

COMPLIANCE TO THE EDUCATION SERVICE CONTRACTING (ESC) REQUIREMENTS BY PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAM

Aljon S. Bucu¹

Abstract: *Quality graduates is often times equated with quality education services. This analogy simply advocates the necessity to promote an ambiance of learning equipped with effective delivery of educational programs and services geared towards skills development on both theoretical and practical aspects. The research paper aimed to describe the compliance to the education service contracting (ESC) requirements by participating schools towards sustainability of the program. The research employed descriptive-evaluative research design to assess the effectiveness of an existing program of the five private schools in Congressional Area 1 which are recipients of the ESC program of the government. Their compliance to DepEd minimum standards was assessed using the actual tool during accreditation/re-certification period in which administrators, teaching & non-teaching including student-leaders were selected as legitimate respondents. Findings revealed that on the nine (9) areas of quality practices and conditions, schools were found practicing the minimum standards to a great extent. This implies that the program beneficiaries conformed to the criteria or standards set by the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) which is the trustee of the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE). Moreover, the result reported that there is about 88% to 100% compliance level of these schools to DepEd requirements which further indicates that each provision is extensively and functionally met. This implies that there is a perceived a continuous effort in improving the quality of basic education services among these private schools. Based on the conclusion of the study, it can be recommended that promisingly schools have manifested continuous improvement in so far as compliance to basic requirements is concerned. The increasing number of school population specifically on the number of ESC grantees as well as in the number of teaching staff who benefited from the program through a subsidy signals an appropriate and lawful adherence to existing guidelines and conditions.*

Keywords: *Education Service Contracting (ESC) Program, Sustainability, Nine Areas of quality, practices and conditions, Compliance, DepEd minimum standards.*

¹ Regional Science High School for Region 02, PHILIPPINES, Aljon.bucu@deped.gov.ph

I. BACKGROUND

Sustaining the quality assurance in the Philippine Education, the government thru the Department of Education or DepEd initiated programs that would continuously assist both public and private education sectors to improve their system of serving the community. This is made possible by making the Filipino learners enjoy their rights to quality education without any burden of financial conflicts, thus, the various government extension programs to afford these poor but deserving elementary and junior high school completers. Reports and statistical results show that there is an increasing rate of dropouts across the archipelago due to many indicators such as financial matters, family issues, lack of educational facilities (e.g. books, computers, classrooms, teachers and educational media), and geographical locations, etc. This alarming challenge wakes up the long-sleep mind of the Philippine education system to make education the top concern of the education leaders by expanding its program and partnering with private schools to cater learners who choose to pursue their education in a private institution.

In one of the Department of Education (DepEd) reports dated June 26, 2017, there is an increasing percentage of elementary and high school learners who dropped out from a formal school making 4.8 million or 11 percent increase since 2012. This circumstance has been attributed mainly to the tormenting poverty nationwide. In order to arrest such impending and pressing education concern, the government has led numerous programs making education more accessible to the individuals especially the youth and more programs designed to accommodate students who are to complete their basic education.

As an offshoot to this effort, the government thru the Presidency of the late Ferdinand E. Marcos has initiated a constitutional support that has placed premium assistance to education sectors especially those that composed the private schools. The birth of Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution and R.A 8545 or the Expanded Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education or GASTPE supports the government's earnest purpose to intensify its campaign to eradicate children at risk of dropping out rooted from low government aid.

Through the Education Service Contracting (ESC) program of DepEd, a qualified participating or recipient school is deemed compliant with the minimum standards set for secondary educational institution. It is therefore imperative that these schools as social institution must be fully responsible to providing efficient and quality education programs for mankind. Hence, the department enjoins all participating institution to offer an academic framework aimed at ultimate acquisition of knowledge and development of skills necessary for success in higher educational pursuits and a wide range of careers.

Meanwhile, the Department of Education has commissioned the trustee of the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE) which is the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) to establish an appropriate measure to quality assure, through a certification mechanism, that private education institutions' performance is in conformity with DepEd's standards for recognition. Those that are duly certified compliant with DepEd's requirement for participation and all other applicable policies are entitled for further inclusion to the program and additional ESC grants/slots. Thus, the PEAC-FAPE Secretariat Committee on ESC School Certification regularly conducts assessment procedures to assist schools in determining their potentials for becoming a more effective learning institution. Truly, program evaluation considers as key litmus assessment of academic quality. According to Gao (2007) he emphasized that accreditation is made to evaluate criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess

whether or not those criteria are met. Further, academic institutions and/or programs that request an agency's evaluation and that meet an agency's criteria are then "accredited" by that agency.

