

Experiences in the Chosen Strand of Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) Passers: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract: *This study was conducted to describe the experiences in the chosen strand of Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) passers of Sandoval National High School, Sandoval, Narra, Palawan. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: 1) What are the experiences of Grade 11 EIM students in Sandoval National High School in terms of: a) Readiness; b) Challenges and; c) Coping Strategies of the participants? 2) How do these experiences affect the academic performance of Grade 11 EIM students? and 3) How do the participants perceive the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT)? Total enumeration, face to face interview and researchers-made interview protocol were used in data gathering. Moreover, data gathered were encoded, transcribed, coded and themed. Based on findings, it was concluded that participants experienced adjustment issues. On the other hand, difficulties experienced by the participants is addressed through the support of the people around them like their new classmates, teachers and families. Furthermore, it was also concluded that positive experiences of the participants made them easily adjust to their new environment, and as a result, positive perception on the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) was inculcated to the students. The researchers recommended that the school shall prepare an intervention program intended for the PEPT passers and teachers, classmates and families of Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) passers should sustain the support and inspire them more on their studies for them to easily adjust in their new grade level.*

Keywords— *experiences, PEPT, challenges, readiness, perception and coping mechanisms*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

One of the extensive problems in today's society is the increase of students dropping off from school and children who did not have the chance to pursue their education due to several reasons. Not everyone is given a chance to pursue their studies without interruption. Sometimes money, fitness, and personal problems force a student to stop schooling for a year or two; sometimes they force the student to discontinue from going to school altogether and probably in order to work.

This is the dilemma of the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) under the Accreditation and Equivalency Program (EO No. 733 s. 1991) needs to report. Through PEPT, students who are no longer in school will be engaged back in the formal school system if so preferred. Meanwhile, children who were incapable to attend formal education can take advantage of the equivalency exam to have understanding and skills they acquired through informal and non-formal means be validated and accredited in order to re-enter formal school and qualify for a more descent job.

Earlier, learners would have had no choice but to catch up on the years they spent away from school once they have resumed their schooling. Students who have stopped schooling now have better chances under the programs like Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) and the

Alternative Learning System Accreditation and Equivalency (ALS A & E) Program of the Department of Education (DepEd).

Taking the PEPT, a learner who fell behind their classmates because of dropping out from school can have the choice to skip the grade or year levels they would normally be required to complete as long as they can prove that their competencies are equivalent to learners with the same age as them.

This year, there are six learners from Sandoval National High School who passed the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) and promoted to senior high school. One from elementary level and five from junior high school. Since these learners were promoted on the mid of the first semester, they missed lots of competencies required for the different subjects. The researchers wanted to determine how these learners cope with the interventions given to them as well as their experiences.

Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the experiences in the chosen strand of Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) passers of Sandoval National High School, Sandoval, Narra, Palawan.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study aimed to understand the experiences of Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) passers in

Sandoval National High School. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of Grade 11 EIM students in Sandoval National High School in terms of:
 - 1.1 Readiness;
 - 1.2 Challenges and;
 - 1.3 Coping Strategies of the participants?
2. How do these experiences affect the academic performance of the Grade 11 EIM students?
3. How do the participants perceive the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT)?

2. METHODOLOGIES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 SAMPLING

Total enumeration was used to identify the participants. Five (5) Technical Vocational Livelihood (TVL) learners who are Electrical Installation and Maintenance (EIM) strand recently passed the PEPT and promoted as grade 11 students. Hence, they were the subject as participants.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION

The researchers used a face-to-face interview and researchers-made interview protocol to understand the experiences of Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) passers in Sandoval National High School. The researchers asked permission of the School Principal before conducting the research study. The researchers also asked the parents and gave an informed consent for their approval in interviewing their child. The data gathering was scheduled for two (2) weeks. The two (2) week-time schedule were divided among the five (5) participants.

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The gathered data were encoded, transcribed, coded and themed.

