

Collaborative Modality for Employment as an Exit Program for Adult Learners with Disability in Alternative Learning System

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to identify the competencies, readiness and employability of ALwD, findings of which will lead to the development of a collaborative modality that will enhance the readiness and employability of ALwD. This collaborative modality is a four-phase process that will track down the capability and readiness of the ALwD towards employment. The study adopted a qualitative thematic method. Thematic analysis will be employed in the current research to analyze the impression of transition teachers and industry on the potential of ALwD to employment, competencies expected from ALwD to meet employment opportunities. Data will be collected using interviews, which will be coded and transcribed in order to determine themes. These themes will help in gaining an in-depth insight of the readiness and competencies of ALwDs based from impression of their parents, teachers and industry owners. Through thematic analysis, the researchers hope to shed light on both shared and distinctive experiences among participants, ultimately making a meaningful contribution to enhance the exit programs and interventions of Alternative Learning System.

Findings implied that respondents believe that ALwD should develop competencies to meet employment opportunities in an industry. Fundamental skills like calculation, positive work attitudes, etc. are basic skills that are expected of every individual who would want to

be employed, and expect by the industry. From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn; (1.) ALwD have potentials when placed under vocational class of ALS. (2.) ALwD can be trained on transition that can enhance their community living skills and can be trained towards livelihood and vocational opportunities. (3.) Sheltered workshop is a good training ground for ALwD to develop skills that are essential for work. (4.) Training and preparation help ALwD succeed in transition where skills, knowledge and attitude are developed to further assimilate them in the world of work. (5.) ALS teachers handling ALwds and industry practitioners share the same observation and sentiment on the employability of ALwD.

Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations are hereby advanced: (1.) ALS teachers should be trained on transition opportunities disability-specific in order to appropriately deliver skills transfer to intended ALwD. (2.) Alternative Learning System Centers should organize disability- based and specific vocational classes that train ALwD skills and competencies that are essential for work. (3.) Establish external linkage, particularly industry for ALwD exposure. (4.) Immersion and later employment. (5.) Foster collaboration and consultation with interagency, teachers, school administrators, family and community to train ALwD on their integration to community and society at large. (6.) It is recommended that ALS program tie up with industry and undergo

periodic evaluation to meet the challenges of the times and the transition needs of ALwD. (7.) The study may be replicated by others research to further enrich the same field of discipline using different setting, group of respondents and

variables. The proposed collaborative modality below be adopted by the City Schools Division of Muntinlupa to help design a responsive transition program for ALwD as an exit for employment.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System, learners with disabilities, transition program, collaborative modality, employment readiness*

INTRODUCTION

The new millennium presents boundless opportunities for growth and development of our youth. Thus, opening doors equally to our PWD's. Gone are the days when our PWD's are left behind capitalizing on their imperfections. Now with the present trends our PWD's have to put up a good fight so that they can realize their dreams and present their potentials and capabilities.

Based on the LIS data Adult Learners with Disabilities increase 1 percent yearly. Although our ALS Center caters some learners with disabilities but none of our Dep Ed Orders have discussed further the exit program. Aside from this we also have the recognized Philippine Transition Model, the K to 12 Transition Curriculum but still there is no concrete / structured exit program that will bridge the school to employment opportunities which is a "Must" for our Adult Learners with disabilities. We also have different mandates that promotes employment of PWD's but has not been fully implemented as of this time. And now that our school has been offering inclusive education and mainstreaming, our question is, "Are we open to accept our PWD's in the world of work today?"

The knowledge, skills and values attained through education open doors to opportunities for a better life in the future. They prepare the recipients toward choices that give them advantages over others. The school, a child friendly, gender sensitive, motivating environment, allows learners to experience what the world will offer them while teachers bridge them to the place they will be in the future. The goal of education is always to make the world a better place for everyone. The learners of today become the shapers of the future.

