

The Journey of Education Service Contracting (ESC) Grantees: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study was initiated to explore and understand the journey of ESC grantees of the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System. Subsequently, this qualitative exploration hoped to draw out insights on the relevance of ESC program to the sustenance of the grantees. Qualitative Phenomenological approach was used with the 2 respondents: 15 participants for FGD and 5 for IDI. DepEd Orders were utilized as one of the references. Results showed that the most common lived experiences of the grantees are feeling happy and grateful, financial instability, being pressured and motivated, and learned to pray. Meanwhile, their coping mechanisms are being innovative, optimistic, and practical and listened to advices. On the other hand, aspirations and insights of them are as follows: the school shall set teacher- hiring standards and implement relevant programs and activities, have moral and emotional supports from parents, and when success comes, remunerate parents' effort. The study concludes that the recipients of grant have relied to the sustenance of the public-private program through the ESC.

KEYWORDS: Education, Journey, ESC Grantees, Qualitative, Thematic Analysis, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Engaging the participation of every sector is ensuring the delivery of quality basic education for every Filipino learner. Through private institutions, learners and their families are provided with options to their needs and career goals governed with the issued manual of regulations for providing quality basic education for all Filipino learners. (Leonor M. Briones, October 29, 2016).

In our country's context, educational system addresses and guarantees for free secondary education in legal and policy documents, and assesses the current government policy for secondary education expansion—the Education Service Contracting (ESC) program. The subsidy is P8, 500 per student in participating schools outside the National Capital Region and P10,000 per student in private schools in the NCR. DepEd and FAPE determined the distribution of slots under the ESC based on public school shortage in the regions, schools division and municipalities.

As of 2015, there are 16,428 private schools out of the 63,167 elementary and secondary schools in the

Philippines. Through the GASTPE and the Senior High School (SHS) Voucher Program, the government not only provides financial assistance for learners who wish to pursue high school education in private schools but assist as well in decongesting class sizes and strengthens the thrust that education for all is the shared responsibility of all sectors. It gives support to facilities and assistance to teaching and learning. The program has contributed to the schools' performance indicators such as enrolment rate, cohort survival rate, participation rate and completion rate (Abiva, 2016).

In SY 2016- 2017, minutes during the year- end reporting of the principals of the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System gleaned that population of ESC grantees was decreasing. After four years, Fr. Saturnino Urios College of Trento, Incorporated (FSUCTI) has decreased from 101 to 89; Fr. Saturnino Urios College of Bayugan, Incorporated (FSUCBI) from 137 to 88, and Fr. Saturnino Urios College of Sibagat, Incorporated (FSUCSI) 158 to 124. This gradual decline caused

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diminishing performance rating of the schools in Cluster 3. Eventually, this will lead to the recommendation of FAPE for decrease or even withdrawal of the budget for subsidizing schools as other private schools are experiencing.

Generally this will also affect the unspent 21.5 Billion national budget thus last September 19, 2017, Sec. Briones with other DepEd Officials were grilled to answer for returning 5 Billion for Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE). To the extent, this occurrence created vacuum between the standard and actual implementation in the private schools.

With the fact that researches about the topic is very limited as bases for interventions and understanding the occurrence on the perspective of the ESC grantees themselves, as administrator- researcher, I come up to that realization in the pursuit of studying this phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and understand the journey of ESC grantees of the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System. This qualitative exploration hopes to draw out insights on the relevance of ESC program to the sustenance of the grantees.

Research Questions

This phenomenological study will look into the experiences of ESC grantees. Specifically, this will seek answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of ESC grantees in the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System?
2. How do ESC grantees address the challenges encountered? and;
3. What are the aspirations or insights of ESC grantees in relation to their academic journey?

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on the theory of Hobbes' (1651) Enforced Cooperation. The main reasons for cooperation are the threat of a central authority, common objectives or other self- interest. He argued that it is difficult to develop cooperation without a strong central authority. Ridley (1997) supports that human minds are built by selfishness but that they are built with the capacity to be social, trustworthy and cooperative as this may benefit the individuals. Hence, our institutions should be designed to draw out these instincts.

Another theory that supports this study is the Game Theory of Weibull (1995). It emphasizes that for individuals pursuing their own self- interest, incentives for cooperation will be greater than for

selfish behavior (even without the central authority) under a wide variety of circumstances, including where the partners are hostile. Game Theory has developed considerably over recent decades to outline some of the basic notions and applicability of one approach to understanding why partnership may come about. This Educational Service Contracting scheme or ESC provided for by Republic Act 8545 (amending R.A. 6728). Its main objective is to decongest public secondary schools by "contracting" the excess capacities of private high schools through the provision of subsidies for students who, otherwise, would have gone to the public high schools. Theoretically, this ESC is a concrete demonstration of a strong private-public sector partnership in making secondary education accessible to Filipino children or more than 20 years now.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This phenomenological study is dependent on the journey of ESC grantees from the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System and their responses to interview questions. ESC grantee-participants have different experiences as they journey their secondary education. Cluster C Director and principals are informed of the study and its purpose and that this study may affect the responses of the participants with the fear that this might be taken against them personally.

Parents of the ESC grantees are informed also for the personal and family reason that maybe disclosed by the respondents. The tendency to protect their school and family, participants might not be compelled to share their true perceptions regarding some issues outside of their comfort.

Moreover, I admit the weaknesses which may not allow this study to achieve the expected generalizability. The sample size of participating students is relatively small. There will be 15 FGD participants from FSUCBI and FSUCSI and 5 from FSUCTI for in- depth interview. They are identified as ESC grantees who are Students- At- Risk- of Dropping Out (SARDO) of the particular school. Besides, I cannot guarantee the perfect recollection of the past memories and experiences of the participants considering memory gaps. Therefore, the application of the findings to a wider population needs careful consideration.

This study will take three (3) weeks to gather data through interview and to identify the themes of their responses. Another two (2) days for the analysis and interpretation and a week for providing recommendations.

Importance of the Study

As I conduct this phenomenological inquiry, I hope to provide more insights and literature into the very limited studies regarding the subject.

The different journey of the participants may benefit the Public School-**Department of Education (DepEd)** for this will serve as solution to the problem of looming congestion of students in their schools and how to enhance the program during the monitoring and evaluation in the delivery of quality education to students.

Consequently, Private School **Administrators** in the formulation of interventions and in the crafting of friendly policies that can positively affect the ESC grantees and the whole community as a whole.

In the same manner, **Teachers** may gain feedback concerning the feeling and worries of the SARDOs and offer necessary adjustments without depriving learning standards and services by employing creative flexible strategies. These will surely lay inspiration and productive experiences for the entire school community.

Parents, the strong foundation of their children may provide security as the family is the fountain of courage and strength for all children. Give them advises by modelling and boost their self- esteem to sufficiently and positively decide for their education.

The **students** through this study will learn from their experiences and that take every experience as a challenge to surpass and survive thus motivated even more to finish academic endeavor and become productive citizens as what the country and their loved ones dreamed them to be.

Finally, other **researchers** may use this study as basis in conducting related studies about Junior High School students whom are ESC grantees. They may also use this as literature review in their study.

Definition of Terms

To give better understanding on the terms used in the study, the following terms will be defined conceptually and operationally.

Journey refers to a person's experience of changing or developing from one state of mind to another as a journey (mobile – dictionary.reverso.net). In my study, the term refers to the academic undertakings of the ESC grantees who are identified Students At-Risk- of Dropping Out (SARDO).

Students At- Risk- of Dropping Out or **SARDO** is a subprogram of Dropout Reduction Program as defined in DepEd Order #4, s. 2010. This refers to students who have the tendency of dropping out or leaving school.

Education Service Contracting or ESC is a scheme under the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) wherein the government subsidizes the tuition fee of students who enroll in private schools because public secondary schools cannot accommodate them anymore. It is jointly implemented by DepEd and the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2010). In my study, this term refers to the program which gives financial assistance to the participants.

ESC Grantees refers to Junior High School students who are subsidized by the ESC program of the government (DepEd Order No. 26, s. 2014). In my study, this term refers to the informants and participants who are beneficiaries of the program.

Organization of the Study

This study has its 5 chapters. Each chapter will be properly discussed and the details will be arranged accordingly to provide understanding of the full concept of the study.

Chapter 1 includes the overview of this study. It presents the foreign and local perspectives of the public- private partnership through the ESC and how this affects the journey of the grantees. Some general questions are presented here and will become the basis for detailed discussion in the end of this qualitative research. In addendum, facts and relevant studies that will clarify and justify the urgency to conduct this study are also transpired.

Chapter 2 covers the array of literature and studies conducted related to this study. Readings like journal, DepEd Orders and Memoranda are utilized to establish the relevance of the study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology applied in the study including: research design, role of the researcher, research participants, data collection and analysis, criteria of trustworthiness in the study, and finally the ethical consideration in the conduct of this study.

Chapter 4 will present the thorough result of the study based from the interviews conducted to the participants who will unfold the underlying reasons for this phenomenological study that is viewed to explore and collect the information from the ESC grantees as participants.

And finally, Chapter 5 will thoroughly discuss the result as acquired from the carefully collected and analyzed data in forms of answers from the participants. These will be explained based on the sufficient understanding of the research questions in the previous chapter. It will also confer the efficacy and appropriateness of the theories. More so, this will

talk through the implications of practice, further researches and so with the concluding remarks.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Various readings from different journals, researches, dissertations and internet sites which have a bearing to the present study are presented in this unit. I focus on the journey of ESC grantees.

McQuaid (1999) argues that above theories suggest a number of factors that may promote or hinder partnership.

First is enlarging the 'shadow of the future.' To increase the importance of the future relative to the present may aid cooperation. Stable cooperation is aided by frequent interaction between individuals. Organizations discuss and hierarchies are said to promote this by binding people in long term multi-level relationships which increase the number and importance of likely future interactions. Hence, constant changing personnel or their responsibilities may discourage cooperation. Thus, institutions tend to create perpetual public-private partnerships.

Second, cooperation can be encouraged by changing the payoffs, and by making defections from cooperation more expensive. In order to attract increased private sector involvement, it is likely to be essential to change existing payoffs. Also if the costs of failure of a partnership are high (like future losses, bad publicity, effect on other projects etc.), a partnership is less likely to disintegrate.