3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS

I. The experiences of Grade 11 PEPT passers in Sandoval National High School

1.1 Readiness

1.1.a Anxious and being timid to the new environment

As PEPT passers, the participants run into some difficulties on how to adjust in their new grade level. The participants felt anxiety and there was a feeling of shyness with their new classmates and teachers since they came from the lower grade level. Moreover, they felt tense on how they can cope with the new environment where they belong now.

Participant 1, 2, 3 and 5 said,

P1. "Noong first day po kinakabahan po, tapos kami lang din na lima and nandoon, kami-kami lang din po magkakasama parang ang hirap po mag-adjust syempre po magkakaclose na po sila simula pa nong first quarter yong

mga nag-aaral sa strand namin magkakasama na sila ng almost 2 months. Kaya mahirap po mag-adjust."

P2. "Nahihya po ako maam, at medyo nakakastress din po kasi pakiramdam ko mataas yong standard ng mga kaklase ko sa akin, kumpara sa akin n nagtake lang ng PEPT nakapasa na, samantalang sila ay by level ang kanilang pag-aaral."

P3. "Parang naiilang po ako, kasi hindi ko pa sila kilala, tapos sila na yong makakasalamuha ko. Kinakabahan din po kasi hindi ko pa sila nakakasama tapos kung ano ang magiging trato nila sa amin."

They further stated that,

P1 said that,

"...first time namin sa grade 11, tapos di namin alam kung ano ang mga susunod na maeexperience namin kasi senior high school na, hindi na junior high school na easy lang."

P2 also said that,

"Nagkaroon po ako ng takot kung ano yong mga gagawin at makakaharap na mga bagong teacher na hindi ko pa kakilala. Bigla po nag-iba yong grade level namin dahil nakapasa kami sa PEPT, ang hirap po lalo na po sa mga bagong subjects namin sa grade 11."

P4 also stated that,

"Nakaramdam po ako ng kaba dahil bagong grade level na, bagong adjustments nanaman po ang gagawin para sa mga classmates, subjects at mga bagong guro, lalo't higit po marami kaming competencies na hindi napag-aralan na kinakailangan sa bago naming mga subjects sa bago naming grade level."

P5: "Nakaramdam po ako ng kaba at natakot din po, kasi bago po ako ulit nakabalik sa school."

Di ko po alam ang gagawin ko. Bagong adjustment po ang gagawin ko para sa mga classmates, subjects at mga bagong guro, lalo't higit po marami akong grade level na nalaktawan po, marami po akong hindi alam na competencies na hindi ko po napag-aralan na kinakailangan sa bago kong mga subjects sa bago ko pong grade level."

It revealed that anxiety and shyness was the first feeling the participants felt in their first day as PEPT passers. There was a feeling of doubt if they can cope with their new grade level and new environment as senior high school students. Stress was also another challenge that PEPT passers encountered in their new environment.

This study was supported by Blona (2005), states that learners experience anxiety since some are trying to cope with the trends of adjusting to a new existing environment, new classmates and academic stress.

1.2 Challenges encountered

1.2.a Adjustment Issues

One of the challenges encountered by the participants was difficulty in adjusting to their new grade level especially in coping with the different subjects. Since they were promoted at the mid of second quarter, they missed a lot of the

competencies that they need or required to their new grade level. They need to do lots of activities and study topics for the first quarter for them to be able to cope with the second quarter. Furthermore, they also experienced difficulties on how to adjust with their new classmates and teachers.

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 said that,

P1. *"Mahirap po mag-adjust syempre po nag iba na po mga subjects namin, tapos di pa po naming masyado nakakasama mga bagong teachers namin.*

Sa mga classmates po, iba po kasi pag nakasama mo mula grade 7 hanggang grade 10 talaga. Sila po kasi bago pa lang namin nakasama kaya mahirap po mag-adjust sa kanila at mahirap po makisama. Sabi po ni ma'am pwede din po magtanong sa classmates na may experience na sa pinapagawa pero bilang bagong estudyante, nahihiya po talaga kami."

