



Operation of unified financial assistance system for tertiary education in selected private institutions in Santiago city, Isabela

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the tertiary education subsidy as mandated by Republic Act No. 10931. A descriptive-comparative research design was used for the investigation. It polled 347 student-grantees chosen purposefully from Northeastern College and the University of La Salette, Inc., sampled using the proportional stratification technique. The respondents believed that the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) should be implemented in order to encourage student perseverance, academic achievement, and administrative capacity. Regarding financial ability, the respondents overwhelmingly concurred that the subsidy reduced their financial stress while attending school, helped them pay their tuition on time, and helped them purchase supplies for their studies. The respondents also concurred that TES provided advantages such developing responsibility and money management skills, aiding in the understanding of the worth of money, and providing motivation to spend prudently. Regardless of their profiles, all of the respondents generally agreed on how well the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) had been implemented. When categorized according to their profiles, certain specific indications were found to be considerably different. Finally, the respondents felt that the late delivery of essential money and severe deadlines for the criteria were the most frequently encountered issues in the implementation of TES.

Keywords: Assessment, Implementation, Operation, Republic Act No. 10931, Student-grantees, Tertiary education subsidy.

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Contribution of this paper to the literature

This paper examines the administrative capacity of schools in assessing the implementation of the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST), ensuring efficient resource allocation, equitable access, program effectiveness, transparency, and timely benefits disbursement. It fosters data-driven decision-making, accountability, and continuous improvement, optimizing program outcomes and student success.

1. Introduction

According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognized by the United Nations (UN), education constitutes a fundamental human right. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aims to advance sustainable development, alleviate poverty, and foster peace. Correspondingly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, endorsed at the 2015 United Nations Sustainability Summit, encompasses 17 goals, including global education (SDG 4). By 2030, Sustainable Development Goal 4 aspires to "provide inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning opportunities for all."

As stipulated in Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the government is obligated to provide quality education, ensuring Filipinos' degree completion and accessibility. Responding to this constitutional mandate, the government enacted Republic Act No. 10931 on August 13, 2017. This legislation, entitled "An Act Promoting Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education by Providing for Free Tuition and Other School Fees in State Universities and Colleges, Local Universities and Colleges, and State-Run Technical-Vocational Institutions," establishes the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) and Student Loan Program, aiming to cultivate a more educated and accessible society.

In accordance with the guidelines outlined in Section 24 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), the scope and magnitude of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) are delineated. Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) grants amount to forty thousand pesos (Php 40,000.00) for State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) accredited by the Commission on Higher Education (CHE), and sixty thousand pesos (Php 60,000.00) for private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) per academic year. Eligibility criteria encompass Filipino citizenship, enrollment in recognized institutions, and admission into the first undergraduate post-secondary program.

The enactment of Republic Act No. 10931 financially supports Filipino students from the most underprivileged households in both public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Evaluating the law's impact on achieving high-quality education necessitates the collection of beneficiaries' sentiments, opinions, and insights. This assessment serves as a tool for gauging the implementation of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) under of Republic Act No. 10931, fostering a constructive partnership for their productive development.

Purigay (2020) reveals that Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) positively influences students' persistence and academic performance. Moneva and Tuñacao (2020) indicate that financial support correlates with academic success. This underscores the importance of beneficiary assessment to measure policy effectiveness and apprise policymakers of outcomes.

Consequently, this study will assess the operation of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) program under the "Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act" (RA 10931).

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Describe the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age.
 - 1.2. Gender.
 - 1.3. Monthly family income.
 - 1.4. Father's occupation.
 - 1.5. Mother's occupation.
2. Determine the assessment of the respondents on the operation of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) in the selected private higher education institutions in Santiago City, Philippines in terms of:
 - 2.1. Student's persistence.
 - 2.2. Academic performance.
 - 2.3. Financial capacity.
 - 2.4. Administrative capacity.
3. Analyze the difference of the respondents' assessment on the operation of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) when grouped according to their demographic profile.
4. Determine the problems encountered by the respondents on the operation of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) in the selected private higher education institutions in Santiago City, Philippines.