On the other hand, EFA Education for All opines that education development outcomes can be achieved through a comprehensive framework for understanding, monitoring and improving education quality. In the study of Welch (2010), he underscored that educational quality contains the following components such as effectiveness, efficiency, equality, relevance and sustainability. Similarly, Hawes and Stephens (2013) on questions of academic quality, both asserted that effectiveness is measured when the education objectives are being realized and achieved. In addition, they also described effectiveness as both internal and external.

II. MOTIVATION AND OBJECTIVES

This paper aimed to describe the compliance to the education service contracting (ESC) requirements by participating schools towards the sustainability of the program. Specifically, it aimed to answer the objectives below:

1. To determine the profile of the participating schools with regard to student population (ESC and Non-ESC Grantees), teaching and non-teaching population and years as ESC recipient;
2. To find-out the extent of compliance of the private schools in the nine areas of quality practices and conditions as perceived by the respondents with respect to: School philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals/Objectives, Instructional program, School personnel, Student Services, School Plant and Physical Facilities and Equipment, Academic Support Services and Resource Facilities and Equipment: Library and Laboratories, Administration and Governance, School Budget and Finances, and Institutional Planning and Development;
3. To determine the significant difference in the extent of compliance among the nine areas of quality practices and conditions of ESC participating schools in Congressional Area 1 as perceived by the respondents;
4. To find-out the significant difference in the extent of compliance among the participating schools in Congressional Area 1, and
5. To find-out the significant difference in the extent of compliance of the participating schools in Congressional Area 1 as perceived by the respondents.

III. STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

The results of this study could be a potential basis in improving the educational program and services which are key elements towards academic success. In some points, the procedure involved in it is a simulation of an actual assessment and evaluation of schools' readiness and compliance to DepEd policies by identifying their strengths and weaknesses in various areas of quality practices and conditions. In order to fulfil its two goals, quality assurance and institutional and program improvement, assessment or certification provides valuable service to several partners such as the students, parents, community, school stakeholders, curriculum developers and planners, DepEd, PEAC and the government. The government duly represented by the DepEd may be benefited from the study as lead policymakers, this study would be valuable to them by reflecting honestly the results-based report

occurring in the education sector. This would provide an interesting data on the effect of subsidizing students and teachers in the elimination or prevention of drop-out rates. Likewise, it would also project if the existing programs coincide with the national goal of sustainable education for all.

The school curriculum planners and developers would also be able to periodically evaluate, plan and make projections consistent with and supportive of its purposes. New improvement efforts are encouraged by the results of the analysis of student performance, system effectiveness and assessment of the program's process.

Findings of the study may help the private school administrators to assess whether their schools have all the resources to ensure the integrity, effectiveness and reputation of the school through the establishment of relevant policies, provision of resources and assurance of a quality educational program. It may further build up the potentials of stakeholders to improve student learning by promoting a more rigorous collaborative, result-oriented practice. The results may guide the policy makers in making wise decisions for the general welfare of the school and its clientele. Lastly, parents and students would definitely orient them on how private schools are being managed, assisted and monitored in terms of curriculum, instruction, governance, management and personnel development. It thus provides a clear and vivid picture about the systems and strategies that private schools have to undertake in order to quality-assure the kind of education offered.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The Descriptive – Evaluative research design was employed to identify appropriately the extent of compliance of ESC participating schools in the nine areas of quality practices and conditions. This design was chosen because it judges the goodness of an existing program, it is also directed to whether or not a program achieved its goals. Based from the data of the Planning Office of the Schools Division Office of Isabela, there are only five (5) recognized Non –DepEd high schools in this area. This consists of Saint Ferdinand College Cabagan Campus, Advance Montessori Education Center of Isabela, Inc., School of Saint Matthias, Magsaysay Memorial High School and Northern Isabela Academy. There were 171 respondents of which were 10 administrators, 111 teaching and non-teaching & 50 student-leaders. ESC Re-certification Assessment Instrument was used as an official questionnaire. Since the aim was to assess the compliance of the schools on set criteria or standards, arithmetic mean and a scale from 0 to 4 were employed. To test the hypotheses, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with level of significance at 0.05 was used to determine statistically if variables being compared have difference.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Profile of the Participating Schools

On school student population, majority of the respondent-schools' student population are recipients of the ESC program which ranged from a total of 301 to 501. Only few are non-ESC grantees numbering from 100 and below. It was also identified that with regard to school teaching and non-teaching population, the number of school administrators in each school was less than 5, while teaching staff ranged from 11 – 19 and 20-29, respectively; and non-teaching from 5 and below. Meanwhile, with respect to the years as ESC participating school, data showed that four-fifths or 80% of the schools were found part of the ESC program for 16 years and above. These statistical

figures indicate that the government program intended to support private school teachers and poor but deserving students has met its functional objectives by providing continuous financial aid and other logistical matters.

