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Utilizing Positive Heutagogy on Learners Discipline: An Assessment

MAYETTE R. ORLANDA[1], CLARIZA G. TERONES[1], & MARITES M. ZOLETA[1]
[1]Department of Education Division of Calamba City, Calamba City, Philippines
ORCID NO: Mayette R. Orlanda: http://orcid.org/0009-0000-4292-5632
Clariza G. Terones: http://orcid.org/0009-0007-2503-4484
Marites M. Zoleta: http://orcid.org/0009-0003-5155-8733

Corresponding author: mayette.rodriguez@deped.gov.ph

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ABSTRACT

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Heutagogy, also known as self-determined learning, is a student-centered approach that emphasizes autonomy and capability development. In a heutagogical context, students actively explore areas of uncertainty within their topics. Teachers facilitate this process by providing background information and allowing students to delve deeply into subjects. This study explores the impact of the UPHOLD (Utilizing Positive Heutagogy on Learners' Discipline) approach on the academic performance of Hearts and Hands Extended to Learners Progress (HELP) recipients for the academic year 2021-2022, using a descriptive-comparative method. The research focused on assessing changes in learners' performance and the number of HELP recipients before and after the implementation of

UPHOLD. The results indicated a significant improvement in performance for Grade 1 in Key Stage 1, while Grades 2 and 3 did not show the same improvement. In Key Stage 2, Grades 4, 5, and 6 all demonstrated noticeable improvement. Furthermore, there was a notable decrease in the number of HELP Program learners, suggesting that UPHOLD effectively promoted self-directed learning. However, it was observed that younger students in Grades 1 to 3, who struggle with independent learning, require more support. These findings highlight the importance of educators closely monitoring students' learning independence to foster effective habits and prevent disengagement.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of heutagogy, or self-determined learning, has gained popularity recently as a successful teaching strategy that gives students the freedom to direct their own learning. Blaschke (2012) highlights the value of heutagogy in promoting lifelong learning, contending that it gives people the tools they need to survive in a world that is always changing. Blaschke and Hase (2019) also draw attention to the way in which heutagogical methods and technology can be combined to improve learner agency and flexibility in a variety of educational environments. The COVID-19 epidemic has highlighted the necessity for adaptive learning methodologies even more, since some students encountered hitherto unseen obstacles that impeded conventional teaching approaches (Exter & Ashby, 2022).

The Department of Education is committed to developing well-rounded, lifelong learners who can make meaningful contributions to society and the world. Central to this mission is the Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao Curriculum, which focuses on cultivating individuals capable of making responsible decisions and acting in ways that benefit the common good. To accomplish these objectives, the emphasis on values formation is essential, serving as a cornerstone in the educational process (Department of Education, 2016).

However, the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have severely impacted the provision of high-quality education. Data from both global and local sources highlight the significant struggles faced by children, including poverty, mental health issues, lack of access to digital resources, and the fear of academic, physical, and emotional regression (Black et al., 2021). In the Division of Calamba City, 2,856 students have been identified as underperforming, with many participating in the Hearts and Hands Extended to Learners Progress (HELP) Program—an intervention designed to support struggling learners. Alarmingly, a majority of these students are reported to be

grappling with mental health issues, ranging from loneliness to anxiety and depression.

Teachers, too, are feeling the strain. During Focus Group Discussions, many educators voiced their frustration at being unable to provide sufficient support to their students, largely due to the absence of face-to-face interactions. These challenges have also taken a toll on the mental health of teachers, underscoring the need to prioritize the socio-emotional, mental, and physical development of both learners and educators.

In light of these challenges, teachers must be equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to identify and support struggling students. This includes adopting innovative teaching strategies that align with the current educational landscape and fostering a renewed commitment to the holistic development of learners. The insights gained from this research will be instrumental in shaping action plans, proposing targeted interventions, and developing strategies to effectively support students who are struggling in this new educational environment.

FRAMEWORK

Heutagogy, as Nathani (2022) explains, is rooted in the Greek word "heuriskin," which means to discover and forms the basis of the term "heuristic." Heuristics involves enabling individuals to discover or learn something on their own. Heutagogy is built upon foundational concepts from constructivism, humanism, capability, systems thinking, and action learning, as extensively described in previous works (e.g., Hase & Kenyon, 2000, 2007; Hase, 2016).