The depicted conceptual framework in Figure 1 elucidates the interconnection of study variables, encompassing data collection. The input variables encompass respondents' demographic attributes: age, gender, monthly family income, and parental occupation. Process variables include respondents' evaluation of Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) operation, covering Student Persistence, Academic Performance, Financial Capacity, Administrative Capacity, and encountered implementation problems. The study examines disparities between assessment and demographic profiles, ultimately scrutinizing overall respondent program evaluation. The diagram illustrates the integration of these variables in evaluating program operation.

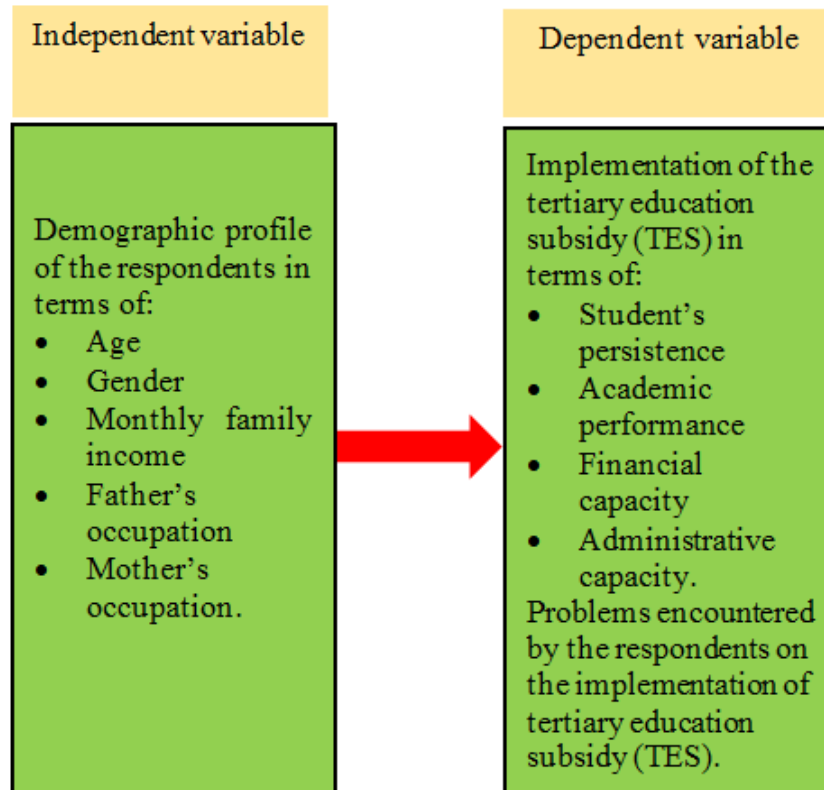


Figure 1. The paradigm of the study.

2. Methodology

The researcher utilized a descriptive-comparative research design. This study was conducted in the selected private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Santiago City, Philippines namely: Northeastern College and University of La Salette, Inc. The researcher purposively chose the HEI with more than one thousand grantees/beneficiaries of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES). The study surveyed 347 respondents from the list of Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) grantees in Northeastern College and University of La Salette, Inc., who were currently enrolled in the 2nd semester of School Year 2021-2022. The researcher used the formula used by Krejcie and Morgan to calculate the sample size. Moreover, to obtain the sample size, the researcher used proportionate stratified random sampling with a 95 percent level of confidence and a 5 percent margin of error.

Table 1. Proportional allocation of the respondents.

University/College	Population	Sample	Percent
Northeastern College	2235	215	61.96
University of La Salette, Inc.	1373	132	38.04
Total	3608	347	100.00

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of respondents in proportion to the total population. The research encompassed two academic institutions: Northeastern College and the University of La Salette, Inc. Out of a total population of 3608, a sample size of 347 is selected. Northeastern College accounted for the majority, constituting 61.96% of the sample, with a population of 2235 and a sample size of 215. The University of La Salette, Inc., on the other hand, represented 38.04% of the sample, with a population of 1373 and a sample size of 132.