The academic environment capitalizes on the trend of changing appetites and reinforces practice through training of human resources to meet the challenges of the times. This includes opening doors equally to persons with disabilities (PWD). With the United Nations advocating for balanced opportunities, integrating PWD in the community and treating them similarly like others have been a welcome relief. Teachers, parents and advocates are more positively motivated to make way to a larger world to PWD.

Inclusion of PWD to mainstream society has been a long and ardent work for people behind them. Although slow, the move has gained ground to PWD setting their foot to secondary schools, vocational schools, tertiary environments, and even post-graduate programs. Their presence and engagement in community activities are positive indications that they are now welcome to a society that has isolated them for the longest time. Industries have also opened doors for their training and apprenticeship that led to their employment. Employment that was elusive for PWD then saw an increasing participation that has helped improved their lives. Move to expand prospects have been a steady phase.

Positive as it may for PWD, there are still a lot of work to be done to make their integration to society acceptable devoid of discrimination and mistrust. This is where transition opportunities come in. In special schools where aging population of PWD are constantly on the rise, the concentration must shift to skills-based more than the usual cognitive-focused curriculum. PWD are trainable and competencies that are developed can be channeled to opportunities that are of interest to the industry. There are more Adult Learners with Disability (ALwD) today than were before.

With training on vocational program that interest ALwD, exposure to industry-based skills, and support from advocacy groups, and employment opportunities that can be availed, ALwD will be more motivated to work better for their chances. With prospects of a possible job, ALwD will diligently harness their skills and will showcase their potential. Connection to industry now becomes the job of teachers in special education, who have done a great part in teaching these ALwD the skills, competencies and work values, and promotes their engagement. The industry welcomes ALwD in collaboration with the teachers in special education who now become their job coaches and make sure that their engagement will transit them toward assimilation in the real work setting beyond the classroom and industry-based exposures.

The roles of ALS teachers have widened its scope. From the usual class-room simulated teaching to an industry engagement of work settings, they now become job coaches to help bridge professionalism, corporate or organizational culture and productivity in the work place for ALwD. This entails more passion, commitment and dedication from teachers in special education and strong collaboration work with parents, and industry counterparts. This goes beyond what is expected from a teacher in special education that goes to teach learners with special needs from a Monday to Friday program of instruction.

It is at this premise that this paper is proposed. The researcher being a teacher in special education handling transition program for quite a time has embarked toward a more challenging venture of realizing the K-12 paradigm of school to work. The study attempted to look at industry perspectives, particularly on the employability of ALwD and will try to look at what competencies and readiness they require to welcome ALwD in their backyard.

Research Questions

1. What is the impression of transition teachers and Industry on the potential of ALwD to employment
2. What competencies are expected from ALwD to meet employment opportunities in the industry?
3. From the findings of the study, what modality may be developed for a successful job opportunity?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Researchers in this study used a qualitative thematic method. Thematic analysis is an approach to discovering, analyzing, and reporting qualitative data patterns or themes. Thematic analysis will be employed in the current research to analyze the impression of transition teachers and industry on the potential of ALwD to employment, competencies expected from ALwD to meet employment opportunities. Data will be collected using interviews, which will be coded and transcribed in order to determine themes. These themes will help in gaining an in-depth insight into the readiness and competencies of ALwDs based from impression of their parents, teachers and industry owners. Through thematic analysis, the researchers hope to shed light on both shared and distinctive experiences among participants, ultimately making a meaningful contribution to enhance the exit programs and interventions of Alternative Learning System.

Determination of Sample Size

The participants of the study are the five (3) parents of Adult Learner with Disability, (3) ALS teachers, (3) stakeholder to ensure the research's validity, reliability, and generalization. In Alternative

Learning System, the participants of the study are the parents of Adult Learners with disability. The participants were interviewed in order for the researchers to understand their perspectives regarding their impression and perception about the readiness and capabilities of ALwDs.

