



Learning Behind Bars: The Academic Journey of Person Deprived of Liberty

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the implementation of Alternative Learning System in the Municipality of Kabacan. Their challenges as well as the coping strategies will also be identified in this study. Findings showed that challenges faced by persons deprived of liberty on their quest for a higher learning includes the suspension of classes, availability of school supplies, worrying about their family, and absence on the needs of the family. They responded on these challenges by changing their character, having the positive outlook in life, and anchoring faith to God. In the same manner, they suggested that in order to improve the implementation of the program there should have the focus on learning outcomes, provision of school supplies, and extra instruction time.

INTRODUCTION

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) is one of the flagship programs of the Department of Education. It caters the Out-of-School youth in order for them to continue with their quest for a higher learning and become productive citizen of the country. Some of them have their own family, jobs, and those cannot really afford to go to school because of the distance. Enrolling in this program will give them the new beginning to reaching their dreams in life.

In the study of Bacal and Ormilla (2021) the implementation of ALS program in the Province of Isabela has made a difference in the lives of the learners. This made into reality because of the participation of the Local Government Units (LGUs). Another study revealed that they have acquired the 21st century. It can be associated by their sex, age, and employment status (Tindowen et al., 2017).

On the contrary, it was suggested that division offices of the Department of Education should find another source of fund and should not rely merely on the government's funds in the implementation of ALS (Abad & Galleto, 2020). In the same vein, there were also cases of suicidal ideation among the learners. Thus, teachers should have to teacher-student interaction should be strengthened (Estrada et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, the study will look into the experiences of ALS learners. There were related studies conducted, however these did not tackle the present topic. Like for example, Cucio and Roldan (2020) conducted a case study of the ethnic minorities in the Philippines who are enrolled in the ALS. The World Bank Group (2018) reported them as the human capital and the implementation of the program during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chavez & Tadana, 2021).

The aforesaid reasons have pushed the researcher to look into the different facets of the implementation of ALS through the lens of the learners. Understanding them will help in honing them to be the best version of themselves. As such, they could be the hope of the country and alleviate their living condition, making the Philippines as the haven of hope because of education.

Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the implementation of Alternative Learning System in the Municipality of Kabacan. Their challenges as well as the coping strategies will also be identified in this study. Hence, understanding them will be the focus of this study. In particular, it intends to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the Social Characteristics of the Persons Deprived of Liberty
2. What are the challenges faced by Persons Deprived of Liberty in their quest for a higher learning?
3. How do the Persons Deprived of Liberty respond to the challenges?
4. What can be improved in the implementation of Alternative Learning System to students deprived of liberty?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study applied the concept of qualitative cross-case study. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research focused on holistic inquiry; it involves a vast and complex area of methodology that is used to describe phenomena from the participant's viewpoint, with rich, descriptive detail of the human context, and preferably it does so by observing subjects in their natural setting (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The objective is not to count, but rather to understand a wide holistic picture. Qualitative research generally involves direct interaction, of some kind, between the researcher and the individual/household/company to be studied. In contrast to quantitative approaches, qualitative research aims at directly reaching the idiosyncratic inner world of individuals by this interaction and this is considered to be a unique advantage over quantitative approaches (Starman, 2013).

Cross-case study seeks to understand the importance of social occurrence from the views of those who have the first-hand experiences. Thus, this will lead to the understanding of the nature and meaning of these experiences. Humans are considered as the source of information through their responses (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

Interestingly, this study is qualitative since it has extracted the data from the responses of the ALS students. This was in turn the basis for the explanation of the occurrence of the phenomenon. Through this, themes will emerge that give light to the research questions.

Locale of the Study

The Municipality of Kabacan is the locale of the study. Specifically, the Kabacan Municipal Jail.

Certainly, the Alternative Learning System is one of its programs which caters to students who wish to finish elementary level of education despite being deprived of liberty. Its ALS teacher visited them twice a week to have their classes. Below is the map of the Municipality of Kabacan.

Research Instrument

The research instruments helped the researcher in the gathering of the data. For example, the consent-to-ascend form will be used in asking the consent of the parents. This will be considered since the informants and participants are underaged and are considered vulnerable. The interview guide questions will also be developed in order to understand their lived experiences.

Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was the sampling technique (Guarte & Barrios, 2006). Particularly, the researcher used the criterion-based sampling in the selection of the Key Informants and Focus Group Discussion. Thus, the following criteria will be the premise:

1. An ALS learner: specifically, Persons Deprived of Liberty in Kabacan Municipal Jail.
2. Enrolled in Kabacan South District for School Year 2022-2023.
3. Must be within the age bracket of 15 years old and beyond.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first prepared the letters of permission for the Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor, and the ALS teacher. This process must be observed so that the flow of the data gathering will not be hampered. Their approval will signal me to proceed to the next phase which is the sending of consent-and-ascend form to the parents of the ALS learners in Kabacan South District.

In the same vein, parents will be asked to affix their signature to the form. This will justify that they will allow me to interview their children as informants and participants. There will be two groups of individuals to be interviewed. The first group will be the Key Informants who will be interviewed individually. Second will be the participants for the Focus Group Interview. Their role is to confirm or negate the experiences of the former.

The researcher considered their availability for the interview. Before this will be conducted, preliminaries will be observed. One of which is the orientation about their crucial role in the success of the study. Rapport will be built as well so that they can freely express themselves without any hesitations. After the interview, their recorded responses will be transcribed.

Themes were analyzed by the data analyst. These were supported with the core ideas. Using MAXQDA, their responses were grouped. Easy identification of themes will be achieved. Finally, the results were presented in table forms. Narratives of the FGI were strengthened which were support and nullify based on their own experiences as ALS students.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were grouped using the MAXQDA software (Marjaei et al., 2019). Through this, the themes could easily be drawn. Thematic analysis was the main process of data analysis in this qualitative phenomenological study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Challenges faced by persons deprived of liberty on their quest for a higher learning

The first research question deals with the challenges faced by persons deprived of liberty on their quest for a higher learning. There are four major themes. These are the suspensions of classes, availability of school supplies, worrying about their families, and their absence on the needs of the family.

Suspension of Classes. This theme presents that the Person Deprived of Liberty (PDL) has faced this kind of predicament since learning should not be hampered even behind bars. Suspension of classes because of courtroom hearing as well as other activities could result in the disruption of learning. Thus, their ability to continue their education could be severely restricted. In the same manner, education plays a crucial role in their rehabilitation. It not only equips them with essential knowledge and skills but also provides a sense of purpose and hope for their future. The suspension of classes could negatively impact their rehabilitation efforts.

This is confirmed by the statement of the coordinator. He said that:

“On my part as ALS coordinator, it is very hard to teach the PDL’s because we have to follow the protocol of the BJMP no matter the circumstances. Sometimes my classes are suspended due of hearing of some PDL’s. Sometimes I consider these prisoners, Because of their problems I conducted some advice and I also help them in terms of basic needs.”

In line with this, the suspension of classes might delay their ability to reintegrate effectively. A lack of educational opportunities during incarceration may contribute to a higher risk of recidivism. Education can empower PDLs with better learning opportunities upon release, reducing the likelihood of committing the crime again. To mitigate this, it is essential for the government and concerned organizations to explore alternative methods of delivering educational content to PDLs during times of suspension. These could include the provisions of materials to online platforms if necessary, or the arrangement for educators to continue teaching remotely, whenever possible (Labarrete, 2021).

Availability of school supplies. It is undeniable that learning is always coupled with challenges. One of these is the availability of school supplies. For PDLs who are inside the prisons, they have nothing to buy any learning materials which could encourage them to pursue higher learning. In addition, they have limited access to resources due to the controlled environment of correctional facilities. Security concerns and limitations on materials that can be brought inside the facilities can restrict the availability of learning materials. Further, it implies that correctional facilities often face budget constraints, and education programs may not be prioritized in their allocation of resources. As a result, there might be insufficient funds to provide a wide range of learning materials for them.

The coordinator revealed during the interview the necessity to have the school supplied for the PDLs.

“During the cause of implementation of the program, the number factor that limits the maximum achievement of the goals and objectives is the limited learning resources of PDL in any other programs similar to ALS, enough and adequate resources of programs greatly contributes to its success more specifically, the following are found to be lacking in the program.”