Also known as self-determined learning, heutagogy is a student-centered instructional approach that emphasizes the development of autonomy, capacity, and capability. Traditional education has long focused on imparting theoretical knowledge, which students might not readily apply in real-life situations, often resulting in unproductive learning experiences as students struggle to understand and use the information in practical contexts. Heutagogy stands out as a unique and innovative learning method because it is neither planned nor linear. Instead, it is informal and parallel, reflecting how learning continues beyond the classroom and outside the school environment. In this approach, teachers do not occupy a central role; instead, they act as coaches and valuable resources for students.

Consistent with heutagogy, the study on self-determined learning revealed that participants demonstrated characteristics of effective learners who regard learning as a core aspect of their roles and use diverse strategies to plan and reflect on their learning continuously. Exter and Ashby (2022) recommend that

employers foster self-determined learning practices within their organizations and that educators equip students to become self-directed learners.

Additionally, Lock et al. (2021) found that heutagogy and lifelong learning share common principles that are relevant to both blended and online learning environments as well as lifelong learning.

In addition, Blaschke (2021) explores the impact of the rapid shift to online learning on both educators and students, emphasizing the increased importance of self-direction among learners. With a focus on preparing students for both the professional world and lifelong learning, there is a growing interest in heutagogy, or self-determined learning, as a solution. Her study delves into the rising demand for lifelong learning skills and the potential of heutagogy in fostering these skills. The paper presents a case study of an Israeli higher education institution that implemented heutagogy, using interviews with program leaders and instructors. The findings highlight initial challenges, but students ultimately favor self-determined learning once they adapt.

Ultimately, the goal of heutagogy is to teach lifelong learning and to produce learners who are well-prepared for the complexities of today's workplace. The teacher is more of a coach, a valuable resource to be used when necessary but not the primary source of knowledge. The heutagogical approach to teaching allows students to discover for themselves, and rather than simply performing the tasks assigned by their teachers, it encourages students to find their problems and questions to answer to become self-determined learners.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to evaluate the impact of positive heutagogy on learners' discipline in the Division of Calamba City. It specifically seeks to (1) determine whether there is a significant difference in learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. Additionally, the study will (2) assess any changes in the number of HELP recipients before and following the implementation of UPHOLD. It also intends to (3) identify the issues and concerns arising from the implementation process. Based on these findings, the study will provide recommendations to address the identified issues and concerns.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

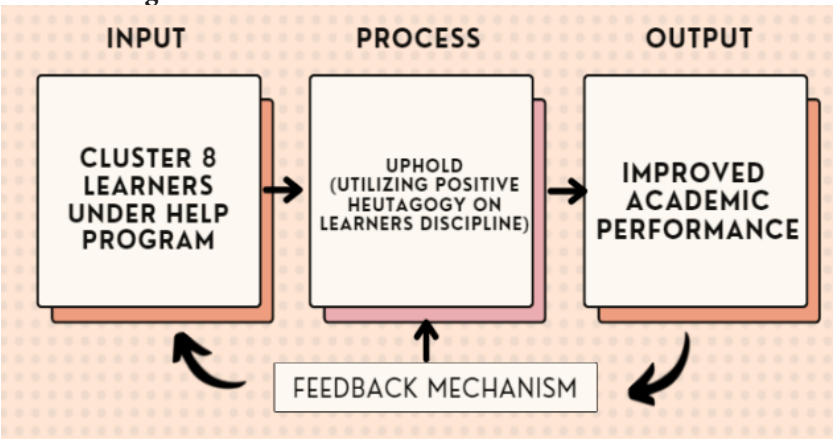

Figure 1. Research Design

Using Positive Heutagogy on Learners' Discipline is an intervention used to engage learners in the new normal and eventually improve their academic performance. It addresses issues that arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is considered a phenomenon.

Research Site

The research was conducted in selected elementary schools in Calamba City Division. Calamba City is located 54 kilometers (34 miles) south of Manila and is recognized as the Philippines' Resort Capital due to its numerous hot spring resorts. It has a total land size of 14,950 hectares (36,900 acres), making it Laguna province's second-largest city after San Pablo City in terms of land area. Dr. Jose P. Rizal, our country's national hero, was born and raised in the city.

According to the 2020 census, it is the fifth-most populous local government unit in Laguna, with a population of over 581,671 people. Because of its various factories, the city is considered Calabarzon's richest city.

As of 2021, Calamba City Division has 52 public elementary schools and 21 public secondary schools, which are divided into 10 clusters. This study focused on cluster 8, which includes the researchers' school. It includes five schools with populations ranging from 300 to 2000 learners.

