RESEARCH ARTICLE

FROM HARDSHIP TO LEADERSHIP: THE SUCCESS STORIES OF ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEMGRADUATES

John Gil S. Camacho, Angelika Marie C. Bucia and Catherine A. Tamang

ALS, San Carlos City Division, Calepaan Integrated School, Kabanbanan National High School.

Manuscript Info	Abstract
	The existence of leaders rattled the very foundation of each community and had an impact on followers' viewpoints in forming their personal beliefs. Leadership is a type of authority in which one person has the ability to influence or change the values, beliefs, conduct, and attitudes of another person. The majority of the reasons for dropping out are related to poverty. While basic education is free, many impoverished families cannot afford to pay for their children's extracurricular activities. In actuality, almost 28 million Filipinos do not have a secondary education. To address this issue and to comply with the UNESCO Millennium Development Goal of eradicating illiteracy across nations, the Department of Education has designed a program called Alternative Learning System (ALS) to provide all Filipinos with the opportunity to have access to and complete basic education in a mode that suits their unique situations and needs. The goal of this study was to figure out why the participants opted to stop going to school. Similarly, this study investigated the challenges that participants had during studying and how the Alternative Learning System transformed their lives. ALS students should finish their degrees and pursue their goals regardless of their circumstances, according to respondents. According to the findings, ALS has a big impact on their lives, and they are grateful that the government provides ALS for students like them.

Introduction:-

In fact, there are about 28 million Filipinos who have less than secondary education (Labor force Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority 2015). The reasons cited for dropping-out are mostly poverty related. While basic education is free, many poor families are unable to finance the ancillary school needs of their children.

In so doing, the Department of Education has designed a program called- Alternative Learning System (ALS) to address this issue and to comply with the UNESCO'S Millennium Development Goal of eradicating illiteracy across nations and to provide all Filipinos the chance to have access to and complete basic education in a mode that fits their distinct situations and needs. This is relative idea in the Philippine Educational System in order to prevent the increase of illiteracy on the country.

Corresponding Author:-John Gil S. Camacho
Address:-ALS, San Carlos City Division, Calepaan Integrated School, Kabanbanan National High School.

A leader, according to Sethuraman and Suresh (2014), is someone who is in charge of influencing one or more followers and directing them toward a specific goal. A leader plays an important part in the development of humanity, as evidenced throughout human history. (2014) (Ogurlu& Emir). Because leadership is a type of power in which one person has the ability to influence or change the values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes of another person, the presence of leaders shook the very core of each community and had an impact on followers' perspectives in shaping their personal beliefs (Ganta&Manukonda, 2014; as cited by Hao &Yazdanifard, 2015). Affecting each one of the followers to their common goals in the process.

Furthermore, according to Karagianni& Montgomery (2016), the field of leadership has been dominated by an emphasis on adult leaders. The literature on the development of leadership in young people has a considerable vacuum, and the factors that contribute to leadership in young adults have not been extensively studied. Despite the huge volume of research on leadership and leadership practices, it is worth noting that there is little research on the experience of turning young adults into leaders.

The presence of leaders shook the very core of each community and its impact the perspective of followers unto shaping their personal beliefs as leadership is a kind of power where one person has the ability to influence or change the values, beliefs, behaviour and attitudes of another person (Ganta&Manukonda, 2014; as cited by Hao &Yazdanifard, 2015).

Prior to their achievement as student leaders, they had to overcome numerous obstacles in their organizations. According to Ibrahim (2016), the position of leadership continuously poses challenges to the leader's talents as well as to people, things, and change; change brings challenge, and no matter how competent a leader is, they can't stop it. How one responds to those issues will define one's leadership style and determine how effective one can be. Some difficulties arise in the shape of individuals or problems that obstruct the achievement of a goal. Much more comes from within the leader, or from simply being in the position of being a leader. Every leader will be confronted with a large number of them and must learn to cope with them in some way.