This corroborates that developing specialized educational materials for incarcerated individuals requires careful consideration and adaptation to suit the unique needs and circumstances of PDLs. The lack of tailored curriculum resources can impede their educational progress (Faa, 2020). While digital resources can be valuable, correctional facilities may lack the necessary technology and internet connectivity to support e-learning initiatives. This limits access to online educational materials and platforms (Labarrete, 2021).

Worrying About the family. Some of the PDLs are heads of the family. They are fathers who are thinking about their families outside. With their absence, they knew well the difficulties that their families have to face. Indeed, this brought them enough worry because as fathers, they even looked into the welfare of their respective families. Communication with family members can be limited or challenging within correctional facilities. Restricted visitation policies and limited access to phone calls or letters can make it difficult for them to stay connected with their families. As such, this brought a huge problem on their quest for learning. Supposedly, they could have the strong focus on learning.

For informant 1, he said that:

“Ang partikular na problem ana kinakaharap ko ngayon bilang isang taong pinagkaitan ng Kalayaan ay ang pagtahak ko bilang isang mag-aaral ALS na palgi kong iniisip kahit nag-aaral ako ay ang aking pamilya, kung kailan ako makakalaya dito, kung may makakain ba ang aking mga anak o kung nakakain ba sila sa tamang oras.” (The specific challenge I am facing now as a person deprived of liberty is my journey as an ALS student, which I always think about even though I am studying is my family, when I will be free from here, if my family will have anything to eat, or whether they eat on time).

In addition, Informant 4 shared about the loneliness of life being far away from the family.

“Ang hinaharap kong karanasan ng buhay dito sa piitan ay mahirap at malungkot. Mahirap pala ang makulong dahil hindi mo magawa ang gusto mong gawin mula ng nakulong ako ay palagi na lang ako malungkot at malayo ang iniisip ko, dahil sa mga anak ko malayo sila sa akin. Sa aking pag-aaral ng ALS minsan di maiwasan na mawala ako sa concentrasyon kasi naiisip ko ang aking mga anak pero sinisikap ko na labanan para may matutunan ako hindi ko na sila masyado maisip.” (My time in the prison will be challenging and depressing. It's difficult to be imprisoned since you can't do what

you want. I've been miserable and distant since I was imprisoned since my children are far away from me. When I'm studying ALS, I can't help but lose attention because I'm thinking about my children, but I try not to worry about them too much because I want to learn something).

Being far from the family affected the performance of the PDLs in their classes. This is the response of the Informant 8.

“Palagi kong naiisip ang aking mga anak, minsan malayo ang tingin ko dahil naiisip ko sila. Minsan wala akong ganang mag-aral hindi ako makaconcentrate kasi naiisip ko ang mga anak ko baka hindi pa sila kumakain o baka nagkasakit na sila. Mahirap ang kalagayan ko dahil wala akong magagawa kasi anndito akosa kulungan.” (I am always thinking of my children, and I occasionally turn away because I am thinking of them. Sometimes I don't want to study; I can't concentrate because I'm worried about my children; perhaps they haven't eaten or have become ill. My condition is challenging since I am unable to do anything because I am incarcerated).

Correspondingly, PDLs may worry about the legal and administrative challenges their families may face. Being separated from loved ones can be emotionally challenging, and concerns about their well-being are natural. This may have in turn an impact especially if they are engaging into learning inside the correctional facility (Faa, 2020).

Absence on the needs of the family. The incarceration of an individual may lead to the disruption in the dynamics of the family. Their absence at home can be challenging for children who rely on them for guidance, care and emotional nurturing. Absence of parental presence may impact children's emotional well-being and development. This is also the same feeling of the PDLs inside the correctional facility.

Aside from being old, one of the PDLs expressed his feelings that:

“Ang mga problem ang kadalasan kung kinakaharap ngayon bilang isang taong painagkitaan ng kalayaan sa aking pagtahok bilang isang Alternative Learning na mag-aaral ay tungkol sa edad ko ngayon dahil matanda na ako , hindi ko maintindihan kaagad ang aming mga leksyon, at higit sa lahat ay palagi kung iniisip kung papaano ko masuporahan ang aking mga anak.” (The challenges that I normally confront as a person deprived of liberty in my participation as an Alternative Learning student are about my age now since I am elderly, I do not understand our teachings right away, and above all, I am constantly worrying about how I can feed my children).