Third, if however, the relationship is likely to come to an end then there will be a temptation to hold back, or behave more in your own interests rather than trying to maximize joint gains. Hence joint ventures are more likely to succeed if they are seen as a precursor to more intimate cooperation rather than as finite activities.

Fourth, Kay (1993) applies the Prisoners' Dilemma and argues that a long term relationship can overcome the dilemma and achieve the optimum outcome. In joint ventures the process is broken down into a sequence of small steps, with early meetings used to explore each other's attitudes, then offering whole-hearted cooperation and awaiting a response. If the other side fails to reciprocate, then not much has been lost and you can hold back in the future, but if they do reciprocate then you continue to give full cooperation, so gradually improving trust and establishing a cooperative relationship.

Fifth, local characteristics are also important in assisting public-private partnerships. Even where there is a will to cooperate, there remains the question of capacity to make a meaningful contribution, hence

there is considerable emphasis on capacity building to enable more local communities to participate in economic development initiatives. Considerable work has been carried out on local capacity building for local community organizations. National 'social responsibility' private sector organizations have grown in capacity and importance and are often crucial to private inputs to economic initiatives.

And finally, Nutt and Backoff (1992) argue that a 'mutualist' strategy by organizations of marshaling external and internal stakeholders is effective for a public agency in responding to turbulent environments in which needs are rapidly changing and collaboration is required to respond. This strategy is proactive and a response to a diverse and ever changing set of needs through actions to meet these needs. This organizational relationship bridges across traditional lines of authority creating complex structures on solving organizational dilemmas.

One hundred ninety-two countries in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasized and stressed that free and compulsory education is guaranteed as a human right at both the primary and secondary stages by 148 countries in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Tomaševski 2004). Moreover, other international agreements such as the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) and the (Revised) European Social Charter (1996) have ratified international commitments for the human right to a free education.

With recognition that low-cost private education is serving large numbers of low-income families in developing countries is very recent. In many instances, it is assumed that non-state provision has arisen in response to state failure to provide services – and is thus the only option for those who cannot get access to public provision. The mushrooming numbers of poor people who have access to public services but who vote with their feet and make use of neighboring non-state services is testament to this.

In addition, Government assistance to private institutions can be readily felt in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). For example, private involvement in secondary education assumes both provision and financing. Private provision includes elite schools often owned and operated by faith-based organizations (FBOs); low-quality dwelling house' type schools owned by small community associations; free-paying classes private-for-profit operators; community schools run by parents or community associations; and private tutoring.

Consequently, Private source of financing include formal and informal fees and charges paid by parents, contributions from NGOs, well-wishers and corporation to support school improvement. In fact it is the responsibility of the government to establish a policy framework to ensure that access to quality education is provided to eligible students in the private schools (Verspoor, A. M. 2008). This is anchored on the partnership principle espoused by Jeffares (2009) that to foster collaboration and commitment in partnership the purpose must be clear, aligned and realistic.

That is to say, GASTPE- ESC program is a demonstration of Government's commitment in keeping up the viability of private learning institution, a partner in the delivery of quality basic education (DepEd Order No.26, s. 2014). It has policies and guidelines in implementation. The Department of Education in its effort of making quality basic education available and accessible to all Filipino citizens issued policies and guidelines to ensure its effective and efficient implementation (DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2010). The management of GASTPE has been contracted out by DepEd to the Private Education Assistance Committee, which is the trustee of the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE), a private institution.

Patrinos (2000) stressed that the main rationale for developing PPP thru GASTPE is amplifying the potential for spreading out equitable access to schooling and improving education outcomes, especially for marginalized groups instead of engaging a private organization to operate a public school. This Program was implemented to serve as a vehicle for the private schools to participate in the provision of education, bridging the resource gaps like classrooms, textbooks, computers, laboratories, and other school facilities which are supposed to be provided by the public sector (DepEd Order No. 86, s. 2009).

With respect to education today, it is largely paid for and almost entirely administered by government bodies or non-profit institutions. The result has been an indiscriminate extension of governmental responsibility. Moreover, the aim of education is to provide individual children with the knowledge and skills necessary to make them self-reliant and functional. On socioeconomic punto de vista, Jennifer 2013 enumerated that family income level, parents' level of education, as well as cultural traits and gender influence the quality and availability of education.

As descriptively discussed in Private Provision, Public Purpose: A Review of the Government's

Education Service Contracting Program 2011 sponsored by the World Bank, most students in the Philippine setting receive their basic education in public schools, in other words, in buildings built, maintained, owned, operated, and administered by DepEd. The curriculum is delivered by teachers who are public employees and who are supervised by government- paid school heads and officials in division, regional, and national offices.

Thus, Students in public schools do not pay any tuition fees and are entitled to the use of free textbooks. This free education led to four key problems that beset the Philippine Education sector in the 70's as identified by Felipe (2009). These are: (1) Congestion in public high schools: In the mid-1970s, enrollment in secondary schools expanded at a rate that was almost twice as fast as the 2.5 percent average annual growth rate in elementary enrollment.

However, this was not due to a spike in the population of an age cohort– there had been no baby boom. Instead, supply and demand factors may have been at work, plus the advocacy by Pedro Orata, an educator, for the establishment of a high school in every barangay (village) may have triggered a huge increase in demand for secondary education. Education was underfunded during the martial law years, which led to deficits in school infrastructure spending, which also increased congestion; (2) The low quality of education offered in public high schools: Results from the National College Entrance Exam (NCEE), a test created in 1974 that high school graduates must pass to be eligible for college, repeatedly showed that students from private schools outperformed their peers from public schools. Other research confirms this (Jimenez et al. 1988).

A 1983 survey of 5,190 secondary school students nationwide showed a private school advantage in both English and Filipino (by more than half a year or roughly 15 percent of the sample mean achievement scores). In mathematics there was a relatively small difference in favor of the public schools – roughly 4 percent of the sample mean score; (3) The higher per student cost of public secondary education: Private schools claimed that they were more efficient than public schools, and this has been confirmed by research (Jimenez et al. 1988).

On average, public schools spend roughly twice as much as private schools per student.

Nevertheless, private students perform better academically in English and Pilipino. Moreover, even in mathematics where public school students do better, their advantage is slight and is unlikely to outweigh the substantial public/private cost

differential; and (4) The declining viability of private high schools: The Free Secondary Education Act of 1988 (otherwise known as Republic Act 6655) expanded secondary enrollment, but it also caused an exodus of students away from private to public high schools. This occurred because of increased public spending on education and a substantial program of school construction. While Sakellariou (2006) showed that liquidity-constrained individuals who benefitted from the free education policy experienced large earnings premiums as a result of their education, the expansion of free secondary education was not without negative consequences.

The Education Service Contracting (ESC) program began as a modest social experiment by FAPE involving elementary schools in the Bicol Region (Region V) in 1977 (Felipe 2009; Galace 2009). The premise, according to Felipe (2009), was that private schools provided better value for money, in other words, that they delivered a higher quality of education at a lower cost. Around 1981, encouraged by bishops at a private educators' conference, Onofre D.

Corpuz, then Minister of Education, initiated a similar pilot project at the high school level, which became the model for the ESC program that was first implemented nationwide by FAPE in 1989.

As a matter of fact, ESC is originally conceived by Felipe (2010) to address the afore-mentioned problems, was designed to be "a public school system in a private school setting" and was inspired by the school desegregation policy of the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. The program required four conditions to be satisfied:

1. An ESC grantee must have an "overflow" certification. The principal of the public high school where the grantee initially sought admission (known as the sending school) certify that the school is too congested to accept his or her enrollment. The private school in which the grantee eventually enrolls is referred to as the receiving school. The overflow certification allows the ESC authorities to track the sending-receiving relationship between a congested public school and a private school with spare capacity;
2. The receiving private high school must have a curriculum that has been approved by the Ministry of Education;
3. The private high school cannot impose admission standards on ESC grantees other than those found in public high schools. Therefore, the private school cannot require ESC grantees to pass entrance tests that the school may require of its

other students. Indeed, the only way in which a private school can refuse admission to an ESC grantee is if it is itself overcrowded; and

4. ESC grantees cannot be expelled from private schools for academic deficiencies. As in public high schools, they can only be made to repeat the year level or to retake the subjects in which they failed.

Historically, FAPE's records reveal the timeline of the ESC program. The pilot project at the high school level mentioned by Felipe (2009) was undertaken between 1983 and 1985. Starting in 1986, the Department of Education assumed responsibility for the funding of the ESC program, although FAPE continued to implement it. In 1989, the program was expanded nationwide, as mandated by the law RA 6728. Between 1991 and 1996, the DepEd took over the implementation of the ESC program. Because of numerous complaints by participating private schools about long payment delays and even non-payment, the DepEd (then called the Department of Education, Culture and Sports or DECS) returned the day-to-day administration of the program to FAPE in 1996, and FAPE has been the implementing agency ever since.

Generally, Philippines has one of the largest public-private partnership programs in education in the world, serving more than 567,500 students who represent almost 9 percent of the 6.5 million high school students in 2009. Explicitly, the Government of the Philippines recognizes the complementary roles played by public and private schools in the education system. The Education Service Contracting (ESC) program aims to increase access to quality basic education at the secondary level by extending financial assistance from the public budget to "poor but deserving" elementary school graduates to attend private high schools that have contracted with the government. The ESC program improves school quality, relieves congestion in public high schools, maintains the financial viability of private secondary schools (more than one-third of private secondary school enrollments are supported by the program), keeps the overall costs of public secondary education in check, and encourages households to invest in education.

Interestingly, ESC program has evolved over its years of operation into a useful mechanism that enables students to enroll in private schools. The program has grown tremendously in terms of both the number of grantees and the number of participating private schools over the last 20 years. In 2009, grantees numbered almost half a million or 9 percent of the 5 million students in public high schools and 36 percent of the 1.3 million students in private high schools. In

fact, nearly half of the more than 4,000 private secondary schools in the country have enrolled ESC grantees. This program generates considerable cost-savings for the government. Evidence from around the world suggests that the private sector can deliver high-quality education at relatively low cost as correlations between the private provision of education on one hand and indicators of education quality are positive (Woessmann 2005).