As such, the researcher aim is to conduct a critical analysis of the perspectives of ALS graduate regarding their success life stories and experiences and how ALS transform their life.

Methodology:-
The purpose of this qualitative study was to find out why the participants decided to discontinue formal education. Similarly, this research looked into the obstacles that participants faced when learning and how the Alternative Learning System changed their life.

Participants
In this study, convenience sampling was used. The term "availability sampling" is frequently used to describe convenience sampling. It is a non-probability sampling strategy in which participants are chosen depending on their immediate availabilityThis accessibility is normally measured in terms of geographical proximity, but it can also include other factors like recognized contacts (Frey, 2018). Non-probability sampling focuses on sampling approaches in which the units under investigation are chosen depending on the researcher's judgment.

The researcher collaborated with the Alternative Learning System Graduates within the Schools Division of San Carlos City, Pangasinan, to choose the study's participants. To find previous ALS grads who were competent for this study, the researcher contacted ALS mobile teachers.

Two (2) successful graduates of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) agreed to take part in the study. Participants had to meet the following criteria: 1) ALS graduate; 2) tertiary education; 3) professional work; and 4) willingness to engage in the study.

See Table 1 for the profile of the participants.

Table 1:- Profile of the Participants.

Respondent	Age	Status	Occupation	Affiliation	Years in Service
1	29	Single	Instructor I	Virgen Milagrosa University	7 years

				Foundation	
2	41	Married	Administrative II	Division Office San Carlos City, Pangasinan	3 years

Data Collection And Analysis
This study used a qualitative research design, with in-depth interview as the main approach. It is primarily used to explore the topic, understand the concerned phenomena and answer queries by analyzing and making sense of unstructured data.

In gathering the relevant data for the study, the researcher used face-to-face interview using a semi-structured interview guide using open-ended questions, which are questions that provide respondents an opportunity to provide a wide range of answers (Hyman & Sierra, 2016). In addition, on semi-structured interviews, DeJonckheere and Vaugh (2019) stated that this method typically consists of a dialogue between researcher and participant, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes and comments.

Face-to-face interview, also called an in-person interview, is probably the most popular and oldest form of survey data collection (Lavrakas, 2008), this method enables the researcher to acquire factual information, consumer evaluations, attitudes, preferences and other information coming out during the conversation with the respondent. This approach was selected because first-hand information vocally explained by the participants are much preferred to yield more accurate data. The study was conducted in San Carlos City, Philippines. The researcher sought permission from the respondents by sending them informed consent online. As to data collection and storing methods, the researcher asked permission to record the whole interview to be able to review the content of the recordings and to ensure the validity of the data to be published. The researcher interviewed the participants one-by-one for an average of one (1) hour recorded conversation. The qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed using comparative and content analysis after each session. The direct quotation of the participants and the relatives were used to complete the process of the research.

Results And Discussion:-
Analysis, comparison, and categorization were performed on the replies received. It is largely categorized based on how many times the same idea, thinking, or response appears in each category.

Part I: Perception / Idea about Alternative Learning System
Question 1: What is your idea about the Alternative Learning System? (Ano ang iyongideyatungkolsa Alternative Learning System?)
P1: I have no idea in ALS.
P2: Pagluluto ng tocino or Life Skill. Walangalam n may academic pala ang ALS.
In question 1,The first respondent knows nothing about ALS, but the second respondent knows a little about it. In this situation, ALS learners' perceptions are hampered by their age. In 2009, respondent 1 was 16 years old, whereas respondent 2 was 26 years old in 2007.
Question 2. How did you know about the Alternative Learning System? (Paanomonalaman ang tungkolsa Alternative Learning System?)
P1: In 2009, my mother told me to enroll in ALS because I was a third-year high school and had an unpaid miscellaneous in my previous year in private school.
P2: I have an idea about ALS, I inquired at Schools Division of San Carlos City Pangasinan if they offer ALS. I was referred to Sir Nestor Bautista, an ALS Coordinator in Salinap Community Learning Center, I decided to enroll in 2007.
In Question 2, Respondent 1, was informed by parent to enroll in ALS at the same time, respondent 2, is a parent already and has a broader idea on educational program offered in the Philippines.

