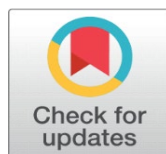


LEARNER EXPERIENCES IN DIGITAL AND VISUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MOTIVATION, CHALLENGES, AND ASPIRATIONS IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored learner experiences in digital and visual learning environments within alternative education, focusing on the lived experiences of twelve (12) students enrolled in the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP). Participants were selected through purposive sampling, and data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that learners were primarily driven by strong personal aspirations and practical professional needs. For many, ETEEAP provided an opportunity to fulfill long-postponed educational goals and achieve career advancement that would have been difficult without formal academic credentials. Several participants learned about the program through family members or colleagues who shared their experiences. Within digital and visual learning contexts, managing academic responsibilities alongside work and family obligations required effective time management, self-discipline, and consistent support from relatives. Participants described establishing structured routines, breaking tasks into manageable goals, and adjusting daily schedules to meet demands. Key challenges included time constraints, sustaining motivation, and readapting to academic writing and digital technologies after a long absence from formal education. Despite these difficulties, students demonstrated resilience through careful planning and strong personal commitment. Institutional support—such as clear communication, structured guidance, and flexible arrangements—was appreciated; however, participants recommended improvements in feedback timeliness, online resources, and opportunities for peer interaction. Many aspired to use their qualifications for career progression, further education, or entrepreneurial development, highlighting the program's role in fostering lifelong learning and professional growth.

Keywords: Experiences, Digital and Visual Learning, Motivation, Qualitative Study, Aspirations

1. INTRODUCTION

Among the most important programs in the Philippines, the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) allows non-traditional students to get college degrees by having their previous coursework and work experience recognized (Commission on Higher Education [CHED \(2019\)](#)). Recognizing that professional and experience learning play an important role in adult learners' pursuit of academic credentials, this program caters to their varied needs [CHED \(2020\)](#). Personal development, professional advancement, and the requirement for official recognition of skills gained outside of conventional classroom settings are some of the many factors that influence people's decisions to seek education through ETEEAP [Jones and Smith \(2021\)](#).

The importance of ETEEAP and similar alternative pathways in fostering both workforce preparedness and lifelong learning is growing in tandem with the transformation of higher education. In order to keep up with the ever-changing labor market, advance in their current positions, or change careers, many adults decide to return to school [Reyes and Dizon \(2023\)](#). Obtaining equivalency certification, though, isn't a picnic. [Smith \(2023\)](#) notes that many ETEEAP students have to juggle job, family, and school responsibilities with little help from the institution. In light of these facts, it is clear that schools need to do more to remove the personal and systemic obstacles that students face.

In addition, returning to school after a period in the industry can be a challenging transition for ETEEAP students, who often struggle with issues of self-confidence and anxiety about their academic performance. This being said, their experiences frequently demonstrate perseverance, intrinsic drive, and a firm resolve to grow professionally and personally [Brown and Garcia, \(2024\)](#). This study aims to add to the expanding conversation around non-traditional education and how institutions can better assist adult learners in reaching their maximum potential by shedding light on these experiences.

For ETEEAP to be more adaptable and long-lasting, it is essential to learn about the students' goals, struggles, and reasons for participating. Policies that encourage inclusive practices, flexible learning options, and more extensive guidance services can be informed by a greater understanding of their lived experiences [Del Rosario and Cruz \(2025\)](#). This research aims to give ETEEAP students a platform to share their stories and demonstrate how their experiences impact not just their personal growth but also the development of human capital at the national level and the larger goal of creating a more inclusive and flexible higher education system in the Philippines.

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research study sought to investigate the motivations, challenges, and future aspirations that ETEEAP students had experienced in the course of pursuing their academic and professional goals.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What factors motivate students to enroll in the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP)?
- 2) How do ETEEAP students describe their experiences balancing academic requirements with personal and professional responsibilities?
- 3) What specific challenges do ETEEAP students encounter throughout their journey in the program?
- 4) How do ETEEAP students perceive the support systems and resources provided by their institutions?
- 5) What are the future aspirations and career goals of students who complete the ETEEAP program, and how do they plan to achieve them?

1.2. SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS

Students participating in the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) at a subset of participating universities were the primary subjects of this qualitative research project. By taking into account their existing knowledge and job experience, it addressed adult learners who had taken non-traditional routes to get degrees. Researchers mainly used in-depth narratives gleaned from interviews and focus groups to learn more about the ways in which ETEEAP influenced participants' educational paths, self-development, and professional aspirations.

Only current or former ETEEAP students who were enrolled or graduated from the program during the past three years were eligible to participate in the survey. Program administrators or employers' viewpoints were absent. The results may also not apply to ETEEAP students in other regions because the study only included a certain school in one area. The focus of the study was not on quantitative measures of academic performance but on the participants' actual experiences and reflections.

1.3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Comprehending the motivations, obstacles, and future ambitions of ETEEAP students necessitates an analysis of pertinent results regarding intrapersonal aspects, motivational experiences, and career aspirations across diverse

educational settings. [Forde \(2024\)](#) underscored the critical influence of intrapersonal factors on behavioral outcomes in Latino youth, asserting that self-perception, resilience, and intrinsic motivation might mitigate or moderate risk behaviors. Forde's study, while centered on youth within a particular cultural context, offers valuable insights into intrapersonal dynamics that are pertinent for examining how ETEEAP students confront personal and contextual obstacles in their educational pursuits.

