

Impact of Alternative Learning System to the Out-of-school-youths, Kasambahay, Indigenous People and Children-in-conflict-with-the-law

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Abstract - This study aimed to establish data on the impact of Alternative Learning System (ALS) to the learner-passers in the Division of Sagay City, Negros Occidental, Philippines, from 2003 to 2015. Mixed-method research, particularly convergent parallel design was used. The respondents of this study were the 219 ALS passers sampled per year. For the qualitative investigation, 10 participants were chosen from among the classified learner-types. Findings showed that the educational attainment of the ALS learner-passers improved wherein majority of them finished vocational courses and college degrees. The family monthly income of the respondents also increased along with the improvement in their employment status. Majority of the learner-passers were employed by other persons, business and government establishments. Still a majority of the learner-passers became professionals; there was a dramatic shift from physical labor to office and profession-based jobs. Thus, ALS programs and projects contributed to the improvement of the ALS learners in terms of their educational attainment, family monthly income, employment status, and nature of jobs. Moreover, supports of local government unit and other stakeholders helped the sustainability of ALS programs and projects implementation. This study advances knowledge for the ALS implementers especially on how the investments on the program pays off.

Keywords: Alternative Learning System, impact, out-of-school-youth, kasambahay, IP, CICL.

INTRODUCTION

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) is a “parallel learning system in the Philippines that offers a practical option to the existing formal instruction” [1]-[3].

According to the Bureau of Alternative Learning system (BALS), ALS vision is “empowerment of the Filipino with desirable knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that will enable him to think critically and creatively, act innovatively and humanely in improving the quality of his life and that of his family, community and country.”

“It is envisioned that...every Filipino will be awakened, empowered and transformed into a productive, self-reliant, responsible, humane and upright citizen who can contribute to the betterment of the family, community and country. It is also envisaged that ALS will help alleviate poverty and sustain social and economic growth via the development of

employable skills and the generation of self-employment.”

Whether ALS is successful in realizing its vision and fulfilling its mission still lingers as a question, hence, this study helps to find answer.

The Department of Education (DepEd), through the BALS implemented two major programs on ALS. One is the Basic Literacy Program, “which aims to eradicate illiteracy among out-of-school youths and adults by teaching basic literacy and numeracy. The other is the Continuing Education Program – Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E), which targets people who are functionally literate but did not complete basic education. The latter also offers programs at both the primary and secondary school levels.” Both programs are modular and flexible. This means that learning can happen anytime in any place, depending on the convenience and availability of the learners [1, 2].

In order to help improve the system of education in Sagay City, ALS become one of the DepEd’s flagship

programs to address education problems in the remote areas. Hence, from 2003, ALS has been on its way on paving educational gaps of the out of school youths, school drop outs and other types of learners.

Different programs of ALS have been provided to improve education of both pedagogy and andragogy, Life skills were also introduced to address socio-economic constraints.

The Sagay City Division ALS caters the out of school youth who are completers of basic literacy program, unemployed or underemployed, elementary and secondary school drop-outs, industry-based and domestic workers (kasambahay) and balik paaralan para sa out-of-school and adult learners.

The DepEd Sagay City, in partnership with the local government unit (LGU) also succeeded on its implementation of programs and projects by reaching the diverse marginalized groups especially the indigenous peoples (IPs) in the community, who for several years, have been isolated with their distinctive way of life [4]. The ALS implementers believe that with the changing society today, IP's were left behind because of lack of social exposure and educational achievement in their side. This is the reason why the DepEd and the LGU direct much attention on helping IP's through this ALS.

Another ALS program is for children-in-conflict-with-the-law (CICL) or children who are alleged as, accused of, or adjudged of having committed an offense under Philippine Laws as embodied in Section 4. (e) of R.A. 9344 as amended.

The goal of this ALS program is to facilitate the children or out of school youth to be reintegrated to the school and community and prevent them from re-offending. The implementers believe that it is essential to consider that the child lives in the context of interrelated environmental systems, such as the family, school, and community, which might influence or affect his/her growth and development. Thus, the needs and problems of the family and the community are also addressed by the intervention programs to achieve full development, rehabilitation and reintegration of the child.

The program includes strategies which do not only save young lives but also prevent the development of adult criminals at the onset, thus, reduces crime.

The ALS is well supported by the city. All the ALS passers are automatically given slots for scholarship program of the LGU. Learners can continue their study in tertiary level as full scholars of the city.