This is also the predicament being faced by Informant 3. He expressed his sentiment that:

“Ang problema na karaniwan kong kinakaharap financial walang pera wala kang pambili ng gusto mong pagkain at hindi mo makita ang mga anak at hindi ka makatulong sa kanila, at isa kong anak namatay Grade 6 ang kanyang sakit U.T.I noong Nobember 8, 2022 dito ako sa loob ng kulungan. Nahirapan din ako dahil habang nag-aaral ako dito ng ALS naalala ko kung ano ang kinakain nila at kung mkapag-aral ba sila.” (The financial problem that I generally confront is that without money, you can't buy the food you want, and I can't see my children and you can't help them, and one of my children died in Grade 6 from U.T.I on November 8, 2022. She dies while I am inside the prison. I also struggled since, although I was studying ALS here, I was concerned about my children's well-being: had they eaten, had they gone to school)?

Overthinking about the welfare of their family is the context of the response of Informant 5.

“Ang problema na karaniwan kong kinakaharap ay ang sobrang pag-iisip sa aking sarili at sa aking pamilya dahil gusto ko na silang makasama muli. Sa panahong hindi ko sila kasama ay babawi na ko na lang kung matapos na ang problema ko ngayon. Kaya nga nandito ako ngayon nag-aaral sa ALS para matapos ko ang pag-aaral ko.” (I normally have a problem with thinking too much about myself and my family since I want to be with them again. after I'm not with them, I'll simply return it after my present difficulty is resolved. That is why I am here today studying ALS in order to complete my education).

This is also the problem of Informant 6.

“Ang partikular na problem ana karaniwan kong kinakaharap ay ang sobrang pag-iisip sa aking pamilya, dahil gusto kona silang makapiling, mayakap at mahagkan, pinoproblema ko rin ang aking kaso na sana ito 'y matapos na at akoy makalaya na.” (The problem I normally have is that I worry too much about my family because I want to be with them, embrace and kiss them. I also have troubles with my case and wish it would end so that I could be free).

Though they have these problems about their family, Informant 9 tried to be strong amidst the uncertainties.

“Ang palagi kong problema ay aking pamilya lagi ko kasi silang iniisip kung kumusta na sila, may kinakain pa kaya sila o wala. Sila talaga ang parati kong iniisip araw man o gabi. Pero pag-dating sa pag-aaral ako ay nakikinig ng maayos dahil alam kong makatulong sa upang makapagtapos ako ng pag-aaral at maka tanggap ako ng diploma. Lahat ng aking problema ay lagi ko na lang dinadasal sa ating Panginoon, at siya ang nagbibigay sa akin ng lakas at loob. Walang imposible sa Panginoon kong isuko mo ang lahat sa kanya.” (My family is always a source of concern for me because I never know how they are or whether they are eating. They are truly what I think about at all hours of the day and night. However, when it comes to studying, I pay close attention because I know it will help me finish my studies and earn a diploma. I always pray to our Lord for help with my troubles, and he is the one who provides me strength and bravery. With my Lord, nothing is impossible; submit all to him).

As a result of their incarceration, PDLs may be unable to fulfill their roles as providers and caregivers for their families. Their loss of financial support can lead to significantly financial strain for their loved ones. Adding to this, they have limited access to financial resources which lead to their failures to provide financial assistance or to the needs of their family in general (Faa, 2020).

The responses of persons deprived of liberty to the challenges of being enrolled in the Alternative Learning System

The second research question provides the coping responses of the PDLs to the challenges they are facing as learners of the Alternative Learning System. These are the change of character, positive outlook in life, anchoring faith to God, and looking forward to finding a job through ALS diploma.

Change in character. ALS empowers PDLs with education which leads to the increase of self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. As they gain knowledge and skills, they become more motivated to make positive changes in their lives. Engaging in this program demonstrates their willingness to take full responsibility for their education and personal growth. This extends to other aspects of their lives and encourages them to take ownership of their actions.

In line with this, the coordinator further stressed that:

“Since I have always reminded them about the program, I notice a big change to their character. They know how to respect their fellow inmates, always advice this PDL’s to finish the basic education so that if ever they will finish their sentences/on they will avail the parole they will not go back to their previous work.”