[Lamssali et al. \(2024\)](#) examined the impact of pleasant academic experiences on the motivation of undergraduate STEM students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research demonstrated that recognizing progress and obtaining constructive assistance enhanced pupils' resilience under extraordinary disruptions. This discovery aligns with the experiences of ETEEAP students, as many juggle professional obligations while seeking academic equivalence, necessitating comparable sources of motivational support to endure hurdles.

Furthermore, [Hasan et al. \(2025\)](#) investigated research involvement and career ambitions among public health graduate students in a developing nation, highlighting that possibilities for substantive research and professional advancement profoundly influence students' future career paths. The study emphasizes the significance of institutional support and pertinent opportunities in cultivating aspirational objectives, which aligns with the necessity for customized direction and acknowledgment of prior learning in ETEEAP programs. Collectively, these studies offer essential insights into the intricate dynamics of motivations, obstacles, and ambitions that influence the educational experiences of ETEEAP students.

Comprehending the motivations, problems, and objectives of students participating in the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) necessitates an analysis of how non-traditional learners endure and conceptualize their educational paths. [Sainvilus \(2024\)](#) undertook a comprehensive examination of the persistence and dropout trends among at-risk students in their inaugural year of postsecondary education. This study emphasized the diverse socio-academic elements influencing student retention or attrition, highlighting the significance of institutional support and personal resilience in surmounting obstacles. These findings align with the experiences of ETEEAP students, who frequently balance numerous duties while seeking formal acknowledgment of earlier learning.

[Wang et al. \(2024\)](#) conducted a thorough bibliometric study that delineated the foundations and progression of career ambition research, broadening the perspective on students' future outlooks. Their research illustrated how students' job aspirations are influenced by a confluence of personal objectives, external possibilities, and socio-cultural environments. This finding pertains to ETEEAP members whose incentives frequently encompass not only degree accomplishment but also job progression and personal satisfaction. By comprehending these changing goals, institutions can more effectively connect program delivery with the requirements of adult learners.

[Nhi \(2025\)](#) examined the core aspects of study abroad desires among Vietnamese students in Japan, highlighting the interplay between personal motivations and overarching life objectives. Despite differing contexts, the study demonstrates the importance of personal relevance and self-determination in educational endeavors. For ETEEAP students, whose educational trajectories are non-linear and highly individualized, such intrinsic motivators are important in influencing their perseverance and achievement. Collectively, these studies offer a detailed context for examining how ETEEAP students manage their motivations, address problems, and formulate objectives for their future.

Comprehending students' motivations, obstacles, and future objectives is a multifaceted process shaped by numerous personal, environmental, and institutional aspects. [Svensson et al. \(2024\)](#) examined the coexistence of appreciation and discomfort in Swedish male forensic psychiatric patients with substance use disorders. This study illustrates how individuals may manage conflicting emotions during personal growth and rehabilitation, akin to how ETEEAP students might reconcile gratitude for the program's opportunities with unease about re-entering formal education after prolonged workforce engagement.

Likewise, [Vukša et al. \(2025\)](#) investigated the motivations of Croatian nursing students who opted to pursue a master's program despite constrained career growth opportunities. Their findings indicated that intrinsic reasons, including personal fulfillment and professional identity, may surpass practical obstacles. This observation pertains to ETEEAP students, who frequently pursue degree completion not solely for advancement but for self-actualization, validation of competencies, and formal acknowledgment of experience learning.

Furthermore, [Quang et al. \(2025\)](#) examined the intricate relationship between individual and external influences on medical students' specialization selections. Their qualitative investigation highlighted how decisions are influenced by

personal interests, familial expectations, financial factors, and mentorship. These findings reflect the diverse factors affecting ETEEAP students' motives and objectives as they balance their professions with school obligations.

A recent mixed-methods study on [Technological self-Efficacy, Motivation, and Contextual Factors in Advanced EFL E-Learning: A Mixed-Methods Study of Strategy use and Satisfaction \(2025\)](#) revealed that motivation is intricately linked to learners' confidence in navigating new technologies and adapting to flexible learning environments. For ETEEAP students, who often juggle employment, family, and school via blended or online formats, technological self-efficacy is a vital element that can either promote or impede their advancement.

Collectively, these studies highlight that the motivations and obstacles of adult learners are influenced by a dynamic interplay of internal drives and external circumstances. This collection of literature offers a significant perspective for analyzing the distinct experiences of ETEEAP students, whose paths entail balancing previous educational deficiencies with current aspirations and future objectives.