This study utilized a modified survey questionnaire, based on the study of Purigay (2020) "Assessment on the Implementation of the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST): Basis for a Proposed Action," Joint Memorandum Circular No. 04 s. 2020 "Enhanced Guidelines on the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) program," and Memorandum Circular No. 2018-0004 "Guidelines on the Implementation of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) for Filipino Students."

For data collection, a structured close-ended questionnaire was employed, comprising three distinct sections. The initial segment encompassed respondents' personal details, including age, gender, monthly family income, and parents' occupation. The second part is split into four sections, each assessing different aspects of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) program: a) student commitment; b) academic achievements; c) financial capability; and d) administrative efficiency. The final part of the survey contains queries regarding problems the respondents commonly face.

Table 2. Descriptive values for the interpretation for the weighted mean.

Evaluation on the implementation of TES		Common problems encountered	
Range	Verbal interpretation	Range	Verbal interpretation
4.50-5.00	Strongly agree	4.50-5.00	Very frequently
3.50-4.49	Agree	3.50-4.49	Frequently
2.50-3.49	Moderately agree	2.50-3.49	Occasionally
1.50-2.49	Disagree	1.50-2.49	Rarely
1.00-1.49	Strongly disagree	1.00-1.49	Very rarely

Table 2 provides interpretive ranges for weighted mean scores in the evaluation of Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) implementation and the identification of common problems. In the assessment of TES, scores between 4.50-5.00 indicate strong agreement, 3.50-4.49 reflect agreement, 2.50-3.49 suggest moderate agreement, 1.50-2.49 imply

disagreement, and 1.00-1.49 convey strong disagreement. Concerning common problems, 4.50-5.00 represents very frequent occurrences, 3.50-4.49 denotes frequent incidents, 2.50-3.49 signifies occasional issues, 1.50-2.49 indicates rare instances, and 1.00-1.49 portrays very rare occurrences.

The researcher considered the following procedures in gathering data. The researcher sought for the approval of the University/College Presidents through their respective Scholarship Coordinators to conduct the study and to administer the survey questionnaire to student-grantees of TES.

During the survey administration, the researcher sought permission and consent from the respondents. Due to the inherent risks associated with face-to-face interviews and in adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols, questionnaires were administered using the Google Form platform while upholding the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Prior to disseminating the questionnaires, the researcher ensured that respondents were comprehensively informed about the study's purpose and data collection procedures. The researcher guaranteed the maintenance of anonymity, confidentiality, and cost-free participation throughout the study. Subsequently, the questionnaires were collected online and subjected to analytical scrutiny.

To effectively interpret the data, the researcher employed distinct statistical tools. Frequency distribution and percentage were utilized for depicting respondents' demographic profiles. The mean was employed to assess respondents' assessment on tertiary education subsidy implementation concerning student persistence, academic performance, financial and administrative capacity, and to identify problems encountered in the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) implementation.

Furthermore, Kruskal-Wallis H test was applied to ascertain significant differences in respondents' assessments of TES implementation relative to their demographic attributes. The predetermined significance level was set at 5%.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings revealed that most of the respondents were 18-20 years old. On average, the age of beneficiaries was 21 years old. The majority of the respondents were males. Most of the respondents had a monthly family income of ₱22,000 and below and majority of the occupation of the father and mother of the respondents were classified as "blue-collar jobs."

The study revealed that the beneficiaries had agreed on the operation of the TES in terms of student persistence, academic performance, and administrative capacity. On the other hand, the respondents strongly agreed that in terms of financial capacity, the scholarship relieved their financial burden, assisted them to pay their school fees on time, and aided them to buy their educational needs. Similarly, the respondents agreed that the TES taught them to become accountable and manage their finances, helped them to realize the value of money, and gave them reason to spend wisely.