Part II: Reasons to stop from schooling
Question 1. When did you stop your formal education?
P1: It was April of 2009, and I was in my 3rd year high school.
P2: I decided to stop in formal education in Davao, when I was in third year high school, and it was 1995.
In question 1,When they stopped formal schooling, both respondents were in their third year of high school. It reveals that both respondents were in their adolescent years and were at a crossroads in their lives.
Question 2.What are the reasons you stopped from schooling?

P1: I don't want to stop from schooling, but my parent can no longer afford to pay my miscellaneous fee in the private school I enrolled.

P2: We were 7 siblings in the family. My parents can't send us in public school because we prioritized our everyday meal just to survive our daily life. I was tired studying and working at a very young age so I decided to stop.

Question 2, The respondent 1 parent was unable to financially support and pay the miscellaneous charge, whereas the respondent 2 parent was unable to support and pay the miscellaneous fee owing to poverty, and they prioritized their necessities.

Part III: Difficulties experienced while studying in the ALS

Question 1. When did you start studying in the Alternative Learning System?

P1: "I was encouraged by my mother to enroll in ALS, it was May 2009".

P2: I still remember that it was 2007 when I enrolled in ALS.

In question 1, Respondent 1 enrolled in ALS right away, but respondent 2 took a few years to decide and enroll in ALS.

Question 2. Is studying in the Alternative Learning System your personal choice?

P1: No, it was my mother's choice.

P2: Yes, I was hesitant at first to enroll in ALS, but then again, I have enough desire to finish my basic education.

In this part, Respondent 1 was motivated extrinsically by the parent, whereas respondent 2 was motivated inwardly. It demonstrates that motivation is one of the aspects that influences a person's decision-making.

Question 3. What do you think are the challenging part while studying in the ALS?

P1: As far as I remembered, the classroom facility was the challenging part in ALS. Not having enough chairs and tables affects our learning environment and we cannot concentrate or focus in our lessons. We don't have permanent room in ALS.

Aside from that, I am having trouble to cope up with my classmates due to the age differences likeI had 12- & 35-years old classmates.

P2: Since I stopped a long time, it wasn't easy for me to adjust in my studies.

In this question, Respondent 1 focused on the absence of classroom facilities, whereas respondent 2 was troubled by the length of time spent not studying. It demonstrates that the respondents have had varying degrees of difficulty learning about ALS.

Question 4. Did you have a hard time studying in the ALS?

P1: I am having a hard time to write essaysandto recite in the class because I was used into objective type of test in the formal education

P2: It wasn't easy for me to leave my kids and no one is willing to watch over them. Instead, I bring them in our learning center.

For question 4, the first responder focused on academics, while the second respondent struggled to care for the children. While studying at the ALS, the respondents faced a variety of challenges.

Question 5. What do you think are the main reasons or causes of your difficulties in studying in the ALS?

P1: I usually go to school with an empty stomach. Most of the time, I only buy rice from canteen and request for a free soup.

P2: I felt that no one is concern about my studies and there are times that I am losing hope to finish my basic education because of these I am having difficulties to focus on my studies.

In this question, Respondent 1 focuses on his or her physical demands in order to be able to study in the classroom, whereas respondent 2 is experiencing emotional stress, which causes him or her to get disengaged from the lectures. It demonstrates that a person should be supported physically, psychologically, emotionally, and financially by those around them.

Question 6. How did you respond to those difficulties?

P1: "To meet my educational demands, I am a working student, and we occasionally shared meals with my classmates."

P2: "Through prayer and faith, and on occasion, I will bring my children to school merely to sit in on my lesson."