P2. *"Nahirapan po ako sa unang araw ng pasok ko, isang linggo o dalawang linggo. Nahkaroon po ako sa sarili ko ng isiping ayaw ko na pong pumasok kasi nahihirapan ako, na hindi ko napag-aralan yung ibang subjects."*

P3. *"Nahirapan po akong maghabol ng klase po sa first quarter. Kasi second quarter na kami pumasok.*

Kung paano po gawin yung mga nagawa na po nila kasi hindi na po yon nadiscuss sa amin. Pinagsasabay po namin ang first quarter at second quarter.

Nahirapan po talaga ma'am kasi di po namin masyadong alam ang gagawin, kaya mahirap po talaga mag-adjust."

P4. *"Nahirapan po talaga akong mag-adjust sa bago naming grade level, kasi po grade 10 po ako nong makapasa ako sa PEPT. Hindi po namin natapos yong mga aralin namin sa grade 10 na alam ko pong malaking tulong po sana pagdating namin sa senior high school. Lalo na po sa mga bagong subjects namin ngayon, meron po kasing mga topics na hindi ko kayang iconnect sa mga dating napag-aralan namin. Parang meron pong kulang sa akin."*

P5. *"Mahirap po talaga sa part ko ma'am kasi po grade 5 lang po ako tapos bigla po naging senior high school. Napakalayo po ng agwat ng level ng pinanggalingan ko po sa bago ko pong grade level.*

Medyo matagal po akong nahinto sa pag-aaral kaya nahirapan po talaga ako. Lalo na po sa mga bagong subjects ko sa grade 11, napakarami pong mga competencies ang hindi ko po talaga napag-aralan na kung saan yon po ang kailangan sa mga aralin namin."

It showed that the participants faced a big issue when it comes to adjustment in their new environment since they missed lots of competencies that they need as senior high school students. Being accelerated was not easy, difficulties or challenges would be faced by students especially adjustment issues to their new environment and new peers. There would be emotional, social and psychological adjustment as well.

It was supported by the study conducted by the National Association for Gifted children (2018) that some argue that acceleration can be harmful to student's self-concept and ability to fit in with older peers.

Moreover, readiness is another aspect that accelerated or promoted students should possess. Without readiness, promoted students' performance will also be affected. Lack of school readiness can produce long-term problems for children. Learners who enter school late than their peers in terms of basic intellectual and social-emotional skills are at risk for a number of negative outcomes, including low achievement, peer problems, own attachments and investment in school, and school drop-out. (Welsch, 2014).

1.3 Coping Mechanism

1.3.a Self-study

As Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) passers, the participants missed lots of competencies or topic that they need for second quarter of their current grade level. To cope with this dilemma, they did self-study with the topics that they missed since it wasn't discussed anymore in the classroom with them.

According to the participants,

P1. *"Nag self-study po ako, pero hindi ko pa din po masyadong maintindihan."*

P2. *"Yong ginawa ko po ma'am nakikinig po akong mabuti sa turo ng aking mga guro. Isinusulat ko po yong mga bagay na hindi ko maintindihan kasi may time po nanahihiya po ako magtanong kaya isinusulat ko po. Pagdating ko po sa bahay, sinusubukan ko pong sagutan yong mga topocs na hindi ko po maintindihan. Nakatulong din po sa akin yong pagbabasa ko ng mga sarili kong aklat."*

P3. *"Nagpursige po akong gawin nang maayos yong mga pinapagawa pa sa amin. Nakatulong din po sa akin yong pag iinternet ko po."*

P4. *"Nanghihiram po ako ng mga notebooks ng mga kaklase namin, tapos pinag-aaralan ko po yong mga topics na natapos na po nila para maintindihan ko po yong kasalukuyang topics namin."*

P5. *"Nagbabasa po ako ng mga aklat na pwedeng makatulong sa akin, kasi grade 5 po ako at naging grade 11 bigla. Napakahirap po sa akin. Malaking tulong din po yong paghiram ko ng mga notebook ng mga classmates namin kasi po napag-aralan ko po yong mga naunang topics na hindi po namin naabutan.*

Based on the findings, it revealed that self-studying helps the participants to cope with their new grade level especially with their different subjects. Also, studying was a habit that a student should develop. Being a responsible student was indeed an attitude that would help them to become competent and competitive student. They need to learn strategies and approaches that would help them adjust and manage stress of their new environment.

