UNTOLD STORIES:
Tales and Directions of Alternative Learning System (ALS) in Antipolo City

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ABSTRACT

Education is a means to equalize opportunities for all, but it can also multiply inequalities when individuals fail to have one in a society that esteems merits. Through the years, Alternative Learning System (ALS) has served as a solution to provide education to students who could not follow in the regular classroom setup, but pressing challenges persist that need to be addressed for the program to succeed. Hence, the researchers investigated the current situation and track of ALS in Antipolo City. A total of 25 ALS teachers served as the respondents of the study, which used the descriptive method of research. Data were gathered through test and interview.

Results revealed that there were only 35 Instructional Managers in the entire division of Antipolo catering a total of 2289 registered regular learners, resulting to a ratio of 1:65 per class. It is also found that some opted not to teach for they do not receive the quarterly honorarium anymore. ALS teachers had upper mastery level in their Communication Arts Skills test, but most skills were least mastered. Moreover, like regular non-English

teachers, ALS teachers displayed anxiety when taking a diagnostic test in communication arts skills. Formal schooling strategies and ALS teaching strategies posed some similarities and differences.

The untold stories of teachers in the focus group discussion revealed that much work is needed to strengthen ALS in Division of Antipolo City. The Division has produced outputs as far as ALS in concerned though the years, but to sustain and improve the program, it has to hear its needs.

Among the recommendations were the following: Refuel the passion of the ALS teachers in teaching by conducting capacity building seminars and workshops; consider the sentiments of the ALS teachers, and update and check the availability of the appropriate instructional materials for ALS students; prepare a much reliable and valid test focusing on English proficiency as well; A&E test should be revisited.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals who seek employment for social mobility see education as one of the key components for landing a job. Education thus becomes a requirement and a priority. Unfortunately, not all students are able to continue their academic endeavors due to myriad of reasons such as financial problems, sickness, family problems, lack of interest, to name a few. When a student stops from school, a lot of opportunities crumble because of the student's inability to provide documents (diploma and/or transcript) that would allow him or her possible employment. This leads to the the growing number of unemployed citizens in the country. Caoili, as cited in Arzadon & Nato (2015), indicated that the dropout rate in 2000 was estimated at 7.67 in the elementary level and 8.5 in the secondary level, amounting to 11 million of school-age children dropouts. These figures sound very alarming.

"Education is always political," Freire (1970) mentioned in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He added, "in reality, we do not have children who drop out of school for no reason at all, as if they just decide not to stay. What we have are conditions in schools that either prevent them from coming to school or prevent them from staying in school (Freirie, 1998, p.36)." These conditions are often the focus of teachers' momentous endeavor in making a difference in the lives of the students. Countless stories—told and untold—map the journey of students, who, befaced bychallenges, still managed to succed. Alongside these tales, educators continue to play a vital role to ensure that these stories happen,

To address the problems, various programs have been executed particularly by the Department of Education (DepEd) to ensure equal opportunities for all. One of these programs is the Alternative Learning System (ALS). As stated in the Basic Education Governance Act of 1991, ALS is referred as "a parallel learning system to provide a viable alternative to the existing formal education instruction. It encompasses both the non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills."

The implementation of the ALS in the Philippines is ignited by various flagships such as Education for All (EFA), the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP), Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Decade for Literacy, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. ALS

caters both children and adults who fail to attend formal schooling but have the desire to pursue education. These clienteles include dropouts, teenage parents, non-readers, out-of-school youth, and working people. Specifically, the ALS utilizes non-formal education through the use of modular approach for students. It is different from the actual classroom setup where students are required to report daily and have fixed schedules. In ALS, students can freely choose their schedules depending on the availability of the teachers. Arzadon and Nato elucidate how ALS works:

> ALS classes are conducted in community learning centers … found all over the Philippines. Incoming learners, mostly out-of-school youth and adults, are assessed. Those who do not pass the basic literacy test are placed at Basic Literacy Program. The rest are placed either at elementary or high school level. The elementary and secondary equivalency program was initially to be delivered through education service contractors coming from NGOs, colleges and universities, foundations and other community based organizations. Mobile teachers are provided by the Department of Education (DepEd) to handle basic literacy learners. Learning sessions using various delivery systems (independent learning, tutoring and classroom instruction) are conducted starting in March until the end of the year. The much awaited Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Examination, a paper and pencil test, is administered in all regions of the country from October to December. The test includes multiple choice questions and essay writing (p. 8, 2015).

ALS, together with the Alternative Delivery Modes (ADM) and the Open High Schools (OHS), are designed to reduce dropout rates and out of school children (David, Albert, & Vizmanos, 2018).

