

The Mobile Teachers' Profile, Competencies, Performance And Problems In The Department Of Education, Division Of Northern Samar, Philippines

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Abstract: This study aimed to describe the profile of the mobile teachers, assess their competencies, determine the level of their performance and identify the problems they encountered from 2010-2014 in the Department of Education, Division of Northern Samar, Philippines. The descriptive evaluative research design was used. Questionnaires, actual observation, focus-group discussion and interview were utilized in gathering the data. All mobile teachers during the conduct of the study served as respondents. Others sources of information were the ALS Education supervisor, ALS specialist, the District supervisor, barangay officials, learners and completers. The performance rating given by the District supervisor was used as the basis in determining the work performance of the mobile teachers. The mobile teachers were young adults, majorities were males, educationally qualified but their formal training were inclined towards the conduct of formal classes. Several mobile teachers have pursued graduate studies geared towards administration and supervision. All were passers of the Licensure Examination for Teachers but were relatively young in service as mobile teachers. They have higher competence in the conduct of learning sessions, and have very satisfactory work performance. Their major problems were lack of community-based instructional materials, delayed release of travel allowance and absence of permanent room during the conduct of the learning sessions.

Key words: Alternative Learning System, competencies, illiteracy, learning center, learning sessions, mobile teachers, and performance

1 Introduction

In a world characterized by the presence of advanced information and communication technologies, literacy is an urgent necessity. It empowers and nurtures societies as well as contributes to human and national development. In the case of mothers, literacy tends to enhance the quality of life of their families and improves the education of their children. If one will look at the future of the Philippines in the above context, this means that to become globally competitive, the Filipinos must be literate. It also means that it should have an educational program which must address to the drop-outs, and the non-literate adults who have never experienced formal schooling. This must be the reason why the Department of Education mandated the Bureau of Alternative Learning System to hire 300 mobile teachers starting 1999 [1]. Their principal role is to cater literacy services in the barangays to seasonal pupils who dropped from schools because of poverty through different means and modes of delivery [3]. Yet, literacy seemed inaccessible and unreachable to over 785 million adults and out-of-school youth who just possess basic reading skills [2]. In the Philippines, while literacy rate is between 94-96 percent, functional illiteracy is high. They learned some reading and writing but cannot write well enough to understand the instruction [4]. The literacy mapping conducted in the Division of Northern Samar reported that there were 54, 109 illiterate out-of-school youths and adults in the Province of Northern Samar [5].

Being illiterate means difficulty in understanding instruction, inability to get a better-paying job due to low educational attainment, thus depriving them from better life. Out of the 300 mobile teachers hired nationwide in 1999, the Division of Northern Samar was allocated only two mobile teachers and they were assisted by non-formal coordinators. Additional mobile teachers were hired in the succeeding years with the issuance of DepEd Memorandum 12, s. 2012, making 600 mobile teachers all over the country [6]. Currently there are only thirty one (31) mobile teachers in the Division. Certainly, the big numbers of potential learners in the Division pose a great challenge to mobile teachers on how to minimize if not eradicate illiteracy and on how they addressed this challenge. The researcher took interest if the ALS mobile teachers in the Division of Northern Samar will be able to attain its objectives. The hiring of mobile teachers also started more than six years ago and the need to conduct an evaluation study is in order. Along these views and confronted with the demand for an effective and responsive performance of the mobile teachers, the researcher has conceptualized this study.

Objectives of the Study

This research assessed the performance of the mobile teachers in the Department of Education, Division of Northern Samar. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. describe the socio-demographic profile of mobile teachers in terms of age, sex, educational qualification, and length of service as mobile teacher;
2. determine their level of competencies in the conduct of learning sessions;
3. assess the work performance of the mobile teachers; and
4. identify the problems they encountered as mobile teachers

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Materials and Methods

The Division of Northern Samar, Philippines, the second largest Division in Region VIII serves as the locale of this study. The division is composed of 32 school districts with the district supervisor or principal-in-charge as the head, while the central school is headed by a principal. Each school district has about 5 to 15 barangay schools. Some of the barangay schools are accessible only by the use of *habal-habal*/motorcycle, jeepney or by a combination of hiking, riding a motorboat and a motorcycle. At the district level, the district supervisor is currently designated as the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Manager who takes charge of the supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the ALS mobile teachers [7] and at the Division level two ALS specialists take charge in the supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the mobile teachers performance and the ALS program and projects. One is assigned at the first district and the other at the second district. The descriptive research design was used, with the mobile teachers as the main source of the data. Questionnaire, focus group discussion and interview were also used in gathering the data from the learners and the completers, ALS Education supervisor, District supervisors and barangay officials were also interviewed. As regards the performance of the mobile teachers, the rating scheme of the DepEd mobile teachers was used. A total enumeration of thirty one (31) mobile teachers who were actually conducting learning sessions at the time of the survey served as the respondents. The researcher also joined the ALS Education Supervisor during their field supervisory visits to observe how the learning sessions were conducted. Responses were interpreted through frequency counts, ranking, percentages, and weighted mean.