1.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

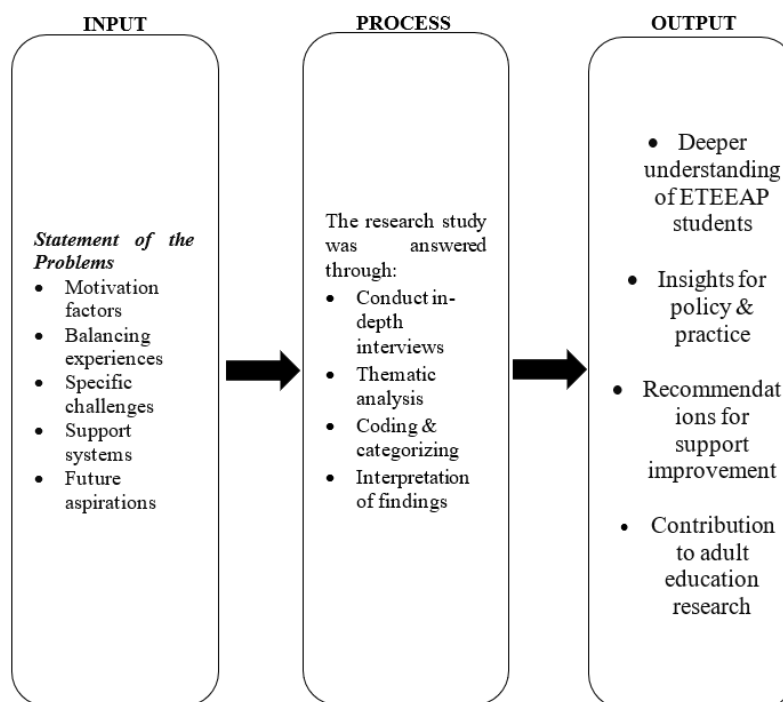
This study utilized two pertinent theoretical frameworks to enhance the comprehension of adult learners' experiences in non-traditional educational paths.

The study utilized **Knowles' Andragogy Theory** (Knowles, 1980), which highlights that adult learners are self-directed, intrinsically motivated, and possess extensive life experiences relevant to the learning context. This idea corresponded effectively with ETEEAP students, who generally re-entered formal education following years in the labor force. Knowles' principles elucidated the reasons behind these students' participation in the program, their strategies for managing its requirements, and the influence of their previous experiences on their educational aspirations and self-conceptions. The framework offered a perspective for examining the motivations and learning practices of ETEEAP students, emphasizing the importance of relevance, autonomy, and practical application in their educational experience.

The study employed **Schlossberg's Transition Theory** (Schlossberg, 1981) to analyze how ETEEAP students managed their reintegration into academic life. Schlossberg's approach concentrated on adult responses to substantial life transitions, highlighting aspects like the individual's situation, self, support, and strategies (the 4S's). This hypothesis elucidated the distinct problems encountered by these students, such as reconciling work, familial obligations, and academic requirements, as well as their utilization of personal and institutional support structures to navigate these transitions. Schlossberg's theory was crucial in situating the students' ambitions within the larger context of their life transitions and adaptation.

Collectively, these theoretical frameworks enhanced the study by offering a solid foundation for examining ETEEAP students' motivations, problems, and future objectives from both educational and life-transition viewpoints.

1.5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



The conceptual framework visually illustrated the systematic exploration of the lived experiences of ETEEAP students. The Input portion encompassed the fundamental components that defined the study—namely, the five research questions that were its foundation. The inquiries addressed the primary causes motivating student enrollment, their experiences managing various tasks, the distinct problems encountered, their views on institutional support, and their anticipated future trajectories. These inquiries directed the data collection and ensured that the inquiry focused on the fundamental elements of the ETEEAP experience.

During the Process phase, the research illustrated the transformation of these inputs into significant findings via meticulous qualitative methodologies. The research design included in-depth interviews to collect genuine narratives directly from ETEEAP students. Thematic analysis and coding enabled the researcher to methodically categorize the extensive qualitative data into themes, emphasizing repeating patterns and distinct viewpoints. The framework prioritized a streamlined methodology by omitting triangulation, concentrating on theme extraction and direct interpretation of participants' narratives. The interpretation of these data was essential in establishing links between the students' experiences and the wider implications for educational practice.

Ultimately, the Output delineated the anticipated contributions and outcomes of the research. The research yielded an enhanced comprehension of the motivations, challenges, and ambitions of ETEEAP students. These insights provided actionable recommendations for enhancing support systems and institutional policies for adult learners seeking equivalence and accreditation. Furthermore, the findings enriched the existing knowledge in adult education, providing significant implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers aiming to enhance the accessibility and support of the ETEEAP. The methodology illustrated how meticulously organized qualitative research might convert student experiences into practical knowledge for program advancement and policy improvement.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilized a qualitative research approach to obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the motivations, problems, and future objectives of students participating in the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP). A phenomenological technique was employed to elucidate the lived experiences and

personal narratives of the participants, facilitating the emergence of detailed descriptions from their perspectives. This approach aligned with the study's objective of investigating subjective experiences that were unquantifiable yet necessitated profound interpretation and meaning-making.

2.2. POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The study population comprised ETEEAP students enrolled in a public higher education institution that offers the program. A purposive sampling method was employed to select (12) twelve participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria: they were active ETEEAP students who had completed a minimum of one year in the program. This guaranteed that participants possessed adequate experience to provide significant insights on their motives, the problems they faced, and their aspirations following the program's completion.