He added that:

“During the implementation of the program, the PDL’s have been observed to have changes in their self-esteem and self-confidence. They have more self-radiance and trust to themselves as they enjoy the learning process, they are in. It also gives them avenue to temporarily forget the stress and anxiety caused by their temporary incarceration.”

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) can have a transformative impact on the character and lives of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). ALS provides non-formal education to out-of-school youth, drop-outs, and adult learners, including those who are inside prison cells. This program leads the PDLs to have the opportunity to continue their education and gain essential knowledge and skills that can positively influence their character and behavior (Labarrete, 2021).

Positive outlook in life. Education, especially when delivered through ALS, has the potential to bring about positive changes in their lives and make them more optimistic in life. The pursuit of education instills a sense of purpose and direction into the lives of the PDLs. As they are engaged in ALS and thus, acquire knowledge and skills, they gain a sense of self-empowerment. This newfound empowerment leads to a more positive self-image and a belief in their ability to create positive change.

The PDLs themselves confirmed this by saying that:

“Ang pakiramdam ko bilang isang estudyante at isang taong pinagkaitan ng kalayaan ay ok lng, kasi kahit na nandito ako sa loob ay napatuloy ko ang aking pag-aaral kahit mahirap para sa akin dahil akoay nakulong tinitiiis ko ito dahil wala na akong magagawa kasi nangyari na ito eh. Ok lng ako dito kasi binigyan ako ulit ng pagkakataon na makapagptuloy ng pag-aaral.” (It's okay to be a student and a Person Deprived of Liberty, because even though I'm here inside, I've been able to complete my studies, and even though it's difficult for me since I'm imprisoned, I tolerate it because there's nothing I can do because it already happened. I'm fine here because I was given another chance to further my education). IDI1

In addition, this relieved them from depression. As such the informant shared that:

“Ang pakiramdam ko bilang estudyante ay masaya at natutuwa ako dahil kahit sa loob ako ng piitan ay bnigyan kami ng tsansa na makapag aral muli. Bilang isang taong pinagkaitan ng kalayaan naman, sempre malungkot ako dahil malayo ako sa pamilya ko.” (As a student, I am relieved that, even though I am in prison, we are given the opportunity to continue our education. As a prisoner, I am always depressed since I am separated from my family). IDI2

An informant even gave his utmost appreciation to his ALS teacher.

“Ang aking pakiramdam ng pagiging isang estudyante, para sa akin nakapasaya dahil pinag aaral ako ng alternative learning systems ang aming teachers si Mr. Rufino Belvis hanggang matapos ko ang aking pag-aaral at maka graduate ako.” (As a student, I'm overjoyed since our teacher, Mr. Rufino Belvis, taught me so much in alternative learning systems till I completed my studies and graduated). IDI3

The joy of learning through ALS was expressed by the following informants since they learned how to read and write.

“Masaya po ako bilang isang estudyante, dahil matagal ko nang gustong matutong magbasa at sumulat man lang para hindi man lang ako mahirapan na maghanap ng matrabahuan. Para pagdating ng may pamilya na ako dina ako mahirapan sa buhay at mapa-aral ko ng maayos ang mga anak ko. Malungkot ako dahil dito ako sa kulungan dahil hindi ko na makasama ang aking mga pamilya. At di ko na magabayan ang aking mga anak at magulang pati narin ang aking mga kapatid at di ko na matutupad ang aking mga pangarap.” (I am pleased as a student because I have long wanted to learn to read and write so that I would not have difficulty obtaining work. So that when the time comes for me to start a family, I won't have a hard time and can properly educate my children. I'm sad because I can't be with my family because I'm in jail. And I will no longer be able to guide my children, parents, and siblings, nor will I be able to realize my dreams). IDI7

Successfully completing ALS programs and achieving educational milestone boots PDLs' self-esteem and provide a sense of accomplishment and recognition for their efforts. Eventually, ALS equips them with essential knowledge and skills that increase their chances of successful integration into society upon release. This prospect of reintegration motivates them to work towards a positive and more productive future (Labarrete, 2021; Ondras & Alvero, 2022).