The Division of School of Antipolo City has been operating ALS since then, but pressing concerns need attention. To become fully effective as an education program, ALS must cater to the needs of its clientele and ensure that most of its goals, mission, and vision are realized with effectiveness and efficiency. Most of the endeavors of ALS are delivered by mobile teachers.

Galima (2012) expressed the plight of mobile teachers such as "having to hike to reach their learners, using makeshift classrooms to provide learning, finding remedies for the lack of fixed places to conduct the teaching-learning, conduct home visitation to prevent learners from dropping out of the program, and sometimes encounter barangay officials who are uncooperative (p. 161-162). In another instance, selected ALS teachers in the National Capital Region disclosed some problems such as "no blueprint of policies, lack of proper coordination, lack of funding, lack of teachers' training, lack of teacher strategies, lack of on the job training for the learners, and the lack of sponsors/partners/linkages" (Chan, 2016 as cited in Castolo and Chan, 2016). These concerns should be addressed. Hence, this research aimed to respond to these pressing needs.

The present researchers who belong in a formal school are exposed to up-to-date trends in teaching and learning. They, together with other teachers, conduct their lessons in classrooms and expect that learning will take place. Unfortunately, not all learners are promoted to the next grade level for failure to meet the standards or by dropping of out of school in any time within the school year. The researchers observed that some of the returnees in the following school year experienced the same dilemmas, thus,struggled to stay in school. Hence, the researches hail the possibility that an alternative way of education will cater the needs of these students.

With the interest to saving as many Filipinos from the grueling fate of illiteracy and being uneducated, the researchers endeavor with their best interests in mind to help enhance the ALS as the forefront program of the government for non-formal education.

Pursuant to unnumbered memorandum 162 series 2018 also known as "ALS FGD and Needs Assessment for FY 2018," the Division Office of the Division of Antipolo City held an FGD and needs assessment for ALS implementers for capability building program last April 12, 2018 in San Jose National High School. To fully identify the rooms for development, one must recognize various concerns that revolve around the problem that may escalate to bigger problems if unsolved and unattended.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research aims to determine the needs of ALS teachers through needs assessment. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of ALS teachers in terms of the following:

    1.1   number as to DALCs, IMs, and MTs;
    1.2   their English Communication Arts Skills levels and least mastered skills of ALS teachers in communication arts?

2. What is the overall impression of ALS teachers regarding diagnostic tests used?

3. How does demonstration teaching relate to actual ALS teaching?

4. In what way can the Division Office help ALS teachers improve their instructional skills?

SIGNIFICANCE

Results of the study may provide insights, broader views, and better understanding on the needs of the ALS teachers. The results may be valuable for curriculum planners to revisit the qualifications of ALS teachers in realizing the goals of the ALS program without compromising the quality of education. The results may likewise guide school administrators in determining the aspects of teaching that require the most attention during in-service training for ASL teachers. The results can also open doors for future researches and researchers.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The present data of enrollment reveals the voluminous number of enrollees in ALS. According to the 2018 National Statistical Data, there were

130,346 elementary and 575,093 high school students enrolled in the ALS program. There were 440,140 male and 330,314 female, with a total of 770,454 ASL learners. In another data based, LIS/BEIS SY 2018-2019 generated as of December 15, 2018, there were 25,804 CLCs and 8,702 facilitators, 66,054 students in basic literacy program, 137, 985 enrolled in the A & E Elementary, and 618, 974 in the A & E Secondary. These figures suggest the number of students who patronize the program in 2018 alone.

Many researchers have peered in the development of ALS to enrich its literature. Most researches in ALS focus on macro issues such as the number of participants, funding, and assessment results; very scant look into qualitative and descriptive case study. Hence, Arzadon & Nato (2015) conducted a case study from 2012 to 2014 in 52 community learning centers to determine how was the ALS program designed and actually delivered to meet the needs of the intended learners and the impact of the program and its challenges. Data were gathered by 400 teacher education students through survey and interviews among 43 ALS educators, which were later analyzed into themes. Results of this study are both humbling and overwhelming. From the interviews, mobile teachers sometimes label their job as "search and rescue operations" since they have to walk extra miles to reach students living in outkying skirts- while bracing bad weather, exhaustion, and danger. Meeting halls, prisons, basketball courts, shelters for women, and even market area are turned to makeshift classrooms just to hold classes. The mobile teachers also identified that students experience a lot of problems such as taking care of younger siblings, unable to read and write, criminal acts, victims of abuses, and victims of calamities. Adults who are illiterates were the most difficult to handle.

Moreover, the passing rate of ALS was low. Caoili (2007), as cited in Arzadon and Nato (2015), however said that the "A&E passing rate has been steadily increasing from 9% in 2000 to 21% in 2006. The passing rate peaked in 2013 at 28% but the figure was not sustained in 2014." Arzadon and Nato (2015) accounted that teachers revealed that some learners do well in the ALS classrooms, but still fail the A&E, implying the need for a more authentic assessment or an in-depth review on its assessment process.