Clark (2013) supported this study that students need to create a coping strategy for their stress in order for them to reduce the negative effects to their learning and performance. As such, strategies are needed to reduce stress thereby increasing student's performance.

1.3.b Looking for Others Support

Another strategy to cope with their new environment was seeking support from their subject teachers and

classmates. Some of them asked help from their relatives and friends.

The participants said that,

P1. "...kaya naghahanap pa din po ako ng tulong sa ibang mga estudyante sa ibang strand kung busy po and mga kaklase namin."

P2. "...at minsan naman po ay nagpapatulong ako sa mga kaklase ko."

P3. "Nagpapaturo nalang po ako sa iba na mas nakakaalam kung paano gawin ang mga activities namin. Nagpapatulong din po ako sa ate ko at sa mga kaklase ko."

P4. "...Minsan po nagtatanong din po ako sa mga teachers namin kapag hindi ko na po talaga maintindihan."

P5. "...Minsan po nagtatanong ako sa mga kaklase ko kung paano gawin yong activity na pinapagawa ng teacher namin."

Findings revealed that seeking others help was another strategy the participants did in order for them to cope with their new grade level as PEPT passers. A person being new to his environment needs to employ different strategies and ways in order to survive and manage stress because of adjusting issues.

Clark (2013) supported this study and states that students need to create a coping strategy for their stress in order for them to reduce the negative effects to their learning and performance. As such, strategies are needed to reduce stress thereby increasing student's performance.

II. The Effects of Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) Passers Experiences on their Academic Performance

A. Easily Adaptation to the New Environment

Being a PEPT passer was not that simple. The participants faced difficulties in adjusting to their new environment. Due to the support from their new peers and teachers, the participants easily adapted to the new trends of their new grade level.

Participants 1, 2, and 3 stated that,

P1. "Okay naman po. Nahahabol naman po namin. Nakakaya naman po namin."

Okay na po yong performance namin, hindi na po kami masyadong nahuhuli."

"Hindi po kami binibigla ng mga teachers namin sa pinapagawa nila. Binibigyan po kami ng sapat na time para magawa ang mga dapat naming gawin." "Pag hindi ko napo kaya yong gagawin tapos di ko po alam, nagtatanong po ako sa mga kaklase ko, binibigay naman po nila yong exact na information."

P2. "Nakasabay na po mam sa level ng mga bago kong kaklase. Naramdaman ko po na medyo parehas na po kami kasi nagawa ko na po yung mga bagay na pareho sa kanila at yong mga bagay na di ko po nagagawa dati."

He further said that,

"Nagkaroon na po ako ng mga kaibigan." "Napansin ko din po sa mga teachers na iba yong pinag-aaralan naming kumpara sa ibang estudyante kaya kayo po ang nag-adjust para sa amin."

P3. "Nakapag-adjust na po kasi nakakasalamuha ko napo sila. sa mga performances po naisasama na din po nila kasi grupo-grupo po. Ayun medyo umaayos na din po yong performance kasi di na po ako naiilang sa kanila."

He added that,

"Medyo napapadali napo kasi nakakasabay na po ako sa pinag-aaralan nila". "...sila yong nagpapalakas ng loob namin".

Findings shown that support from external factors like family, peers and teachers played important role in order for them to easily adjust to their new environment. The feeling of comfort, love and support help the students survive and adjust in their new environment. The feeling of acceptance and belongingness made students feel comfortable and confident. Supporting them and guiding them what to do would help them manage stress to their new environment.

It was supported by Clark (2013) said that by providing learners with a feeling of control over their education, giving them information about what to expect, and provide them feedback or suggestions on how to improve their academic performance are ways in reducing stress. In addition, Hearon (2015), said that children should be given accountabilities or tasks in order for them to feel that they really belong to the group.