Anchoring Faith to God. One of the coping mechanisms of the PDLs is their ability to strengthen their faith to God amidst the situation that they are facing. They made sure that while inside the correctional facility, they kept their heads up high to pray to the omnipotent creature. Even though they have committed mistakes to society, there are still a lot of good things in their hearts. As they continue their studies through ALS, they least to forget the importance of having God into their lives.

The expression of gratefulness to God has been transpired during the interview with Informant 4.

“Bilang isang estudyante sa loob ng piitan, unang-una napaka lungkot isipin na nandito ako sa loob ng piitan na ito pero malaki din ang pasalamat ko na naka pasok ako dito sa loob ng pilitan, dahil nag bago na ang aking buhay at dito din ako natuto lumalapit sa Panginoon at dito ko rin napagpatuloy koang aking pa-aaral sa pamamagitan ng ALS. Hindi ko naisip na pwede pa pala akong mag-aral kahit nandito ako sa loob ng piitan.” (As a student inside the prison, it's very sad to think that I'm here, but I'm also very thankful that I came here, because my life has changed and I've learned to draw closer to the Lord, and this is also where I was able to continue my studies despite having ALS. I never imagined that I would be able to study while imprisoned).

For many Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), the experience of incarceration can be a challenging and trying time. In such circumstances, some may turn to their faith in God as a source of strength, comfort, and hope. It is important to recognize that while faith can have positive effects on their lives, individual experiences may vary, and not all may turn to this. The spiritual journey is deeply personal, and different PDLs may find comfort and strength in different ways, including faith in God (Eusebio, 2019; Faa, 2020).

Looking forward to finding a job through ALS Diploma. Being in the correctional facility is not the end of dreams and aspirations for every PDL. As they participate in the ALS and earn their diploma, they have reasons to be optimistic about their future job prospects. The ALS diploma is recognized by the Department of Education and serves as evidence of educational attainment. Having a formal certification boosts PDLs employability and demonstrates their commitment to education and self-improvement.

Informant 5 looked forward to finding a job through an earned diploma.

“Ang pakiramdam ng pagiging isang estudyante at isang taong pinagkitaan ng kalayaan ay malungot at masaya. Malungkot dahil nandito ako sa loob ng piitan di ko magawa ang mga gusto kong gawin at kung may mga problema ang aking pamilya wala akong magawa dahil nakakulong ako ako pero masaya pa rin ako kasi nabigyan parin ako ng pagkakataong mag-aral kahit dito ako sa bilangguan. Ang pag-aaral ko ng ALS ang isa sa magandang nangyari sa akin dito sa loob ng piitan. Gagamitin ko ang aking mga natutunan ko sa pag-aaral ng ALS sa aking paglaya para sa ganon akoy makakatulong sa aking pamilya at para na rin makabawi naman ako sa kanila.” (Being a student and a person robbed of freedom is both painful and joyous. I'm upset because I'm in prison and can't do what I want to do, and if my family has difficulties, I can't do anything since I'm in prison, but I'm also glad because I'm still allowed to study even though I'm in prison. One of the finest things that happened to me here in prison was my ALS studies. When I am released, I plan to use everything I have learned from studying ALS to aid my family and make amends).

Completing the ALS program and obtaining a diploma increases self-confidence among the PDLs. This is instrumental in job interviews and other aspects of the job-seeking process. Some ALS programs offer job-readiness training which equips PDLs with the necessary skills for job hunting and preparing them well in beginning a new journey in life (Labarrete, 2021).

Suggestions to improve the implementation of the Alternative Learning System to persons deprived of liberty.

The third research question provides significant themes on the suggestions of the informants to improve the implementation of the Alternative Learning System to persons deprived of liberty through focus on learning outcomes, provision of school supplies, and extra instruction time.

Focus on learning outcomes. This suggests that the Alternative Learning System should focus on the learning outcomes of the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). It implies that there are competencies that need to be taught. This will help them improve their knowledge and skills which make them ready to face the world after they face their sentence. Their realizations would eventually open the door of opportunities. Thus, equipping them with the most essential abilities will lead them to greater heights as members of the society.

The coordinator enumerated the following justifications:

“To enhance the program the Department of Education in partner with the BJMP should focus to the following: Focus on Student/Learners outcome and track them after they hone their sentences; Follow up them and they should be stream UFE them to UFE skill on TESDA program; Ensure that all PDL student can avail some school supplies; Produce extra instruction time for student who struggle; Ensure that BJMP provide strong securities to the ALS implementers.”