This research is conducted during the first year of the implementation of Distance Learning. Where learners are either enrolled through modular distance

learning (printed and digital) and/or blended learning (IT-supported) learning mechanisms.

Research Participants

The participants of the study will be the Cluster 8 learners listed in the Hearts and Hands Extended to Learners Progress (HELP) Program, which consists of 70 learners in key stage 2 and 11 learners in key stage 2. This research will utilize data from the HELP Program monitoring tool and collect progress reports of grades for the academic performance of learners.

Instrumentation

This research used the descriptive-comparative method to gather data and information on the effectiveness of UPHOLD (Utilizing Positive Heutagogy on Learners' Discipline) on the Academic Performance of HELP Recipients. Focused group discussions with teachers and interviews were included. This type of research described what existed and helped to uncover new facts and meaning. Data was tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted based on the research design. 1) Concerning the difference between the learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD, a simple mean will be used. 2) Concerning the difference between the number of HELP recipients before and after the implementation of UPHOLD, a comparative analysis was utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Grade 1 Learners Performance

LEARNERS	BEFORE QUARTER 1	AFTER QUARTER 2	Difference 1	Difference 2
A	82	83	1	1
B	82	80	-2	4
C	81	81	0	0
D	82	80	-2	4
E	78	80	2	4
F	78	81	3	9
G	78	80	2	4
H	80	84	4	16
I	78	83	5	25

J	77	80	3	9
K	82	81	-1	1
L	77	80	3	9
M	78	81	3	9
N	82	85	3	9
O	82	84	2	4
P	83	86	3	9
Q	76	79	3	9
R	76	79	3	9
S	79	77	-2	4
T	76	76	0	0
U	78	76	-2	4
V	77	79	2	4
W	76	79	3	9
X	77	77	0	0
Y	77	79	2	4
Z	78	78	0	0
Average Mean	78.85	80.31	∑D1 = 38	∑D2 = 160

Table 1 shows the performance of Grade 1 learners before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. The general average of learners was 78.58 in the first quarter and 80.31 in the second quarter, a difference of 1.46%. The table also includes the differences in grades of Grade 1 learners from quarter 1 to quarter 2.

Table 2

Grade 1 Learners Performance Prior and After the Implementation of UPHOLD

	Before	*After*
Mean	78.84615	80.30769
Variance	5.495385	6.861538
Observations	26	26
Pearson Correlation	0.665935	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	25	

t Stat	-3.64577
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000611
t Critical one-tail	1.708141
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001223
t Critical two-tail	2.059539

Table 2 shows that the critical value of t is 2.059 and the t-stat is 3.645 (regardless of sign), implying that there is a significant difference between the grade 1 learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD.

Table 3

Grade 2 Learners' Performance

LEARNERS	BEFORE QUARTER 1	AFTER QUARTER 2	Difference 1	Difference 2
A	77	78	1	1
B	82	83	1	1
C	82	81	-1	1
D	82	81	-1	1
E	80	82	2	4
F	75	75	0	0
G	79	78	-1	1
H	75	75	0	0
I	81	82	1	1
J	84	83	-1	1
K	82	84	2	4
L	78	80	2	4
M	78	77	-1	1
N	81	85	4	16
O	80	80	0	0
P	84	81	-3	9
Q	84	83	-1	1
R	76	79	3	9
S	78	79	1	1

T	78	78	0	0
U	75	75	0	0
V	86	86	0	0
W	79	79	0	0
X	86	86	0	0
Average Mean	80.08	80.41	∑D1 = 8	∑D2 = 56

Table 3 shows the performance of Grade 2 learners before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. It is seen that from 80.08 Average Mean of learners in the first quarter, it reached 80.41 in the second quarter, showing a difference of 0.33%. Included in the table are the differences in grades of Grade 2 learners from quarter 1 to quarter 2.

Table 4

Grade 2 Learners Performance Prior and After the Implementation of UPHOLD

	Before	*After*
Mean	80.08333333	80.41666667
Variance	11.12318841	10.6884058
Observations	24	24
Pearson Correlation	0.893865312	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	23	
t Stat	-1.072380529	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.147336391	
t Critical one-tail	1.713871528	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.294672782	
t Critical two-tail	2.06865761	

Table 4 shows that the critical value of t is 2.068, and the t-stat is 1.072, which is less than the critical value of t. This implies that there is no significant difference between the performance of grade 2 learners before and after the implementation of UPHOLD.