Results and Discussion:

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Mobile Teachers

As regards the age of the mobile teacher's majority were in their early adulthood. Being young they have the physical stamina in reaching far-flung barangays where the delivery of alternative learning system is needed. As to gender, the number of male mobile teachers is slightly higher than females, indicating that in an alternative learning system delivery, the male still exceeds the number of female mobile teachers, disaffirming the findings in the study of Benseman that teaching is a female-dominated world [8]. The slight difference could be explained by the association that male teachers are better fit in reaching far-plunged barangays. In terms of educational qualification, a little more than 50% were Teacher education graduates in the elementary level and some were pursuing graduate studies. The rests are graduates of allied degree programs. This data connotes that most of the mobile teachers were trained to handle formal classes which is entirely different from how an alternative learning system is conducted. This finding complements the report of AEFLA that although the teachers are qualified educationally and are board passers, they do not have the formal training and exposure in handling the learning sessions as envisioned in the alternative learning delivery system, especially on the andragogy aspect of teaching [9]. The same finding was shared by Tobing [10] and Singh that mobile teachers hold baccalaureate degree, but such degree is not very

appropriate in so far as teaching through the Alternative Learning System is concerned [11]. In an interview with the mobile teachers, all those who pursued graduate studies are pursuing Master in Education, major in Administration and Supervision. Thus, the knowledge they acquired may have less relevance to their work as mobile teachers, but more as a preparation to become future administrators. This must be the reason why most of the school head were former ALS coordinators. Finally, mobile teachers' length of service as mobile teachers indicated that in the Division of Northern Samar, Philippines the ALS mobile teachers started in 1999 making this mode of learning delivery young. Being young in the service would also mean, they may lack the needed exposure in order to be efficient and effective as mobile teachers but they can still do a lot to improve the delivery of their services.

Table 1
Socio-demographic Profile of Mobile Teachers

Socio-demographic Profile	Frequency	Percent
Age		
40-45	7	22.50
35-39	10	32.30
30-34	14	45.20
Total	31	100.00
Sex		
Male	17	45.16
Female	14	54.54
Total	31	100.00
Educational Level		
BEEd with MA units	3	9.68
BEEd	13	41.94
BSIE	5	16.13
BSAgEd	4	12.90
BEEd-HE	2	6.45
2 nd Courser LET passer	4	2.90
Total	31	100.00
Length of Service		
11-15 years	12	38.71
6-10 years	10	32.26
1- 5years	9	29.03
Total	31	100.00

Competencies of Mobile Teachers

The competencies of mobile teachers were measured by several indicators such as educational qualification, use of instructional modules, networking with Peoples' organizations, government organizations and non-government organizations, conduct of action research and evaluation of learners' performance. On the whole, a grand mean of 3.43 indicates that the mobile teachers were highly competent. They were evaluated very competent on the ability to collect information for a data bank, use of learning materials, and translation of learning materials to dialect. However, they were described only competent in having linkages with GOs and NGOs, development and use of community-based learning materials, making home visits, tutorials, and other need-driven activities to sustain learners' participation and the conduct of action research. During the focus group discussion with the learners, a majority of them claimed that the mobile teachers were highly competent in coordinating with local officials and in the Conduct of tutorials. A few learners narrated that the mobile teacher visited them when they are unable to attend their learning sessions. Thus, affirming the findings that the

mobile teachers were less efficient in following up the progress of the learners. There were some learners who hesitantly mentioned that their mobile teacher sometimes failed to report to the agreed time and place in the conduct of their learning session. While a few District supervisors also mentioned that there are times they requested the services of the mobile teachers especially when they believed that the barangay where the learning sessions are conducted are inaccessible areas or rough roads especially during bad weather condition. On the other hand, the mobile teachers informed the researcher that on the months of November and December, they were unable to conduct the learning sessions because of their attendance to seminars, division and district meetings, other officially related functions and the bad condition of the road due to heavy rainfall. It can be inferred from the accounts of the mobile teachers, the district supervisor, the learners and the completers that there were times that the mobile teachers failed to report to the learning site due to typhoons and the learners were civilized enough not to shame their mobile teachers when asked regarding the regularity of the conduct of learning sessions. As a cultural behavior in the province, *hiya* or shame is a valued practice. In the face of confrontations or discussions, nobody would shame anybody, particularly when they are getting something from respected people like the mobile teachers. During the researcher's observation on the conduct of learning sessions the researcher found out that the mobile teachers depended much on the available instructional materials which were already worn out due to the transfer of these materials from one barangay to another barangay. In addition, most of the duplicated copies were not so clear and were blurred. The learning materials seemed overused. They could have been replaced because mobile teachers received an allowance for the reproduction of the instructional materials. Three mobile teachers explained during the interview that they have not photocopied the instructional materials because they have not yet received their instructional allowance and they also claimed that a big portion of their allowance is spent in their transportation to the learning station. The low competence of mobile teachers in the conduct of action research could be attributed to their curriculum. They only have three units in the Alternative Learning System and during their practice teaching they were exposed only to handle formal classes. A situation that does hold true always because some of them are hired as mobile teachers. As Lopez, Strawn and Lopez mentioned, professionalizing the field of adult basic education through teacher certification is one way of improving teachers' competence in the non-formal education system. The use of formal competencies in the non-formal education system is inappropriate for adult basic literacy teachers and should not be used because they are dealing with different types of clientele [12]. The same finding is confirmed by Patena [13]. Nevertheless, it is clear that the mobile teachers' competencies were needed in the performance of varied functions ranging from coordination with the local officials, collection of information and other related functions.