ALS recognized that learners have diverse needs and backgrounds. It tailors learning approaches to meet the specific requirements for each learner. This ensures that they can progress at their own pace. More importantly, it allows learners to receive credit for competencies they have already mastered, accelerating their progress toward achieving learning outcomes (Martinez, 2019; Faa, 2020).

Provision of School Supplies. School supplies are essential tools for effective learning. Providing the PDLs with these, ALS ensures that they have the necessary materials to engage in educational activities and make the most out of their learning opportunities. Their access helps level the playing field and ensures them to have equal opportunities to participate in the program. It removes barriers that may prevent some individuals from fully engaging in their education. Having their own school schools can motivate them to actively participate in their learning journey. It stimulates their sense of ownership and responsibility which leads to increased engagement and dedication to their studies.

The PDLs expressed their desire to have the necessary facilities, equipment and learning materials. For them, this provided them with the motivation to learn and continue with their quest for higher learning.

“Makatulong sa akin bilang isang mag-aaral ang TV, table o laptop upang makapanood kami ng film viewing lalong lalo na na kapag tungkol sa kalusugan para mas Madali naming maintindihan.” (As a student, I can benefit from using a TV, tablet, or laptop to watch movies, particularly ones about health that will make it easier for me to understand it). IDI1

As well, Informant 2 stated that:

“Ang tv, tablet o laptop ay makatulong ito sa amin layong lalo na kapag may film viewing. Ang mga ballpen, Bond Paper, papel at Notebook ay kailangan namn lalong lalo na kapag math ang klasi namin kasi mag solve kami at sa papel ko mag sulat para makitang solusyon namin.” (The tv, tablet or laptop will help us a lot especially when there is a film viewing. Ballpoint pens, Bond Paper, paper and notebooks are necessary when we have math class because we solve and write on my paper to see our solution).

Correspondingly,

“Makatulong ito sa akin para mafdali lang ako matuto. Kung mayroon mga gamit sa pag-aaral ng ALS mas marami kaming masulat at Mabasa at maraming matutunan.” (It will help me to learn easily, If there are ALS learning materials we can write, read and learn more). IDI 3

Furthermore,

“Makatulong sa akin ang pag-aral sa ALS dahil nadaragdagan ang aking kalalaman sa buhay. At hindi na rin ako mahirapan na turuan ang aking mga anak at madali na rin sa kin ang maghanap ng matrabahuan at mabigyan ko na rin ang aking pamilya ng magandang pamumuhay.” (Studying ALS helps me because it increases my knowledge of life. And I won't find it difficult to educate my children and it will be easy for me to find a job and I will be able to give my family a good life). IDI7

The provision of school supplies to PDLs is an investment in their education and personal growth. It facilitates their engagement in learning. Aside from that, it empowers them to have a positive and supportive learning environment. Giving them the necessary tools for education, ALS contributes to enabling their skills and knowledge towards their successful reintegration in the society (Labarrete, 2021).

Extra instruction time. PDLs often have diverse educational background and learning needs. Extra instruction time allows ALS facilitators to offer more personal attention and support, catering to no specific learning requirements of each individual. It should be noted that many of them have experienced gaps in their education due to factors like dropping out of school or limited access to educational opportunities while incarcerated. Extra instruction time can help bridge these gaps and provide opportunity to cover essential educational content. Additional instructional hours can reinforce the concepts and skills taught in regular ALS classes. Repetition and practice and fundamental for solidifying knowledge and ensuring deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The coordinator suggested the following:

To enhance the program the Department of Education in partner with the BJMP should focus to the following: Focus on Student/Learners outcome and track them after they hone their sentences; Follow up them and they should be stream UFE them to UFE skill on TESDA program; Ensure that all PDL student can avail some school supplies; Produce extra instruction time for student who struggle; and Ensure that BJMP provide strong securities to the ALS implementers

This is in consonance with the statement of a PDL.

Dapat araw araw may klase kami sa ALS para mas maganda at marami pa kaming matutunan. Sana magkaroon din kami ng TV, table o laptop para makapanood kami ng film viewing.

