

Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko: An Exploration of Student Tutor-Tutee Experiences in School-Based Reading Program

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Abstract — The need to come up with an effective intervention is really a must, especially if the main goal is to aid something or someone important. Indeed, the growing number of students who are academically-challenged in most schools in the Philippines is undeniably evident. This study covered the lived experiences of the learners who were discovered as individuals who have the potential to help (tutor), and condition to be helped (tutee), as it viewed how the Kamag-aral Ko, Guro Ko school-based reading program was conducted. The researcher utilized Merriam and Tisdell's qualitative case study framework to deeply explore the impact of this peer teaching approach towards the learning and development of the students. Ten tutors and ten tutees were involved in the study— served as the participants, and three teachers for corroboration purposes. Through in-depth interview, the researcher was able to gathered all the needed data, and were analyzed thematically to capture the lived experiences of the participants. A positive view of the explored reading program was shown in the results. It emphasized that the initiative helped the tutees develop their reading comprehension and engagement, and nurtured leadership and communication skills among tutors. In addition, teachers also observed the improved and developed skills among the participants such as teamwork, classroom participation, and sense of responsibility. Thus, the totality of the experience showed meaningful and transformative impact of the reading program.

Keywords — *peer teaching, qualitative case study, reading program, student tutors, tutees*

I. Introduction

Background of the Study

Learning should not be confined in one area where everyone is expecting that teacher is the only responsible in educating the young minds. In this fast and ever evolving time, we experience a lot of adjustments. From the traditional way to a more inclusive and learner-centered teaching which emphasized the need of various strategies that promote collaboration, support, and shared responsibility in learning.

To add to that, there is an increased appreciation of the fact that students can be a great contributor of good learning environment. Through giving them proper training with enough tools, guidance, and motivation-leading to a more prepared individuals, they will become an

effective facilitator of learning for their peers. This goal acknowledges the shared learning process where students are involved in creating their own and others' academic endeavor.

In spite of the initiatives, the department is still facing this never-ending problem, the alarming number of academically-challenged learners. They are often left behind not just in the teaching-learning process for skills development, but also in engaging to various opportunities for their growth.

Many contributing factors were seen and considered along the way. The Department of Education is indeed very adaptive and never failed to provide so many ways just to save every single learner from not being able to access quality education. However, what had happened gets the scenario even more alarming. It resulted to having an increased number of learners who are identified as below proficient, or learners who cannot perform the skills and knowledge expected from them according to their level.

As a response to the impact of the learning gaps, policymakers and educators reconsidered and reexamined the efficacy of existing teaching methods. The system is in need of a more responsive and individualized approach to put an end to the growing problem in learning. Peer teaching marked as a viable intervention that is aligned with learner-centered principles, refining the engagement of the students with the learning process.

In response to the rising concern on learning loss and gaps, the Department of Education has intensified its commitment to learning recovery through various Central Office issuances and initiatives that aim to improve foundational skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Among the major issuances that can be cited is the DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2023, which institutionalized the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP). The program seeks to address learning loss by implementing targeted interventions, remediation activities, and learner-centered strategies that aim to ensure that students meet grade-level standards.

Additionally, the Department has implemented the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program, which was issued through DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2024. This program aims to provide structured remediation sessions for learners who need additional academic interventions. This program seeks to improve learning outcomes, especially on foundational learning, such as literacy and numeracy, through the implementation of intervention sessions, instruction, and learning strategies. This program encourages the development of localized learning recovery programs that cater to the needs of the learners while ensuring that the learning recovery goals are met.

Furthermore, various Department Order issuances from the Regional and Division Offices were also issued to support the strengthened implementation of learning recovery interventions at the school level. These issuances provide technical guidance to schools in conducting interventions, strengthening reading initiatives, monitoring learners' progress, and implementing innovative strategies. Such policies highlight the Department's commitment to

ensuring that no learner is left behind by promoting inclusive, responsive, and sustainable learning recovery efforts.

The strategy Kamag-aral Ko, Guro Ko was initiated by Mr. Edmond A. Pareñas, the Reading Coordinator of Francisco Ramos National High school, which actually anchored to the Department of Education's goal-to strengthen and improve the proficiency level among learners. It is a peer teaching approach which aimed to address the gap through utilizing the highly performing learners who served as the little educators.

The highly performing learners were responsible in providing various teaching strategies to extend appropriate support to their peers. These little educators underwent training to attain the necessary skills and knowledge they have to learn in becoming an effective tutor, a sole expectation from them to make the learning process beneficial and impactful.