2.3. DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

Gathering of data was performed via semi-structured, comprehensive interviews. The interviews were arranged at suitable times for the participants and were conducted either in person or by online video conferencing platforms, based on the participants' availability and preference. Each interview lasted roughly 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted according to an interview protocol that permitted flexibility for probing and follow-up questions to obtain more profound responses. Audio recordings were conducted with the participants' consent to guarantee precise transcription and analysis.

2.4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis. The researcher meticulously reviewed the transcripts several times to familiarize themselves with the data prior to classifying salient remarks and developing themes. Patterns were discerned and categorized into overarching themes that represented the individuals' motivations, the obstacles they encountered, and their aspirations.

The analysis concentrated on elucidating the significance of the students' statements and developing a cohesive narrative that responded to the research inquiries. Triangulation was not utilized; rather, the credibility of the findings depended on meticulous recordkeeping, reflexivity, and member checking to validate participants' intended meanings.

2.5. LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study included specific limitations. The sample size was restricted to twelve individuals from one institution, thereby failing to encapsulate the experiences of all ETEEAP students across different contexts or geographies. Moreover, participants' responses may have been affected by their comfort in disclosing personal experiences during interviews. The subjective character of qualitative research may have allowed the researcher's interpretations to add possible bias, despite attempts to maintain objectivity and reflexivity throughout the process.

Ethical considerations were meticulously adhered to. Before participation, all subjects were apprised of the study's objective, their voluntary engagement, and their entitlement to withdraw at any moment without repercussions. Informed consent was secured, and confidentiality was guaranteed by anonymizing participants' identities in both transcripts and the final report. The researcher guaranteed that all data were securely stored and accessible just to the research team. Sensitive material was handled with care and integrity, prioritizing the wellbeing and privacy of all participants during the research process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, here's how the research questions answered:

SOP 1. What factors motivate students to enroll in the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP)?

For SOP 1, it is evident from the participants' accounts that motivations are grounded in profound personal ambitions and professional requirements that frequently intersect. Numerous students emphasized that their motivation to study ETEEAP is primarily driven by the necessity to obtain improved employment opportunities and career progression that would be unattainable without a formal degree. One respondent openly stated, ***"I pursued ETEEAP to obtain a degree that acknowledges my extensive work experience. This represents progress in realizing my aspirations and expanding prospects for professional advancement and promotion."*** This emotion resonates throughout numerous narratives, indicating that for adult learners, the degree serves not just as a certificate but as a critical key to access opportunities that years of experience alone cannot provide.

The notion of personal fulfillment and self-actualization is equally potent. Numerous participants articulated that their aspirations were deferred owing to familial or financial constraints, and how ETEEAP rejuvenates that desire. One person remarked, ***"Obtaining a college degree has consistently been a lifelong aspiration. I already assured myself that even if I had to attend college with my daughter, I would still complete my education."*** This remark demonstrates how education via ETEEAP serves as a rehabilitative avenue—realizing unfulfilled aspirations while affirming to oneself and to family that tenacity and learning remain timeless, irrespective of age.

A significant role is how students initially become aware of ETEEAP. For numerous individuals, knowledge of the program disseminates via word of mouth—from relatives, colleagues, or acquaintances who have themselves completed ETEEAP. The motivating example of a cherished individual or associate serves as a catalyst. One member stated, ***"I initially discovered the ETEEAP program via my sibling. I was attracted to it due to its provision of a professional and quick avenue for obtaining a degree by acknowledging and accrediting my pertinent work experience and talents."*** The practicality of obtaining a degree without compromising present employment or income renders ETEEAP especially attractive to individuals managing several obligations. Certain responders highlighted that the program's modular structure and acknowledgment of existing experience mitigate the obstacles typically associated with conventional education.

Support from family and the workplace also proves to be essential facilitators. Numerous learners articulated the emotional and motivational impetus provided by their loved ones. An explicit illustration is, ***"My wife and daughters motivate me to participate in ETEEAP because they recognize my desire to complete my college education. They frequently tell me that it is not too late for me to obtain my degree."*** This form of encouragement maintains the learner's drive throughout professional, academic, and familial obligations. Similarly, the job serves as a significant motivator, either directly through encouragement or indirectly through its requirements for official certifications. The absence of a degree serves as an impediment to promotions or permanent employment, so prompting individuals to take action. One participant remarked, ***"Advancement in my profession necessitates a degree, thus I enrolled in ETEEAP."***

The incentives propelling ETEEAP students are multifaceted—rooted in economic necessities, professional advancement, personal aspirations, and social support. Their narratives illustrate how this adaptable program serves as a conduit between practical experience and formal academic acknowledgment, enabling individuals to reclaim their aspirations while remaining anchored in their obligations. This equilibrium between ambition and pragmatism elucidates why ETEEAP continues to serve as a significant educational option for several employed Filipinos today.

SOP 2. How do ETEEAP students describe their experiences balancing academic requirements with personal and professional responsibilities?

