

Lived Experiences of Pioneering Graduates of the K To 12 Program

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Abstract:

Background: The K-12 Program has been present in the educational system of most countries in the world for quite some time but it is just recently that the Department of education in the Philippines implemented this program. This year, the pioneers of the said program were able to complete the curriculum. It was the aim of this phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of the pioneering graduates of the K-12 Program of the country.

Materials and Methods: Individual interviews and a focus group discussion were employed in gathering the data. The Colaizzi method was used in interpreting the data that were collected.

Results: It was found out that there were varied meaningful experiences gained by the participants of the study while and upon finishing the program.

Conclusion: After analyzing the data gathered, it was found out that research is both frowned at and appreciated by the participants. Academic and non-academic activities are enjoyed by the participants that allowed them to have both positive and negative experiences that allowed them to develop holistically.

Key Word: Colaizzi Method; K-12 Program; Phenomenological Study; Philippine Education

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I. Introduction

The Philippines is not new when it comes to educational paradigm shifts. From the pre-colonial period, Spanish colonization, American regime to the Japanese era, the country experienced various curriculum changes. From vocational content to language programs, the republic had multiple disciplines that were implemented (Musa, 2012). That being said, transitions are inevitable.

Recently, the country adopted a new curriculum to be at par with other Asian countries. It is during the reign of former President Benigno Simeon Aquino III when this new curriculum was introduced and implemented (Okabe, 2013).

The Year 2012 was when the Department of Education implemented the K to 12 Program which aimed to elevate the quality of basic education in the Philippines by adding two more years in basic education. From 1945 until 2011, basic education took only ten years to complete until the new curriculum had taken effect (Ocampo, 2014).

After the implementation of the K-12 program which was six years ago, there is already a set of graduates of this curriculum and this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of the pioneering graduates of the K-12 program.

II. Literature Review

The K to 12 Program of the Department of Education is implemented to improve the basic skills of the students. Improving such skills will result in having competent citizens of the community which will enable them to be productive in the field of employment and will engage in life-long learning (Okabe, 2013).

This program allocates one year for kindergarten, six years for elementary education, four years for junior high school, and two years for senior high school (Burgonio, 2013).

The original constitution was reorganized in the earlier part of the millennium via the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. This highlighted the right of children and young adults to have free access to basic education. In the Administration of the former president Aquino, the free education was boosted through the Kindergarten Act in 2012 and the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 which enabled the country to propel in terms of education (The Philippine government works to implement its K-12 program while raising educational standards, 2018).

The implementation of the K-12 program in the Philippine Curriculum is one of the answers to solving the existing challenges of the country. The government may be facing many problems and this program is one of

their solutions in overcoming them. (Abueva, 2015).

This year marks the beginning of the enrolment of the graduate of the pioneering completers of the K to 12 Program. The completers, though, have the option of whether they will continue their education through tertiary education or opt to find a job that their program under their senior high prepared them into. Even there is already a set of graduates of the new program, many are still wondering about its implementation in the country. Meaningful experiences of the pioneering graduates of the aforementioned program may enlighten the queries of many about the concern (Review and Updates on the K-12 Curriculum in the Philippines, 2018).

Several accounts have been gathered that were related to the current study. Completers and undertakers of the program shared their thoughts on being a senior high school graduate or completer.

There are different meaningful experiences one can gain while traversing the path of being A high school student and several factors can affect this. First, peers play a big part in the smooth sailing through high school. Second, school activities and programs help the experience in high school more meaningful. Third, the different processes a high school student must learn through the course of being a high school student. Fourth, the academic offerings will enhance the capability of the learner in terms of cognition and lastly, the role of the teachers will complete the meaningful experience one may gain while finishing the high school journey (Ganeson, 2006).

Swiger (2012) mentioned not to forget about peer pressure. All high school students are exposed to it at some point in their life. High school can be a place where students are made fun of, disapproved, singled out, and pointed at.

Ogul (2007) said that when he wasn't a senior, he heard seniors talk about missing things about the place they live before they move, and this is something he has been consciously trying to avoid. He thought it would be easy because the place he lives is notorious for its lack of things to do. He added that it isn't that easy to stop those nostalgic feelings from forming, though, even this early in the year.