Table 2
Level of Competencies of Mobile Teachers

Competencies	Mean	I
Educationally qualified	4.50	VC
Coordination with Local Officials	4.31	VC
Collects information	4.20	VC
Prepares data bank	3.97	VC
Networks with NGOs, POs and GOs	3.49	HC
Knowledge in community organizing	3.42	HC
Extends learning sessions	3.36	C
Conducts home visit and tutorial	2.69	C
Development of IMs	2.65	C
Translation of Learning materials to dialect	2.64	C
Conduct of action research	2.50	LC
Grand Mean	3.43	HC

Legend: VC-Very competent
HC-highly competent
C-Competent

Performance of Mobile Teachers

There were three (3) indicators used to measure the mobile teachers' performance, personal attribute, competence and professional development. Despite their travel to reach far-flung barangays in the conduct of learning sessions, nobody got a rating of outstanding. Almost all the mobile teachers' performance was evaluated very satisfactory (6.6 to 8.5). They have very high rating on personal attributes which included participative leadership, flexibility, good interpersonal relations and exemplary conduct. However, they were rated just satisfactory in transforming the illiterate learners to basic literacy and on the adoption of high standards in grading and teaching. The mobile teachers' performances were validated by the District supervisor. They explained that in most cases, the learners do not complete the learning sessions, and dropped out at the middle of the school year, to join with their family during the planting season. In addition, very few learners were able to pass the placement test. This means that there are lessons which may have not been given attention by the mobile teachers. Most of the mobile teachers were rated excellent on professional development. This finding is supported by the data presented in Table one where some mobile teachers pursued graduate studies. Although, their course is on Administration and Supervision, it is still a fact that their professional level is different from those who have not pursued graduate studies at all. The ALS Education Supervisor also pointed out that all mobile teachers have regular in-service trainings and educational tours in order to learn from other regions strategies to make them more competent and to expose them to best practices, outside the province. Another explanation for this situation is the University that operates in the province of Northern Samar offers limited advanced degree programs, so they end up choosing Administration and supervision as their field of specialization. A number of mobile teachers narrated that their learners were varied. Some were victims of abuse. Others work as household helpers, or farm laborers. So,

she kept on adjusting their learning sessions to accommodate them. But what frustrate her most is when learners suddenly quit due to work and other family responsibilities. As Guarin pointed out mobile teachers have been providing education to out-of-school individuals through informal education in mountains and remote places where the mobile teachers are the one who look for them, check their status and the kind of families they have [14]. Two mobile teachers have only satisfactory performance. The researcher presumed that they were those who seldom conducted the learning sessions and the one assigned to handle formal classes.

Table 3
Performance of Mobile Teachers

Rating	F	Percent
8.6 - 10.00 (Outstanding)	0	-
6.6 - 8.5 (Very satisfactory)	29	93.54
4.6 - 6.5 (Satisfactory)	2	6.45

Problems Encountered by Mobile Teachers

Mobile teachers were not spared of the problems in the performance of their duties. Like the formal school system, they expressed the lack of learning materials or instructional modules (IMs) as the number one problem. The lack of Instructional materials according to the majority of the mobile teachers is due to the delayed release of Instructional allowance. The explained that the amount released in 2014 is actually a reimbursement of their expenses in duplicating instructional materials in 2013. This is worsened by the situation that they have to bring the IMs from one barangay to another, especially during the rainy season. Furthermore, these findings indicate that the Department of Education is not able to respond to the financial demand of reproduction of learning materials in the Alternative Learning System. Priority is given to formal school needs, rather than the Alternative Learning Service Program. Perhaps, it could also be explained by the economic standing of the country. Despite the fact that the highest allocation of budget goes to education, it is still clear that the amount allocated is not as big as her Asian neighbors. As to the problem of not having a permanent learning center may de-motivate learners to report to their learning sessions. According to a mobile teacher they use the barangay hall for their learning sessions. Unfortunately, if a Barangay Council have scheduled meeting, the mobile teachers are forced to look for another classroom. Sometimes, they conduct the learning session in the house of a Barangay Official. The above finding is confirmed by the report of Barcia that Canicula, a mobile teacher in Albay conducted classes either in the tribal hall, under the trees, and houses which can accommodate the learners. Sometimes he also serves as nanny of the toddlers in school to enable their mothers or fathers attend their lessons [15]. When asked why they cannot use the classroom for formal classes, almost all mobile teachers answered that they organized classes in barangays where there are no formal classes organized. This finding is affirmed in the report of Barcia that most mobile teachers in Albay have organized mobile classes which is 18-20 kilometers far from the town proper [16]. Irregular

