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Research Article

Challenges Encountered by Junior High School Graduates of the School of Tomorrow Program to Senior High School Program in Capiz: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The School of Tomorrow (S.O.T.) having the Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) here in the Philippines promises that they can give the most advanced twenty-first-century educational system available, but the experiences and grievances of S.O.T. graduates stated otherwise. This case study intends to determine the key informant's experiences in transitioning from Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) institution to conventional schools in Capiz. This study utilized interviews, observation, and data reviews in gathering the data while the Mayring (2002) approach was utilized in analyzing the data. Themes came out from the constructs of the interviewees in Capiz, like S.O.T. curriculum is offered in Pre-School to Junior High School only, difficulty in transitioning from S.O.T. school to conventional schools offering Senior High School Program and conventional schools must be adopted and integrated to the S.O.T. Junior High School. The output of the research is the proposed new S.O.T. curriculum model to help address the existing problems.

Keywords: School of Tomorrow, Capiz, Philippines, New SOT Curriculum Model

Introduction

In the Philippines, the School of Tomorrow (S.O.T.) has been a stupendous pacesetter using the A.C.E. curriculum. S.O.T. Schools are not like any other schools. It utilizes the A.C.E. curriculum through individualized learning. S.O.T. stands on the notion that students don't just get by - they get ahead. They call their classrooms learning centers, and students have desks called offices. These offices are separated by dividers to avoid distraction and communication

during the P.A.C.E. time. As a matter of policy, the learning centers should be in silence. This is manifested by their learning center behaviors like they could not talk, stand, use of comfort room, and check and tally their work unless permission is given by their supervisor or monitor. The students are working on their activities known as the learning packets like the self-instructional workbooks, each one of these is written from the vantage of biblical teachings. In the learning center, a teacher, known as the

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supervisor and a teaching assistant, called monitor manned the learning center and facilitate the learning process. The student who needs assistance may call their supervisor or monitor through raising their flag. There are two kinds of flags that students are using. The Philippine flag is answered by the monitor for questions and/or permissions. When the Christian flag is being raised the student signals that he/she needs academic help. Each learning center has a "scoring station", this is where the students can score their P.A.C.E.s using the score keys found in the scoring station. According to the A.C.E. Home Educator's Manual (2018), the scoring is done by students by comparing their answers to the score keys, by marking the items having wrong answers. After the scoring process, the students go back to their offices and correct their mistakes and then they go back to the scoring station again to re-score. The student needs to do this up until three times until all the answers are correct (p.25). A.C.E. is an unconventional way of learning. S.O.T. having the A.C.E. the curriculum here in the country claimed that they can give the required twenty-first-century education (www.sotphil.net). Despite this claim, the students, especially the graduates have experienced difficulty during the transitions from a S.O.T. School to a conventional school in Capiz. The experiences and grievances of S.O.T. graduates in Capiz were further supported by Scaramanga's thesis in England. Scaramanga (2017) in his study disclosed that participants experienced crucial things, particularly in the transitions to university or other non-S.O.T. schools. The participants mentioned the struggles that they experienced in transferring from the S.O.T program to the university or other non-S.O.T. schools (p.p. 140-146).

The study was undertaken to determine the challenges faced by the Junior High School graduates of School of Tomorrow in Capiz in transitioning to the Senior High School program in a conventional school since no Senior High School Programs is being offered yet in S.O.T. Schools in Capiz. From the findings of the study, a new S.O.T Model Curriculum is proposed to help address the existing problems of S.O.T Schools.

Objectives

1. To determine the S.O.T programs in Capiz;
2. To identify the problems experienced by Junior High School graduates of the School of Tomorrow Program enrolling in Senior High School Program in Capiz particularly in School Activities, School Setting, Social Interaction, School Curriculum
3. To determine the other factors that will facilitate the coping skills of School of Tomorrow Junior High School graduates to the conventional Senior High School Program.

Methodology

The range and progression refuse the idea of grade level and go forward in continuous progress, starting with the first skill to learn. Students may move ahead quickly or slowly, based on their ability and motivation levels, but each student masters the material.

As a result, student's achievements are considered as one of their greatest assets in life. Estimated, graduates of the A.C.E. program are excelling in almost 1,400 academic institutions around the world. The A.C.E.'s P.A.C.E. curriculum has been tested and established packed with fundamental academic disciplines while inculcating godly character among students (www.aceministries.com/about-ace).

