPCAT* [UP College Admissions Test] *kasi sa lower math ito."* (Before, it was difficult for me to understand but later, it became easy. I was refreshed and it was advantageous for UPCAT because it involved lower math.)

Some students thought that some tasks assigned to them (like setting up homeroom bulletin boards, covering the working table in the department area, delivering letters, answering phone calls, photocopying of papers, running errands for teachers, and checking papers for non-CPs) were beyond the scope of their AC sections. But their CPs felt otherwise. Since some CPs were also classroom advisers, club advisers and administrators, they felt that these tasks were still within the scope of the AC work. It can be inferred that the tasks under a particular section were not made clear to the students.

The students said that almost all of the activities they did were assigned to them by their CPs, except in some cases when they volunteered their services to other teachers who did not have AC students, or when their CPs instructed them to assist other teachers. The sharing of services of the AC students became necessary when the CPs forgot to assign tasks for the students to accomplish, when the CPs could not think of any other activity to assign to their AC students who had relatively light work load, or when the CPs had student teachers who could regularly assist them.

The tasks given by CPs to students generally helped both parties. The AC students were considered by almost all their CPs as "help rather than burden." As regards CPs with student teachers, some CPs and their corresponding AC students confirmed that tasks assigned to them did not overlap.

Aside from the activities under the CPs, the AC students also had KITTY-CAT done some days before the end of the semester. This activity was an "on the job training" outside the school for the students to gain actual job experience. During the interview period, the AC students had not undergone