

Promoting Outcome-Based and Place-Based Education as Approaches to Alternative Learning in Underserved Communities

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the processes involved in the promotion of the use of two approaches to education: outcomes-based and place-based in underserved communities in some regions in the Philippines. The process maximized the features of community engagement in order to assess the learning needs of the people and to propose alternative learning approaches that are appropriate to address these needs.

Keywords: outcomes-based education, place-based education, alternative learning

1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines, like many other countries, started utilizing the outcomes-based education framework which is apparent in the implemented K+12 curriculum. Based on the goal of developing lifelong learners, the mainstream curriculum was restructured in 2013 and since then, competencies to address the intended outcomes per grade level were identified and became the bases for the numerous activities, both individual and collaborative, the students were tasked to perform.

The mainstream curriculum highlights the value of being job-ready so K+12 students are also exposed to on-the-job trainings when they reach Grade 12 [2]. Since the new curriculum follows a track-based system, schools are tasked to identify industries in their area, which is one of the bases in choosing what track to offer in junior and senior high school.

To mitigate the added cost parents would shoulder for the additional two years in basic education, the Department of Education implemented a voucher system wherein students are given a voucher worth 11,250-22,500 Philippine pesos to cover their

tuition fee expenses for a year should they opt to study in a private school that offers the track they want to pursue [2]. However, despite the voucher system, access to education remains a big problem in many underserved regions in the country. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) remains the sole means for learners from these regions to achieve basic literacy at the very least. With the help of various non-government and church-based organizations, there have been numerous attempts to bring education services to underserved communities. However, implementing a curriculum that is intended to run 13 years proves to be beyond difficult. Adding to the burden is the late release of equivalent competencies in the ALS scheme. This necessitates the re-evaluation of framework/s necessary to achieve the intended outcome of learners in relation to the needs of their communities and to their rights as individuals. This is most especially true in the case of the indigenous communities in Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Agusan del Sur, and Agusan del Norte in the CARAGA Region.

2. TARGET COMMUNITIES

One of the underserved communities in the Philippines that consistently garnered very high, if not 100%, passing rate in the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Test is the Alternative Learning Center for Agriculture and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV). Established in 2004, ALCADEV offers academic, vocational, and technical training in the form of formal education to indigenous peoples (IPs) in CARAGA.

However, despite its intention to educate the IPs, the school was not given permit to operate by the Department of Education. Thus, it thrives through the support of non-government organizations and private individuals who believe in its cause.

The school has consistently been at the receiving end of various forms of harassment that displace IP learners. Martial Law in the province also adds to the difficulty experienced by the learners, who consistently have to move to evacuation centers to avoid being bombed or killed [1]. This scenario prompted the re-evaluation of their curriculum so that learners can continue their education despite being displaced.

3. Outcome-based education

Spady and Marshall (1991) argued the significance of preparing learners for life, not simply for higher education or employment [6]. Outcomes, according to him define higher-order role capabilities and are not subject-based. In essence, there are exit outcomes that will identify whether a learner can go to the next level and try to achieve new outcomes. With this framework, time is not so much a consideration as there are learners who will develop certain competencies required to achieve the exit outcomes faster than other learners.

One key component of OBE is its designing down framework wherein outcomes are established first before writing the entire curriculum [6]. As a result, the learner's interaction with the content and even with the teacher is based on established competencies that aim to develop the learners to deliver the expected outcomes. This necessitates learner-centered approaches to instruction since meeting the exit outcomes is the goal of instruction.

4. Place-based education

Place-based education (PBE) defies the notion of traditional classrooms as the ultimate venue of learning. Instead, PBE puts premium on local heritage, culture, landscapes, experiences, and even opportunities in creating authentic and meaningful personalized learning for students [3]. In essence, the entire community becomes a place for and of learning.

PBE has three key features making it suitable to alternative learning. These features are: (1) it impacts communities; (2) it increases student and teacher engagement; and (3) it boosts outcomes [3]. As such, learning is grounded in community and local contexts making it easier for learners to see immediately the value of learning and studying to their lives [5]. Moreover, authentic learning takes place as they are challenged to see the world through various lenses: economic, social, political, and ecological. The knowledge, therefore, is not compartmentalized into subject areas.

Service learning is one key principle in PBE that allows learners to develop civic responsibility. This is essential in honing individuals who are conscious to the needs of their communities.