We should have an ALS class every day so that we can be better and learn more. I hope we also have a TV, tablet or laptop so we can watch film viewing.

PDLs who face significant challenges in specific subjects benefit from intensive remediation during extra instruction time. ALS facilitators focus on areas where individual learners need additional support to improve their academic performance. The provision of extra instruction time allows for a more flexible learning pace. Some PDLs may require more time to grasp certain concepts and the additional hours enable them to progress at a comfortable speed. A stronger educational foundation increases their employability and facilitates a successful transition back into society (Faa, 2020; Labarrete, 2021).

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Practice

The implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) among Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) carries profound implications and the pursuit of justice within correctional settings. Education is a powerful tool that can transform lives. Offering educational opportunities to incarcerated individuals helps break the cycle of crime, improve rehabilitation outcomes, and promote social reintegration.

In line with this, the success of ALS implementation among PDLs hinges on the development of a curriculum that addresses their unique educational needs. It should be flexible and adaptable so that it will recognize the diverse educational levels, interests, and capabilities among learners. It should incorporate life skills training, vocational education, and subjects relevant to their potential reintegration into society.

Correctional facilities present unique challenges for education, with limitations on mobility and varying schedules. ALS implementations should adopt flexible learning modalities to accommodate these constraints. Distance learning materials, self-paced modules, and blended learning approaches can enable PDLs to engage with educational content effectively. The flexibility in learning modalities also caters to individual learning styles that encourages greater participation and motivation to learn.

Undeniably, there are many PDLs who experience mental health problems as a result of the stresses of incarceration. They have been thinking of their lives after facing their sentence. Also, they are thinking about their loved ones. Thus, implementing ALS with sensitivity to mental health concern is crucial. Incorporating mental health support within the educational framework can address emotional well-being and promote a conducive learning environment.

ALS implementation should not be limited to the period of incarceration. It should be accompanied by a comprehensive reintegration support system to assist PDLs in continuing their education and development upon release. Collaborating with external agencies can facilitate a smooth transition back into society, reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

Implications for Future Research

To ascertain the effectiveness of the ALS program, further research should focus on tracking the long-term educational outcomes of PDLs who have participated in the educational initiatives. Understanding whether ALS participation leads to sustained educational advancement, acquisition of relevant skills, and continued pursuit of higher education upon release can provide valuable insights into the program's impact and sustainability. Researchers can therefore analyze the educational trajectories of former PDLs and identify factors that facilitate or hinder their educational progress beyond their incarceration.

Further research should delve into the accessibility and equity of ALS implementation among PDLs in the Philippines. By identifying potential barriers to access, namely the geographic location, socio-economic status, or gender, can inform targeted interventions to ensure that all eligible individuals have equal opportunities to access education. Researchers can explore ways to make ALS programs more inclusive, responsive to diverse needs, and sensitive to issues of social justice within the correctional setting.

The efficiency of ALS implementation depends significantly on the competency and support of educators working with PDLs. Conducting research on teacher training programs can shed light on the preparation, challenges, and experiences of ALS educators. In order to understand their professional development needs, researchers may recommend strategies to equip educators with the skills and resources necessary to create a supportive and transformative learning environment for incarcerated learners.

The implementation of ALS among PDLs in the Philippines marks a progressive step towards promoting rehabilitation. As the country seeks to enhance the effectiveness of the program, further research is indispensable. Research in different aspects promotes holistic transformation. Such research will not only strengthen the program but also contribute to broader criminal justice reforms that prioritize education and create opportunities for positive change in the lives of the PDLs and their communities.

Concluding Remarks

This study helps me realize the value of education. Even inside the prison cell, a person has the chance to change the path of his life. Through the Alternative Learning System, Persons Deprived of Liberty could still sail into the winds and soar up high again and claim victorious glory.

As an educator, I saw the immense role of ALS. Though there are still a lot of things to be done, however, they have already started a beginning that cater the needs of the people inside the facilities. They are still humans who need human consideration. At the end of the day, learning for them is like gold and silver. They will bring these with them as they will begin a new chapter of their lives.

As such, this study opens the doors of opportunities to look into the different facets of learning. Everyone has the right to be provided with quality education. There are always the rays of light that await them.

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