Taro (2016) also shared the experiences he had as a senior high school student. His life becomes a little bit difficult. Usually, for us students, waking up early in the morning is difficult and challenging. In his case, he woke up at 5:30 in the morning, usually, he prayed and thanked God for giving him another life. Then, he prepared to go to school. He usually would prepare things needed for school, take a bath, eat breakfast and walk a little bit and wait for the tricycle to arrive. That was his daily routine when he was still attending classes.

Several studies and works of literature have been included in the study but the researcher was not able to search studies and works of literature pertaining to the new completers of the K to 12 Program of the Philippines.

Research problem

The study aims to answer the following question: (1) What are the experiences of the pioneering set of graduates of the K-12 Program?

Theoretical framework

The study is heavily banking on the Experiential Learning Theory of David Kolb which is drawn from the theories of Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and Kurt Lewin (Dixon, et. al. 1997).

Experiential Learning is the process of learning through various meaningful experiences. This type of learning is distinct from rote and didactic learning wherein learners are passive. This type of learning is related to active learning, action learning, adventure learning, cooperative learning, and the likes (Itin, 1999).

Experiential learning is often used synonymously with the term "experiential education", but while experiential education is a broader philosophy of education, experiential learning considers the individual learning process (Breunig, 2009). As such, compared to experiential education, experiential learning is concerned with more concrete issues related to the learner and the learning context. Experiential learning has significant teaching advantages.

Peter Senge, the author of *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), states that teaching is of utmost importance to motivate people. Learning only has good effects when learners have the desire to absorb the knowledge. Therefore, experiential learning requires the showing of directions for learners. Experiences are important to hone the ability of learners holistically.

III. Methodology

This qualitative research employed Edward Husserl's Phenomenological design where the Colaizzi method was used to analyze the data gathered.

Research Design

This study employed Phenomenological research which characteristically starts with (1) concrete descriptions of lived situations, often a first-person account, set down in everyday language and avoiding

abstract intellectual generalizations. (2) The researcher proceeds by reflectively analysing these descriptions, perhaps ideographically first, (3) then by offering a synthesized account, for example, identifying general themes about the essence of the phenomenon. (4) Importantly, the phenomenological researcher aims to go beyond surface expressions or explicit meanings to read between the lines to access implicit dimensions and intuitions (Finlay, 2009).

Data Collection

The researcher interviewed fifteen pioneering graduates of the K-12 Program wherein 8 were female and 7 were male. The participants were stratified according to their gender and from the strata, were randomly selected. The participants were asked the question: what are your experiences as a Senior High School student? and their responses were recorded upon their approval.

Data Analysis

Colaizzi's method consists of seven steps. First informants' descriptions of the experiences are read to acquire a sense of the whole. After that significant statements are extracted. Meanings are formulated from the significant statements. Formulated meanings are organized into themes. Themes are integrated into an exhaustive description. The essential structure of the phenomenon is formulated. And finally, for validation, the informants will evaluate the result of the analysis if it means the same as their original experiences were.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher did not mention the names of the participants in the analysis of the data gathered. Permission was sought before conducting the interview and consent was also asked before recording the interview done by the researcher with the respondents.

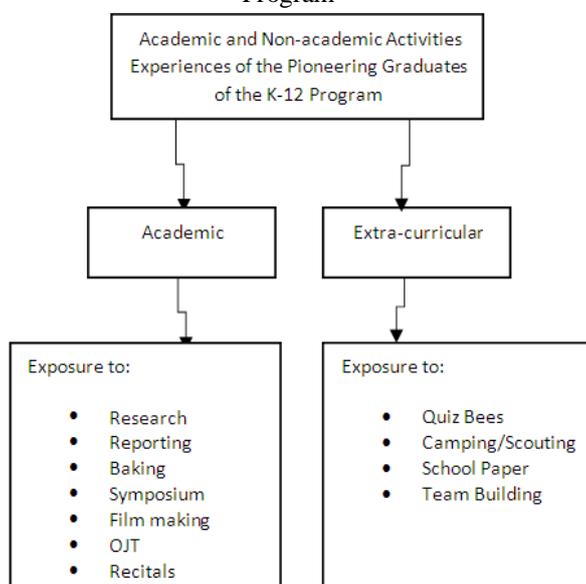
Triangulation

To validate the data collected by the researcher, a focus group discussion was made. The same questions were asked to the participants to validate the data that were collected during the one-on-one interview.

IV. Results And Discussion

Upon the data gathering and analysis, the following theme emerged. The first theme talks about the experiences of the participants while they are inside and outside their classrooms. These experiences are categorized into two. First is the experiences related to the participants' academics. The second is the experiences of the participants which are extra-curricular.