Another intervention program integrated in the conduct of ALS is the livelihood skills training program that help the learners augment family income and become self-sustaining.

Addressing the financial problems “makes it possible to engage more learners who might get encouraged to stay with the program if they are given assistance in acquiring food and other necessities that can help support their family’s daily needs. These are vital concerns to address, especially for demotivated students who do not see the link between education and future employment and for students who are determined to finish their education but cannot pursue it due to low income” [5].

Despite these efforts in the division level, however, a World Bank study still indicates low success rate of DepEd’s ALS. According to the study, there are around 6.6 million potential enrollees aged 15-30 to the ALS program. But only less than 10 percent of this number, or only about .6 million, were enrolled in the program in 2017. Those who initially enrolled, only 60 percent attended classes regularly and only about 20 percent eventually passed the A&E exams [2].

Convinced of the figures in terms of quantity in a macro level, the researchers endeavoured to assess the impact of ALS in terms of quality in its micro level – division level or city level.

This study contributes to advancing knowledge for the DepEd in general and the ALS implementers in particular, on how the program effected the lives of the learner-passers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to establish data pertaining to ALS and its impact to the different types of learners in the Division of Sagay City from 2003 to 2015. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions: What is the profile of the ALS learners in terms of educational attainment, family monthly income, employment status, and job characterization before and after completing ALS program? Qualitatively, this study also answered questions such as but not limited to: How does ALS change the respondent learner-passers’ economic status and social dealings?

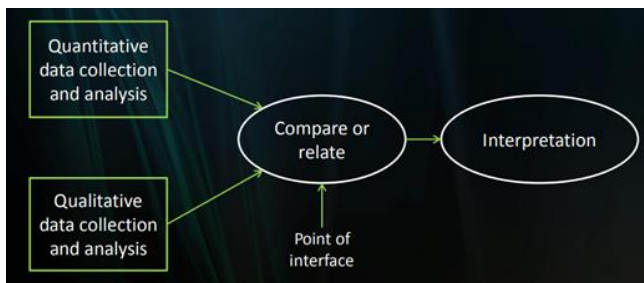
METHODS

Research Design

This study used mixed-method research, particularly convergent parallel design. In this study,

the researchers simultaneously collected both quantitative and qualitative data, merged the data, and use the results to understand a research problem. A basic rationale for choosing this design was to supply strengths to survey and document data to have more complete understanding of a research problem.

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), this method allows the researchers to triangulate the methods by comparing statistical results with qualitative findings for corroboration and validation purposes and develop more complete understanding of the research problem by obtaining complementary data [6].



The researcher found the design more appropriate because for an impact study, the data generated from survey and archives may not completely tell what is real about the ALS passers after several years.

Respondents of the Study

Table 1. Sampling of Respondents

Year	Level		No. of Passers	Sample
	Elem.	HS		
2003	7	0	7	3
2004	2	2	4	2
2005	1	2	3	1
2006	2	5	7	3
2007	0	3	3	1
2008	5	24	29	13
2009	9	10	19	9
2010	1	28	29	13
2011	13	38	51	23
2012	1	48	49	22
2013	10	35	45	20
2014	8	65	73	33
2015	8	158	166	66
Total	67	418	485	219

The respondents of the study were the ALS Learners who passed the A & E Tests both in elementary and high school levels from calendar years 2003-2015. The researchers computed the sample per year as presented

in Table 1. Further, the respondents were classified according to learner-type such as shown in Table 2. For the qualitative investigation, the researchers chose 10 participants from among the classified learner-types.

The learner-passers of the ALS were coming from different Barangays of the City. They were learner-passers of basic literacy program, groups of unemployed/underemployed, elementary and secondary school drop-outs, industry-based and domestic workers or Kasambahay, BP-OSA learners. Sampling design used in this study was stratified random sampling. This study was conducted in districts of the Division of Sagay City offering Alternative Learning Program.

Table 2. Classification of Respondents and Key Participants

Learner Type	Number	Key Participants
Regular Learners	185	4
Kasambahay	30	2
Indigenous People	2	2
CICL	2	2
Total	219	10

Research Instruments

The main instrument used in data gathering is the Alternative Learning System Questionnaire. Part I consists of the personal data questionnaire for gathering the basic information among respondents. Part II is the main instrument on indicators of impact of the Alternative Learning System to the learners.