Bantulo and Guhao (2016) conducted a phenomenological study among 26 ALS learners from different ALS centers of the Department of Education-Division of Sarangani during the school year 2015-2016. The study

aimed to describe the experiences of ALS learners and their coping mechanisms. From the interviews and focus group discussions, results revealed the following challenges: industry, conscientiousness, optimism, and positivity.

In a study conducted by Azarcon (2014) among 144 inmates that enrolled in the ALS program in Bulacan Provincial Jail commissioned by Bulacan State University, it evaluated the extent and effectiveness of the ALS services. Findings indicated that there were significant relationships between the inmates rating and the perceived extent of services being rendered to them and in spite of the lower percentage of graduates.

Castolo and Chan (2016) introduced an assessment framework on how can ALS best sustain its value and worth to achieve education for all in the Philippines. Results revealed that there were significant relationships with all its result and the challenges in the implementation of the program. This gave insights in identifying the unmet needs of ALS learners.

Ebora & Guillo (2014) conducted a descriptive study in the Division of Batangas City among 30 ALS implementers. Three hundred fifty ALS students graduated from school year 2009 to 2013. Results showed lecture-demonstration as a teaching strategy was most often utilized by the ALS implementers. Moreover, findings revealed that the classrooms for ALS instruction and the learning modules were very much adequate for ALS instruction, and the paper and pencil test was applicable to the type of ALS learners. Specifically, 221 students were studying in different colleges, universities, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority(TESDA), wherein 129 ALS graduates were already working.

Galima (2012) investigated the narratives of mobile teachers to know what takes place in ALS program and how adult learners and dropouts actually acquire a high school diploma. Results revealed that mobile teachers used traditional lecture-discussion, multimedia presentation for group activities when facilities were adequate, modular learning, field demonstration, games, and creative arts.

Through the years, the literature on ALS has provided relevant data on qualitative approach, role of mobile teachers, low passing rate, room for

improvement, unmet needs, and methods of teaching of ALS teachers. The previous studies affirm that although ALS is a promising program for nonformal education, there is a necessity for needs assessment in order to improve ALS in the Division of School of Antipolo City.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the success of every student in ALS depend on their evaluation in the A & E exam, it can be noted that the tales and directions of ALS may be influenced by four theoretical frames: Foundations and Principles of English as a Second Language Teaching and Learning, Needs Assessment, Teacher Development, and Self-directed Learning and Contextualized Learning (Figure 1).
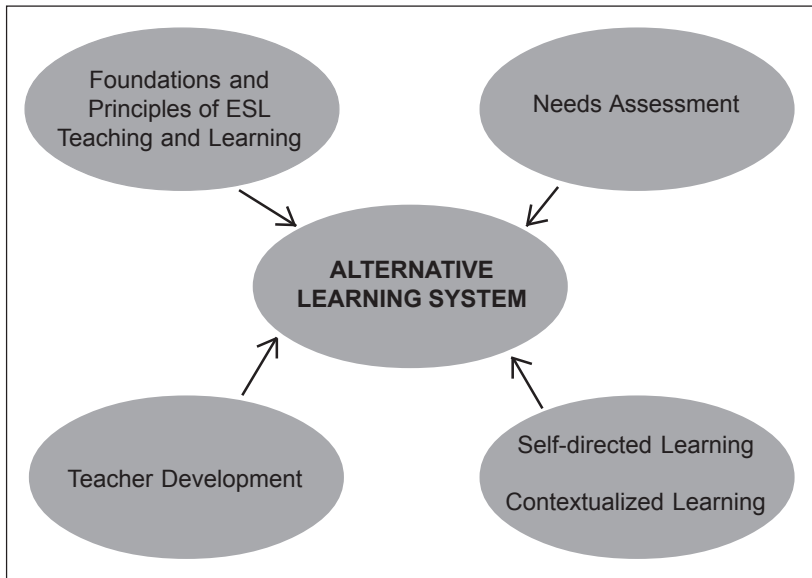

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Foundations and Principles of ESL Teaching and Learning. One of the reasons for not passing the A & E of ALS students may be attributed to students' poor/low competence in English since the test items are usually written in English.

Since ALS is also related to the K-to-12 curriculum, it also gives premium to the use of English language. In August 2006, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo released Executive Order (EO) 210, to establish the policy of strengthening the use of the English language as medium of instruction, which resulted to the extensive use of English in the classroom (Campoamor, 2007). Abad (2007) asserted that "this policy has the objective of developing the aptitude, competence, and proficiency of all students in the use of English to make them better prepared for job opportunities emerging in the new, technology-driven sectors of the economy." Since English is being used in the regular classroom, it is considered as an easy pass to entering the workforce. Some companies even make it as a qualification for the job. Hence, this practice does not exempt ALS. Students need to demonstrate competence in English since, they too, will eventually seek employment. The students' poor mastery on the English language may exacerbate their performance in the assessment.