2. Extent of Compliance of the Participating Private Schools in the Nine Areas of Quality Practices and Conditions as Perceived by the respondents.

Table 1: Summary of the Extent of Compliance in the Nine Areas of Quality Practices and Conditions as Perceived by the Respondents

Areas of Quality Practices and Conditions	Mean	Description
A. School Philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals/Objectives	3.38	Exceeding the Minimum Standard
B. Instructional Program	2.96	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent
C. School Personnel	2.89	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent
D. Student Services	2.67	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent
E. School Plant and Physical Facilities and Equipment	2.58	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent
F. Academic Support Services and Resource Facilities and Equipment: Library and Laboratories	2.64	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent
G. Administration and Governance	2.68	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent
H. School Budget and Finances	2.65	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent
I. Institutional Planning and Development	2.86	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent
Grand Mean	2.81	Practicing the Minimum Standard to a Great Extent

Table 1 shows the summary of the private schools' extent of compliance in the nine areas of quality practices and conditions. As shown, schools were compliant to the requirement of the program by Practicing the Minimum Standards to a Great Extent in all areas. This conveys that these learning institutions are conforming to DepEd standards by 88% to 100% and that each provision is extensively and functionally met. In other words, there is a perceived a continuous effort in improving the quality of basic education services among these private schools as revealed by the grand mean of 2.81.

Findings reveal that these ESC schools work and unceasingly strive to promote education to its best. From the schools' distinct philosophy, mission, vision up to their institutional planning and development there is a consistent perception that these schools labor for the sustainability of the ESC program. However, areas on "School Plant and Physical Facilities and Equipment" and "School Budget and Finances" have to be carefully and seriously monitored and improved. Considering the impact of these areas to quality performance, people on top management are encouraged to create ways and means to address issues or matters contributing to the overall compliance of schools. These, specifically, include improving the facility on laboratories and better facilities for personal and hygienic necessities like urinals. Sanitation service programs in schools have to be implemented well to safeguard students' health. This may be done through regular integration in classroom discussions to educate both students and teachers to be more responsible members of the community. Hence, quality education programs do not only speak on curriculum designs but also on facilities and physical well-being of the school. This finding adheres to the components of quality education by Welch (2010) stating that effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability are key elements of school performance.

3. Significant Difference in the Extent of Compliance among the Nine Areas of Quality Practices and Conditions of ESC Participating Schools

Table 2: Significant difference in the extent of compliance among the nine areas of quality practices and conditions of ESC participating schools in Congressional Area 1 as perceived by the respondents

Areas	Significance F	Analysis	Decision	Remarks
A. School Philosophy, Vision, Mission, Goals/Objectives	7.2E-08	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
B. Instructional Program	7.12E-18	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
C. School Personnel	1.32E-18	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
D. Student Services	4.23E-25	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
E. School Plant and Physical Facilities and Equipment	2.34E-25	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
F. Academic Support Services and Resource Facilities and Equipment: Library and Laboratories	5.31E-31	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
G. Administration and Governance	4.21E-21	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant

H. School Budget and Finances	3.67E-09	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
I. Institutional Planning and Development	2.27E-05	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
Overall	3.24E-07	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 2 presents the result of the test on significant difference of the nine areas of quality practices and conditions based on the perceptions of the respondents. The figures in the table using Analysis of Variance F – test at 0.05 level of significance, the significance F values were less than 0.05. Since the overall F value of 3.24E-07 is less than the set level of significance of 0.05, this means that the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the extent of compliance among the nine areas of quality practices and conditions of ESC participating schools in Congressional Area 1 failed to accept.

Data report that different groups of the respondents have significantly different perceptions as to how the ESC participating schools complied with the nine areas of quality practices and condition. For instance, the school administrators showed high confidence that their respective school exceeded the minimum standard requirements. Findings conclude that each area has an impact or effect over the other areas. In other words, the areas are interrelated and dependent with one another and that the overall compliance of the schools is being predicted either by the success and failure in responding positively to the required provisions expected for each condition. Thus, schools are assured of better delivery of each quality conditions and practices if there is complete evidence of adherence to the guidelines and other governing DepEd policies with regard to the level of compliance which then results to sustainable ESC participation.

4. Significant difference in the extent of compliance among the participating schools in Congressional Area 1

5.

Table 3: Significant difference in the extent of compliance among the participating schools in Congressional Area 1

School	Significance F	Analysis	Decision	Remarks
A	0.84	F > 0.05	Accept Ho	There is no Significant Difference
B				
C				
D				
E				

As shown in the analysis of Table 3, the computed significance F value of 0.84 is greater than the level of significance of 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference in the degree of compliance among the

schools. As it is reflected in the previous discussions and tables particularly in their individual means, almost all schools have very close overall perception with respect to ESC compliance.