The findings of the study as well revealed that there were no significant differences in the operation of the TES in terms of student persistence, academic performance, financial capacity, and administrative capacity across the profiles of respondents. However, there were some specific indicators that were significantly different to profiles.

Under student persistence, the respondents with a monthly family income of ₱22,001-₱44,000 more likely agreed and observed that the TES gave them a source of inspiration to finish their studies while the respondents with a monthly family income of ₱22,000 and below more likely observed that the TES promoted confidence to pursue their studies and able to finish them, and encouraged them in making their future decisions and to add, the respondents with a monthly family income of ₱22,000 and below and from ₱22,001-₱44,000 more likely observed that the TES reclaimed their integrity in school.

In terms of academic performance, the respondents with a monthly family income of ₱22,001-₱44,000 more likely agreed and observed that the TES enabled them to engage in activities and lessons by providing necessary resources, allowed them to participate in any school activities, and made them feel at ease in doing their lessons and projects. Further, the results implied that the respondents with a monthly family income of ₱22,000 and below more likely agreed that the TES motivated them to explore their new knowledge and skills, helped them to focus on their lessons and projects, encouraged them to aim for high grades and seek new knowledge and skills, influenced them to attend their classes regularly, made them feel at ease in doing their lessons and projects and satisfied on whatever grades they received, and does not give them worries about missing their class schedules.

In terms of financial capacity, the female respondents more likely observed that the TES taught them to become accountable and manage their finances while the respondents with a monthly family income of ₱22,000 and below more likely observed that the TES assisted them to pay school fees on time, aided them to buy their educational needs, helped them realize the value of money and not to borrow money, and gave them reason to spend wisely.

In terms of administrative capacity, the respondents with an age range of 24-26 years old more likely perceived that their schools had provided an adequate number of staff/personnel qualified to handle and supervise the TES program and lastly, the respondents with a monthly family income of ₱22,001-₱44,000 more likely perceived that their schools had provided sufficient time for student to complete the requirement needed in applying and renewing, monitored and facilitated timely the allocation of allowances, and provided them with an accessible location for the distribution of allowances.

The study further revealed that the most frequently encountered common problems by the respondents on the implementation of the TES were the late releasing of necessary funds and strict deadlines for the said requirements.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Most of the respondents were 18-20 years old. Most of the respondents were males who had a monthly family income of ₱22,000 and below, and the occupations of the father and mother of the respondents were classified as "blue-collar", respectively.
2. The respondents had agreed on the implementation of the TES in terms of student persistence, academic performance, and administrative capacity. Under financial capacity, the respondents strongly agreed that the

subsidy relieved their financial burden in school, assisted them to pay their school fees on time, and aided them to buy their educational needs. Also, the respondents agreed that the TES taught them to become accountable and manage their finances, helped them to realize the value of money and gave them reason to spend wisely.

3. Generally, the respondents had the same assessment on the implementation of the TES regardless of their profiles. However, there were some specific indicators which were observed significantly different when grouped according to their profiles.
4. Late release of necessary funds and strict deadlines for the requirements were the common problems frequently encountered by the respondents on the implementation of the TES.

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended actions to the research beneficiaries:

1. Student-grantees are advisable to continue to using the subsidy to provide them the opportunity to dream and believe in their abilities, encourage them to aim for high grades, and to relieve their financial burden in school.
2. Parents of the grantees are also recommended to continue supporting their children on whatever means to motivate them to strive, pursue, and finish their studies.
3. Schools offering the TES are suggested to conduct an orientation or assembly with the student-grantees and to have a proper dissemination of information to address frequently encountered problems, especially the late releasing of necessary funds and strict deadlines of requirements.
4. The researcher is advised to present the action plan to the appropriate authorities in collaboration with the concerned stakeholders to measure the level of acceptability and to evaluate the action plan to further improve the implementation of the TES.
5. Future researchers are envisioned to duplicate the current study with a larger group of respondents. They might add other relevant variables to cross-validate the results of this study.

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