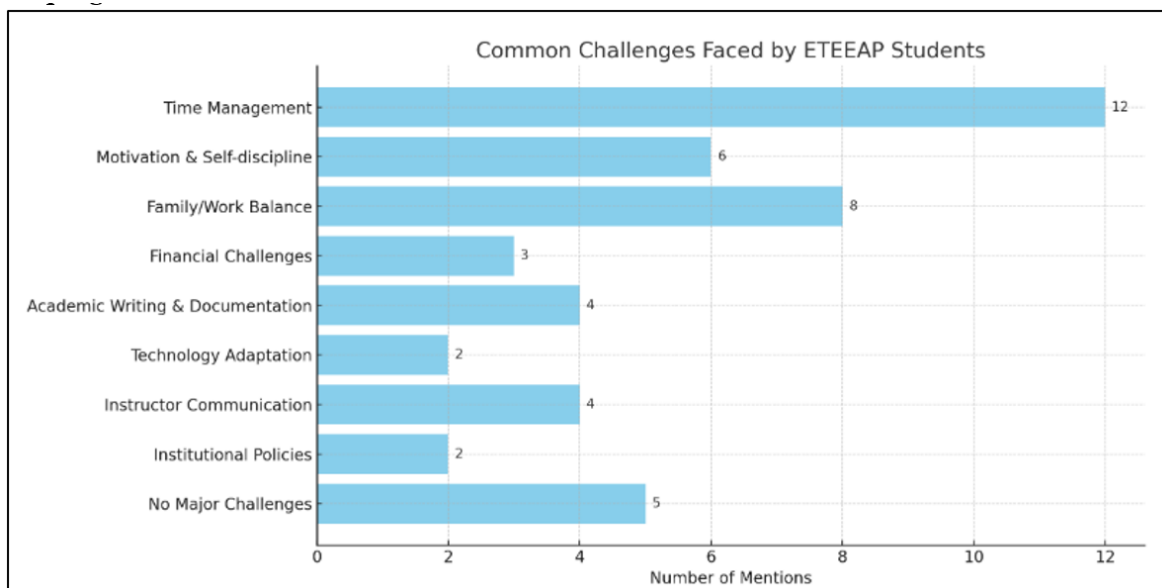
The participants regularly underscored the critical importance of time management, familial support, self-discipline, and a defined sense of purpose for their success in the program, in response to SOP 2. Numerous ETEEAP students articulated their intentional allocation of specific hours throughout the day—early mornings, lunch breaks, nights, or weekends—to concentrate on their academic responsibilities. A participant stated, ***"I arrived at my workplace early in the morning and commenced my daily tasks promptly. After completing my assignment, I allocated time to access my modules and respond to them to the best of my ability."*** This illustrates how learners ingeniously optimize intervals of spare time within their professional obligations. They frequently adjust their daily schedules to accommodate family demands, as illustrated by the participant's statement: ***"Regarding my family responsibilities, I ensure that I have prepared everything they require. Subsequently, they urge me to concentrate on finalizing my modules."*** This indicates that balancing roles is not a solitary endeavor; familial support is an essential structure that sustains learners' momentum.

Maintaining commitment to the ETEEAP journey is firmly rooted in their objectives and pragmatic tactics that provide discipline and goal orientation, even among hectic schedules. A participant stated, ***"I remind myself that***

completing the ETEEAP program is crucial for advancing my career to a higher position.” This assertion demonstrates how a defined vision of professional advancement fosters perseverance. To maintain focus, participants utilize structured planning aids, such as printed weekly plans placed on desks, serving as a visual reminder to allocate consistent study hours. A participant emphasized the efficacy of incremental objectives, asserting, **“I establish explicit, short-term goals—such as completing designated modules or portfolio assignments weekly—which maintains my focus and organization.”** These ideas emphasize that commitment is maintained not alone by intrinsic desire but also via concrete behaviors such as establishing routines, deconstructing tasks, and engaging with supportive family or friends who provide encouragement throughout challenges.

The influence of ETEEAP membership on their everyday life is significant, frequently altering habits and redefining personal priorities. Although the augmented duties may provide challenges, numerous learners perceive the alterations as gratifying and conducive to personal development. A participant articulated: **“Enrolling in ETEEAP influences my daily life and routines, fostering greater discipline in my time management.”** The transition frequently necessitates the forfeiture of leisure activities or hobbies to dedicate additional hours to studying, however students perceive this exchange as valuable. As another learner observed, **“After work, rather than participating in leisure activities, I allocate several hours to reviewing my modules. Notwithstanding these alterations in my daily routine, they imparted a sense of purpose and fulfillment.”** These words emphasize the profound sense of accomplishment that students experience as their sacrifices manifest in concrete academic progress and professional development. ETEEAP students adeptly manage intricate balancing acts through discipline, familial support, strategic scheduling, and steadfast personal determination, transforming daily problems into significant milestones in their pursuit of lifelong learning and career advancement.

SOP 3. What specific challenges do ETEEAP students encounter throughout their journey in the program?



A review of responses to SOP 3 revealed multiple repeating themes. The predominant problem stated was time management. Numerous students articulated their challenges in reconciling professional duties, familial commitments, and academic demands. Unforeseen work obligations, exhaustion from extended work hours, and conflicting priorities frequently interrupted their study routines, hindering their ability to maintain pace with modules and assignments.