Therefore, partnerships in which the private sector is the operator and the public sector is the financier of schools have the potential to increase enrollment while keeping the education budget in check. In the Philippines, the direct per student cost of public secondary schools (or direct GAA cost per public secondary school student per year) is estimated to be Php 9,048 (\$185) or a total of Php 47 billion for 5,241,806 students. At the same time, the ESC cost per grantee is only Php 5,233 (\$107) per year. Thus, the government is able to enroll a student in a private school at a cost that is only 58 percent of the unit cost of attending a public high school.

Clearly, this encourages households to invest in education. On average, the families of ESC grantees pay Php 4,298 (\$88) to cover the difference between the amount of grant that they receive and the actual cost of tuition at the private school attended by their child. Estimates show that further cost savings could be realized. In fact, in a simulation, an upper bound estimate showed that the ESC program could accommodate all “excess students” (also known as aisle students) at a cost of only Php 7,761 million per year compared with a cost of Php 10,963 million to expand capacity in the public sector.

In some way, the GASTPE- ESC program has contributed to the DepEd schools’ performance indicators such as enrolment rate, cohort survival rate, participation rate and completion rate as indicated in the previous discussion. Thus, the program has evolved into a useful mechanism that enables students to enroll in private schools as cited by a World Bank study (2011) nevertheless, as cited by Abiva (2016), that there is dearth of literature on GASTPE- ESC implementation because high school teachers rarely write research. Hence, there are no abundant studies about the topic.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter explained the methodology employed in this study to answer the research questions about the phenomenological journey of ESC grantees of the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System. Elaborations on the research design, role of the researcher, data collection process, data analysis, trustworthiness and credibility as well

as the ethical considerations used in the process of this study.

Research Design

In this qualitative study, I used a phenomenological approach as described by Creswell (1998) who states that researchers search for essentials, invariant structure or essence or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning.

This phenomenological approach examined the meaning of experiences make sense to those who live it prior to all interpretations and theorizing. Creswell argued that when reading a report written by a phenomenologist, the reader should come away understanding better what it was like for someone else to experience the phenomenon being studied. This phenomenon will be explored through my interactions with the ESC grantees of the identified cluster of secondary schools. Subsequently, this approach best fit for this study to explore the experiences encountered by each ESC grantees. These varied experiences with emphasis on the subject of this study will affect as they go through their academic life as beneficiary of this public-private partnership.

On the same light, Schwandt (1997) describes a phenomenologist as someone who provides a detailed description of ordinary life experiences. This includes experiences such as perceptions, beliefs, feelings, judgments, and evaluations of ESC grantees.

Research Participants

I adopted the concept of Polkinghorne (1989) who suggested five (5) to twenty- five (25) participants and that the best participants for a phenomenological investigation are those who have had the experience being investigated and are able to describe it. Hence, I opted to have 9 participants from FSUCBI and another 6 participants from FSUCSI for the focus group discussion while 5 participants for the in- depth interviews. The purpose of collecting data from three different kinds of informants is a form of triangulation – data triangulation to contrast the data and ‘validate’ the data if it yields similar findings (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bloor, 1997; Holloway, 1997).

The number could be good enough hence according to Sergeant (2012) that in qualitative research, the sample size is not predetermined. The number of participants depends on the number required to inform fully all important elements and phenomenon

being studied. The purposive sampling method is used in choosing the participants of this study.

Moreover, Lichtman (2006) also states that a typical qualitative research has a small number of individuals that are selected so that information can be covered in- depth. She also emphasized that there are no specifications as to the number of individuals that should be interviewed since the purpose of qualitative research is to describe rather than to interpret.

As Lewis and Sheppard (2006) judiciously explained, this method provides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience. To this, SARDO ESC grantees will be selected for their respective and treasured experiences.

Moreover, the SARDOs ESC grantees were pre-identified through the quarterly report submitted by the Registrars and/ or Principals of the participating schools as stated in DepEd Order 74, s. 2010 also known as the Guidelines on Mainstreaming the Dropout Reduction Program (DORP) in the Public Secondary Schools. These students at risk of dropping out judiciously provided ample source of information and insights on the study. Berg (2005) proved that sample size is determined by information redundancy and data saturation. It ensured similar types of individuals or students displaying certain attributes included in this study.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the qualitative researcher as emphasized by Litchman (2006) is to find the answers to the research questions proposed in the study through conversations with people. The questions are not strictly controlled and are often general in nature. It is important to build trust and rapport with people since the data for the study comes directly from the minds of those individuals who have experienced the problem being studied. In essence, my abilities to relate positively with people and to make them feel enough at-ease to share their honest thoughts and beliefs are pivotal to the entire research study.

I was aware of possible bias due to my current professional role and responsibilities. Litchman says that the researcher must place his own thoughts in brackets so as not to influence his thinking about the phenomenon. When words are put in brackets, it means that they are to be set aside and treated as a unit. I am committed to putting my preconceived ideas about the life of ESC grantees aside.

I accomplished the task by carefully listening to each participant without making judgments or jumping to conclusions, by recording each interview, by taking

field notes, and through careful review of official documents provided by participants. It was important to keep my interactions with participants focused on the life experiences of the ESC grantees who are SARDOs. This was to keep me and the participants focus on the importance of the data being collected. I let the data speak for itself.

Data Sources

Data of this study were taken from the interview conducted to the ESC grantees that are identified as SARDOs. This was the most common source of data in qualitative research. With the Focus Group Discussion and In-Depth Interview, open-ended and conversational questions are pre- determined for the 9 ESC grantees from FSUCBI, 6 from FSUCSI, and another 5 ESC grantees from FSUCTI.

This helped me get their common experiences on the phenomenon and made observations which generally involve review of documents. Field notes were taken on the process to assist in determining what the observed events might mean and to provide help for answering the research questions during subsequent data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Pitney and Parker, 2009).

Secondary data from the registrar and Guidance Office were another source in identifying the participants.

Data Collection Procedure

In gathering the data, I sought permission from the school authorities of St. Mary's College whose approval letter will be attached to my request for the Office of the Cluster Director. After which, approval was forwarded to the School Principals and registrars of the three schools in Cluster C in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System to identify the participants. Consent Forms were given and carefully explained to the participants.

Prior to the interview, guide questions were validated by the experts. Venue, day and time of the interview were scheduled as soon as the participant signed the consent form. I used my prepared open-ended questions and personally conducted the face to face interview with audio-tape recorder and other gadgets relevant to ensure that every detail of the information is saved. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim for accurate data analysis.

Consequently, in my study I followed the five steps recommended by Creswell (2012); obtaining permission to conduct a study, selecting the participants who have in common experiences of the phenomenon, identifying data from various sources, administering and recording data using the protocols,

and administering the data collection in a manner sensitive to individuals and site.

Data Analysis

Analysis initially began after the data collection period; the collected data were reviewed, synthesized, and documented in order to keep careful and detailed note. This was very important due to the short time frame for data collection. After the completion of the format data collection period, analysis began. The qualitative data were analyzed and examined collectively to provide a holistic picture. All the data collected were transcribed and analyzed based on the research questions.

Trustworthiness of the Study

In this research, I utilized Lincoln et al. (1985) criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of a study. The four criteria reflected the underlying subjectivist assumptions of qualitative research as opposed to the objective and realist nature of quantitative work. The criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirm ability.

Credibility involved establishing that the results of the research are believable from the perspective of the participants. Several measures are taken to ensure this in the current study. The focus group protocol and survey went through a back-translation process that ensured the items would be understood from participants in the community. Member checking was another important component of establishing credibility of results.

To establish credibility in this study, Lincoln suggested that during the data collection process, informal conversation were held with participants and the school principals to see if the initial findings aligned with the credibility is the potential for participants providing, socially desirable responses. In order to account for this possibility, efforts were made to ensure participant anonymity in their survey responses. Efforts were also be made in focus group and individual to ensure privacy of each participant.

Transferability referred to the degree to which the result can be applied to other contexts or settings. In this study, this meant that the lesson learned in this research are useful in understanding experiences of ESC grantees elsewhere by illuminating key issues

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the experiences of the students who are ESC grantees, the aspirations and insights of the participants on their academic journey.

This study seeks to answer three (3) central questions as follows: (1) What are the lived experiences of ESC grantees in the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System?, (2) How does ESC grantees address the challenges encountered?, and (3) What are the aspirations or insights of ESC grantees in in relation to their academic journey?

and seeking greater understanding of the problem being studied.

Dependability is concerned with the replicability of a study, or whether the same results would be observed if the study was repeated. However, the assumptions of qualitative research stated that the same thing cannot be measured in the same way more than one time. Therefore, dependability emphasized the need for me as a researcher to account for the changing context in which the research occurs.

Confirm ability referred to the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of the study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. He further suggested that one way of doing this is through the creation of an “audit trail”, so other personnel such as the research panel and adviser could check to see that the interpretations and conclusions can be traced to legitimate sources. This study achieved this by thoroughly documenting the research process, as well as making all my decisions transparent. All raw data that collected were retained in hard copy and electronic form, including audio recordings, paper copies of the surveys and field notes. Based on this documentation, the data can be reanalyzed by my research adviser to confirm the findings and conclusions of this study.

Ethical Consideration

Participants were given a copy of the informed consent document prior to the interview. In addition, participants were told that they could withdraw from the research study at any time during process. Permission to tape record the interviews were also obtained before each interview. An open communication with the participants was maintained; that was why, participants were made to understand the processes and procedures of the study, including the proposed use of the data collected.

The students who participated in the study will be assured of the confidentiality. Students were assigned a pseudonym and they will be assured that information shared by them would not be identifiable. Data, including field note, documents, transcriptions, and audio-tapes, were kept in the researcher’s home in a secure cabinet. Data were retained until the completion of the study and the defense of the thesis.

Lived Experiences of ESC Grantees

To be an ESC grantee is a blessing. The experiences of the participants showed how lucky and grateful they are because of the privilege given to them by the government through the private schools. Although being a scholar enrolled in the private school puts pressure on them, their parents served as the motivator to pursue against all odds. Most of the participants revealed how their families struggled financially but with the ESC scholarship they are able to continue their studies.

Table 1 presents the major themes and core ideas on the lived experiences of ESC grantees.