The main instrument on impact of ALS is composed of 4 indicators namely: educational attainment, family monthly income, employment status, job characterization

In Part III are the qualitative questions used to gather information about the impact of Alternative Learning System to the learners in Sagay City.

Qualitative questions gathered information on the impact or contribution of ALS to the learners especially the improvement of their economic status, financial management and livelihood skills.

Further, qualitative questions also gathered information on how ALS helped them improve their social status such as being better decision makers, effective communicators, having self-confidence and self-worth and being competent job seekers and workers.

To establish the reliability of the research instrument, the researcher administered a dry run to 30 respondents whose scores were interpreted and

subjected to *Cronbach Alpha* to determine the reliability coefficient. The instrument achieved a reliability index of .992.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The researchers secured permission from the Schools Division Superintendent and from the Ethics Committee to conduct the study. The respondents and key participants signed the informed consents before they answered the survey questionnaire and engaged with the interviews. In lieu of written informed consent for participants abroad, the researchers laid down first the objectives of the study before proceeding to in-depth interview via phone or Skype. Moreover, since there were only two IP participants and they were part of the ALS program, a permission from their community leader sufficed.

Treatment of Data

This study used frequency count and percentage. Data before and after engagement or passing the ALS were compared and variances were determined. On one hand, qualitative data analysis employs thematic analysis method. This method assists in determining patterns from the answers collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the data collected revealed the following findings: *[Note: Some quotes from the participants, as presented below, were not originally expressed in English but translations from dialects.]*

Table 3. Educational Attainment of ALS Learner-passers

Educ'l Attainment	Before		After		Variance
	F	%	F	%	
No Schooling	0	0	0	0	0
Elementary (Grades 1-6)	42	19.18	0	0	-19.18
Secondary (1st - 4th Year)	177	80.82	0	0	-80.82
HS Graduates	0	0	50	22.83	22.83
Voc'l Courses	0	0	50	22.83	22.83
College	0	0	119	54.34	54.35
Total	219	100	219	100	- - -

The educational attainment of the learners leveled up. Majority of the learners completed vocational courses (v=22.83%) and enrolled in and finished

college (v=54.35%).

This result was supported by the 2015 data on college enrollment and scholarship of the ALS passers in Sagay City: 3 SUCs with 122 enrollees in 15 different degree programs, 2 TVIs with 13 takers in 5 various technical-vocational courses, and 1 Private College with 1 enrollee in 1-degree program.

Further, the result gained support from a study in 2017 which stated that the motivation factors of the learners in engaging with ALS include getting a secondary level diploma and continuing a study in college/university [7].

The participants expressed gratefulness for the opportunities ALS offered to them.

Anabel, an ALS-passer-turned-teacher, recounted: "I haven't thought of becoming a teacher after quitting school for a longest time. When I was out of school, I felt inferior and deprived. I am forever thankful to ALS for a chance to go back to school."

Jan Paul, a participant from CICL group, also said: *"ALS rose me up; it led me the way after release from formation facility. I am now a college student in a state college here in Sagay...I promise I won't go back to my old ways...Nobody wanted to mingle with me before but now I feel that I belong."*

The participants consider ALS as 'Great Equalizer'. With ALS, they feel equality and sense of belongingness among their social groups.

Educational attainment is an increasingly important determinant of economic and social success in the in many countries of the world. Improving college completion rates among students who are traditionally lacking in higher education is a promising tool to improve social mobility. The most apparent connection between education and life outcomes stems from the strong correlation between educational attainment and labor market outcomes such as but not limited to earnings, occupational status, amount of time spent unemployed [8]-[11].

The combined family income of the learners increased after ALS engagement. This is evidenced by the -22.83 per cent variance of those within the income bracket of one thousand to five thousand and 13.7 per cent variance of those earning fifteen to twenty thousand monthly.

The ALS learner-passers from Sagay City are now working locally and abroad. Hence, many are now

getting higher salaries and are supporting their families with basic needs and reasonable wants.

Table 4. Monthly Family Income of ALS Learner-passers

Income	Before		After		Variance
	F	%	F	%	
P1,000-5,000	150	68.49	100	45.66	-22.83
P5,001-10,000	37	16.89	30	13.70	-3.19
P10,001-15,000	16	7.30	25	11.41	4.11
P15,001-20,000	16	7.30	46	21.00	13.7
P20,001-above	0	0	18	8.21	8.21
Total	219	100	219	100	- - -

For the majority of participants, ALS is a ‘Life Changer’. They play up the improvements in their personalities and ways of life.