Besides time constraints, students frequently encountered challenges in sustaining enthusiasm and self-discipline. Numerous respondents indicated that maintaining concentration on their studies was often challenging, particularly in a self-directed, modular setting devoid of the framework provided by regular classroom engagement. Occasional feelings of fatigue, discouragement, and self-doubt impeded their capacity to consistently finish academic assignments.

The interplay of professional obligations, familial duties, and academic commitments exacerbated these issues. A significant number of ETEEAP students were working professionals or parents managing several responsibilities

everyday. Some encountered financial limitations that restricted their capacity to manage expenses associated with transportation, educational resources, or essential needs while fulfilling program obligations.

A number of students identified challenges related to academic writing and documentation. Individuals who had been absent from formal education for years sometimes encountered difficulties in reengaging with academic responsibilities, including writing papers, assembling portfolios, and adhering to academic norms. Moreover, the adaptation to technology and online learning platforms presented slight obstacles for many students, especially those who did not have early exposure to digital technologies.

Although the majority of respondents reported no substantial difficulties with institutional policies, teachers, or course delivery, a minority noted concerns over instructor communication. Several students reported delays in obtaining feedback or challenges in reaching their teachers, which often resulted in doubt over their progress. Notwithstanding this, some participants commended their instructors for being accessible and supportive, and several conveyed gratitude for the flexibility provided by their institutions.

A few students notably claimed that they encountered no significant obstacles in fulfilling the program requirements. The students credited their seamless experience to transparent institutional procedures, well articulated policies, supportive professors, and their own readiness.

Students articulated diverse ways to address the issues they encountered. They effectively controlled their time by employing scheduling and prioritization, sought assistance from family, peers, or mentors, and sustained motivation by recalling their objectives. Some resorted to prayer, mindfulness, and introspection to maintain focus and resilience. The responses underscored the students' resilience and resolve to surmount challenges in the pursuit of their educational and professional goals.

SOP 4. How do ETEEAP students perceive the support systems and resources provided by their institutions?

According to the collected replies for SOP 4, ETEEAP students perceive their institutions' support systems and resources as significant and essential to their academic experience; nonetheless, there are clear opportunities for improvement and enhancement. A multitude of students indicate that the most beneficial assistance they obtain is through accessible communication channels, explicit academic advice, and adaptable timetables that correspond with their distinct obligations as adult learners. A student remarked, "***Messenger chats are the most effective means of communication for me, as my professors consistently respond to my inquiries promptly,***" underscoring the importance of timely and responsive communication for their advancement. Others share this sentiment, valuing accessible coordinators and instructors who deliver clear instructions and feedback, so facilitating their navigation of intricate program requirements with reduced uncertainty and stress.

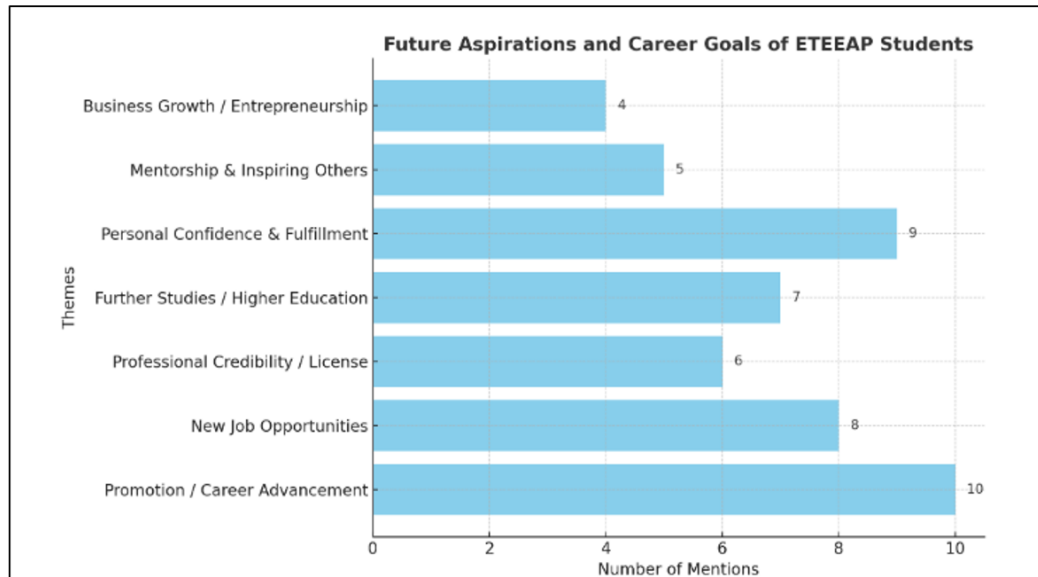
Nonetheless, despite this predominantly favorable perspective, several students believe that the support should be enhanced or augmented, particularly in aspects that tackle the issues specific to working professionals and international learners. A participant noted that although the personnel are responsive and the programs are "***excellent,***" effective communication is essential, as they stated, "***even if the programs are good, they become ineffective if your questions or queries are not addressed adequately.***" This indicates a consensus that the core of ETEEAP's efficacy is in consistent, transparent, and timely communication. Students advocate for enhancements like increased frequency of check-ins, more explicit rules for requirements, expedited feedback mechanisms, and improved online resources—especially for individuals studying abroad or managing work and family obligations. There are also demands for increased peer involvement and interactive virtual sessions to mitigate the feelings of isolation associated with modular, self-paced learning. A student openly articulated that the absence of peer connection can create a sense of "***navigating everything alone,***" indicating a wish for the program to promote community development among participants.