Solorzano (1993) suggested that there is more information needed on effective methods of reading instruction for teachers who are second language speakers of English. Hence, even ALS teachers should be aware of the latest trends and practices in teaching and using English. ESL learners' background and learners' reading strategies should be considered. For instance, teachers should consider the schema theory as a vital factor in ESL comprehension (Carrell 1984 as cited in Solorzano, 1993). Background knowledge plays an important role in learners' understanding of a text. Meanwhile, various groups can adapt specific strategies: some can learn using rote learning while others can learn in whole language or functional English communicative activities. Therefore, teachers need to be aware with the appropriate approach when teaching, especially English. This is important because the learning materials or modules are usually in English. In addition, the tests are also in English. Therefore, ALS teachers need to know how to assist students in learning the content using English. In other words, ALS teachers need to help learners in comprehension. Thus, ALS teachers need to understand how students comprehend more effectively, and how to help them whenever they experience difficulties.

Language may empower learners depending on how it is used in the classroom. Thus, the responsibility lies on teachers on the extent of communication was used in the classroom (Giroux, 1997). Teachers actually

have the freedom to choose the content, the manner it is taught, and how students interact with each other and with the material. Hence, ALS teachers need to exercise this principle effectively.

Needs assessment. This research deepens the analysis of the problem using needs assessment or needs analysis. Richards (2001) defines needs assessment as a "procedure used to collect information about learners' needs." Needs assessment is a unique and important phase in planning educational programs. The end users of needs assessment include curriculum writers, teachers, learners, writers, testing personnel, and staff. To gather information, utilized questionnaires, interviews, meetings, and analysis of available information were conducted (Richards, 2001).

Vella (2002) asserted that needs assessment is a standard practice and a basic principle of adult learning. Needs Assessment is based on the notion that learners may sign-up for the same program, the system recognizes that all learners are coming from different experiences. Thus, it is important to listen to what learners want and need. In improving the curricula for ALS, it is imperative for teachers and curriculum planners to listen to the customers (the teachers and their students). Freire (1972) as cited in Vella (2002) called it thematic analysis, which was a manner of listening to the themes of a group. However, Vella (2002) warned that "needs assessment does not form the course; it informs it."

Teacher development. Technical assistance also plays an important role in ensuring that the ALS program fulfills its mandate. Hence, teacher development lies on top of the priority in improving an adult literacy program since the teachers have the direct contact to learners, so they have the more direct influence on the program.

Street (1995) suggested that teachers should be immersed on knowledge on critical theory, educational theory, linguistic theory, literacy theory, and social theory. Specifically, teachers should engage in praxis, where they understand how educational theory translates into their own everyday practices and being aware of the students they are serving (Bartolome, 1996). If teachers can freely apply the theories and principles in the actual teaching, students will surely benefit from it.

Self-directed learning and contextualized learning. Herod (2012) emphasized the importance of the principles of self-directed learning and contextualized learning in adult learning.

In self-directed learning, it moved the focus on teacher-centered learning into learner-centeredness or facilitated learning, making the teacher the facilitator instead of dispenser of knowledge. In other words, students are more empowered to be self-directed in their own learning. Self-directed learning is based on humanistic approach.

In contextualized learning, learning is seen as most effective when students are situated in a particular context. When learning is contextualized, students will find it easier to learn a particular material because it becomes more relevant and relatable to them. These two principles favor learners in the ALS because they also have needs like the students in the regular classroom setup.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

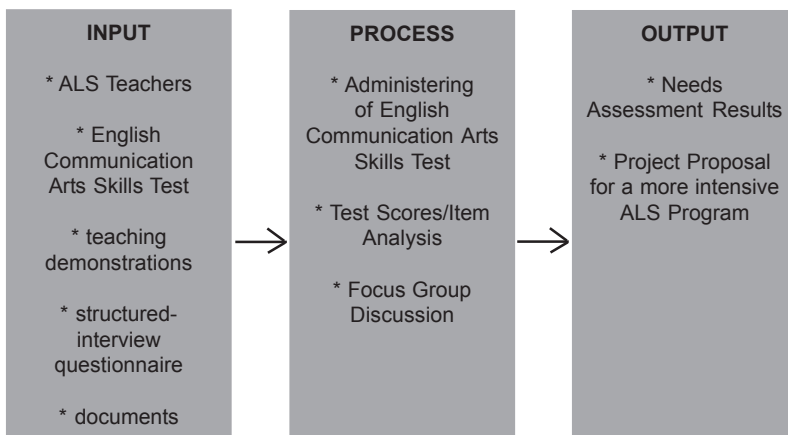| INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
* ALS Teachers * English Communication Arts Skills Test * teaching demonstrations * structured-interview questionnaire * documents	* Administering of English Communication Arts Skills Test * Test Scores/Item Analysis * Focus Group Discussion	* Needs Assessment Results * Project Proposal for a more intensive ALS Program