5. Community Engagement

It will be futile to restructure a curriculum and integrate the ideas and components of OBE and PBE without involving the community in designing a learning platform that will maximize the resources available in the community based on the needs and desired outcomes of its people.

In order to ensure that the identified outcomes will benefit the communities, needs assessment was initially done where community members, teachers, and the learners themselves played an active role in deciding what they want to achieve and why. Education is not a tool to achieve an end; rather, they view it as an integral part of the process where learners hone themselves into becoming community members who will work together for the collective good of the people.

In PBE, finding solutions to actual problems encountered by the communities is part of the learning process. As a result, education is not merely a mechanical process for learners but a progressive venue for collaboration to achieve community development.

The first step into proposing OBE- and PBE-based curriculum is through needs assessment. Aside from school directors, teachers, and student representatives were consulted in order to assess their learning needs. The consultation followed an informal group discussion where participants were encouraged to voice out their concerns regarding the current education framework and on the possibility of restructuring it according to their needs. Most of the concerns are understandably about the traditional record keeping and evaluation of credits. The second concern is changing 'class' dynamics. Despite being an alternative learning platform, ALCADDEV follows formal approach to education where subjects are taught according to how formal schools schedule them to be taught. This approach proved to be unhealthy during evacuation periods. Disruption in classes lasts longer than what they normally perceive and since lessons are taught in a class-based mode, they find it difficult to adjust to the new environment where they are evacuated.

Another consideration is the amount of preparation needed to restructure a curriculum. Violent attacks against the IPs affect the general well-being of children. Education is an outlet for them to have a sense of normalcy. As much as possible, they do not want any interruption resulting from a possible curriculum shift.

The first step to address their concern is clarifying the idea of non-formal education and its difference from formal education. As an alternative learning platform, they are not burdened by the traditional partitioning of lessons into subjects. The beauty of adapting OBE and PBE is giving them leeway to integrate lessons into activities that are not time-bound and subject-restricted. In terms of record keeping, it can be eased by portfolio assessment that will give the teachers more freedom to design and manage

learning system must either come or approved by community members. Only then can their commitment and action be guaranteed. As such, needs assessment is a fundamental component of every community engagement. Any proposed change to their practices requires assessment and analysis. As reflected in Figure 1, shared leadership and action between the community and concerned organizations assign key roles to both parties in order to ensure that the end goal will be beneficial to the community and that the desired changes will be met.



Figure 1. Community engagement model from iap² [4]

Class disruptions can also be addressed by adopting OBE and PBE. Once outcomes are established, it will be easier for teachers to identify competencies that are necessary to achieve them. The greater challenge is identifying outcomes that will benefit the community and the learners in the long run. With PBE, moving to another place means having a new environment for learning to take place. Every place is an environment for learning; thus, evacuation is not a hinder to class. Rather, it is an opportunity to identify new solutions for a different problem set.

It is important to note, however, that any proposed changes to the community's alternative

Conceptualization is as important as physical and psychological will to impose curricular changes. To make the process easier, a template on competency alignment with the existing curriculum is provided. That way, the problem with accreditation will be addressed since the minimum competencies, albeit not the focus of instruction, are still considered in the new curriculum. Note that all competencies are integrated and holistic outputs are considered in crafting activities.

The template used to show that competencies are not subject-specific and they can be integrated is found in the matrix below:

Topics and Texts	Lesson Objectives (General and Specific)	Learning Strand Covered	ALS Competencies and level (lower or advanced elementary junior or senior high)
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After the needs assessment, the second phase of the engagement was to complete the template above in order to show the teachers how competencies are interconnected. In the process, they are shown that lessons are integrated and there is no need to follow a structured hour-based and subject-based discussion of topics. After completing the matrix, the community leaders and teachers were asked to think of the proposed exit outcomes and consider the culminating activities that will capture them.

Fortunately, working in close collaboration with community members helps one in re-evaluating what are essentials and what are not. In terms of the institution outcome, it is praiseworthy that the identified outcome is to produce learners who will go back to their communities

to serve. As such, the burden of complying to standards intended to address the need of a market-driven mainstream curriculum need not be bore by volunteer teachers and by the learners themselves. They are free to explore the potential of PBE in honing highly-functioning democracy of informed and

engaged citizens whose knowledge and skills are grounded to the needs of their communities.

6. REFERENCES

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