Administrative and Instructional Issues in the Implementation of Voucher Program Among Selected Private Senior High Schools

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Abstract: The primary aim of this research was to identify the issues encountered by school administrators and teachers in implementing the voucher program. We identified administrative issues in terms of the release of vouchers or billing statements, providing resources, application, and processing of documents, and career guidance orientation. Meanwhile, we also investigated instructional issues to teach like strategies and techniques, student preparation, learning resources, curriculum enhancement, and teachers' preparation and readiness. The research method for this study was a qualitative phenomenological approach that focused on describing the lived experiences of people. This study involved six school administrators and six teachers that belonged to private senior high schools in a province in Central Luzon, Philippines, during the school year 2018-2019. The results showed that the issues associated with implementing voucher programs among school administrators are: (a) delays in application and processing of documents, (b) lack of parents' support and students' active participation in career guidance orientation, (c) delays in the voucher's release, and (d) difficulties in hiring qualified teachers and the keeping of teachers. Meanwhile, the common problems associated with implementing voucher among teachers are: (a) lack of preparedness among teachers, (b) congested curriculum competencies and idealistic outcome expectations, (c) job mismatch, traditional teaching, non-congruency between the teaching strategies and content, (d) innovative technological advancements issues, and (e) students are not competent. They can learn significant insights from the research-based propositions drawn from the study.

INTRODUCTION

The role of leadership and administration is significant in the success of an educational institution (Icutan & Sagaionit, 2017; Zellman G.L. et al., 2099). This success is key to economic and social progress. There is much being asked for those who are in leadership positions. However, these leaders also need support to do their jobs (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008).

For administrative concerns, Rabacal and Alegato (2017) showed in their research that administrators had a very high extent of opportunities to implement the K-12 program. However, Icutan and Sagaionit (2017) found that school administrators also have a moderately serious conflict along with different administrative factors. School managers

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cannot deny the fact that they also have few conflicts of relationship with higher authorities. We could attribute this to the fact that school managers should deal with higher authorities since they are their superiors. Pleasant relationships with upper authorities reinforce the determination and self-confidence needed in successful endeavors of goals (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). As expected, there are varied roles and responsibilities for school managers. Hence, they need good time management to lessen this problem. According to Kumar (2010), to distinguish a provision, crucial processes of education must lie in the hands of the government. The potential role of vouchers in improving school quality is further restricted. In addition, Ferrer (2019), stated further that the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) identified different forms of assistance to students and teachers in private education in the Philippines. The drive of any educational transformation process must lie on improving the systemic features of education, such as the critical issues of teacher professionalization involving selection, training, and academic support, and providing adequate resources to fulfill the imperatives of universal elementary education. A study recommended that the government must improve the design and implementation of programs which include the division of roles and patterns of cooperation between government agencies and other key players in implementing the program (Setiyono, n.d.). Also in the Philippines, although there is a pro-private sector scheme in their government, private schools are diminishing (Termes, Edwards Jr, & Verger, 2020). From a different perspective, Ford and Andersson (2019) exposed in their study that start-up voucher schools and those unaffiliated ones with the larger institution have a high degree of failure. Till these aspects are addressed and educational quality improves, vouchers can serve little purpose.