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

This study used the Input-Process-Output diagram which includes all of the materials and information required for the **process** such as the ALS Teachers, English Communication Arts Skills test, Teaching Demonstrations, Structured-Interview Questionnaire, and Documents for the **process** itself

which led to the needs assessment results and project proposal for a more intensive ALS program (Figure 2).

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method was used in this study. It describes a given state of affairs as fully and carefully as possible (Blay, 2007). In the case of this research, the researchers summarized and described the characteristics of the ALS teachers in the Division School of of Antipolo which includes English Communication Arts Skills, knowledge, teaching skills, attitudes, and values (KSAVs) in teaching ALS. Based on data gathered, the researchers identified their needs through item analysis, and consolidated their experiences and KSAVs towards teaching through feedbacks during the process-observing teaching demonstrations and focus group discussions (FGD).

The teachers were divided into two big groups (Districts I and II) to deepen the discussion, solicit more answers, and verify their answers later on in terms of comparison.

INSTRUMENT

The test underwent face and content validation as per consultation with the SDO-Antipolo's Curriculum Implementation Division (CID) Chief. The test focused on the usual least mastered skills set in formal education. Furthermore, the test was constructed to provide results that generated their mastery level on these competencies which they also teach to their students as baseline for further discussion. Moreover, the researchers also made use of a structured-interview which dealt with their English Communication Arts Skills test results, teaching demonstrations observed, and intervention.

POPULATION, SAMPLE SIZE, AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The respondents of this study were the ALS teachers (IMs, DALCs, and MTs) in the Division School of Antipolo City. Currently, there are some

ALS teachers in the division teaching in different schools and learning centers located in eleven sub-districts.

For the sample, a total of 25 ALS teachers teaching in these districts were purposively considered for this study.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The data were gathered through the following processes:

Step 1. English Communication Arts Skills Test. This part consisted of items which aim to determine the respondents' least mastered skills.

Step 2. Focus Group Discussion. After the teaching demonstrations, their observations were asked through a structured-interview questionnaire.

After both steps, the teachers' responses were transcribed and consolidated.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The data were gathered through administering the test, getting the frequencies of scores and correct response, and formulation of the questions for the FGD. In terms of the profile of the ALS teachers in the division, a request letter was formally addressed to the two ALS Education Program Specialists for the baseline data.

The researchers asked permission and approval from the ALS teachers if they could do voice recording during the FGD. The voice recording was objectively transcribed verbatim to report their answers in this study.

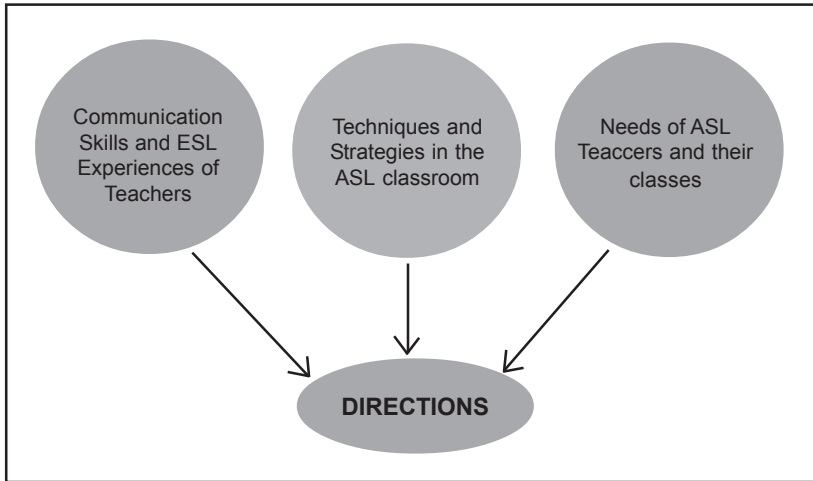The data gathered are represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Data Analysis

A. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

1. Profile of Teachers

Table 1: Number of DALSCs, MTs, IMs, and Volunteers

District	DALSC	MT	IM	Volunteer
I-A	0	0	4	3
I-B	1	1	2	0
I-C	0	1	5	2
I-D	0	1	4	4
II-A	1	0	2	1
II-B	0	0	4	1
II-C	0	1	4	0
II-D	1	0	2	0
II-E	1	2	2	0
II-F	1	1	5	0
Total	**5**	**7**	**35**	**11**

The table reveals that there is a small number of ALS teachers compared to the reported 2289 registered learners across the division. This imply that a ratio of 1:65 (students to one IM) may hinder the quality of education since the class is too big. The frequency of classes and the limited instructional materials aso surfaced as hindering factors during the course of interview with the ALS teachers.