Table 5
Grade 3 Learners' Performance

LEARNERS	BEFORE QUARTER 1	AFTER QUARTER 2	Difference 1	Difference 2
A	80	82	2	4
B	82	82	0	0
C	81	81	0	0
D	76	78	2	4
E	76	80	4	16
F	80	79	-1	1
G	81	79	-2	4
H	79	76	-3	9
I	79	78	-1	1
J	81	81	0	0
K	85	84	-1	1
L	78	77	-1	1
Average	79.83	79.75	∑D1 = -1	∑D2 = 41

Table 5 shows the performance of Grade 3 learners before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. It is seen that from a general average of 79.83 learners in the first quarter, it decreased to 79.75 in the second quarter, showing no improvement.

Table 6
Grade 3 Learners Performance Prior and After the Implementation of UPHOLD

	Before	*After*
Mean	79.83333	79.75
Variance	6.333333	5.477273
Observations	12	12
Pearson Correlation	0.686861	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	

df	11
t Stat	0.149677
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.441864
t Critical one-tail	1.795885
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.883728
t Critical two-tail	2.200985

Table 6 shows that the critical value of t is 2.20 and the t-stat is 0.149 which is less than the critical value of t. It implies that there is no significant difference between the grade 3 learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD.

Table 7
Grade 4 Learners' Performance

LEARNERS	BEFORE QUARTER 1	AFTER QUARTER 2	Difference 1	Difference 2
A	77	78	1	1
B	81	82	1	1
C	79	79	0	0
D	81	81	0	0
E	80	80	0	0
F	78	80	2	4
G	80	80	0	0
H	83	83	0	0
I	84	85	1	1
J	85	85	0	0
K	79	80	1	1
L	77	78	1	1
M	79	80	1	1
N	78	79	1	1
O	80	81	1	1
P	78	78	0	0

Q	77	77	0	0
R	82	83	1	1
S	82	82	0	0
T	87	87	0	0
U	88	87	-1	1
V	84	84	0	0
W	80	80	0	0
Average	80.83	81.26	∑D1 = 10	∑D2 = 14

Table 7 shows the performance of Grade 4 learners before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. The general average of learners was 80.83 in the first quarter, but it improved to 81.26 in the second quarter, showing no improvement.

Table 8

Grade 4 Learners Performance Prior and After the Implementation of UPHOLD

	Prior	*After*
Mean	80.82609	81.26087
Variance	9.786561	8.110672
Observations	23	23
Pearson Correlation	0.979791	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	22	
t Stat	-3.148	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002335	
t Critical one-tail	1.717144	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.004669	
t Critical two-tail	2.073873	

Table 8 shows that the critical value of t is 2.073, and the t-stat is 3.148 (regardless of the sign), which is higher than the critical value of t. This implies that there is a significant difference between the grade 2 learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD.

Table 9
Grade 5 Learners' Performance

LEARNERS	BEFORE QUARTER 1	AFTER QUARTER 2	Difference 1	Difference 2
A	83	84	1	1
B	82	83	1	1
C	79	79	0	0
D	82	83	1	1
E	77	79	2	4
F	78	80	2	4
G	77	79	2	4
H	78	79	1	1
I	81	81	0	0
J	82	83	1	1
K	78	78	0	0
L	79	79	0	0
M	78	77	-1	1
N	78	79	1	1
O	78	78	0	0
P	83	83	0	0
Q	76	76	0	0
R	75	75	0	0
S	81	82	1	1
T	85	85	0	0
U	80	81	1	1
V	84	84	0	0
W	81	82	1	1
Average	79.78	80.39	∑D1 = 14	∑D2 = 22

Table 9 shows the performance of Grade 5 learners before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. From 79.78, it reached 80.39 in the second quarter, showing an increase of 0.61.

Table 10
Grade 5 Learners Performance Prior and After the Implementation of UPHOLD

	Before	*After*
Mean	79.7826087	80.3913
Variance	7.177865613	7.43083
Observations	23	23
Pearson Correlation	0.958206438	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	22	
t Stat	-3.729567994	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000581872	
t Critical one-tail	1.717144374	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001163743	
t Critical two-tail	2.073873068	

Table 10 shows that the critical value of t is 2.073, and the t-stat is 3.729, which is higher than the critical value of t. This implies that there is a significant difference between the grade 2 learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD.