Table 1 Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of ESC Grantees

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Feeling happy and grateful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I am happy despite of the pressure of maintaining grades. ➤ I was so thankful, honored, grateful, and blessed for the very limited slots and it helped me financially. ➤ I did not expect that I can be given a slot for many applied. ➤ I am lucky because of the number of students who wanted to avail.
Being financially unstable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hard indeed! Tuition fee in the private school is a little higher so it is really hard for us. ➤ Before I availed ESC, Sir, financial [support] was unstable. ➤ Financially [challenged], Sir. My parents have no works. ➤ All the same, financial [aspect]. Only the mother who is earning for a living.
Being pressured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I was pressured because from the word itself “scholar,” grade should be maintained. ➤ Thankful at the same time pressured. ➤ Aside from the pressure to maintaining grades, some teachers are super strict. ➤ People outside have high regards for Urian students, disciplined plus the school is standard. ➤ Sir! Pressured because when you commit mistakes, school’s name is at risk. ➤ They have high regards to us Urians for being rich. ➤ High standards for we are in the first section.
Being motivated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parents’ experiences motivated us, Sir. ➤ Parents are my sources of motivation for I will finish school to help my parents. ➤ Like any other, motivated too. Especially in times of receiving awards from different contests. ➤ Motivated, they monitor my performance. ➤ They are always there for me. They are always cheerful.
Learning how to pray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Religious Education is helpful to me because it enhances my ways of prayer. ➤ My faith is better this time. We are given time to pray. ➤ Yes. In Religious Education, experiences shared are related to the bible. ➤ This [subject] Christian Living Education or becoming a good Christian helps me in my perspective, Sir.

Feeling happy and grateful

The participants revealed their feeling of being lucky and privileged as one of the ESC grantees. They are very happy and grateful because they consider their scholarship a blessing from God.

Matthew, excitedly exclaimed:

“Privilege for me kay in the first place unhanay kibali ba so sa akong part kanang nakuan ko nga kanang naapil sa ESC ba kay naka help man siya sa amoa jud. In short nalipay ko. Eventhough kuan siya pressure kay nay e maintain nga grade” (FGD1–P1).

(It is a privilege for me because of the first come, first served policy I was catered and this has helped me. In short, I am happy despite of the pressure of maintaining grades).

On the other hand, Mark listening while reminiscing his experiences, restlessly shared:

“Ako sir tong na ESC grantee ko thankful jud ko kay tabang siya financially ug sa ngalan nga sa government siya gikan so proud pud ko ngs in terms sa education naa sab nabuhat nga maayo ang gobyerno para sa amo. Which is kwarta sa gobyerno so kwarta jud na sa mga tao, tax so murag counterpart sir ba nga ang gobyerno ni focus pud siya sa education” (FGD1 – P2).

(When I become a grantee, I was so thankful for it helped me financially. And knowing that the assistance is coming from the government, I feel proud that government has done something good for us. Money from the government means money of the people, tax from the people. So it means, a counterpart of the government focusing on education).

In addition, Deza narrated her realization with composure:

“Ahm kuan kanang pagka receive nako sa ESC kanang blessed kaau. Dako na siyanga blessing. Alangan kai dili raman jud siya in term sa financial bitaw nga makatabang sa amoa. Well as scholarship nay gina maintain nga grade so ang ESC sa amoa murag way bitaw nga murag gihatagan me ug purpose ba nga makakuha ug dagko nga grado.nindot man jud kayo nang ESC so mag hard work jud me so kanang blessed jud me kay multipurpose jud siya nga gihatag sa Ginoo” (FGD1 – P8).

(I am blessed when I received the ESC slot. It is not only because of the financial support but it is also a way for me to be better student for I will be maintaining a grade. It is nice to be a recipient of it for I have to work hard. It is indeed a multipurpose blessing from God).

As Romeo listened to the shared memories of his co- interviewees, expressed as well his feelings:

“I feel honored, grateful and thankful kay dako man jud na siya nga tabang. Nalipay kay gihatagan ug dako nga importance sa government ang mga Filipino students. Kanang murag wala bitaw nila gipabaya. Kahibalo sila magtan aw ba sa mga naglisod kay ilang tabangan. Dako siyag natabang labina sa mga students nga gusto e pursue ilang education” (FGD2- P1).

(I feel honored, grateful, and thankful for it helped a lot. Happy too, for the government has given importance to the education of the Filipino students).

Relatedly, Elna gratefully and judiciously cried out:

“Pasalamaton ko kay na member ko kay dako kayo ilang tabang sa mga students labi na sa mga dili kayo mga kuan kanang sakto rapud kanang dili kayo kay maglisod sa tuition. Gihatagn nilag attention ang mga studyante. Labi n atong mga gusto kayo mu skwela pero walay kuan. Dako kayo nag tabang” (FGD2- P2).

(I am thankful because I am one of the recipients. It helped a lot especially to those who are having difficulty in paying the tuition. They attend to the needs of the students. Especially, those who are deserving. It helped a lot).

Rodel strongly agreed with Elna as he shared:

“Thankful ug blessed kay sa kadgahan-daghan ug studyante nga gusto mu skwela unya limited rapud ang slots. Grab the opportunity” (FGD2 – P3)

(Thankful and blessed for the so many students who wanted to avail the limited slots of ESC, I grabbed the opportunity).

Joanna extrovertly connected as she felt:

“Lucky kay daghan kayo ug gusto mu inter unya na impress ko sa government giunsa nila pag kuan. Kay naa ko nabsahan ngano ila na gibuhay kay daghan na kaayog mga high school student unya dili na ma allocate sa mga public schools. So gikuan nila ang mga private school para makatagkatag ang mga studyante” (FGD2- P4).

(I am lucky because of the number of students who wanted to avail. I am impressed of the move of the government to help. I have read that the help is brought because of the congestion in the public high schools. So private schools are standardized for the students to have alternative options).

Joshua finally expressed his deemed judgment as to the pre-identified number of slots thus, very limited:

“Thankful kay limited ra ang slots ana unya mao to thankful kay na gamay gamayan ang gasto” (FGD2 – P5).

(Thankful for slots are very limited. I was thankful as well because expenses are lessened).

Boldly, Yvonne elatedly shared:

“Kuan sir nakatabang pud ang ESC bitaw kay pareha kang Queenie nga first come first served then wala sab me nag expect nga maapil me didtoa sa sobra ka daghan sa nag avail” (FGD1- P3).

(ESC has helped me like in Queenie’s situation on first come, first served situation, I also did not expect that I can be given a slot for many are wanting to avail).

Thereupon, I was caught by the happily yet hastily remark of Luke as he said:

“Kuan sir kanang siyempre nindot kaayo sa paminaw ba nga bisan half man lang gani atleast mabawas-bawasan ang gasto pud ba. Bahala nag kining nay problema gamay atleast gamay-gamay nalang pud kai kining though grabe nay makaingon usahay nga daghay bayronon dili na kayo kanang maka bayad pa ug dako kay murag katunga nalang ba” (FGD1 – P4).

(Somewhat, nice to feel though only half is being sponsored, at least tuition is lessened. This time only miscellaneous is paid.)

On the same manner, John confirmed wisely the sharing and remarks given by his co- grantees:

“Grateful, thankful kay makatabang-tabang napud sa parents kay diba monthly naa kay bayronon ana unya murag di na sila maghunahuna sa tuition kay makabalo sila nga gamay nalang” (FGD1 – P9).

(Grateful, thankful because it can help my parents in their monthly fees in result they will not be thinking hard on paying the tuition for the reason that only the small amount [miscellaneous] will be paid.)

Having financial instability

Most of the participants unveiled their financial struggles prior to their scholarship. Their financial instability pushed them to find ways.

Crissan during the in- depth interview without hesitation promptly claimed how devastating was his student life, he narrated:

“Galisod gyud. Ay dili sa ingon nga galisod pero more like maglisod jud kay syempre kuan pako grade 7 so ga skwela pa akong ate as college ug akong manghud ug elementary so murag for me sa ako nga part is syempre Private School so kung muingon kag Private School, diba ah tuition is medyo dako jud so medyo naglisod jud me” (IDI – P2).

(Difficult indeed! Not totally hard but more likely hard. My older sister is in college and my younger sister is also in elementary while I am in Grade 7 in a private school. When we say private school, tuition fee is a little higher so it is really hard for us).

Likewise, Donna shyly considered her story too, so she commented:

“Kung sa financial murag dili ko as in settled kayo bisag teacher akong mama, single mother man siya, akong kuya is college pud atonga time ug akong ate. So ako upcoming kuan pa upcoming grade seven pa so ni apply me diri sa urios so may gani kay ni avail tong ESC nga kuan, unya kung in terms pud sa academically, kung e compare sa elementary nga performance ug sa secondary mas ni excel ko academically kay maningkamot man ka kay naa man kay kailangan nga e maintain so ang ESC nga scholarship nakatabang sa ako ng maningkamot pud para ma maintain nako akong scholarship” (IDI – P4).

(Before I availed ESC, Sir, financial [support] was unstable though my mother is a teacher. My older brother and sister are in college. So, I, as incoming Grade 7 student I enrolled here in Urios Bayugan and applied for ESC. In terms of grade in the academe, I excelled more this time in high school than before in elementary because I have to maintain a grade this time so I can continue to avail the scholarship. This [demand] pushes me to avail the said scholarship).

Similarly, Luke stated his the same ill- feeling as she expressed:

“Kuan sir, financially gihapon kay walay tarong trabaho bitaw ang parents akong mama kay naara sa balay unya akong Papa kuan- kuan ra side line side line lang” (FGD1 – P4).

(Financially [challenged], Sir. My parents have no works. My mother is a housewife and my father is only on side line, laborious works).

Relatedly, Romans recalling his situation, agreed:

“Kuan man jud, kanang actually financial gihapon siya kanang because elementary pako my father died so si mama nalang jud ang nagbuhi. tapos mao to I decided sa akong self nga mag Public ko kay mao to financial kay naga depende rapud me sa kana bitawng status namo. Ang kining Urios kay nag offer man silag ESC so mao to nga nag avail me dria. Nang inquire ra bitaw nga what is ESC kanang unsa d i pasabot ana so mao to kay first come first serve man so naglist lang me sa akong mama ug pangalan. Mao to niana dayon siya nga makaless mao to ni proceed ko dria until grade 10, hantod karon” (FGD1 – P6).