The bigger class size in ALS poses a challenge among teachers to cater to the needs of more students. If this is an alternative mode, this should address the concerns in which the regular delivery mode does not work. Bigger class size in the regular classroom is already a challenge for regular classroom teacher; having the same dilemma in the ALS learning stations make it more difficult for ALS teachers to focus in every student. In regular classroom, the most common reasons for dropping out are lack of interest, family problem, and financial problem. Those who left the regular setup may experience the same situation if the ALS classroom has the same class size.

2. Mastery Level and Least Mastered Skills of ALS Teachers in Communication Arts

Based on on the diagnostic test conducted among ALS teachers, results indicate that they got an MPS of 31.33 or in Upper Mastery Level.

Out of the 16 competencies tested in the communication arts skills test, results indicate that the least mastered skills are as follows.

Table 2: Least Mastered Skills

Competency	ATS (%)	Rank
Summarize the given text.	16.00	1
Observe correct subject-verb agreement.	41.33	8
Identify text type.	44.00	9
Choose the synonym of the given word.	28.00	6
Use correct tenses of verbs.	24.00	4
Use appropriate transitional devices.	48.00	10
Get specific idea.	20.00	3

Use reflexive/intensive pronouns.	20.00	3
Observe correct parallelism.	24.00	4
Make generalizations.	16.00	2
	36.00	7

The findings suggest that ALS teachers need to master these skills since these competencies are also measured in the A & E Test to certify the ALS students are comparable graduates of the formal school system. However, other factors should be put into consideration of the least mastered skills. One of these reasons and probably the most plausible is that some ALS teachers are not Communication Arts major.

Nevertheless, looking into the communication arts skills do not only limit to the part of ALS teachers teaching English, but also communication arts include skills that may go across curriculum vital to the effective teaching of various content. Since ALS follows the non-formal education and the use of alternative teaching strategies, communication arts skills are central to the effective delivery of the lesson.

Moreover, this may also explain why some students fail the A&E, which was mentioned by Agcoali (2007) as cited in Arzadon and Nato despite exemplary performance in the classroom. Like in formal education, low test scores of students may be attributed to their language proficiency. Although the correlation between teachers' language proficiency and students' performance was not identified in this research, it poses interest for future studies.

Teachers cannot share what they do not have. If teachers are having difficulties in some of the English skills, it is not surprising that studentsexperience the same situation.

Hence, teachers of ALS should undergo communication enhancement program to improve their English communication skills. Also, all teachers of ALS, not only English teachers, should be trained to incorporate English skills such in reading and writing. In that way, teachers may help students to learn and be prepared for future tests and for life.

B. OVERALL IMPRESSION OF ASL TEACHERS ABOUT THE DIAGNOSTIC TEST

During the FGD, teachers were asked about their overall impression of the diagnostic test. Results revealed that teachers in Group A described their perceptions on the test as: *"madali na mahirap," "nanibago," "nade-grade ang English ko," "hindi ko kasi major ang English," "nakalimutan ko na ang rules,"* and *"madali, pero confusing,"* whereas in Group B, the teachers said *"nalito ako," "kailangan ko na ulit magbasa-basa ng English books," "iba ang tinuturo kasi namin, pero sa test ng mga bata, laging may grammar."*

A teacher in Group A suggested that some teachers, particularly English teachers, in regular classes may offer community service by teaching in ALS.

According to the teachers, the test items that are literary in nature are confusing like items no. 14 and 21. In item no. 2, the word "after" confused me. Item no. 20, when to use "on the other hand," "likewise," "unfortunately."

Teachers from both groups revealed that to improve their communication arts skills they need clearer and more specific directions, comprehension and analysis, memorization of the rules, good module specific only for grammar, series of practice exercises for mastery, attention span, and learning venue.

The findings suggest that test should be given assistance to cope with the gaps in communication arts since it is one of the five learning strands of ALS, aside from problem solving, sustainable use of resources, development of self and a sense of community, and expanding one's world vision. In addition, ALS teachers should undergo training or lecture on grammar to enhance their knowledge particularly in grammar. Also, they should be exposed on how to teach grammar in the classroom just in case they need to conduct incidental teaching to help students use English fluently and accurately.