In addition, this approach promoted leadership, responsibility, and compassion among student tutors. As they strengthen their own level of understanding through paired learning sessions, they were able to develop more patience and consideration for other students' shortcomings which actually created a greater sense of classroom society that upholds a learning environment where students feel valued and supported.

To support this, the Department of Education has constantly dreamed with policies that enhance reading programs in every school. DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018 entitled "Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of the National Reading Program (NRP)" emphasized the importance of an inclusive reading program solely designed to cater the learners' diverse reading needs. This national mandate was also the basis for local reading initiatives like "Kamag-aral Ko, Guro Ko," which shared the same principle of making all learners readers. Similarly, DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2024 and regional and division memoranda reiterated the call for schools to strengthen their reading interventions, encouraging innovations and localized programs that fit the learners' context at the same time anchored to the main goal of the program.

In the Division of Zamboanga Sibugay, certain memoranda have also been issued which actually complemented to the implementation of reading programs at the school level and encouraged teachers to develop timely and effective literacy interventions. These issuances gave schools the power to design reading initiatives that are aligned for their learners, making school stakeholders became part and accountable for the implementation.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lay on the shared insights from the tutors and tutees who served as the source as to how peer teaching impacted the learning experience of individuals to achieve total understanding both in academic and personal aspects. It also had significant contributions to the different working bodies in the department like the teachers, school administrators, and future researchers-taking into account the highlighted advantages of the

initiative. The qualitative evidence can be used as a strong basis as to how the initiative can be a powerful instructional support specifically for our academically-challenged learners.

Literature Review

Suija (2020) emphasizes that Peer-Teaching is important in improving one's theoretical and practical skills. It does not just offer the learner a tighter learning session with their peers, it enables them to hone essential skills like collaboration, communication and time management. Rusli, et al. (2020) recognized that peer teaching is an effective teaching method. Even when applied to various contexts, such learning process has shown positive impact which is the increased academic performance of the students. It is also believed as a strong way to reduce anxiety and keep the engagement stronger for peers felt more relatable and supportive.

Moreover, peer teaching approach like Kamag-aral Ko, Guro Ko aims not only to give aid to these academic difficulties, but also to instill a sustainable culture of cooperation through shared efforts. It transformed the classroom atmosphere from teacher-directed learning to collaborative effort where everyone was taking their part.

In spite having new initiatives like DepEd's "ARAL Program" (Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning) targeting post-pandemic recovery learning to fill learning gaps through focused remediation, "Kamag-aral Ko, Guro Ko" continued to succeed as an additional school-based reading intervention. While ARAL is a nationwide program, "Kamag-aral Ko, Guro Ko" presented a more local peer-led one that supports reading interest and complements the objectives of ARAL through student-student collaboration.

This study will cover not just the cited problem that the education system is facing, but also the positive impact of the covered initiative as a particular way of addressing it. As we move forward towards having an advance and more appropriate learning system, we have to be more open for the different strategies. A strategic plan that would deepen and strengthen our usual ways in reaching the level of our learners just to ensure effective and quality learning.

II. Methodology

Research Design

This research used a qualitative study design to engage itself in the everyday experiences, actions, and understandings of student tutors and tutees involved in a school-based reading program. Qualitative research is concerned with investigating meanings and interpretations people give to their lives within their contexts. Through this, the researcher gathered all the essential points that completely gave rich insights without being limited by quantitative data.

The use of Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) qualitative case study model enabled the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the bounded system under study —Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program. As the framework centered on context, discovery, and

interpretation, the researcher became the main instrument for the data collection and analysis. Through interviews, the researcher got the chance to discover rich experiences among the participants.

In this particular research, a multiple case study design was employed. The exploration on tutor case and the tutee case. In every case, rich data were viewed such as the lived experiences of the participants as a whole. The tutor case revolved on students' perceptions of serving as little educators, while the tutee case presented learners' experiences of receiving help from peers. By comparing both cases, the researcher aimed to determine commonalities and variations reflecting how peer teaching affected reading development, motivation, and learner engagement in the school-based reading program.

Research Environment

This research was conducted in one of the national high schools in the municipality of Kabasalan, province of Zamboanga Sibugay. The school has implemented an initiative-Kamag-aral Ko, Guro Ko. It is an intervention used to address the continuous problem among academically-challenged learners in school. One strategy used in such initiative is a peer-tutoring approach of which highly-performing learners voluntarily submit themselves to be the little educators to their peers, making it a relevant environment for this qualitative inquiry.