Table 11
Grade 6 Learners' Performance

LEARNERS	PRIOR QUARTER 1	AFTER QUARTER 2	Difference 1	Difference 2
A	74	77	3	9
B	82	84	2	4
C	80	80	0	0
D	76	77	1	1
E	76	77	1	1
F	77	79	2	4
G	77	77	0	0
H	79	77	-2	4
I	78	79	1	1
J	79	80	1	1

K	79	82	3	9
L	83	83	0	0
M	79	81	2	4
N	78	79	1	1
O	81	81	0	0
P	79	79	0	0
Q	76	78	2	4
R	76	77	1	1
S	78	79	1	1
T	76	77	1	1
U	76	77	1	1
V	82	82	0	0
W	82	80	-2	4
X	82	83	1	1
Average	78.54	79.375	∑D1 = 20	∑D2 = 52

Table 11 shows the performance of Grade 6 learners before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. It is seen that from 78.54, it became 79.38 in the second quarter, showing an increase of 0.84.

Table 12

Grade 6 Learners' Performance Prior and After the Implementation of UPHOLD

	Before	*After*
Mean	78.54167	79.375
Variance	6.172101	5.027174
Observations	24	24
Pearson Correlation	0.867372	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	23	
t Stat	-3.29379	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.001589	
t Critical one-tail	1.713872	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.003177	
t Critical two-tail	2.068658	

Table 12 shows that the critical value of t is 2.068, and the t-stat is 3.293 (regardless of the sign), which is higher than the critical value of t. It implies that there is a significant difference between the grade 6 learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD.

Table 13

Cluster 8 Learners' Performance Before and After the Implementation of UPHOLD

	Prior	*After*
Mean	79.65166667	80.24833
Variance	0.699736667	0.418657
Observations	6	6
Pearson Correlation	0.782494008	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	5	
t Stat	-2.80572535	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.018868954	
t Critical one-tail	2.015048373	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.037737909	
t Critical two-tail	2.570581836	

Table 13 shows that the critical value of t is 2.570, and the t-stat is 2.805 (regardless of the sign), which is higher than the critical value of t. It implies that there is a significant difference between learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD.

Table 14

Summary Result of Cluster 8 Learners' Performance in Elementary

LEARNERS	PRIOR QUARTER 1	AFTER QUARTER 2	t-Critical Value	t-stat value	Decision
Grade 1	78.85	80.31	2.059	3.645	Reject Ho
Grade 2	80.08	80.41	2.068	1.072	Accept Ho
Grade 3	79.83	79.75	2.200	0.149	Accept Ho
Grade 4	80.83	81.26	2.073	3.148	Reject Ho
Grade 5	79.78	80.39	2.073	3.729	Reject Ho
Grade 6	78.54	79.37	2.068	3.293	Reject Ho

Gen. Ave.	79.65	80.24	2.570	2.805	REJECT Ho

Table 14 displays the summary of cluster 8 learners' performance in elementary. It is noticed that among Key Stage 1, grade level, only grade one shows a significant difference in learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. This implies UPHOLD is effective in grade 1 learners. On the other hand, grades 2 and 3 accept Ho, which means that there is no significant difference in the learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. This implies that it is not effective for them, or rather, the absence of the presence of teachers is a big factor that should be considered.

For Key Stage 2, Grades 4, 5, and 6 all show that there is a significant difference between learners' performance before and after the implementation of UPHOLD. According to Hase and Kenyon in 2000, Heutagogy is a holistic model of self-determined learning. It shows that learners from grades 4, 5, and 6 can learn on their own, and this approach is effective for them, compared to those learners in grades 1, 2, and 3 who are dependent on their teachers/parents.

Table 15

Number of Learners under the HELP Program

Grade Level	Number of Learner			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	42	28	25	8
2	24	32	19	8
3	12	23	11	6
4	23	30	11	6
5	21	31	16	4
6	24	35	13	7
Total	146	179	95	39