C. DEMO TEACHING IN RELATION TO ALS ACTUAL TEACHING

To find the connection of the demo teaching of formal education strategies to actual ALS teaching, teachers were asked to comment on a demonstration teaching. Group A reacted to the demon teaching of Demo Teacher 1 while Group B reacted to the demo teaching of Demo Teacher 2. Results indicate that Teachers of Group A revealed the following statements:

> *"Hindi kaya ng learner."*
> *"Pilosopong ugali."*

When asked if they can teach the topic confidently, teachers of Group A answered:

> *"Yes, translate in tagalog."*
> *"Yes, if the learners are active."*
> *"Yes, lower the level and approach."*
> *"Gamitin ang appropriate word."*
> *"Ituro ng word for word."*
> *"Spoon feed ang lesson."*
> *"Concern lang ang retention span and attention span."*
> *"Starting from the motivation okay pa rin yon."*
> *"Groupings wala na – hindi na magagawa ng learner."*
> *"Teacher – kaya ituro; Learner – sila ang problema."*

On the other hand, teachers of Group B answered:

> *"Yes, kaso paunti-unti. Hindi lahat makakasabay dahil iba-iba sila ng Grade levels."*
> *"Yes, spoon feed dapat ang lesson."*
> *"Step by step dapat."*
> *"Hirap kasi sila mag-English. Kaya, panigurado, 'pagpinagconstruct mo sila ng sentences sa English, pa-oral man o written, mahihirapan sila."*
> *"Mahirapi-process ang activity kasi kokonti lang ang makakausap mo."*

Teachers in Group A also revealed that they conduct intervention or *re*teach the lesson if poor mastery level is attained. Remedial classes may be conducted as well. Another problem is that students do not come to the class all at the same time, and they also belong in different learning levels.

With regard to catching the interest of learners, teachers used different activities and strategies, relate the lesson to real life situations, and remain approachable. One of the teachers in Group A shared, *"Kapag masyadong strict ang teacher, hindi na papasok ang learners."*

With regard to students' attendance and parents' support to their children's education, teachers in Group B mentioned, *"Mahirap i-hold ang bata. Attendance pa lang sablay na. Kaya mas mahirap kung nanay ang nag-eenrol sa anak. Hindi naman lagi pumapasok ang bata."* And *"Minsan, kailangan pang i-home visit pa namin. Kami pa ang magbibigay ng pamasahe para lang pumasok. Papasok sa susunod na araw, sa mga next meetings, hindi na naman."*

The findings illumine the problems commonly faced by ALS teachers in the teaching-and-learning process which include the planning, preparations of lessons and instructional materials, students' participation and attendance, parents' support to education, students' financial problems, and misconception etc. The plight of these teachers continue to arise in ALS, which were already identified by Galima (2012), Castolo and Chan (2016), and Arzadon & Nato (2015). Hence, more actions are needed to eliminate these educational dilemmas to ensure that students in ALS will succeed.

During the interview, the ALS teachers emphasized that they always do their best just to have a hold to their students. They do maximize the allowance given to them based on the implementing guidelines of DepEd Order No. 59, s. 2016, stating that "ALS teachers will be given Php 24,000 as allowance for 12 months and teaching aid of Php 1,500 for 36 students and below to Php 5,000 for 75 students and above per year, depending on the number of learners." It is reiterated in the memorandum that such allowances shall be used to defray transportation expenses that incurred in reaching all types of ALS learners in far-flung areas and barangays. On the other hand, the teaching aid allowance is intended for purchase of supplies and for thereproduction of materials. However, teachers from Groups A and B said, *"kulang talaga ang budget,"* *"minsan pinapakain pa namin ang bata kasi papasok*

hindi pa kumakain, malamang mahihirapan na makinig sa amin," "dati okay lang sa amin gumastos talaga, kasi may nakukuha pa kaming honorarium, pero may mga pamilya rin kami." "gustuhin man namin, nahihirapan din kami talaga sa mga kailangan para maging mas effective pa kami."

The findings further exposed that these teachers find it difficult to address their needs and help their students more since they no longer receive the usual quarterly honorarium from the Special Education Fund (SEF).

In addition, the answers of the teachers revealed that there is a need to strengthen the ALS program to become a parallel alternative learning system to the existing formal education instruction.

It seemed that ALS and regular classroom share as much similarities and differences. Both are the same in terms the goals, delivery, and class size. They are different however in terms of the schedule, learning areas, levels of students in a class, age of students, instructional materials, and the like which result to difficulties in executing approaches which are found usual and effective in formal education.

The findings are also cognizant to the data presented by Galima (2012). Mobile teachers use traditional lecture-discussion method of teaching. The participants in the study revealed that some of the strategies presented by the teacher-researchers may be doable but are difficult to implement because of the challenges experienced in the classroom—financial and student factors.

Also, the results may serve as a basis for future teachers' trainings as suggested by Street (1995). teachers should the know-how on the latest trends in critical pedagogy, language teaching, principles of teaching, and more.