The primary aim of the study was to identify the issues associated with implementing the voucher program among senior high school students in selected private schools from a province in Central Luzon, Philippines. This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What administrative issues confronted the implementation of the voucher program?
2. What instructional issues confronted the implementation of the voucher program?
3. What are the common problems associated with implementing the voucher program?
4. What coping mechanisms do administrators and teachers use in addressing the issues encountered?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study by Sarvi, Munger, and Pillay (2015), one could find from this study the following six considerations concerning the K-12 program. Rosenberg (2011) also added that rural high schools face additional challenges in the recruitment and maintenance of prime quality teachers and administrators for various reasons. A researcher also argued that vouchers must not be considered a solution to improve student performance output (Zhao, 2019). In relation, a study also divulged that parents remained neutral about the government's efforts to promote quality, 'child-centered' schools (Wong & Rao, 2020). In a memo by Patrick and Powell (2009), only a few publications with a rigorous context pertain to the effectiveness of online learning for K-12 students. Teachers and students had a very high extent in almost all areas except in areas on curriculum, instruction, and faculty qualifications (Rabacal & Alegato, 2017). Another issue stipulated by Capilitan, Cabili, and Sequete (2015) showed that there was a decongestion of topics for all areas of science. This context has to do with the retention and increase in the knowledge of students. The study of Dixon, Egalite, Humble, and Wolf (2019) stipulated that there is a large impact of voucher use in the test scores in English from a particular urbanized city in India. Also, Lartec et al. (2014) showed that teachers used strategies like improvising instructional materials, remediation of instruction, and utilization of a literary piece in teaching a mother tongue-based multilingual education. Orbe, Espinosa, and Datukan (2018) found the same issues that the teacher's content, pedagogy, and assessment in a science subject are problematic. These challenges include instruction-related factors, teacher competence, in-service training sufficiency, job satisfaction, and support from upper management, laboratory adequacy, school resources, assessment tools, and other influences on teacher success in teaching. Amadio (2015) revealed some other issues related to implementing cross-curricular themes. Teachers often have to deal with a 'congested' or overloaded curriculum. Also, it is difficult to find enough time for cross-curricular themes. Besides, Tabora (2014) mentioned some serious problems with the K-12 senior high school curriculum. These include over-congestion and technical-vocational track preparation of students for work in the industry. Previous findings showed that implementing the SHS program in STEC had mixed response ratings (Acar, 2017). The said study produced the following responses: a fair response for the infrastructure and learning facilities, a very good response for instruction and curriculum, and a

poor response for admission and retention area. Sergio (2012), in his study, claimed that the intended implementation of the K-12 program, teacher training, and deployment are also serious concerns that need active intervention before their implementation. Also, Mohammad (2016) discussed that informants in the study had positive and negative reactions to the K-12 Basic Education Program.

In terms of K-12 curriculum development and preparedness, Dagaraga, Demata, Felicilda, Malinda, and Sabando (2013) revealed that private and public schools were very prepared with their instructional planning, teaching pedagogy, and assessment. However, Umil (2017) mentioned some significant problems in the K-12 implementation like shortages in manpower and facilities, budget allocations, problems brought about by senior high school implementation and an increase in out-of-school youths. Metin (2013) mentioned that teachers do not determine the topics and criteria on the students' level. The author also mentioned that there is insufficient knowledge about how to prepare rubrics. Regarding their level of preparedness in terms of instructional materials, it turned out to be moderately prepared. The concerns/problems encountered in implementing the K-12 curriculum exhibited significant differences when grouped according to age, educational qualifications, and teaching experiences.

With the gaps found in related studies embarking implementing the K-12 program, which took very serious effects on implementing voucher programs, the researchers purport to identify the administrative issues and instructional issues associated with implementing voucher programs in another research environment in selected private schools from a province in Central Luzon, Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The research method for this study was a qualitative phenomenological approach. This approach focuses on describing the lived experiences of people. Also, it explores how they have suffered these experiences. In the phenomenological research design, it concerns the lived experiences of people (Groenewald, 2004).

The researchers explicated the data gathered instead of analyzing it. The explication process referred to has five phases or steps: (1) bracketing and phenomenological reduction, (2) delineating units of meaning, (3) clustering of units of meaning to form themes, (4) summarizing each interview, and (5) extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary in the form of a grounded theoretical framework.

The researchers used interviews and observation in data gathering. This is to get the information requirements for this study. The researchers interviewed the respondents. The investigators also gave the participants a letter of request. This letter signifies their agreement with the interview.

Participants

The respondents of the study comprised school administrators and teachers from selected private senior high schools in the municipality of Bocaue, Bulacan, Philippines. We used purposive sampling to select the respondents of the study. Purposive sampling in qualitative research is a technique used to identify and select information-rich cases for the most efficient use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involved identifying and selecting individuals or groups of people who have experienced or knowledgeable about a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

In this study, selecting the participants was purposeful in the sense that they meet three important criteria for the study: first, a school administrator and teachers; second, school administrators and teachers belong to private schools from a province in Central Luzon, during the school year 2018-2019; and third, they have at least been in the position for at least one year. Considering these general criteria, six school administrators and six teachers qualified for the study.

Instrument

To gather the information for this study, we used researcher-made interview questions. We submitted the questions for validity and reliability to experts. They composed of a university professor, a principal, a headteacher, and a researcher.

These questions describe the issues and problems in implementing the voucher program. We sent letters to the participants to schedule a personal interview with them. This was for them to be informed of the topic at hand and to give them the readiness to tell their lived experiences as school administrators and teachers. The guide questions served as stimuli in getting the perceptions of the respondents on the issues.