Research Participants

The participants were chosen through purposive sampling. For the ten tutees, they are the identified academically-challenged learners who show poor level in basic skills—reading, writing, and counting. Tutees are coded as STE-01 to STE-10 for confidentiality and easy reference. The high-performing 10 students who serve as the peer tutors are tapped to provide their experiences that include the challenges and at the same time the benefits they have gained throughout the implementation.

In addition to the tutees and tutors, the study also involved three teachers who directly participated in the school-based reading program. They have played an important role in providing major inputs which consist of the different kinds of supports that they have provided to our student-volunteers.

Research Instruments

The primary tool used in this research was the researcher, who was also the main data collection instrument. The aim of collecting the lived experiences of the participants allowed the researcher to value the importance of a good interview guide. After it was developed, it was checked by some experts to know its validity in obtaining rich information from both tutors and tutees. This made the data even richer and more useful in understanding the overall experience of the participants in the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher followed the interview protocol through submitting a letter to conduct study first which was signed by the schools division superintendent of Zamboanga Sibugay. Then, the researcher coordinated with the school head and class advisers for identification and consent. This made the participating school well-informed and made the entire process of the study valid. Ensuring good and effective communication with significant school officials resulted to openness which promoted a friendly space for the research. In addition, it enhances the ethical basis of the study by excluding the participants without prior coordination and agreement from them.

The researcher made sure as well that the identified participants are given proper orientation. Making sure that everyone involved is ready and well-aware as to the purpose of this study. This gave them clear information about their roles and the extent of their involvement. The researcher then gathered qualitative data from interviews. It served as the primary source of all the data analyzed, making it an essential and at the same time a crucial process. The utilized tool was actually anchored to Merriam and Tisdell's case study approach. It made the researcher possible to collect depth, genuine, and reliable information needed from the participants to answer the research questions and reveal their real-life experiences in the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko.

Data Analysis

In order to lay down clear and complete data analysis, the researcher used Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) case study approach as the main method. It was used in this qualitative study for identifying, examining, and presenting patterns or themes in the data. It also helped the researcher to interpret various aspects of the research phenomenon in an organized way while being adaptive to the depth of human experiences. It is indeed very effective in portraying the richness of participants' views, particularly in studies that investigate lived and personal experiences.

Through that model, the data gathered were thoroughly examined, categorized, and coded. Such thing, frequent ideas were categorized into significant patterns which represented the participants' voices. The goal was to convey an insightful analysis that highlights their authentic lived experience without changing their perspective but representing it respectfully and accurately.

Ethical Considerations in Conducting Research

This study aims to enhance the validity of its findings. While ensuring that the pursuit of knowledge does not compromise the well-being of the participants, the following sections detail the specific measures taken regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation to align with St. Columban's Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements.

Informed Consent. The researcher was much concerned on ensuring the confidentiality of the participants, particularly their personal information. To guarantee ethical requirements, consent from both the guardians and the students were collected prior to their participation.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw. Their participation in this study was purely voluntary, and all participants were aware of their right to withdraw at any time without harm.

Confidentiality. Moreover, the researcher maintained strict confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process. Data collected were considered thoroughly and safely stored.

Respectful Presentation of Findings. In presenting the findings, the researcher presented them with respect and honesty, avoiding any form of judgment or bias to protect the dignity and integrity of all the participants involved.

III. Results and Discussion

This multiple case study presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered from the participants-the student-tutors, tutees, and teacher-implementers of the “Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko” school-based reading program. The procedure of the analysis is anchored to Merriam and Tisdell’s, 2016 case study model, which involved a simultaneous process of gathering and interpreting data. Consolidated responses from the interview were coded and categorized. Since categories emphasized the meaning of the data in a broader concept, highlighting already the shared experiences of the participants, category and theme were merged.

Theme 1: From Doubt to Courage

The conduct of the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program emphasized a significant transition among the tutees, who first viewed reading with fear and uncertainty but gradually gained confidence and appreciation. In the first few sessions, tutees find reading aloud especially in English as a nerve-wracking task. However, constant encouragement from tutors and teacher-implementers helped them surpass their anxiety. In time, reading served its purpose in becoming more than an academic requirement as it became a source of joy, pride, and self-assurance. This theme has four sub-themes: Initial Anxiety toward Reading, Gradual Adjustment and Enjoyment, Increased Confidence and Participation, and Emotional Support from Tutors.

Johnson and Johnson (2019) highlighted that emotional and social support in collaborative learning contexts enhances learners’ engagement and reduces fear, enabling greater participation.

These shared experiences and observation of the student tutors, tutees, and teachers conveyed the significant transition the participants have experienced throughout the reading journey. How the tutees were transformed into someone who valued themselves because of the guidance and encouragement they received from their peers. The point which actually aligned to many studies asserted that constant support and motivation through collaboration enable learners to feel and understand the importance of learning.