It shows that, respondent 1 works to sustain his/her education even having going to school with an empty-stomach while respondent 2, brought his/her kids to surpass the struggles and cope up with the lessons in ALS. This shows that the two ALS learners are strategic in life to solve their own problem in a good way with empathy to help other co-ALS learner and fighting with a prayer and faith in God.

Part IV: How did the ALS transform your life?

Question 1. What made you decide to finish your basic education in ALS?

P1: "In my opinion, Basic education must be completed before proceeding to the postsecondary level. Also, to pursue my aim of finishing college, earning a degree, and landing a job one day."

P2: "I felt so little in their eyes that I persisted in finishing, despite the difficulties, because ALS is a must for obtaining a college degree."

Both individuals are attempting to achieve their life goals and desires in this situation. Both respondents desire a solid employment for the future.

Question 2. What are the things that you can't do before but you can do now?

P1: "Previously, I was not confident, but now I am. I've entered the ALS pageant and am now able to communicate well. I even dabble with computer science, such as photo and video editing."

P2: "When I passed the A&E Test and completed my degree, I became a self-sufficient individual and the family's breadwinner. I'm now a part of my husband's family's decision-making process."

In this question, Respondent 1 gained confidence and improved communication skills, whereas respondent 2 has matured into a self-sufficient individual whose opinion now matters. This shows that when they both graduated in ALS program there is an improvement in their abilities and the way people look at them with respect.

Question 3. What do you think is the contribution of Alternative Learning System in your current work?

P1: "ALS has had a significant impact on my life. I am now a focal point at a university, and they are assisting me in achieving my dreams and ambitions"

P2: "I implemented everything I learned in ALS to my current job and the way I interact with my coworkers, and it worked."

In response to question 3, respondent 1 is now a representative in his or her college department, assisting and encouraging other students to be successful and leaders in the future, at the same time respondent 2 was able to use his or her learning in ALS while also interacting with new people.Both of the respondent's experiences in ALS had a good impact in their current job because they have learned how to deal with people, good fellowship with their workmates and become an inspiration to others.

Question 4. How do you define success and leadership?

P1:"Push yourself out of your comfort zone and believe in yourself.

P2: "Never give up in life, even if you are going through a lot of difficulties, keep going till you achieve your goals."

For this question, Respondent 1 describes success and leadership as believing in one's own inner capacity, but respondent 2 believes that problems are a necessary element of being a leader.They have different parameters to define success, it can be intrapersonal or interpersonal relationship that push them to reach their success in life and keep them going.

Question 5. What is your life lesson/s?

P1:"Live without limits."

P2: There is no place for fear and be courageous enough.

Respondent 1 believes in living without boundaries, but respondent 2 believes in being brave and not fearing life's problems. Both of the respondents have a strong personality in dealing with life problems that they had overcome.

Question 6. Any piece of advice to ALS learner?

P1:"Take in all of your teacher's advice and learn how to listen from your peers."

P2: "don't show that you are superior to anyone"

In response to question 6, respondent 1 believes that students should listen to and apply what they are taught by their mobile teachers, whereas respondent 2 wishes to be modest in life no matter who they are or how far they have come. Both of the respondents shows that respect to other people is a key to success in life.

Conclusion And Recommnedation:-

Stories play a critical role in how we interpret life events and the emotions that accompany them. Stories are a great method to capture life's greatest moments and lessons. The human brain is wired to recognize patterns and grasp story plots in order to preserve them in long-term memory. We believe that wonderful stories can alter people's lives, so we've compiled a selection of some incredible short life stories that can teach you vital lessons, assist you in dealing with various life situations, and encourage you to approach life in new ways. Good leaders are cultivated rather than born. A leader who possesses both passion and power will be successful. Self-study, education, training, and experience are all part of the process of becoming a good leader.(Aline & Ramkumar, 2018). Leadership has a substantial impact on the strategic management process, according to Jabbar and Hussein (2017). It is very useful in determining the organization's vision and mission. It also makes it easier for the organization to implement effective tactics in order to attain that vision.