Figure 2
Cluster 8 Learners under HELP PROGRAM

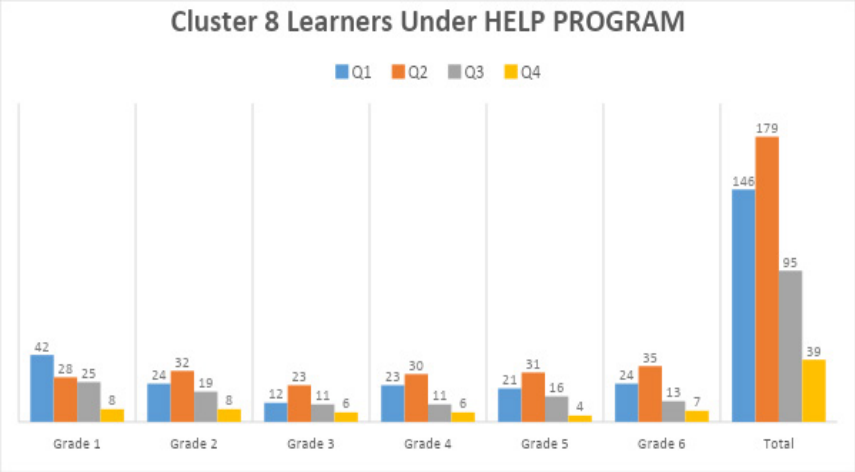

Table 15 and Figure 2 show the number of learners under the HELP Program who participate in the research. It is noticed that from quarter 1 with 146 learners, it increased in quarter 2 by 33 learners, which makes it 179 learners. During the implementation of UPHOLD, teachers noticed its positive effect and continued to use it as their approach. This resulted in a decrease in the number of learners under the HELP Program from listed 179 in quarter 2; it became 95 by the third quarter and 39 by the last quarter of SY 2021-2022.

The results of this study are consistent with international research that highlights how heutagogy can improve student performance and engagement. As an example, Hase and Kenyon (2007) contend that heutagogy promotes a better comprehension of the material by empowering students to take charge of their education, which is especially advantageous in a variety of learning environments. Similarly, Lock et al. (2021) demonstrated the flexibility of this method across a range of educational settings by finding that incorporating heutagogical principles into technology-enabled learning environments dramatically enhanced student outcomes. Additionally, Blaschke (2021) addresses the benefits of self-determined learning for student motivation and academic performance, arguing that learners are more tenacious and successful when given the freedom to guide their own educational paths. All of these findings lend credence to the idea that heutagogy improves academic achievement while also preparing children for lifelong learning in a world that is becoming more complex by the day.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

First, because the research was limited to the Division of Calamba City and was carried out in a particular educational setting, its applicability to other areas or educational systems may be limited. Furthermore, the sample size was quite small, especially for Grades 2 and 3. This could have an impact on the reliability of the findings and the capacity to make firm judgments regarding the effects of the UPHOLD method on these grades. Additionally, the focus on quantitative metrics to evaluate academic achievement may obscure qualitative elements of education, such as motivation and student involvement, which are equally vital to comprehending the efficacy of pedagogical approaches. Finally, because the study only lasted for a single academic year, it is possible that the long-term impacts of the UPHOLD strategy on students' self-determined learning and academic success were missed. These drawbacks point to the necessity of more investigation into the wider application and long-term effects of heutagogy in other educational contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the implementation of UPHOLD has significantly improved the performance of learners in grades 4, 5, and 6, while grades 1, 2, and 3 showed no significant difference, with grade 1 exhibiting notable improvements. The decrease in the number of learners under the HELP Program over the quarters suggests that UPHOLD effectively supports learners in becoming self-determined. The research highlights that positive heutagogy fosters a learner-centered environment, enhances self-efficacy, and encourages independence. However, without proper monitoring, there is a risk of developing laziness and reduced industriousness. Thus, while self-efficacy and determination can lead to effective learning habits, educators need to ensure regular oversight to prevent potential distractions and ensure balanced development.

This study informs policy development by highlighting the need for tailored support mechanisms within educational frameworks that facilitate the effective implementation of heutagogical approaches, particularly for younger learners who may struggle with self-directed learning.

In summary, further research should focus on the sustained impact of the UPHOLD approach over time, identify effective support mechanisms for younger learners, and assess the role of teacher training in facilitating the adoption of heutagogical methods in various educational settings.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Findings from this research demonstrated significant improvements in learners' performance and a reduction in HELP Program recipients, which enhanced self-determined learning practices. The research will develop and implement instructional strategies that integrate positive heutagogy, focusing on both improving performance in lower grades and providing effective guidelines for monitoring and supporting self-directed learners. By piloting these strategies in various classrooms, the study will assess their impact on academic performance and engagement, gather feedback from teachers and students, and refine practices to prevent issues such as laziness. The goal is to translate these insights into actionable recommendations for broadening the application of positive heutagogy, thereby supporting learners' self-determined learning and academic success across different educational settings.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could influence or bias the content of this article. This study was conducted independently without any external funding from organizations or individuals that could have a vested interest in the findings.

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request to ensure transparency and facilitate independent verification of the results. AI was utilized ethically solely to enhance readability, with due diligence and mindfulness applied to ensure that it did not contribute to the analysis or interpretation of the content.

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