Faculty and staff accessibility and responsiveness receive considerable praise, with numerous students characterizing them as approachable, amiable, and perpetually "***one call away.***" However, several stories indicate that this support may fluctuate, with occurrences of delayed responses or unanswered inquiries, which can be exasperating for students balancing employment, family, and academic responsibilities. A student underscored the significance of establishing explicit expectations on timetables, processes, and distinct academic requirements from the outset to prevent confusion and last-minute difficulties. One participant stated that the university's website need more explicit information to ensure that students are informed prior to the day of enrollment.

ETEEAP students express gratitude for the encouragement and practical assistance they get, whether from familial support, peer counsel, or adaptable academic provisions. However, qualitative observations indicate that sustaining

robust, continuous communication and improving institutional systems—such as clearer information conduits, more accessible online resources, proactive mentoring, and opportunities for peer connection—can significantly enhance their experience, making it more supportive and successful. These thoughts indicate that although the fundamental support systems are esteemed, the efficacy of ETEEAP is contingent upon the institutions' ability to accommodate the distinct circumstances of adult learners and working professionals endeavoring to attain their degrees.

SOP 5. What are the future aspirations and career goals of students who complete the ETEEAP program, and how do they plan to achieve them?



The replies to SOP 5 indicate that the completion of the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) significantly influences students' professional and personal development. A prevailing theme that surfaced is professional progression. Numerous participants highlighted that obtaining a formal degree via ETEEAP immediately enhances their qualifications for promotions or advanced positions within their existing organizations. For government officials and those in regulated sectors such as education, the degree serves as an essential prerequisite for eligibility in civil service promotions, teaching licenses, or formal certifications that were previously inaccessible.

A prevalent ambition among several students is the quest for additional employment alternatives outside their existing positions. Some perceive ETEEAP as a catalyst for transitioning into more stable, secure, or higher-paying professions, while others aim to utilize it as a means to enhance their professional network and access roles that more closely fit with their abilities and aspirations. In addition to these immediate employment objectives, some participants articulated definitive plans to seek advanced education, including master's or doctoral degrees. For them, ETEEAP signifies not merely a conclusion but the commencement of an enhanced academic endeavor that will allow them to augment their skills and maintain competitiveness in their selected domains.

The personal effect emphasized in the responses is equally significant. A multitude of students indicated that finishing ETEEAP has markedly enhanced their self-confidence and sense of accomplishment, demonstrating that patience and commitment can surmount prior constraints. This feeling of achievement frequently leads to increased enthusiasm to pursue new challenges, both in professional and personal contexts. Several participants remarked that their experiences motivated them to mentor colleagues, inspire their families, or serve as role models for non-traditional learners who may feel marginalized by standard educational routes.

A smaller but significant number of respondents associated their ETEEAP certificate with entrepreneurial aspirations or business development. The degree augments the credibility and professional image of self-employed persons and business owners, facilitating the expansion of their businesses or the exploration of new markets. The findings indicate that ETEEAP graduates are motivated not only by the pursuit of actual economic advantages but also by profound ambitions for lifelong learning, personal development, and constructive contributions to their communities.

The ETEEAP program has enabled students to convert longstanding aspirations into tangible objectives and implementable strategies. The students' comments indicate that ETEEAP serves not merely as an academic expedient, but as a catalyst for enduring personal and professional advancement, facilitated through promotions, further education, professional licensure, mentorship, or company creation.

4. SUMMARY

The results indicate that students are largely motivated to participate in the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) by aspirations for professional progression and personal satisfaction. Numerous adult learners perceive the degree as a pivotal instrument that facilitates access to chances unattainable through job experience alone, particularly in sectors where official qualifications are necessary for advancement. For some, ETEEAP resurrects long-held aspirations of obtaining a college degree that were previously hindered by financial or familial obligations. The program is frequently discovered by word of mouth, and students like ETEEAP's adaptable framework, enabling them to obtain a degree while managing work and family responsibilities. Familial support and employer encouragement bolster their determination to seek higher education despite conflicting responsibilities.

Reconciling the academic requirements of ETEEAP with personal and professional obligations presents a persistent challenge. Students assert that effective time management, self-discipline, familial support, and a defined sense of purpose are essential for maintaining focus. Numerous individuals allocate study time before or after work, during breaks, or on weekends, depending on the support and encouragement of family members who assist in alleviating home responsibilities, so enabling them to concentrate on their modules. Explicit short-term objectives, systematic schedules, and prompts maintain their organization, while concessions like relinquishing leisure time are regarded as essential trade-offs for prospective benefits. Despite the increased effort, students frequently characterize this balancing endeavor as gratifying, since it cultivates discipline and engenders a profound sense of accomplishment.