attendance of learners is another problem difficult to deal with by the mobile teachers in the Division of Northern Samar. The same finding was aired by Beder and Medina also pointed out "learner's no show and late arrivals were due to incidents in the learner's lives. They found the first problem more frustrating than their complete withdrawals because as teachers they lost the momentum with their learners' progress especially if they were scheduled only for two hours a week [17]. It seemed the mobile teachers found it difficult to create an impact with the learners who had erratic attendance patterns. The situation is further worsened by the lesser value attached to the alternative learning system by some school head as evidence by the assignment of two mobile teachers to handle formal classes. As Rimando reported he encountered a lot of struggles and difficulties in dealing with barangay officials, on how indigenous people can pursue education for free and how to deliver free education to remote villages without elementary schools. Nevertheless, he finds his work very challenging and widen his patience and tolerance [18]. Furthermore, the data connotes that mobile teachers encountered varied problems ranging from the most basic which is lack of instructional materials to additional administrative assignments aside from being a mobile teacher. A situation that is also true to formal classroom situation.

Table 4
Problems Encountered by Mobile Teachers

Problems	F	Rank
Lack of community-based instructional materials	31	1
High cost of transportation	29	2
Delayed release of allowance	28	3
Absence of permanent learning center	25	4
Irregular attendance of learners	21	5.5
Low priority attaché to ALS	21	5.5
Very far learning sites	16	7
Interruption of classes due to role conflict	15	8
Lack of support from local officials	12	9
Basic Literacy Learners demand for livelihood skills training	11	10
Mobile teacher assigned to handle formal classes	3	11
Given an administrative assignment	2	12

Conclusions and Implications

The mobile teachers were young adults, most were males and their educational orientation is to handle formal classes. Hence, they lacked sufficient educational background regarding alternative learning system delivery prior to their appointment as mobile teachers. They learned the intricacies about their job through the in-service trainings provided to them and during the conduct of learning sessions. Being young adults afforded them the strength and will to reach out far-flung barangays in Northern Samar, Philippines. Their profile has proven that in the field of alternative learning system delivery, male teachers are preferred over female teachers. The mobile teachers are highly competent in their job and this implies that they can help minimize illiteracy in the place where

there are only few who can read and write. However, their competencies are not enough because they have to cater to thousands of illiterates in the province. The high ration between the illiterates and the number of mobile teachers is indeed a challenge to the Alternative Learning System of education. Although the mobile teachers have very satisfactory performance, there is much to be improved. They were found very high on personal attributes and professional development but low on competence. Commitment is indeed an important component of the performance of a mobile teacher. Like other professions, mobile teachers were not spared from having problems as implementers of the Alternative Learning System delivery. These problems range from the most basic which is the lack of instructional materials to being given additional work aside from being a mobile teacher. The problem on lack of instruction materials is not only true in the alternative system but also in the formal school system. It can be argued that if the formal school system lacks the needed books, that deficiency is twice higher in the alternative learning system. These problems is complicated by the school administrators themselves who instead of advising the mobile teachers to focus on the conduct of learning sessions and to organize more mobile classes, their performance is hampered by additional assignments given by the school head. This just affirms the view that even school administrators do not regard the alternative learning system equal to the formal school system.

Recommendations:

From the findings and conclusions of this study the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Considering that the mobile teachers were hired without sufficient knowledge about the alternative learning system delivery, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) may offer ALS as one of the mandated subjects in the Teacher Education courses.
2. To reproduce more instructional materials, the mobile teacher may ask the assistance of their school supervisor that a certain amount from the Special Education fund be allotted for that purpose.
3. A linkage with the DepEd and the University of Eastern Philippines may be initiated for the translation and production of community-based learning materials.
4. The higher competence of the mobile teachers could be sustained by regular in-service training on the andragogy of education and conferences to share the best practices.
5. The district supervisor should stick to the assignment of mobile teachers. They should not assigned mobile teachers to the formal school due to the high ratio of illiteracy in the province.
6. Another study may be conducted to look into the variables which was not included in this study.

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