(All the same, financial [aspect]. My father died when I was in elementary so it was only my mother who is earning for a living. So I decided to enrol myself in public school but when I heard that Urios Bayugan offers ESC scholarship, I applied and availed it. At first, my mother and I asked for detailed information about the scholarship and enlisted myself eventually enrolled from grades 7 to up to now, 10).

Joy noted similar predicament, so she shared:

“Pareha ra sa ilaha sir. Sauna kay responsibility jud sa parents jud nila nga ikuan sa skwelahan. pero sauna kay public man mag skwela so less ang bayronon so murag ma sustain pa sa akong family ang mga bayronon unya pagkakaran medyo magkalisod kay dili nato makuan nga maglisod jud. Dako kayo ug tabang ang ESC dria” (IDI-P5).

(The same with what you heard from them, Sir. It is the responsibility of the parents to send their students to school but it was still in the public, tuition fee is still minimal and my parents can still sustain it but now, difficulty is inevitable. ESC scholarship has a big help).

Being pressured

The responses of some ESC grantees are pointing out that ESC grantees are being pressured.

Accordingly, Mary divulged that she had similar experience as she expressed:

“Kaning kuan sa seventh grade pa lang ang pagkuan nako sa pag-avail nako sa ESC. Pinakauna kay maka pressure siya kay kuan man from the word nga scholar ka so naa jud kay e maintain nga grado. Unya ang ESC pud kay pag pila n aka years kay okay-okay na. kaning makaya0-kaya raman pud di ay. Niya nakatabang kay naka less na siya sa bayronon” (FGD1 – P7).

(I availed ESC scholarship when I was in 7th grade. I was pressured because from the word itself “scholar,” grade should be maintained).

John as well confirmed the pressure he felt, he explained:

“Thankful at the same time pressured. Thankful kay ma lessen na lagi ang mga bayronon kay half man ang makuha sa bayronon kay kato nga time murag tulo man ata ang college o duha sa amog family mao tog murag kasagarang kwarta maadto sa ilaha mao tong happy kayo ko nga nay ESC. Pressured kay lagi nay e maintain nga grado so dapat e maintain jd to siya para dl mawala ang scholarship” (FGD1 – P9).

(Thankful at the same time pressured. Thankful for half of the tuition fee is charged to ESC. That was the time to when our family has three or two college students so most of the money is spent for tuition thus, I am so happy for ESC. On the other hand, pressured for we will maintain grades to be fitted to the scholarship).

Mark narrated sensibly but reservedly shared what he felt being ESC grantee:

“Aside sa pressure sa pag maintain sa grade sir, so siguro ang masulti lang nko ga issues about sa teachers. Kanang some teachers nga kung kinsa pa tong dili kayo active o dili siya kayo atchup mu tudlo, kanang strict kanang at some point dili mapugngan nga malain pud ka. Pero at the end of the day mag respect lang me sa iyaha kay teacher man siya unya accept lang pud namo kay mao man jud na ang trabaho mga estudyante. Thankful pud me sa among teachers kay nitabang man pud sila kay sa pagkuha sa among goals” (FGD1 – P2).

(Aside from the pressure to maintaining grades, Sir, I would talk on the issues about teachers. Some teachers that are not even active, not good on teaching but are super strict at some point that we, as students can't help to feel bad. At the end of the day, respect is still there for she is our teacher and we are her students. We are thankful too to our teachers for they really help us achieve our goals).

Romeo considerably agreed so he narrated:

“Sa among lugar man gud kay nay muingon nga “oy Urios dato diay” dili nalag pud namo pansinon kay ingon man si mama nga wala daw na sa skwelahan naa radaw na sa bata kung gudto siya mu skwela mu skwela jud na. kan man gud taasa ilang tan aw sa Urios ba kay well- disciplined unya ilang panan-aw kay well standard bitaw ang Urios ing ana murag ma proud pud kai sip ing ana. Naa man pud gud uban estudyante nga dili ganahan sa Urios kay dili ganahan sa Urios kay grabe daw ka strikto. Kanng mga bata sa Pulic muingon nga mura daw ug mga piniriso kay di jud baya me basta basta makagawas bisan pag nananghid ka sa principal kay dili jud basta basat paulion during kanang class hours” (FGD2-P1).

(In our place, people would say “Urios? Rich!” we prefer to ignore for my mother told me that it is not in school, it is on the students. If students would study, they would study no matter what. People outside have

high regards for Urian students because we are well disciplined plus the school is standard. There are also students who dislike Urios for management is strict. Other public school students would say that we are somewhat imprisoned because we can't go out from school even with the permission from the principal especially during class hours).

But Yvonne anxiously acclaimed unfair and unequal treatment she shared:

"Lahi ang standard kay first section man pud me maong kami nga section ang dumtan. Ginatagaan me ug project nga lahi sa uban section" (FGD1 – P3).

(High standards for we are in the first section that when we can't meet, teachers hold grudge. We will be given projects different from other sections).

Being motivated

What prompt this grantees act well in academe is because they are motivated. In contrary to the third theme, there were responses as well that directing to that feeling of being motivated.

It can be noted that students, at their age could still be easily driven by the external and internal forces especially with their parents' perception.

Herzl interestingly mentioned how he feels whenever parents are attached to him, he said:

"Kuan sir kanang gina motivate at the same time gina trace kung nagtarong bajud ka ug skwela, something ing ana kay dili man gud pud nila gusto nga diil ko i pa feel atong sila wala kahuman ug skwela ana ba nga makahuman jud ko ug skwela kay ana sila para naa pud koy nindot nga kaugmaon" (FGD2-P6).

(Motivated while making me feel that they monitor my performance so that I can really finish my study).

Further, Mark expressed subsequently his sentiments especially during contests and awarding wherein his parents are not present, he narrated:

"Pareha pud sa ila kanang ma motivate pud bitaw. In times nga recognition na kintahay naa nay nadawat nga award, kanang ingon ana worth it tanan kahago bitaw since first sem then kua sa semester then makuan nga wow scholar siya sa ESC unya naa siyay nadawat nga daghan nga award through different contest" (FGD1- P2).

(Like any other, motivated too. Especially in times of receiving awards from different contests during recognition programs).

Finally, Yvonne unveiled similar feelings on how she is so closed to her dad that she wanted her to be monitoring her in school by being present during meetings and others, she said:

"Ako ra jung parents kay akong ganahan sa ilaha kay kung unsa akong success, success pud na para sa ilaha. Then akoa jung daddy kay ako ang pinaka bestfriend jud. O murag nindot pud sa feeling nga ga motivate sila sa imoha. Unya cheerful kaau sila" (FGD1- P3).

(They are always there for me. Even when I fail to win, they would say there are still many chances, opportunities. They are always cheerful).

Learning how to pray

Few participants have identified that they are learning how to pray in the occurrences of difficulties and challenges. Participants and informants accounted much their successes to divine interventions.

Accordingly, Aikeen considered her experience as her way to learn how to pray, she solemnly expressed:

"Helpful jud kay nay Rel.Ed. to ko nakalearn nga na enhance ko the way I pray. Knowledgeable ko sa mga Christian life for example maminaw ko sa Homily ni Ftahe, kanang mga readings, oy murag mao mana among na discuss so murag knowledgeable nako ba" (IDI- P1).

(Religious Education is helpful to me because it enhances my ways of prayer. Knowledgeable as well to my Christian life due to learnings from the homilies of the priests, readings and discussions).

In addendum, Lesly shared with conviction her self- observation on her behavior this time, she described:

"Layo ra kayo kaong faith sa karon sir. Mu simba ra ata ko ug ganahan ko unya karon naa ma me subject nga Rel.ed hatagan me ug time sa church nga mag pray" (IDI- P3).

(My faith is better this time. We are given time in church to pray).

Romeo strongly added how he has changed his attitude as he said:

“Oh kay naa man gud usahay sa C.E ba nga mag sharing-sharing unya ang GMRC namo sauna kay mag copy ra unya mag storya storya mao ra. Mga experiences namo unya e relate namo sa bible” (FGD2- P1).

(Yes. In Religious Education, there are sharing of our experiences then relate these to the bible).

Elna affirmed in good faith:

“Makatabang siya sa akoang panghunahuna bitaw sir. Kanang mutabang sa akoga kay Christian Living Education rba or example maging maayong kristiyano ba kanang magpuyo ka ug magamit man gud nimo siya sa pang-adlaw-adlaw kanang dili ka makasakit sa uban kanang usahay kay ma misinterpret ka sa isa aka tao mao nang kailanangan naka learn jud ko nga nakatabang” (FGD2- P2).

(It will really help. Christian Living Education [subject] has taught me of becoming a good Christian and helped me in my perspective of praying. With that, prayer led me to become more understanding).

Coping Mechanism of ESC Grantees to Address the Challenges Encountered

Participants applied varied strategies just to cope with the difficulties they encountered as ESC scholars. They learned how to be resourceful, optimistic, and practical. They value Listening to the advices of others.

Table 2 presents the major themes and core ideas on how ESC grantees address the challenges encountered.

Table 2 Major Themes and Core Ideas on How ESC Grantees Address the Challenges Encountered

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Being resourceful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ With regards to the books, we’ll make groupings so little amount will be contributed by each for a book. ➤ Library can be of help. ➤ At times, teachers themselves lend us their reference books so everyone shares on it. ➤ Teachers do assigned groupings to purchase a book. ➤ The strategy of some teachers is they provide fact sheets. With this provision, 1 or 2 pesos a days is far better than three-hundred-peso books.
Being optimistic and practical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We are used to it but time would really come to end, we will soon graduate, I would tell myself. On the other hand, we enjoyed our every experience. ➤ Talking about books, practicality counts. I only share with those who have. ➤ Be practical. If teachers are hard to be understood just not be affected.
Listening to the advices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ My father was motivated and looked at the situation in a positive way. ➤ They [parents] also help me in my progress in school. ➤ Advices were given especially with my problems on teachers and grades, they would tell me to be prepared next time around. ➤ Advices too, Sir especially on grades matter. It is very often that we talk with my father on my performances at school. ➤ They drive me to a realization or reflection that I am not always right. ➤ Advices that I can make it through.