There are numerous tasks that must be completed in order to obtain academic achievement. For starters, it has to do with getting to know oneself as a person. Because once you know who you are, it will be evident which areas you need to work on and better. Knowing one's own learning style allows us to gain a more nuanced understanding of ourselves and appears to place a greater emphasis on taking responsibility for our own learning achievement.

The researcher discovered that one of the reasons why learners fail to complete their formal education is due to financial difficulties. While studying at ALS, the respondents faced a variety of problems, including physical facilities, financial issues, age gaps and differences, peer pressure, a lack of support, and prejudice. Furthermore, respondents stated that ALS students should complete their degrees and pursue their objectives regardless of their circumstances. ALS had a significant impact on their life, according to the findings, and they are grateful that the government provides ALS for students like them.

Researcher recommend to ALS and communities should offer a wide range of program options that appeal to and meet the needs of various adolescents, and they should do so through local entities that can coordinate such efforts across the community. Programs for vulnerable and underserved adolescents should receive special attention.

Acknowledgement:-

References:-

1. Sethuraman, k., &suresh, j. (2014). Effective leadership styles. International business research, 7(9). Doi:10.5539/ibr.v7n9p165
2. Ogurlu, ü., & emir, s. (2014). Effects of a leadership development program on gifted and non-gifted students' leadership skills. Eurasian journal of educational research, (55), 223-242. Doi:10.14689/ejer.2014.55.13
3. Osman, abdullah&hadi, arman&safizal, muhammad. (2014). An analysis on student leadership behaviour: a higher education institutional perspective. International journal of scientific and technology research. 3. 161-164.
4. Jun hao, moo &yazdanifard, assc. Prof. Dr. Rashad. (2015). How effective leadership can facilitate change in organizations through improvement and innovation. Global journal of management and business research (a). 15. 1-6
5. Despoinakaragianni&anthonyjudemontgomery (2018) developing leadership skills among adolescents and young adults: a review of leadership programmes, international journal of adolescence and youth, 23:1, 86-98, doi: 10.1080/02673843.2017.1292928
6. Despoinakaragianni&anthonyjudemontgomery (2018) developing leadership skills among adolescents and young adults: a review of leadership programmes, international journal of adolescence and youth, 23:1, 86-98, doi: 10.1080/02673843.2017.1292928
7. Despoinakaragianni&anthonyjudemontgomery (2018)developing leadership skills among adolescents and young adults: a review of leadership programmes, international journal of adolescence and youth, 23:1, 86-98, doi: 10.1080/02673843.2017.1292928
8. Farrell, m. (2017). Leadership reflections: leadership skills for knowledge management. Journal of library administration, 57(6), 674-682. Doi:10.1080/01930826.2017.1340768
9. Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). Encyclopedia of survey research methods (Vols. 1-0). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412963947
10. Frey, B. (2018). The SAGE encyclopedia of educational research, measurement, and evaluation (Vols. 1-4). Thousand Oaks,, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781506326139
11. Dejonckheere m, vaughnlmsemistructured interviewing in primary care research: a balance of relationship and rigour family medicine and community health 2019;7:e000057. Doi: 10.1136/fmch-2018-000057
12. Hyman, michael& sierra, jeremy. (2016). Open- versus close-ended survey questions. Nmsu business outlook. 14.

13. Ihorindengeraaline and dr. S ramkumar. Leaders are not born, they are made. International journal of applied research. 2018; 4(5): 94-96.
14. Irsheid, e. (2018). The effectiveness of students involvement in leadership process in schools and its impact on increasing their academic achievement in jordanian schools: the case of schools in ramtha city, 6(9). Retrieved from https://ijern.com/journal/2018/september-2018/05.pdf.