The School of Tomorrow in the Philippines consists of Kindergarten, Elementary, Junior High School, and Senior High School Program. The preschool of S.O.T. is a full-year program intended to nurture kids with basic skills that prepare the learner to learn and read. At this level, the learner is being prepared to learn the important skills of phonetic reading, but only for those learners who are tested and proven ready for reading. There are eight (8) major subjects in the Elementary Program like Math, English, Social Studies, Science, Word Building (Spelling), Literature and Creative Writing, Filipino, and Araling Panlipunan. The elementary students are learning these eight subjects through P.A.C.E.s tailored for mastery and continuous progress. It also offers conventional classes only for Values Education, Art, Physical Education and Health, and Home Economics. The Junior High School program focuses on Math, English, Science, Social Studies, Filipino,

Etymology, Speech, Computer Literacy, and Bible Courses. On their website, S.O.T. published their offering all strands in Senior High School. Though the Philippine Christian School of Tomorrow's Parents and Student Handbook of 2017 stated that a Senior High School permit was granted, compliance and implementation with K-12 law are still developing. There is still no developed P.A.C.E. The chart clarifies curriculum assignment requirements for the Senior High School Program (<https://www.pcst.edu.ph/programs>). The S.O.T schools through its Accelerated Christian Education curriculum received its ounce of criticisms like the utilization of memorization, the lesson about race and apartheid, the P.A.C.E Content, and education outcomes. Educational experts doubted that the curriculum's concentration is on rote call.

Berliner (2007) opined that the teaching methods are low in the area of cognition tasks relating to emphasis on simple association and recall activities, usual instruction from workbooks, too much engagement on behavioral objectives, learning that is programmed, and employment of rewards. Flemming and Hunt (1987) examined the A.C.E. curriculum deduced that the A.C.E curriculum has a very limited and incorrect content of the study of the world and ignoring thinking above the level of memorization.

A.C.E. materials are very different from those commonly known in the area of scholarship and critical thinking. For example in the United Kingdom, there were 26 schools registered as of January 2017 under the A.C.E curriculum. The British Press raised issues about the mistreatment of the necessary learning contents and activities under this program.

Ten schools were graded by British Parliamentary Education inspectors in October 2016 with nine (9) of them re-graded as "Inadequate" that requires improvement (Fenton, 2017). Burgess (2018) further stress that an A.C.E. school in London was rated "Inadequate" due to inadequate teaching of Science and failure to imbibe among children the skills to collect and evaluate scientific evidence. This was supported by research into the International Certificate of Christian Education claimed that

it failed to prepare students for university-level education. Rudgard (2017) cited Reiss laments that "My particular problem with A.C.E. is the awful nature of the curriculum they provide to their students." Scaramanga and Reiss (2017) averred that the A.C.E curriculum failed to prepare students in their future courses of study because the program mainly focused on memorizing information instead of analyzing and thoughtful engagements. These suppositions were reflected in a comparative performance at American College Test (ACT) in government school learners and the A.C.E. students from another private school in one geographic location. Overall, A.C.T. scores than A.C.E. graduates and observed as consistently lower in scores than those of the public students. Methodology This research is a qualitative case study. A research approach that facilitates exploration of phenomena within its context using Mayring's approach in data analysis to establish the rigors of the research. The research was conducted in Capiz, the Philippines from December 2020 to March 2021. There were twelve (12) participants participated in the research.

They were the School of Tomorrow graduates, their parents, S.O.T. Teacher, Administrators, and Principals selected using the Purposive Sampling. Data gathered were analyzed right after every interview to immerse the researchers with the data. Research protocols were observed as embodied in the ethical considerations at the entirety of the research process.

Result and Discussion

The data gathered from the interview that was audio recorded were transcribed. It was analyzed from the transcription to form a pattern, identifying significant statements to form a cluster theme. The themes that come out from participants' narratives are:

THEME #1. In Capiz, S.O.T. Curriculum is Offered in Pre-School to Junior High School Only

All S.O.T schools involved in this study offer Kindergarten, Elementary, and Junior High School programs only. This pauses issues on the learner's capability to easily adapt when transferring to a conventional school in Capiz.

In conventional Senior High School, students begin to study strands leading to the program they will be taken when they get into college. This also implies that all necessary skills must be taught and learned by the SOT Junior High School graduates to their Junior High School academic journey. Since S.O.T. is an unconventional school, the customs and system are different from those of the Senior High School program and settings. As a result, it is difficult for students to cope when transferring. The effect on students can be traumatic. The graduates of S.O.T. school who transferred to non-SOT school dropped, either transferred to another school or received low or failing grades. This gives them a feeling that they are dumb and stupid as deduced by a participant.

THEME #2. Difficulty in Transitioning from S.O.T. School to Conventional Senior High School

Common difficulties immersed from interviewees was issues on coping to the new system of their education such as taking down notes, making reports, making projects, doing challenging tasks, number of home works, catching up with the lessons, social interactions, coping up with the school extra-curricular activities, the feeling of being dumb, confidence, struggle in adjusting to teachers and the way they teach, the nature of assessment that is being employed by conventional schools, the school environment as a whole especially the spiritual aspect, the feeling of being different, and the behavior of the learners in a conventional school. The stories informants demonstrated that S.O.T. performance and grades are not reliable indicators of students' readiness for Senior High School under the non-S.O.T. curriculum.

THEME #3. Conventional School must be Adopted and Integrated to the S.O.T. Junior High School

To facilitate the Coping Skills of S.O.T. Graduates to the conventional Senior High School Program: S.O.T. Schools must synchronize their activities to the prescribed DepEd activities, Intensify the social interactions in every learning center, Harmonize the S.O.T. Junior High School

curriculum to the DepEd Senior High School curriculum, and Retrofit the school setting in every level. If the School of Tomorrow incorporates the culture and methods of conventional schools, S.O.T. graduates will be better prepared for Senior High School in Capiz. After all, Education in its real sense aims to inculcate knowledge, skills, and practices of people or society from generation to generation common to all across.