III. Participants Perception in the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT)

A. Difficult to Pass

Taking an exam or test was not easy. It needs self-confidence and belief to pass. Just like the participants, they thought that PEPT was difficult to pass that's why they just believed in prayer that they could pass the test.

Participants 2, 3, and 4 said that,

P2. "Mahirap po mam. Kasi po baka yong ibang mga tanong di naming kayang sagutan." "...Basta nagpray lang po ako. Ilang araw po tapos nagtake na po ako agad. Kailangan din po ng tiwala sa sarili na kaya."

P3. "Ano po mam, noong di pa ako kami nag- eexam parang ang hirap po ng pagsusulit."

Iniiisip ko po na parang ang hirap po ipasa ng exam, lalo na po sa amin na nasa junior high school palang po."

"Tapos nagdasal lang po talaga na sana po makapasa. Tiwala lang po sa sarili"

P4. "Mahirap po mam".

"Nagdasal po ako na sana po makapasa po ako sa exam."

In everything you do, self-confidence and prayer were powerful tools to survive. Believing that you can, could help you boost your confidence in accomplishing your task. The participants believed that having self-confidence would help them pass the exam.

According to Marlborough Organization, self-confidence is a feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities and judgment. But for, Green (nd), for various students, the main problem with exams is a lack of self-confidence or what some people might call "test anxiety".

B. Support and Opportunity are stepping stone to achieve their dreams

Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) would have a great help to the participants. It gave them a chance to be on their right grade level base on their age. It also gave them the opportunity to continue their studies and would serve as stepping stone to achieve their dreams.

The participants said that,

P1. "Nakatulong po sa katulad ko mam na parang mataas na ubg edad na nabigyan ng chance na humabol don sa dapat na grade sa edad ko po. Malaki yong naitulong nya na mahabol ko pa yong ibang mga classmates ko."

P2. "Malaki yong ginawang tulong ng PEPT sa mga estudyante. Kasi kung yog level mo ay nasa baba lang, tumutulong yong PEPT para mapaunlad yong isang bata at maabot yong minimithing pangarap ng isang estudyante."

He further said that,

"Masyadong mahalaga yong binibigay na standard ng PEPT kasi may mga batang nawawalan ng pag-asa. Pero dahil sa PEPT nagbigay sya ng malaking pag-asa. Ang PEPT ay isang daan o susi para makapagtapos ng pag-aaral."

He continuously said that,

"Pinakanaitulong po sa akin ay nagbigay sya ng malaking pag-asa. Dahil sa PEPT nabigyan ako ng pag-asa na mag-aral ulit."

P3. "Malaki po yong naitulong ng PEPT kasi syempre po yong isang taon paghihirapan mo pa. Hindi mo na nagawa kasi nalipat kana sa ibang grade level. Talagang laki ng pasasalamat ko s abumuo ng PEPT."

Malaki ang naitulong sa maraming kabataan.

Malaking opportunity po yong PEPT."

It revealed in this study that the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) was one of the programs of the Department of Education that gave opportunity to those students who want to pursue their dreams. They developed an attitude of positivity that despite of challenges they encountered like poverty, and the feeling of being hopeless, PEPT gave them a chance and new hope to continue their studies and reached their dreams for a better future. For them PEPT was a good experience.

This study was supported by the National Association for Gifted children (2018), they said that gifted children who had been accelerated, 71% reported satisfaction with their acceleration experience. It is reported that participants who were unsatisfied, majority of them indicated that they preferred more acceleration. In addition, interviews done with students who were accelerated, most of them said that acceleration is an excellent experience.

4. DESSIMINATION AND ADVOCACY

The school shall prepare an intervention program intended for the PEPT passers.

Teachers, classmates and families of Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) passers should sustain the support and inspire them more on their studies for them to easily adjust in their new grade level.

The researchers will present the findings of this study through School Learning Action Cell (SLAC), District Office, Research Summit and Forum, and Research Congress.

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