Being resourceful

The participants pointed out the idea that one way of coping with the challenges is being resourceful.

Mary humorously narrated her learning based on what happened in the previous years, so she told me during the FGD:

“Unya ang sa books mag grupo-grupo nlang me para gamay ra ang bayad” (FGD- P7).

(With regards to the books, we’ll make groupings so little amount will be contributed by each for a book).

Luke enthusiastically shared the great help of the library resources:

“Ang library sa school. Naa man sab library card unya naa sab sila book nga paherman so if ever wala kay book makahiram raka ddtua” (FGD1- P4).

(With regards to the books, we’ll make groupings so little amount will be contributed by each for a book).

Romeo affirmed promptly with conviction:

“Sa library dili nalang driaa magsalig mangita nalag pamaagi” (FGD2- P1).

(Library can be of help. If none, find other ways.)

Luke then reaffirmed:

“Ang library sa school. Naa man sab library card unya naa sab sila book nga paherman so if ever wala kay book makahiram raka ddtua” (FGD1- P4).

(School library has books to be borrowed. So if ever you do not have books, library can lend you books).

Matthew also considered optimistically:

“Usahay kadtong ginagamit sa teacher nga book ginapahiram nalang sa mga students unya mag share nalang sa isa ka book” (FGD1- P1).

(At times, teachers themselves lend us their reference books so everyone shares on it).

Mark also added joyfully:

“Naa sab teachers nga by group nalang ang pag purchase sa libro” (FGD1- P2).

(Teachers do assigned groupings to purchase a book).

Yvonne laid out promptly her appreciation to some of her teachers:

Ang strategy nga gibuhay sa mga teachers kay ga buhat silag Fact Sheets so dili kayo bug at kay tag dos or tres lang kadaadlaw kaysa sa book nga tag 300 (FGD1- P3).

(The strategy of some teachers is they provide fact sheets. With this provision, 1 or 2 pesos a days is far better than three- hundred- peso books).

Being optimistic and practical

The participants address the challenges encountered, the theme being optimistic and practical aroused.

Matthew shared knowingly his anticipations, he said:

“Naanad name pero muabot jud ang time nga mapuno najud bitaw mao na to sige lang makagraduate raka. Makahawa raka ani nga skwelahan. Pero na enjoy man gihapon kay ang mga experiences lahi ra jud” (FGD1- P1).

(We are used to it but time would really come to end, we will soon graduate, I would tell myself. On the other hand, we enjoyed our every experience).

Yvonne then boldly exclaimed her desire to make friends with fellow students for mutual benefits:

“Sa books praktikal na pud sa amoa. Pag nay books maki share ra ko sa iyaha” (FGD1- P3).

(Talking on books, practicality counts. I only share with those who have).

Similarly, Elna divulged even boldly:

Be practical kinahay sa maestra ug dili makaya pasagdan nalang (FGD2- P2).

(Be practical. If teachers are hard to be understood just not be affected).

Listening to the advices

ESC grantees solicited advices from those people around them for some reasons.

Matthew stressed out humbly by confiding his situation to his father, so he told:

“Nag try pud ko ug ingon sa akong parents ana pero abi nako negative unya niingon sila nga “Asap aka ana nga daghan kay ma learn” so na motivate nalang ko nga tan awon to siya in a positive way” (FGD1- P1).

(I also tried to open it to my father and expected negative remarks. Instead, he said, “The teacher wants to let you learn more.” So, I was motivated and look at the situation in a positive way).

Elna politely disclosed by adding in the progress of school’s academic performance:

“Mutabang pud sila sa ikalambo nako sa pag skwela” (FGD2- P2).

(They [parents] also help me in my progress in school).

Rodel situated valiantly that:

“Advices labi sa problema nako sa mga teachers, sa mga grades. E share bitaw nako nga gaina gipangutana ko unya wala ko nakatubag. Usahay good mood siya muingon ra siya nga tarunga nalang sunod pag prepare nalang. Unya usahay wala siya sa mood muingon siya nga basin wa pud ka nagtarong” (FGD2- P3).

(Advices were given especially with my problems on teachers and grades. I even share that at times I am asked and failed to answer. When they are in good mood they would tell me to be prepared next time around for I have not done my best).

Similarly, Joanna stated the same feeling that she agreed:

“Mga advices ra gihapon sir kanang about sa grades. Panagsa raman gud mag pag maka estorya me nila papa ug mama about ra sa mga gardes sa performance sa school. Kay sauna man gud kay grade conscious kayo sila ba kay kanang mga test paper ilaha jud tan-awon unya pressure kayo kay muingon sila nga tarunga nang inexamman ha kai binayran raba na tanan wala ra baya ko namunit ug kwarta sa kilid-kilid. Maong sauna is kanang pressure kayo sa ako nga part so ginabuhat nako ang tanan” (FGD2-P4).

(Advices too, Sir especially on grades matter. It is very often that we talk with my father on my performances at school. Before they really are grade conscious. They even look at my test papers and tell me to be better in examination because it is paid. Money spent for it is not earned easily. Thus, before I was really pressured to do give my best).

Joshua timidly exclaimed and led you to positive realization, he said:

“Kanang ipa realize niya nga dili ikaw perme ang tama” (FGD2- P5).

(They drive me to a realization or reflection that I am not always right).

Eventually, Herzl affirmed eagerly and submissively that advices were the only support his parents contribute to him, so he concluded:

“Advicesan rako nga kaya lagi na nimo” (FGD2- P6).

(Advices that I can make it through).

The Aspirations or Insights of ESC Grantees in Relation to their Academic Journey

The participants revealed the importance of the hiring standard set by the school in order to give quality education to all students. Their experience tells them that the moral and emotional support they got from their parents helped them survive. They also believed that what they learned inside the classroom may be enhanced through the diverse activities and programs that the school will implement. Their desire to help their parents in the future inspires them to pursue and finish their study against all odds.

Table 3 displays the major themes and core ideas on the aspirations or insights of the ESC grantees.

Table 3. Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Aspirations or Insights of ESC Grantees in Relation to their Academic Journey

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Setting teacher-hiring standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On hiring of teachers, the school should set standard. ➤ Teachers also count because of their ways of teaching.
Having moral and emotional support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Package support [moral and emotional] from the family. When someone supports you, it's the same on someone has belief on you. ➤ Parents' impact is quite different from others. ➤ When they [parents] cannot come at least they will send text messages or call. ➤ Understanding from my parents especially when there will be contributions. ➤ Presence of my parents.
Implementing relevant programs and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Every month, culmination activities are held. ➤ We should be exposed more. More on practical applications. ➤ Enough facilities and students should be exposed to these facilities. ➤ More field trips.
Remunerate parents' effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I have faith on that. I can land a job and eventually help my stepchildren. ➤ Successful and pay back to my mother's sacrifices. ➤ Finish and land a professional job to help my parents and younger brothers and sisters.

Setting teacher- hiring standards

Generally, most of the participants and informants believed that teachers are front liners in catering quality education in private schools more so the Cluster C Schools.

To assure quality education, Aikeen yieldingly suggested regarding the standard a school should stronghold in the hiring, so she exclaimed:

“Inig mag hire ug teachers mag set ug standard ang school nga mahatag jud niya ang kinahanglan. Dapat naa sa ilang papel nga Let passer bisan dili LET basta maayo mu tudlo. Ang school mag kuan ug contract para ang mga teachers dili muhawa dayon” (IDI- P1).

(On hiring of teachers, the school should set standard that the teacher can meet. LET passer or if non- LET passer for as long as good on teaching. School shall also provide contracts for teacher so that teachers would come and go).

Deza’s thoughts seconded Aikeen’s views that she added:

“Tungod sa ilang pagtudlo. For example kanang pag report, naa jud mga teachers nga gusto nila creative. So tungod ana dihaa ma show nga naa di ay kay creativity” (FGD1- P8).

(Teachers also count because of their ways of teaching. For instance in the reporting, there are teachers who wanted us to be creative. With that, we tend to show and develop our creativity).

John bluntly divulged also as he complained:

“About gihapon mi sa teachers ug mga resources kay nay uban nga gipang discuss ni teacher nga dili makita sa libro ra kay naa sa internet” (FGD1- P9).

(Still about our teacher and the limited resources. There are those discussions of our teachers which topics are not found in books only in internets).

Having moral and emotional support

In order to know what they would probably need since financial support was already provided by the government.

Joy shared her perspective as to the totality of the support he needed, he responded:

“Package na nga support kanang naan a morally, emotionally. Lah raman gud kung naa musupporta sa imoa kay mura nay ga believe sa imoha. Kay kung ikaw ra bisan nakuha na nimo ang success ikaw ra ang malipay ana pero kung nay nag supporta sa akoo nay muingon nga kaya lagi a nimo” (IDI- P5).

(Package support [moral and emotional] from the family. When someone supports you, it’s the same on someone has believe on you. Success when it is celebrated alone cannot make you happy but when attaining it is with the support of the family, someone would tell you to be the best).

Matthew considered positively his experiences, she shared:

“As long as naa lang sila sir. Lahi raman gud ang impact sa parents sir” (FGD1- P1).

(For as long as they are there. Parents impact is quite different from others).

Mark forcibly asserted his similar opinion:

“Kung wala man gani sila nagtabang o kung dili man gani sila present through text or tawag. Kung naa gusto ipangutana matubag lagi pero naa jud lahi. Usahay pag mag study unya naa kay pangutana busy dri busy ddo so naa silay kaugalingon life. So usahay mangutana nalang sa classmate” (FGD1- P2).

(When they [parents] cannot come at least they will send text messages or call. At times when they are on duty and I have questions to ask instead of having them to give me the answers I resort to my classmates).

Yvonne sympathetically stated that of all, she only needed understanding and trust in everything, she expressed:

“Pagsabot sa parents sir for example nay amutan kanang makasabot sila. Unya kanang magabihan ka kay nay tungod sa research unya intead nga e support ka kasab an ka. Imbis e motivate ka nila kay e judge ka.pero at some point most of us 18 naman jud so naa na me sa stage of independence” (FGD1- P3).

(Understanding from my parents especially when there will be contributions. There are instances as well that I go home late because I went to internet cafe for research, instead of being supported I received reprimands. Instead of being motivated, you will be criticized. But at some point, especially that we are 18 now, we enjoy independence).