Conclusion

In Capiz, the School of Tomorrow Curriculum is offered in Pre-School to Junior High School only. The absence of a Senior High School program in a S.O.T. school is a significant deficiency in the curriculum, as students are abruptly transitioned from the S.O.T. Curriculum to a completely different one. Difficulty in Transitioning from S.O.T. school to conventional Senior High School causes traumatic experiences like feeling frustrated, feeling dumb and stupid, and lack of confidence that ended them to dropped the class, low grades, failures, and the worst transferring to other schools. Conventional methods and system must be adopted and integrated into the S.O.T. Junior High School as part of their preparations for the Senior High School program and eventually to their tertiary education. Furthermore, this will help them to better cope with the conventional schools and for better academic performance and social integration.

Recommendations

It is strongly recommended that S.O.T. through the Accelerated Christian Education curriculum in Capiz should synchronize their activities to the prescribed DepEd activities, intensify the social interactions in every learning center, Harmonize the S.O.T. Junior High School curriculum to the DepEd Senior High School curriculum, and Retrofit the school setting in every level.

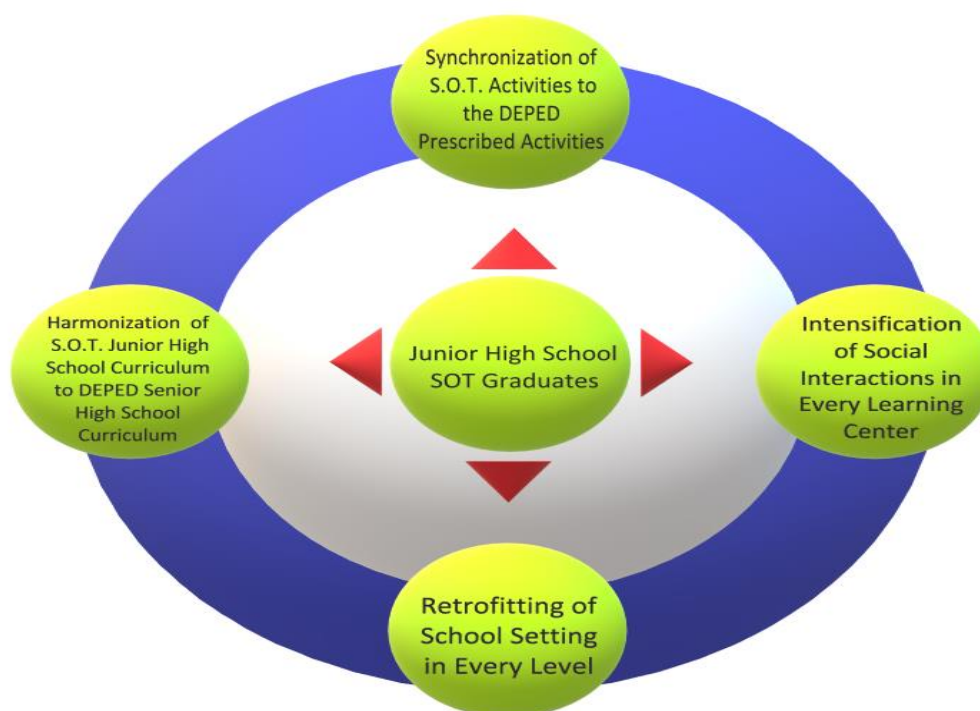
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Appendix A

Panaligan – Maming's Model of School of Tomorrow Program



School of Tomorrow (SOT) Curriculum covers the Kindergarten to Junior High School (JHS) only, particularly in Capiz. This program of study through the Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) curriculum claimed that they can give the most advanced twenty-first-century educational system available. Students don't just get by - they get ahead.

Proponents of S.O.T. in this country opined that they already implemented the K-12 Program nearly 40 years before DepEd adopted it. It seems that this was not true especially in areas like Capiz. The S.O.T. program graduates in this research encountered struggles when they transferred to the University and from S.O.T. schools to other conventional schools in their Senior High School that resulted in dropouts and other related issues because in conventional schools learners are not spoon-fed, that from the vantage of the students there were feeling frustrations and stupidity and dumbness when they get in with non-S.O.T. schools,

S.O.T. assessments are not a valid indicator of student's transition preparedness among many issues.

For the graduates of S.O.T. Schools in JHS to be prepared for their transfer to non-S.O.T. school, the S.O.T. Junior High School curriculum must be harmonized with the DepEd Curriculum, Synchronization of S.O.T. activities to the DepEd Prescribed activities, Intensify social interactions in every learning centers, and retrofit the school setting in every level.

This would help the SOT learners and graduates to be flexible and can easily adjust emotionally and socially when they transferred to the University and other schools. Furthermore, it will provide learners fundamental concepts at a higher degree of complexity and not just a rote recall and spoon-fed type of learning environment and develop and increase independence in applying knowledge, values, and skills learned.