The guide questions were:

i. For school principals
1. As a school administrator, what issues do you encounter in implementing the voucher program?
2. What coping mechanisms do you use in addressing the issues encountered?

ii. For teachers
1. As a teacher, what issues do you encounter when implementing the voucher program?
2. What coping mechanisms do you use in addressing the issues encountered?

The researchers then had a personal interview with the respondents to gather data from the respondents regarding their phenomenological experiences in the school administration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to find out the administrative and instructional issues of school administrators and teachers in implementing the voucher program for senior high school. The study hereby found the following themes which answer the statement of the problem mentioned in the preceding discussion. Note that in the discussion we marked our participants in the following pattern: School Administrator one to six and Teacher one to six. This is to preserve their anonymity throughout the study.

Administrative Issues Confronting the Implementation of the Voucher Program
- Delays the in application and processing of documents: Most of the school administrators, (except school administrator six) said that there were issues in the process and application of the documents by having some delays in the submissions of the requirements. It raised several causes: first is about them too many requirements and considered a burden in applying for the voucher program, second is the expense in acquiring the documents needed, and the last refers to the human error, in filling out forms.
- Lack of parents' support and students' active participation in career guidance orientation: Issues of time constraints with parents and the students' decision factors were some issues and challenges encountered by school administrators when they conducted their career guidance orientation. Enough sessions for career guidance orientations and proper guidance for the students and support from parents are the utmost desired.
- Delays in the release of voucher: We considered financial sustainability important for the school. But all experience delays in the release of vouchers. As a solution, administrators ask the bank for financial help. This is to provide for the needs of the school, teachers, and students.
- Difficulties in hiring qualified teachers and keeping teachers: Subsidy for facilities and other learning materials provide all the needs of the students, though it would cost a lot for school administrators. However, the keeping of teachers was one of the primary problems because some teachers considered private schools as a training ground. Teachers would still look for a greener pasture after all the efforts and privileges given to teachers in private schoolsthey still want to enter public schools. Hence, school administrators had a dilemma about investing a lot to teachers, regarding training in that given phenomenon. A recommendation for the proper allocation of budget and prudent planning for the faculty development program is imperative.

From the above mentioned themes identified, it is clear that several issues arose. These cannot be overlooked by school administrators since these matters hamper the operation of the school. Literature that provides some arguments in the previous discussion includes that of Al-Amarat (2011), where the author showed some problems faced by teachers at public schools. The author found that there are significant differences in interaction regarding genders, levels of school, and teaching experience in terms of behavioral problems. From a unique perspective, a publication stated that a state from the U.S. failed to capitalize on the state's economic recovery to benefit the public-school children and left less money available for all public priorities, including schools (Public School Forum, 2016). Based on these arguments, the current study creates another venue or gap from the existing results that pertain to the implementation of the voucher program.

Instructional Issues Confronting the Implementation of the Voucher Program
- Lack of preparedness among teachers: All of the teachers interviewed, agreed that they have given little attention to their preparation. They have listed two significant reasons. First is about the common problems of graduated

teachers, which is the readiness for the actual setting or life inside the school. Although they had their on-the-job training before they graduated, still, they see things when they are already in the field for a longer period. Second, refers to the time-pressured preparations. The institution fills teachers with many teaching loads and prepares for each subject that they teach. They could not practice ahead for their lessons and they cannot have a mastery of the content and pedagogy.

- Congested curriculum competencies and idealistic outcomes expectation : Teachers claim that the K-12 curriculum has a high-standard, that it is so much idealistic. For them, issues rooted in these two reasons: first is that competencies are congested because of insufficiency of time. The mastery of the lessons is being compromised. The second is that the students cannot cope up with all the competencies because it goes beyond learners' capabilities.
- Job mismatch, traditional teaching, non-congruency between the teaching strategies and the content: These are some clamored issues of teachers regarding the issues in teaching strategies and techniques. Hence, the teachers' innovative ideas and student-centered activities are still a challenge for them. Also, school administrators may be clear in setting a qualification standard in hiring and selecting teacher-applicants.
- Innovative technological advancements issues: The need for a strengthened and stable internet connection was one issue being confronted by teachers to learn materials or resources. In the new era of technology nowadays, we challenge schools to cope up with the trends of the present educational advancement in technology and virtual learning.
- Students are not competent: The readiness of students to be competent and lifelong learners, in the perception of the teachers, is still a serious issue. We suggest that an intensive quantitative-based study regarding this issue.