Nonetheless, pupils encounter enduring difficulties. Time limitations are the primary impediment, as demanding work commitments, familial obligations, and unforeseen exigencies frequently disrupt study schedules. Sustaining focus and motivation is challenging in a self-directed, modular curriculum devoid of consistent classroom engagement. Certain students encounter challenges in academic writing or readjusting to formal schooling after prolonged absences, while a minority experience slight difficulty with technology or using online learning systems. While institutional support is typically valued, certain learners encounter delays in communication or feedback, exacerbating stress in their already constrained schedules. Notwithstanding these challenges, students exhibit resilience by employing tactics such as meticulous scheduling, familial support, prayer, and self-reflection to maintain their commitment.

Students typically see their schools' support systems favorably, commending attentive educators and adaptable timetables that align with their adult obligations. Prompt communication, readily available coordinators, and explicit instructions mitigate ambiguity and foster confidence. Participants identify opportunities for enhancement, including expedited feedback, more explicit guidelines, and increased interactive peer participation to mitigate feelings of isolation. Recommendations encompass increased frequency of check-ins, enhanced online resources, and chances for community engagement among learners.

Ultimately, the objectives of ETEEAP graduates underscore the program's significant influence on professional and personal development. Numerous individuals perceive their degrees as catalysts for promotions, professional certifications, and new employment prospects within or outside their existing domains. Some intend to pursue advanced studies such as master's or doctoral degrees, while others aspire to initiate or expand enterprises, leveraging their qualifications to enhance their prestige. Completing ETEEAP enhances students' self-assurance and motivates them to mentor peers, serve as role models for their families, and support other non-traditional learners. ETEEAP serves as more than an educational expedient; it is a significant catalyst for professional advancement, continuous learning, and the realization of long-cherished aspirations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- The results distinctly demonstrate that ETEEAP students are chiefly driven by interconnected personal and professional aspirations—particularly, the pursuit of career progression, enhanced job opportunities, and the realization of long-postponed educational objectives. Support from family, employment demands, and the feasibility of a flexible, experience-oriented academic curriculum further bolster their determination. ETEEAP

serves as a pivotal conduit that connects informal competencies with formal qualifications, enabling adult learners to aspire to greater achievements while maintaining their existing obligations.

- Managing academic, professional, and personal obligations within ETEEAP necessitates robust self-discipline, effective time management, and steadfast familial support. Students adeptly incorporate study regimens into their everyday routines and maintain momentum with explicit short-term objectives and tangible reminders of their ambitions. This balance, albeit difficult, converts their daily lives into organized and rewarding routines that enhance their feeling of purpose and personal development.
- Despite the flexibility of ETEEAP, students encounter considerable problems, including in time management, sustaining motivation, and readapting to academic writing and online platforms following an extended absence from formal education. External variables, like occupational pressures, familial responsibilities, and financial constraints, frequently exacerbate these challenges. Students exhibit notable resilience by formulating coping mechanisms, relying on familial support, and deriving strength from their dedication to attaining their degrees.
- ETEEAP students typically value the support systems and resources offered by their schools, particularly attentive teachers, explicit guidelines, and adaptable arrangements. Nonetheless, deficiencies in communication and insufficient peer contact may result in students feeling alienated or ambiguous. Although the basic support is praiseworthy, students perceive significant potential in improved responsiveness, more explicit guidelines, and possibilities to foster a better feeling of community among peers.
- Finally, completing ETEEAP enhances students' professional mobility, facilitating access to promotions, new employment prospects, and further academic pursuits. In addition to professional aspirations, the feeling of achievement fosters enhanced self-assurance, motivating graduates to guide others, establish loftier personal objectives, and embark on entrepreneurial endeavors. The program functions as both a certification system and a stimulus for lifelong learning, community engagement, and personal development.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) Firstly, institutions and politicians are advised to enhance the marketing and accessibility of ETEEAP, particularly via transparent information campaigns, community involvement, and alumni success narratives to engage a broader spectrum of prospective adult learners. Moreover, customizing outreach initiatives to emphasize the alignment of ETEEAP with job advancement and personal satisfaction can enhance enrollment and enthusiasm among employed individuals.
- 2) Institutions should offer training in effective time management and study skills specifically designed for adult learners to enhance student support. They should also contemplate establishing peer support groups or accountability circles to assist students in sustaining motivation, exchanging effective balancing tactics, and alleviating isolation during the program.
- 3) Institutions are advised to implement focused interventions, including refresher training on academic writing, technological orientation, and stress management seminars. Assigning specialized academic mentors or counselors who actively engage with students can enhance their ability to overcome challenges and maintain motivation throughout the program.
- 4) Institutions ought to enhance and standardize communication procedures to guarantee prompt responses and unequivocal assistance at each phase. Enhancing interactive online platforms, virtual peer gatherings, and mentorship initiatives can mitigate feelings of isolation and cultivate a supportive learning environment that maintains motivation and connectivity among ETEEAP students.
- 5) Finally, to further this beneficial effect, universities must to establish systematic career counseling and post-graduation trajectories that direct ETEEAP graduates towards advanced studies, licensure examinations, or entrepreneurial ventures. Alumni networks and mentorship programs can leverage graduates' experiences to motivate new students, enhancing the program's function as a conduit for ongoing development and expanded career opportunities.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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