Luke agreed promptly to the hardship he has been through in seeking for understanding and trust, He explained with heavy heart:

“Presence sa parents. Sa akong mga magulang na magbuhat ug assignments unya naa koy dili ma tubag magpatabang ko sa ilaha sa ilahang opinion about ato. Kinahanglan jud ang presence sa imong parents. Dili baya jud pud tanan makuha nimo sa school so kinahanglan pag ug experience unya mangutana ko sa akong mga parents para ang akong magbuhat nga assignment sako” (FGD1-P4).

(Presence of my parents. When we gather together at home, I open up my problems with my assignments so they give their opinions. Presence of our parents is really needed. Not all can be learned at school. At times experiences of my parents help in accomplishing my assignments).

Implementing relevant programs and activities

The participants made mention also of the following that resulted to the theme, implementing relevant programs and activities aroused.

The following were the responses that supported the theme.

Romeo similarly expressed that he needs to be hopeful for how education will be catered to ESC grantees like him in the future. He aspired:

“Form sa education nga dili tanan testing bitaw sir. Ang amoa man gud ideal sa education kay kana man gud sa skwelahan wala man gud nag ingon nga maayo naka kay more on knowledge unya ubos raman na siya nga intelligence ang iyang gusto kay more expose bitaw ka sa real world. Kanang more on praktikan. More on application” (FGD2- P1).

(An education that is not based on trial and error. Ideal education for me not based on knowledge. We should be exposed more. More on practical applications).

Lesly in the best way, dreamed of education for them that is more on activities and exposures so they can discover even more their potentials. She boastfully narrated her aspiration:

“Every month nay culmination then kanang ang mga activities nga ginatagan ug chance ang mga bata nga ma discover ang naa sa ilaha. So nahimo sab meg better” (IDI-P3).

(Every month, culmination programs and activities are always held every month. With this accordingly, this provides chances for the students to show off and gave what the best is).

On the same wisdom, Crissan warmly asserted too, he said:

“Nay enough nga facilities. Kanang e expose jud sila ba” (IDI- P2).

(Enough facilities and students should be exposed to these facilities).

Remunerate parents' effort

From the responses of the respondents on what they aspire as ESC grantees, three responses made this the theme, remunerate parents' effort aroused.

Joanna significantly divulged her dream that summed up why she considered herself strong and brave to face problems and challenges and invest effort, time and sacrifices. She narrated:

“Kanang pagka college kay kana bitawng naa koy ma give sa ilaha puhon-puhon naa koy diploma unya naka trabaho nako sa is aka hospital. Durin my work kay naa gihapon akong parents thou hang edad sa akong mama karon kay dili pajud siya ing ana. So mao a siya nga akong panglantaw nga maktuntong siya sastage. In God's grace. Musalig lang jud ko ana. Makatrabaho ko ug matabangan nako ang akong mga pag-umangkon” (FGD2- P4).

(And I still dream that when I can have my work, they are still there. I hope she (mother) can still see me on stage by God's grace. I have faith on that. I can land a job and eventually help my stepchildren).

Eventually, John expressed his hopes too. He commented:

“Ma- successful ug syempre mabalik sa akong mama ang kahago. Gusto ko ma happy akong life puhon. Kanang mag buhat ug foundation para sa mga bata. Kay I love kids man jud. Gusto ko nga magbuhat ug foundation nga mag free ug tuition or scholar” (FGD1- P9).

(Successful and pay back my mother's sacrifices. I am also looking forward that I can have my foundation for the young children. I truly love kids. I also want to make a foundation that will help students for free tuition fees).

On the same view, Aikeen stressed her hopes of helping her family and the community by being philanthropist, she shared her views:

“Makahuman ug makakita ug professional nga trabaho ug makatabang sa mga ginikanan makatabang pud sa igsoon ug maghunahuna sa pamilya. Ug dato anjud kayo gusto ko Smakatabang sa mga street children, magtukod ug home for the aged” (IDI- P1).

(Finish and land a professional job to help my parents and younger brothers and sisters).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the discussions, conclusions, implications for practice and implications for future research based from the themes developed during the data analysis.

I adopted the concept of Polkinghorne (1989) who suggested five (5) to twenty- five (25) participants and that the best participants for a phenomenological investigation are those who have had the experience being investigated and are able to describe it. It is therefore in line to that the said framework that the 20 research participants, five (5) for the in- depth interview and fifteen (15) for the focus group discussion were invited to share their experiences with regards to their phenomenological journey as ESC grantees. The informants and participants of this study are all ESC grantees from the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan.

Feeling happy and grateful

Results revealed that most of the students have experienced that feeling of being happy and grateful. Though the ESC scholarship is on first come, first served bases, many were privilege enough to be recipients of the program. They are accounting this program as counterpart of the government to them as students in private schools. In the guise of this scholarship, they were monitored accordingly to be better students by the government. They were given purpose to maintain high grades. However, due to the very limited slots, few of the new entrants of the school were deprived of the scholarship. Subsequently, many have grabbed the rare opportunity to avail slots. For with the grant, school expenses are lessened.

Thus, happiness has become one of the central topics of concern to positive psychology (Seligman, 2003; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) while as being grateful is more than just momentary happiness. Froh et. al, 2010 described it as a positive response to receiving a benefit that may contribute more to youth. Other studies have shown that subjective happiness is one of the key factors in subjective well-being and overall satisfaction with life (Buss, 2000). This subjective happiness was then claimed to be rooted from gratitude that is contributory to the importance of human strenghts cited by Peterson and Seligman, 2004. McCullough et al. (2001) showed that grateful

individuals were especially appreciative of the contribution of others to their happiness. Watkins et al. (2003) suggested that grateful persons would further be characterized by the appreciation of life's simple pleasures. These results imply reciprocal relationships among gratitude, subjective happiness, and good social relationships.

Having financial instability

Another lived experience the ESC grantees commonly encounter is the family's unstable financial resources. Most of the participants and informants considered this to be generally true but of different levels. They have different stories of hardships and difficulties that could justify their financial instability. Truly, difficulty in sustaining life nowadays is inevitable.

As judiciously discussed by Chevalier and Lanot, 2002 in their study, children from poorer backgrounds are generally observed to have lower educational outcomes than other youth. However, the mechanism through which household income affects the child's outcomes remains unclear. Either, poorer families are financially constrained or some characteristics of the family make the children less likely to participate in post- compulsory education. As in previous studies, they found out that pupils from poorer families are less likely to invest in education. However, a financial transfer would not lead to a significant increase in schooling investment, which supports the view that the family characteristic effects dominate the financial constraint effects. This was justified by a survey in 2015 conducted by Harvey, et. al in the University of Central England and concluded that many students believe that financial problems are having an adverse effect on their academic performance.

Being pressured

It could be noted that responses of some ESC grantees confirmed that they are pressured. The assistance of the government through the ESC scholarship is coupled with some provisions and one of which is the pressure on maintaining their rating for them to be fitted for the scholarship. However, the pressure accordingly is not only on what are stipulated in the guidelines of the Education Service Contracting (ESC) program but also within their classrooms. There are teachers who have issues on

temper and teaching strategies. There are those who set very high standard different from the standard for non- scholars. With the limited resources, grantees have difficulty on meeting the set standard of the teacher. Despite of this, as they emphasized, they still could claim that they do not lose their respect but instead heightened.

Stereotypically, affluent youth and poor youth are respectively thought of as being at “low risk” and “high risk,” comparative studies have revealed more similarities than differences in their adjustment patterns and socialization processes as cited by Luthar and Latendresse, 2005. Indeed, students have a unique pressureful experiences. Student’s academic performances can be affected by many factors. Bernstein et al. (2008) define the sources of stress as every circumstance or event that threatens to disrupt people’s daily functioning and causes them to make adjustments. Similarly, Phinney and Haas (2003) stressed out sources of stress more specifically as a unique set of stressful encounters among student which includes: difficult financial challenges, domestic responsibilities, responsibilities related to holding a job while in school, and a heavy academic load.

Being motivated

Based on the responses of the informants and participants, they also feel the sense of being motivated.

Being motivated by their parents will give them the prime purpose to strive to change the past scenarios of extreme hardships. Being motivated leads to increased self- confidence of the ESC grantees to learn more in their class. They consider that the successes they earned are also the successes of their parents. So whenever they received awards and recognition, every sacrifice and effort are worth it. Eventually, the successes become their parents’ pride.

Motivation refers to “the reasons underlying behavior” (Guay et al., 2010, p. 712). Paraphrasing Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (2004) broadly defined motivation as “the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something.” Generally, motivation involves a constellation of beliefs, perceptions, values, interests, and actions that are all closely related. As a result, various approaches to motivation can focus on cognitive behaviors and non-cognitive aspects or both. A separate body of research within the study of motivation has focused on values. Eccles and Wigfield, 2002 discussed values as incentives or reasons for engaging in an activity. Judiciously, the value of a given task or activity has four components: attainment value, which refers to the personal value of doing well on a task; intrinsic value, which refers

to subjective interest or enjoyment of performing a task; utility value, which refers to the extent to which task completion is perceived to facilitate current or future goals; and cost, which refers to the negative aspects of engaging in a given task, such as anxiety and fear of failure.

Learning how to pray

In the midst of difficulties and challenges, informants and participants divulged that their faith has become the source of strength to survive. They learned to pray for divine interventions. I observe that their Religious Education or Christian Living Education enhances their ways of prayers. Listening to priests, readings, and bible sharing give them additional knowledge on Catholicism. As a result, I noticed that the high claim on better faith. They do not simply go to church this time only because they are with friends and girl-boyfriends but they go because they will pray. Learning to pray makes every ESC grantee to become more understanding.

For several decades now, social scientists have recognized the mental health benefits associated with religiosity (Bonelli and Koenig 2015). Religion’s positive association with tough mental health is, in one sense, explainable by the role of religious beliefs in providing comfort, particularly in times of distress (Moreira-Almeida et al. 2006). Yet, beliefs alone do not constitute religion. Such coping strategies may entail guidance on the nature, tenor, and substance of prayer, among other aspects of religious life. Consequently, religion and mental health, broadly defined, have been extensively studied, and a good deal of attention has been paid to the role of prayer in facilitating mental health (Ellison et al. 2014). Simply put, prayer can serve as a source of meaning, purpose, and coping in a religious person’s life (Ellison 1991). Consequently, several studies reveal significant linkages between the frequency of prayer and positive forms of mental health, including life satisfaction (Ellison et al. 2014). Quite notably, another study has linked prayer to adverse mental health conditions (Bradshaw et al. 2008).