Fig. 1. Theme 1: Academic and Non-academic Activities Experiences of the Pioneering Graduates of the K-12 Program



Here are some of the responses of the participants when asked what their experiences were when they were still in senior high school.

“We were exposed to doing Research and reporting (participant 1)”

“Danay nag bebake kami tas marixu la kun nag susugad kami (participant 2)”. (*Sometimes we do baking and it is fun whenever we bake.*)

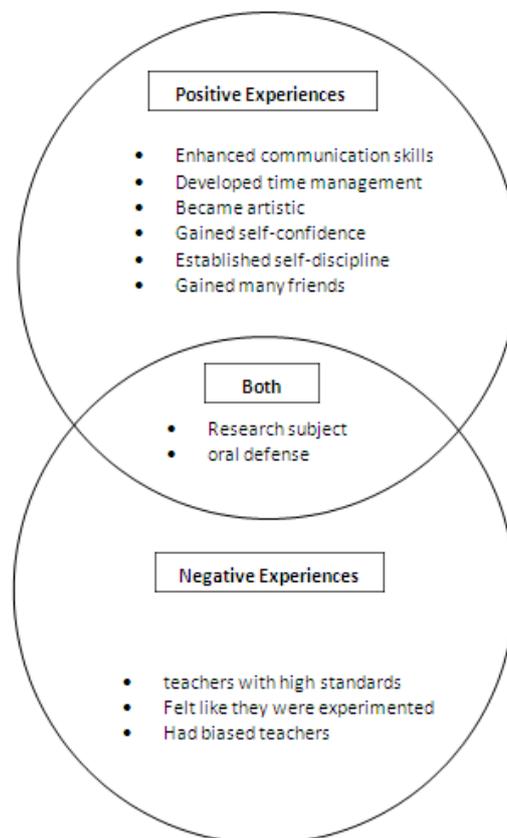
“Mayda adto time na nag conduct kami hin symposium tas mga grade ten an amun participants (Participant 3)”. (*There was a time that we conducted a symposium and the participants were grade ten students.*)

“Nag api ako hin quiz bee and to tell you honestly, I won in that Math quiz bee (Participant 7)”. (*I joined a quiz bee competition and to tell you honestly, I won in that Math quiz bee.*)

“First time nag ka ada hin camping ha amon school tas happy ako nan aka api ako hn scouting ngada ha school (Participant 12)”. (*It was the first time that the school conducted a camping activity and I am happy that I was able to join the school’s scouting.*)

Another theme emerged upon the analysis of the data gathered. The participants were able to share experiences that were positive and negative while they were still in senior high.

Fig. 2. Theme 2. Positive and Negative Experiences of the Pioneering Graduates of the K to 12 Program



“Because of reporting, we can enhance our communication skills. We are also more confident as time passed every time we face our classmates again since there are several times we are to conduct a reporting in class (Participant 13).

“Damo an akon naging sangkay kai bago naman na school an akon gn enrolan (Participant 4). (*I gained many friends since I enrolled in a new school.*)

“Since we were exposed to different activities that involved facing the crowd, I was able to gain self- confidence (Participant 5).”

“Mayda ko naging teacher na biased hiya, mayda niya favoritism. Mayda la niya favorite ha klasi (Participant 11).” (*I had a biased teacher. She is exhibiting favoritism. She has her favorites in class.*)

Those were a few of the responses of the participants pertaining to their positive and negative experiences as a pioneering graduate of the K to 12 program.

V. Summary

Upon the data analysis, the researcher was able to come up with two themes. The first theme that emerged highlighted the experiences of the participants in terms of their academic and extra-curricular endeavours. The second theme magnified the participants’ positive and negative experiences as pioneering graduates of the K to 12 program. The participants were exposed to different activities that were able to holistically developed them.

VI. Conclusion

After analyzing the data gathered, it was found out that research is both frowned at and appreciated by the participants. Academic and non-academic activities are enjoyed by the participants that allowed them to have both positive and negative experiences that allowed them to develop holistically.

VII. Recommendation

With the information that surfaced upon the analysis of data gathered, the following recommendations were formulated:

1. The Orientation of the students in terms of class activities may help them understand the purpose of accomplishing it;
2. Curriculum mapping must be observed to avoid requirement duplication.

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