Based on the above mentioned problems from the findings of the current study, these were the same issues raised by researchers Durban and Catalan (2012) wherein they criticized the unresponsive curriculum, improper monitoring of programs, globalization of education, and politics in education. The authors also implored that for education in the Philippines to we must address the ills and problems addressed. In the initial implementation of K+12 curriculums, teachers refined their best practices in three out of five identified areas of concern. The author added that there were no identified best practices in learning resources and teaching strategies and techniques. From this context, the findings support other existing results which particularly point to the problems and challenges of the curriculum development.

Common Problems Associated with the Implementation of the Voucher Program

The common problems associated with implementing voucher program among school administrators are: (a) Delays in application and processing of documents, (b) Lack of parents' support and students' active participation in career guidance orientation, (c) Delays in the release of the voucher, (d) Difficulties in hiring qualified teachers and keeping of teachers.

Meanwhile, the common problems associated with implementing voucher among teachers are: (a) Lack of preparedness among teachers, (b) Congested curriculum competencies and idealistic outcomes expectation, (c) Job mismatch, traditional teaching, non-congruency between the teaching strategies and the content, (d) Innovative technological advancements issues, and (e) Students are not competent.

The enumerated problem based on the revelations of the participants is interesting. And the result of this study is almost parallel to the research of Kanyimba, Hamunyela, and Kasanda (2014). They reported that the barriers to the implementation of education for sustainable development are dispositional, situational, and institutional. In addition, Fontan (2012) stated that the government developed school vouchers to target specific populations of students, including students with disabilities. These are minor matters that have a great impact. The current study focused on the context of the different problems that arose during the implementation of the voucher programs of some selected private institutions. The findings were again an additional reference for future researches in the same field.

Coping Mechanisms that Administrators and Teachers Use to Address the Issues Encountered

Administrators' coping mechanisms: Following mechanisms are used as coping means.

1. Creating a processing team: According to School Administrator two, the administration is making all its effort to provide timely service. Also, they serve the students and process more of their documents. Thus, the school established its core team. They are the ones who handle government aids and subsidy.

2. Strategic planning: For the School Administrator three, they plan for steps to address the different issues. For example, the issue of career guidance orientation. They give letters to the parents and even use social media campaigns. This is for the advance dissemination of information about the senior high school voucher program. School Administrator five stipulated that the school collaborates with the LGU's. They help the students to process their documents. The school started a series of seminars providing expert speakers. It is necessary to adhere to the announcements on the deadline for submission. School Administrator four said that the school also conducts faculty meetings. This is to address all the above-mentioned problems encountered. The school also directs an additional series of seminars. This is to deal with the students' decision-making in the career path.

3. Intensifying partnerships: As to cope with the existing issues, School Administrator six said that the school spearheaded plans. This is to ensure the readiness of the institution. This is also to provide proper solutions to the difficulties they encountered. According to School Administrator three, they also look for partners/connection. This is for the sustaining of the program. The school administrators had strategic planning on in-service seminars and training. They also planned creative ways of processing documents. Also, they developed ways of proper information dissemination. Careful decision-making to address the issues raised. As school administrators, they have to take some risks in the school management system. They have to run the school community in a smooth-sailing environment. They need to be ready to look for tactical ways for the welfare of the school. And aim towards its sustainability and economic progress.

4. Frequent training: As a way of coping up with this difficulty to hire qualified teachers and in retaining the teachers, School Administrator one said that the department conducted in-service training programs to train the teachers before the actual teaching experience, after the In-Service-Training (INSET), the department continues to train the teachers through departmental training every quarter.

Teachers' coping mechanisms

1. Quarterly INSET: According to Teacher one, the department conducted in-service training programs to train the teachers before the actual teaching experience, after the in-service-training, the department continues to train the teachers through departmental training every quarter. Teacher two said that training and development is a crucial part of teaching and learning. Outstanding thing is that the school has used student and teacher empowerment and training.

2. Collaborative curriculum assessment: Teacher three said that teachers, students, the administration must come hand-in-hand for improving each part aspect of the curriculum. In this statement, Teacher three believes that to enhance curriculum, there must be a collaboration between teachers, students, and the school administration for a better way of assessments, evaluations, and proposed some changes according to the needs of the students and the society.