Being resourceful

The participants and informants general responses for the second question raised pointed out the idea that they have become innovative in coping with their problems. Nevertheless, they tried so hard to find ways to meet the limited academic resources. They created small groups to contribute, purchase and share a book. On the other hand, some take turns from lending available books from the library. Moreover, there are teachers as well who provide sometimes free fact sheets.

Studies show that, in everyday life, individuals having a large repertoire of general learned resourcefulness persevere with challenges, and use problem solving strategies and positive self-talk to deal with challenges and/or to subside anxieties (Rosenbaum, 2000). We also know that highly generally resourceful students are more likely to be very academically resourceful (Kennett & Reed, 2009), in that they set goals, think positively despite demands or challenges, rely on information and assistance from both social and non-social (e.g., the library) sources, keep records, structure their environment to make learning easier, apply self-consequences (e.g., rewards), and review written material. Even when they do poorly on a test or assignment, they remain optimistic, evaluate the possible reasons for the failure, and restructure study goals and strategies (Kennett, et al., 2011). In short, they are neither likely to give up nor succumb to anxiety. Instead, they look for ways to rectify the problem and are efficacious that they have what it takes to succeed. Recent research also shows that these students are not only better integrated into the university environment both socially and academically, their reasons for attending university are for more internal reasons (e.g., they like learning, attend for the challenge) and less so to please others and to delay responsibilities (Kennett, Reed & Lam, 2011, Kennett, Reed & Stuart, 2013). Generally, based on past investigations (Reed et al., 2013), academic resourcefulness was also expected to be a strong and direct predictor of grade performance.

Being optimistic and practical

From the responses of the study informants and participants on what they do to address the challenges encountered and to cope up with these, optimism and practicality aroused. Among the responses, they highlighted that they tend to enjoy every activity they experienced instead of lamenting. They looked at the situation in a positive way.

Seligman, 2013 defines optimism as reacting to problems with a sense of confidence and high personal ability while practicality refers to sense of a person, idea, project, etc, as being more concerned with or relevant to practice than theory. Segerstrom and Sephton (2010) also examined whether optimism and practicality predicted positive affect. Their hypothesis that changes in optimism and practicality would predict changes in positive affect was borne out, as increases in optimism and practicality were associated with increased positive affect, and vice versa. Interestingly, changes in optimism and practicality were not related to changes in negative

affect. Thus, it appears that optimism and practicality are uniquely related to positive affect. This means that optimists and practical people are generally happier with their lives than pessimists. Generally, optimism and practicality are healthy. Optimist live longer, practical cope better to difficult circumstances.

Listening to the advices

ESC grantees solicited advices from the people around them. They are challenged whenever they realized that their parents are there closely monitoring them. In every experience that challenged their academic endeavor, they always realized that they are not always right and that they only have to be humble to make it through.

Research also demonstrates that parental involvement at home and in school is linked positively to a variety of academic outcomes (Jeynes, 2007). Moreover, Vasallo, et. al, 2009 discussed that parents clearly retain a close involvement in the lives of their young adult children through the advice and support they give, and this is very much valued by the great majority of young people. Young people obtained from their relationships with them. Parents of young men did not significantly differ from parents of young women in the degree to which they felt it to be their role to provide advice and guidance.

Setting teacher- hiring standards

Generally, based on the participants and informants' belief that teachers are frontliners in catering quality education in private schools and to assure quality education, high standards should be set on hiring teachers. And those private schools should not only be training grounds for neophyte teachers. Schools should secure tenure of teachers. School administrator should initiate contracts for its teachers. With that, teachers do not come and go as they wish. Moreover, talented and creative teachers are plus factors. With these qualities, knowledge and mastery on the content of the subject and mastery on the strategy used are better employed with fun.

Most of us believe that good teaching matters. What's more, most of us think we know good teaching when we see it. In an effort to pinpoint teacher quality variables across studies for which there is strong agreement. Goe's (2007) examination of teacher quality focuses on four categories of teacher quality indicators— teacher qualifications, teacher characteristics, teacher practices, and teacher effectiveness—which empirically capture the primary variables examined in research studies on teacher quality. Consequently, a number of teacher attitudes have been proposed as essential to teacher quality.

Having moral and emotional support

Since financial support was already provided by the government, ESC grantees were in unison emphasizing that though there is no perfect support from their parents, they do need as well the moral and emotional supports. Accordingly, success is sweeter when it is shared. It does not taste good if it is celebrated alone. When given awards and recognitions, they could feel that their successes are their parents' successes too. Further explanation occurred conveying that whenever there are emergencies in conflict with the time at school, in the advent of new technology today, at least parents can manage to send message or call to encourage the ESC grantees to study even more. It was also stressed out by some ESC grantees that they need understanding from parents. Parents that are not judgmental.

The level of parental involvement has important implications for children's academic performance. Based on this assumption, parents have the potential to model positive attitudes and behaviors toward school, and research in developed countries such as the United States has shown that parental involvement contributes to youth academic success (Houtenville & Conway, 2000). In fact, children are more likely to apply themselves and perform better in school when their parents show an interest in their school work, are willing to assist them with homework, and are willing to hold their children accountable for completion of school assignments. Youth who are not working hard at school may begin to perceive school as valuable when parents actively demonstrate that they value school through involvement. Research suggested that observed relationship between Socio- Economic Status relationships between academic z are mediated by parent involvement (Altschul 2007).

Implementing relevant programs and activities

The participants and informants mentioned on implementing relevant programs and activities. These relevant programs and activities will hone the hidden potentialities of the students. With the monthly expose of the talent, artists were even more talented. With this accordingly, this provides chances for the students to show off and gave what the best is.

Bryson, 2004 made mention of strategic planning as a process that results in decisions and actions to guide what the program is, what it does, and why it does it (Bryson, 2004). The benefits of this include improved program performance, use of resources, understanding of program context, decision making, stakeholder communication, and political support for the program. Another relevant study of Jacobson, SK (1998) demanded the effective use of evaluation to

ensure successful programs. Evaluation consists of the collection, measurement, analysis, and interpretation of data relevant to a program's audience and environment. These data are needed to make decisions about the merits of a program and to facilitate the assessment of whether a program meets identified needs or achieves specific goals and objectives.

Remunerate parents' effort

Few of the participants responded that the ultimate goal of pursuing education is for them to remunerate younger and elder siblings and parents' effort, money, time and most of all sacrifices for them to have brighter future.

Relationships between parents and their children change considerably over the life span. In the early years, parents nurture, support and guide their children's development. As young people move through adolescence into adulthood, the nature of this relationship typically changes; moving from a dependent relationship between a parent and a child, to a more equal, mutually supportive relationship between two adults (Lefkowitz, & Kamp Dush, 2008). However, Kenig, 2009 stated that overall giving by parents who spent time helping their children at all within the previous year¹⁰ has a stronger influence on their children's overall giving than parents who did not spend time helping their children.

Implications for Practice

The following implications for practice are offered based on the findings: **On the Lived Experiences of the ESC Grantees.** The shared lived experiences of the informants and participants divulged how they struggled having financial instability simply to continue and finish JHS education. These poor but deserving ESC grantees offered challenges to our law makers to increase the number of slots of the scholarship to be able to meet what are stipulated in 1987 Constitution of our country that states that, "the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all." To this, public entities can be good partners to manifest growth in private schools and to uphold together the dream of every Filipino learner- to received quality education. This traverses as well the great roles of every parent and teacher in providing the very limited internal and external resources.

On **coping with the difficulties** encountered in educational pursuit of the ESC grantees, optimism and practicality should be mastered. These signify indeed that these positive values really capture how someone should look at life. In addendum, teachers

can be of help in coping with difficulties by informing the students ahead regarding the requirements of the subject and finally, the parents could also offer through moral and emotional support.

Aspirations and insights of the ESC grantees. The ESC grantees are so vivid in considering and suggesting that schools should set teacher- hiring standards and implement relevant programs and activities to expose their students to education that is beyond theories. The participants' responses are also leading me to that insight that money is not everything. Moral and emotional support from parents, friends and loved ones count in the pursuit of academic endeavor. After all, the real measure of happiness and gratitude of every ESC grantee is when they can pay back for the people's sacrifices and effort especially their parents for them to succeed.

Furthermore, this study encourages more ESC grantee to realize that it takes a village to raise them. The government, the community, the school, the teachers, their parents, and they themselves complete the never- ending cycle of raising them.

Implications for Future Research

This study was limited in schools comprising the Cluster C Schools in the Diocese of Butuan Educational System.

As the findings of this particular study are not generalized beyond the 20 participants and informants, future research may be conducted investigating the lived experiences of ESC grantees from other divisions and regions in order to substantiate the findings.

Second, future research may be conducted investigating the challenges encountered of the ESC grantees amidst in other parts of the country to add the research base, other ideas and issues related to it.

Also, further research may be done to re interview some of the participants and informants in the study to see whether their views and perceptions have changed over a period of time.

Further research could be conducted to find out the students lived experiences on the implementation of ESC program as it enhances its operation over time.

Concluding Remarks

The investigation on the lived experiences of ESC grantees on their academic journey highlighted the significance and the necessity of the study. The result of this study would hopefully determine and be used in enhancing the policies, operation and implementation of the program.

The data obtained from both in-depth interview and focus group discussion confirmed to be similar and analogous. As Creswell and Miller asserted that triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross validation from more than two sources which this study conducted –very limited readings on experiences of ESC grant, in-depth interview and focus group discussions.

This study's contribution solely depends on the revelations of participants and informants based on their experiences, the coping mechanism that they exerted and their perceptions and insights on the experiences of ESC grantees. Qualitative approach is far an advantage to this investigation for it deals on understanding rather than interpreting certain and relevant experiences. This also invites opportunities and ideas for future researchers in as much as there is a great deal more to be learned on the lived experiences, challenges encountered and aspirations of every ESC student.

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