Research Instrument

The researchers conducted a semi structured interview to deepen the level of understanding regarding the readiness and capabilities of ALwDs the primary participants in Alternative Learning System. The researchers can explore additional questions to gain a broader understanding of this study. The participants of this study will be assured that their information will be confidential

Data Collection

The data collection for this study is qualitative data collection to gain more understanding in depth based on the readiness and capabilities of ALwDs for their possible future employment.

Information was collected from participants for this research. The researchers conducted an interview through one-by-one discussion with the three (3) parent participants of ALwDs, Three ALS teachers and Three (3) industry owners to uncover their impression and capabilities regarding the possible employment of ALwDs. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began. Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to. Participants were fully informed about the interview process, and the confidentiality and anonymity of the data were ensured through informed consent procedures.

Data Analysis

A thematic approach was used in this study. Exploring the essence of the experience from a transcendental phenomenological perspective (Husserl) provides a unique and powerful lens for understanding experience and reality, offering insights to researchers extracting the transcribed interviews analyzing the information through the procedures of phenomenology. This qualitative analysis utilized a thematic analysis approach, drawing on transcribed interviews with parents of ALwds, ALS teachers and industry owners, encompassing both individual and group discussions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: ALwD have potentials when placed under vocational class in ALS. They are easy to handle, can sustain attention, can also follow instruction, can be taught life skills, capable of developing skills necessary for employment, and can be trained towards livelihood and vocational opportunities too. Sheltered workshop is a good training ground for AwD to develop skills that are essential for work. Training and preparation help ALwD succeed in transition where skills, knowledge and attitude are developed to further assimilate them in the world of work. Special education teachers handling transition and industry practitioners share the same observations and sentiments on the employability of ALwD.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations are hereby advised:

1. Alternative Learning System teachers should be trained on transition opportunities disability-specific in order to appropriately deliver skills transfer to intended AwD.
2. ALS should organize disability-based and specific vocational classes that train ALwD skills and competencies that are essential for work.
3. Establish external linkage, particularly industry for ALwD exposure, immersion and later employment.
4. Their occupational wellness which is their personal satisfaction with work and learning contributing meaningfully, continually expanding their skills and strengths serves as their response to the challenging time of their experience with social indifference and the treat of pandemic
5. Foster collaboration and consultation with interagency, teachers, school administrators, family and community, institutions (LGUs, religious, civic, etc) to train ALwD on their integration to community and society at large.
6. It is recommended that transition program in ALS should be tied up with industry and undergo periodic evaluation to meet the challenges of the times and the transition needs of ALwD.
7. The study may be replicated by other researchers to further enrich the same field of discipline using different setting, group of respondents and variables.
8. The proposed Collaborative Modality and module should be adopted by the City Schools Division of Muntinlupa to help design a responsive transition program for ALwD.
9. Provision for their vocational course skills to enrich the ALwDs learning and occupational competence