3. Appropriate approaches: Teacher four stated that teachers must be trained well. This is for them to be ready and cope up with the problem that may arise. Meanwhile, according to Teacher five, sometimes, it is the way we approach and teach students that can make them engage in learning. There are some situations wherein students' perception is being affected by the quality of education that the school is offering.

4. Research-oriented learning materials: Teacher six stipulates that the coping mechanisms they use in addressing a variety of issues with implementing senior high school voucher programs are doing researches with instructional materials and content. Moreover pursuing continuous studies like attending seminars and training, taking up a master's degree to continue growth in my career as some things that need to be done.

5. Inter-school benchmarking: Teachers consider seminars and training as an important mechanism to cope with issues. Since this is vital in teachers' capabilities and professional growth. It was also a good initiative that teachers enroll in graduate schools to pursue a higher academic career. This will serve the school in the best way that they can be. Additional research is also one of the important things to consider as claimed by Teacher six. This means that the best way to eliminate problems and illuminate issues is to conduct researches. By benchmarking, teachers can research not just in the local schools but also in the international school.

From the above findings, it showed how vital the administrators and teachers tried to find ways to cope up with the challenges that the voucher program provided them in their schools. Although it is a tough ride ahead, the schools, the administrators, and the teachers still put up a deserving and quality education for students. In

an editorial report of Kiang and Chang (2009), they mentioned that the domains of education are segmented and compartmentalized-conceptually, institutionally, and operationally. This makes the above-stated concepts parallel to the mentioned literature. Harris, Herrington, and Albee (2007) also discussed that vouchers are consistent with aggressive educational accountability policies, which arise from a state's moderate social conservatism, openness to privatization, and demographic characteristics. Furthermore, Brillantes, Brillantes, and Jovellanos (2018), the CHED K-12 adjustment assistance program have to be appreciated as a transition program itself, an innovative program spurred by the need to be recognized in the imperatives of globalization and reforms.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, we drew the following conclusions: (1) the issues associated with implementing voucher programs among school administrators were: delays in application and processing of documents, lack of parents' support and students' active participation in career guidance orientation, delays in the release of vouchers, difficulties in hiring qualified teachers, and keeping teachers, (2)the issues associated with implementing voucher among teachers were: lack of preparedness among teachers, congested curriculum competencies and idealistic outcomes expectation, job mismatch, traditional teaching, non-congruency between the teaching strategies and the content, innovative technological advancements issues, and students are not competent, (3) the common problem encountered by school administrators and teachers were: delays in the application and release of the voucher and insufficient preparations among teachers and students, (4) the school administrators' and teachers' coping mechanism in addressing the issues encountered were: creating a processing team, strategic planning, intensifying partnerships, frequent training, collaborative curriculum assessment, quarterly in-service training, appropriate approaches, and research-oriented learning materials, and inter-school benchmarking.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The study found some interesting findings and presented it concisely to be understood by readers in the field of management, administration, education, and others. However, just like other studies, this one is not absolute and has its own limitations. First, the method used in the article. Since this is done in a qualitative way, future researchers can now also delve into doing quantitative researches also. Second, the respondents, the study limited itself only to a couple of administrators and teachers. The authors suggest to include other stakeholders. Third, the locale of the study, the study only included several private schools in a particular town in the Philippines, thus, for future researches, consider other towns and provinces in the country for more substantial data. And lastly, the research question, a more in-depth and exploratory one makes a big difference.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers provided the following implications for the administrators and teachers for future references:

1. Private schools and institution which try to benefit to the voucher program of the government should strive their best to meet the demands and standards of applying and maintain the voucher program. It is understood that the process is quite challenging and problems might arise, however, with proper coordination to responsible resources, this can be solved.
2. School administrators need a lot of patience and innate understanding regarding the implementation of the voucher program. It is a government fund that cannot be wasted progressively. The program should benefit students, schools, and parents as well.
3. For the teachers, since most of the private schools and institutions allocate their funds' ad salary from the voucher program, this should not be the cause of learning degradation for the delayed release of the fund. Instead, continue to pursue the real goal of being a teacher and exemplify the heart of a real educator.
4. The school, the administrator, the teacher, and the parents should work hand-in-hand for the provision of a buffer system that will support the financial capability of the school and teachers for their salaries and operating expenses.
5. The school should also try to link themselves to other legitimate organizations that can help provide financial support or provision that would suffice the teachers for the time being until the funds of the voucher program is released.

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