Theme 2: Learning Through Accountability

The conduct of the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program showed that the learning for both tutors and tutees became a collaborative process. As tutors extended their spare time helping their peers to improve in reading, in the same manner, they too experienced personal and academic growth. This made the implementation of the program an avenue where both groups gained not only from the reading sessions, but also from the act of helping and being helped. This theme has four sub themes: Learning and Growth, Patience in Action, Developing Responsibility, and Shared Success and Motivation.

This theme Learning Through Accountability reflected the two-way exchange of growth fostered by the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program. Tutors progressed in responsibility, empathy, and communication through the act of helping others, while tutees developed literacy skills, confidence, and appreciation for collaborative learning. This partnership between tutor and tutee justified that teaching and learning are mutually reinforcing acts—when one teaches, both learn. This finding is consistent with contemporary research highlighting the transformative power of peer learning in enriching academic competence, empathy, and social connection.

Theme 3: Collaboration and Support

The effectiveness of the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program stemmed in the strengthened collaboration and support among tutors, tutees, and teachers. The strong commitment of all participants shaped an atmosphere of unity that sustained the conduct of the program. This shared effort not only intensified academic performance but also deepened a sense of belonging and mutual purpose. This theme has four sub-themes: Teamwork Among Tutors and Tutees, Guidance and Encouragement from Teachers, Shared Commitment and Cooperation, Sustaining Motivation Through Peer and Teacher Support.

The theme Collaboration and Support emphasized that the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko program progressed because of the teamwork among tutors, tutees, and teachers. The collaboration among them developed an environment of teamwork, empathy, and shared responsibility. The guidance from teachers, cooperation of peers, and continuous motivation made a cohesive learning environment where everyone played a vital role in achieving literacy endeavors. This finding aligned with educational theories highlighting that productive learning is a collaborative process—when individuals support one another, mutual progress follows.

Theme 4: Challenges in Time and Attendance

The success of the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program was evident. However, the participants experienced significant challenges in connection with the time schedules and irregular attendance. These challenges affected the regularity of the sessions and slowed the process of learning. Nevertheless, tutors and tutees showed adaptability and determination to conquer these problems. This theme has four sub-themes: Scheduling Conflicts and Academic Demands, Irregular Attendance of Tutees and Tutors, Managing Missed Sessions and Adjustments, and Balancing Commitment Through Support and Understanding.

The theme Challenges in Time and Attendance revealed that the implementation of the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program was not possible without challenges. Participants found academic responsibilities, school activities, and personal schedules really difficult to handle, but effective communication, deep commitment, and a sense of shared responsibility made the program continue to function and served its purpose. Their passion to embrace such matters showed resilience of peer-based learning environments. The results indicated that even if logistical challenges are unavoidable, shared effort, favorable consideration, and commitment can sustain meaningful learning results.

Theme 5: Empowerment Through Responsibility

The Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program became a venue in developing one's accountability and independence. It fostered a deep sense of empowerment among the participants. The student tutors learned the value of responsibility, patience, and leadership in their teaching engagements, while tutees nurtured their confidence to enrich their reading capabilities. They saw a purpose and at the same time pride in their accomplishments as they took ownership of their roles. This theme has four sub-themes: Developing a Sense of Responsibility, Building Confidence and Independence, Finding Purpose and Fulfillment in Learning, and Motivation Toward Continuous Growth.

The theme Empowerment Through Responsibility noted how the Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program nurtured the participants to becoming more confident and self-motivated learners. Tutors were able to develop more their leadership skills and nurtured a strong sense of empathy through their roles. In the same manner, tutees developed self-efficacy and deep motivation to learn and fostered love for reading. The program illustrated that empowerment emerges when students are trusted with learning tasks and designated opportunities to take active roles in the educative process. This result connects with educational structures highlighting that autonomy, accountability, and social contribution are key to building empowered individuals.

IV. Conclusion

The Kamag-Aral Ko, Guro Ko reading program is therefore considered beneficial for tutees – a significant point that can be drawn based from the results of this study. The implementation of the program did not only develop the necessary skills of the participants towards academic excellence; it shaped them to becoming someone who has the character where growth is evident. This study affirmed that peer-led approach can be an effective intervention in laying down supports to the academically-challenged learners. It is a transparent way of developing ones' level of understanding – holistically, to become the best version of themselves.

The results of this research gave emphasis on the benefits of the peer-teaching program that the schools can get. If considered, it has the potential to enhance academic interventions where students' engagement is developed – fostering an environment of mutual support and growth.

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