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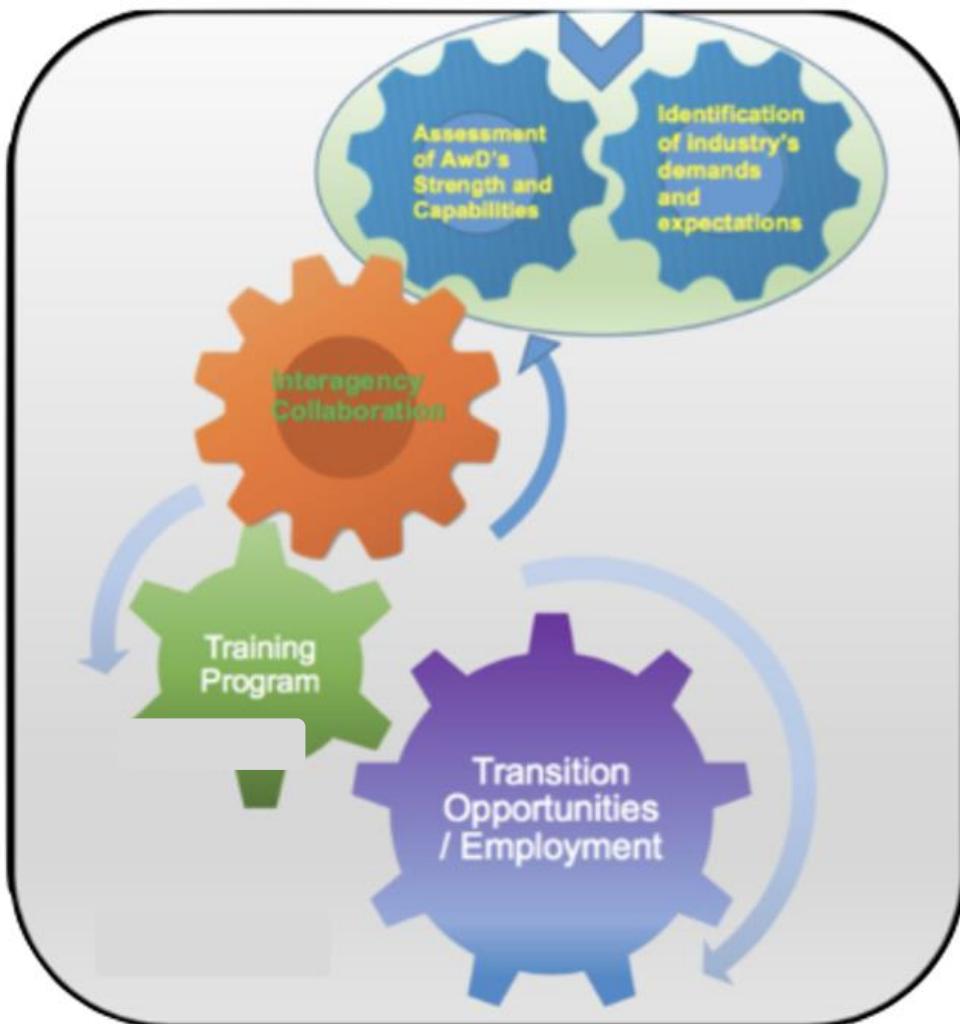
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Innovation, Intervention, Strategies

The Collaborative Modality is a transition model that guides ALwD on their full employment opportunity beginning from identification of their strengths, skills, competencies to full transition opportunity – employment. It draws its inspiration in the mechanical gears to symbolize the collaboration and continuity of motion towards common goal. Five gears are interrelated with one another where their movements set the motion for AwD transition opportunities.

Collaborative Modality for the Employability of Adult with Disabilities





The model has four phases, 1st phase focuses on matching industry's demands and expectations and ALwD identified strengths and capabilities. The 2nd phase points to interagency collaboration where industry, school, parents and community play significant roles in ALwD's full participation to transition training and opportunities. The 3rd phase centers on the training program that PWD can undergo to help him become familiarized with work environment, culture and practices. This will also serve as transition to develop skills and competencies demanded or expected by the industry. It can be done in school and in work place. The 4th and final phase is his full employment participation where he enjoys work opportunities similar to his counterparts.

One of the components of comprehensive inclusive program for children with special needs is the program options. But transition options toward employment for ALwD are limited. The Collaborative Modality can help them lead towards employment, however, the school has to modify and implement curriculum for ALwD to foster optimum learning based on individual's need and potentials and industry practice and standards. Curriculum modification shall include team teaching and provision of support from local government, parents, professionals, specialist, volunteer and industry practitioners.

Collaborative Modality fosters communication channels through interagency collaboration among industry players, schools, family and community. It promotes intervention for ALwD to develop essential skills to keep up with industries' expectations. It is designed within an outcome oriented process that promotes movement from school to out of school activities. Designing a competency program as a basis of training will bridge the development of skills and will enhance the program to meet the expected competencies for adults with disabilities towards their transition opportunities and employment in a chosen industry.