On the other hand, teacher of ALS should not forget to root their teaching from the principles of Self-directed Learning and Contextualized Learning as reiterated by Herod (2012). Since these teachers cater students who are no longer attending the regular classroom set-up, all the more that they need to pay attention on how these students will persist and continue their education amidst the challenges they experience in life.

D. WAYS ON HOW THE DIVISION OFFICE CAN HELP ASL TEACHERS

When asked about the ways on how the Division Office can help ALS teachers, the teachers in both groups shared:

"Localized/synchronized/standard/series of lesson materials"
"Dapat may allowance ang IM."
"Dapat, bawat school ay may naka-designate na classroom only for ALS."
 "Conducive place for learning"
"Complete package (TM,CG,TG)"
"Personal na gamit ng mga learners ay mangagalingsa IM."
"Needs for social services."
"Local service ng IM."
"Hindi po allotted sa MOOE ang ALS. Source of supplies."
"Open forum ng problema"
"Ibalik and honorarium kasi pa bawas na kami ng pabawas."
"Bigyan sana kami ng printer para makapagprint kami ng mga instructional materials."
"Dagdagan pa sana 'yung budget. Wala na nga kaming honorarium, pasaway pa mgabata."
"Magkaroon sana ng instructional materials para sa ALS katulad ng sa formal education na modules. Modular approach kami pero kulang kami sa modules."

The sentiments of ALS teachers may serve basis for needs analysis as suggested by Richards (2001). Identifying what teachers and students need in ALS can be an eye opener for program improvements.

The FGD with ALS teachers reflected on the current situation of every ALS classroom in Antipolo City and probably in any other town or city in the country. Being an ALS teacher, like the other teachers, remains to be an idealistic professionwhich requires passion, dedication, and commitment. Teachers continue to make sacrifices to ensure that learners reach their utmost potential.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings , this research hails the following conclusions:

1. ALS teachers are fewer in number comparative to the number of students. The underlying reason as revealed during the interview is that some ALS teachers no longer want serve because they do not receive quarterly honorarium anymore.

2. ALS teachers had upper mastery level in their Communication Arts Skills test, but when analyzed based on their least mastered skills, 10 out of 16 skills are least mastered. This leads to the difficulty of teachers in teaching communication arts as a learning area for ALS students and preparing them l for their A&E test where English is used as mediuml;

3. Like regular non-English teachers, ALS teachers displayed anxiety when taking diagnostic tests in communication arts skills. This anxiety is common among second language learners, where as the affective theories on second language teaching identified anxiety as a common hindrance in learning a second language. The diagnostic test may be a precursor to the A&E. Teachers and students may be taking a test that is not discussed in the regular classes. As a result, the test does not measure what was taken in the classes. Hence, test takers may tend to have difficulty in answering the test;

4. Formal schooling strategies and ALS teaching strategies posed some similarities and differences. However, the differences were magnified in the context where the students were coming from. Unlike the regular class, ALS students were from different backgrounds, learning abilities, and experiences—posing more challenging on the part of the ALS teachers; and

5. The untold stories of teachers in the FGD revealed that much work is needed to strengthen ALS in the Division School of Antipolo City. The Division has produced outputs over time as far as ALS in concerned, but sustaining and improving the programis the greater challenge..

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the researchers posit the following recommendations:

1. Refuel the passion of the ALS teachers in teaching by conducting capacity building seminars and workshops;

2. Consider the sentiments of the ALS teachers in relation to their honorarium for forum and further discussion, and update and check the availability of the appropriate instructional materials for ALS students;

3. Prepare a much reliable and valid test focusing on English proficiency as well;

4. A&E test should be revisited. Authentic assessment may be considered;

5. The study is limited to Antipolo city. The demo teaching only reflects limited strategies. Consultation with other ALS implementers in other divisions, getting their best practices may unfold latest trends in alternative education; and

6. For further studies, qualitative approach may continue, but researchers encourage to utilize quantitative data. Longitudinal studies are encouraged to see the effects more clearly. Lastly, consider as well the voice of the *customers* or the students for further data gathering.

FINAL WORD

Dahanay (2005) stressed that that the school is liberating force is a myth since education stratifies rather than liberates. It is not the schools but the awakening of consciousness that will liberate individuals from their socio-economic plight. It takes a radical way of thinking that will ignite the passion of people to change their status in life.

Not more projects, funds, or policies will make a radical leap in education as far as ALS is concerned. The Philippine society needs a more powerful force than that. There is a need to inculcate in everyone's heart and mind the burden of making education accessible and relevant to every Filipino. Unless education is regarded as a basic need, dropout rates, student failure, and other problems will continue. It will take a community of educators and stakeholders to ensure that every Filipino will be proud of their education. Finally, more stories need to be told and written.

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