Findings of the research can be attributed to or associated with some facts such as these schools have an active and recognized association which is the “Northern Isabela Private Schools Association (NIPSA)” in which every year school administrators and some teachers conduct series of meetings to discuss plans of the association and one of their agenda is the ESC status of each school. For them, they find this meeting as an avenue for brainstorming and benchmarking on the best practices of their own respective school. In fact, this gathering opens an opportunity for them to adopt and better improved the quality of each area. Another, there is an intimate and unified collaboration among the five private schools and that they do not see and regard their fellow ESC recipients as contender or competitor, instead they share and help. And lastly, they are in the same umbrella- the Non-DepEd schools that function as public schools’ partner and stewards of quality education.

6. Significant difference in the extent of compliance of the participating schools in Congressional Area 1 as perceived by the respondents.

Table 4: Significant difference in the extent of compliance of the participating schools in Congressional Area 1 as perceived by the respondents

Respondents	Significance F	Analysis	Decision	Remarks
Administrators	3.25E-06	F < 0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
Teaching				
Non-Teaching				
SSG				

The test on distribution in Table 4 explains the result of the test of significant difference in the extent of compliance of the participating schools in congressional area 1 when respondents are grouped together or as perceived by the respondents accordingly. Findings reveal that the P value of 3.25E-06, which is less than the level of significance of 0.05, generates an interpretation of significant difference.

Finding concludes that these groups significantly differ with one another. The difference is normally associated with some observable circumstances that teachers and non-academic teachers are more exposed to and have direct involvement to the different areas particularly on academic related conditions. In addition to this, the fast turn-over of the teaching and non-teaching staff provides little understanding about ESC criteria and DepEd overall standards. In the same way, SSG officers have to familiarize themselves with the different programs and plans of the school since they are not directly involved in their planning or implementation. It was mentioned during an interview with the teacher-respondents wherein there were items or provisions in the quality practices and conditions that were unfamiliar to them and so with the school heads that some teachers who are very new in the profession have inadequate knowledge or background about the ESC program.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In view of the findings revealed in the study, it can be concluded that schools manifested continuous improvement as evidently manifested in the increasing number of school population specifically on the number of ESC grantees as well as in the number of teaching staff who are also benefited from the program through a subsidy. Similarly, ESC program bridges a strong partnership between public and private schools, and schools' stakeholders and the community as it affords active involvement of parents, students and teachers. Through this, students could enjoy studying in non-DepEd or recognized private schools without fear of deprivation and hesitation due to financial problems. It is also identified as an effective mechanism to help public schools decongest the number of students' population brought by its limited absorption capacity.

Since, schools' have varied mechanisms to address their adherence to the said government program, it is therefore imperative for all stakeholders (internal and external) that every area has to be regularly facilitated, supervised and improved and this can only be possible if all stakeholders work together for a common vision, mission and goals of the school. One way to make improvement is to continuously monitor the latest actual recertification recommendations to trace the extent of compliance especially the areas of strengths and points for enhancement. This is necessary in order to work with the existing global trend in education and adjust management styles that will ultimately spell-out quality in all areas of quality practices and condition which the general mandate of the program.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author conveys his supreme gratitude to the Schools Division Office of Isabela especially the Private Schools in Legislative District 1 for their willingness and accommodation to provide details for the study that apart from their solid support and positivity, this work may not have been completed. Special thanks to his friends, family and colleagues, this is all for you. Lastly to God who is the constant source of everything.

VIII. REFERENCES

- [1] PEAC-FAPE Secretariat 2012
- [2] Republic Act 8545 (amending RA 6728) known as the "Expanded Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education or GASTPE, (1987)."
- [3] Mourshed, M., C. Chijoke and M. Barber, "How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better". (2010).
- [4] GAO, "Higher Education: Issues Related to Law School Accreditation: Report to Congressional Requests. U.S. Government Accountability Office, (March 2007).
- [5] Hawes, H. and D. Stephens, "Questions of Quality: Primary Education and Development". Harlow: Longman, (2013).
- [6] DepEd Order No. 6, s. 2015 "Policies and Guidelines for the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (2015).

- [7] EFA Global Monitoring Report Education for All: The Quality Imperative (2005).
- [8] Hawes, H. and D. Stephens (2014). Questions of Quality: Primary Education and Development. Harlow: Longman
- [9] Republic Act 10533 (RA 10533) -the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013
- [10] Welch, A. "Third World Education: Quality and Equality". New York, Garland, (2010)
- [11] <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/district-self-assessment.doc>