During a phone interview with Rodelyn, a kasambahay learner-passer, she remarked: “ALS helped me improved my education and I am now earning better here in Saudi.”

Mary Ann, another kasambahay learner-passer in Singapore also shared: “Even if I’m still domestic helper but I earn much higher than my salary there in the Philippines... I ventured applying abroad because ALS developed my confidence in job-seeking.”

The data and the testimonies presented take support from a study which revealed that acquiring additional education after high school corresponds to an annual income increase of 20 per cent per educational level, e.g. those with some college units earn 20 per cent more per year than those with a high school diploma, those with an associate degree earn 20 per cent more than those with some college, and so on [12].

Table 5. Employment Status of ALS Learner-passers

Employment	Before		After		Variance
	F	%	F	%	
Unemployed	85	38.81	69	31.50	-7.31
Self-employed	104	47.48	97	44.29	-3.19
Employed	30	13.70	53	24.20	10.5
Total	219	100	219	100	- - -

The employment status of the learners improved. The data marked negative variances for ‘unemployed’ and ‘self-employed’ while positive variance for

‘employed’. Private persons, profit and non-profit organizations, government units are the common employers of the ALS learner-passers. A majority are self-employed as micro-entrepreneurs with the livelihood projects provided by the LGU.

A study in 2017 which stated that the motivation factors of the learners in engaging with ALS is to have opportunity in obtaining jobs [7].

Lea Mae, an OSY-turned-teacher, narrated: “I couldn’t believe I’m already hired in the division as teacher...meaning ALS passers are employable. When I entered college, I doubted my capability coping with my subjects and going along with my classmates. But when I hurdled the licensure exam, I took pride being from ALS.”

A study confirmed that in hiring, employers are interested in education while emphasizing mostly some certain employability skills [13].

Jenelyn, an IP participant, shared: “I’m enjoying my piggery business now...the pigs are provided by the city... ALS taught me how to run a small business...ALS improved me and my family’s life.”

Juvy, another IP participant, is now a small entrepreneur. She recounted: “Because of ALS, I was able to acquire my piggery business. My skills for this livelihood gradually improved.”

Jenelyn and Juvy are just two of the 2.5 million IPs in the Philippines who live in remote areas where public schools offer limited services, but they can be a living testament that the minorities have hopes with ALS.

Table 6. Job Characterization of the ALS Learner-passers

Jobs	Before		After		Variance
	F	%	F	%	
Unskilled	40	18.26	0	0	-18.26
Skilled	29	13.24	54	24.65	11.41
Physical labor	150	68.49	12	5.47	-63.02
Clerical work	0	0	38	17.35	17.35
Office work	0	0	45	20.54	20.54
Professionals	0	0	70	31.96	31.96
Total	219	100	219	100	- - -

Majority of the learners became professionals (v=31.96). There was a dramatic shift from physical labor (v=-63.02) to office and profession-based jobs.

A great majority of the learner-passers landed to jobs such as but not limited to company employees,

government employees, call center agents, factory workers, teachers, poultry and hog raisers, and domestic helpers abroad.

Rene Boy, a learner-passer belonging to CICL narrated: "ALS honed my skills through trainings; I am now working in the catering services."

Analiza, is now working in Saudi Arabia as domestic helper. She said: "I developed my self-confidence with ALS...I can survive with the other races."

There were evident indicators of the improvement of learner-passers' lives as shared by the key participants. While there were challenges that stuck them to finish the ALS sessions, their drive to change the way things were happening in their lives pushed them to strive hard for a better future [14].

In general, common themes surfaced from the participants' stories and experiences. Most of the ALS learner-passers improved their quality of life by engaging in jobs or entrepreneurial activities that increase financial stability. Engagement to the ALS program developed their sense confidence and decision-making. They develop a positive outlook in life, and they cultivate the passion for education by pursuing further studies [14].

Raising awareness on the impact of ALS to the learner-passers takes a strong support from Paulo Freire' "problem-posing" theory stating that "to raise awareness of social issues and to stimulate action by disadvantaged groups. Using a process of problem analysis, reflection, and action, his approach to education was based on the belief that community members need to be encouraged to think critically about problems in their daily lives in order to make decisions and take action" [15].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

ALS programs and projects, contributed to the improvement of the ALS learners in terms of their educational attainment, family monthly income, employment status, and job nature/characterization.

ALS A&E program was effective in nurturing the life skills of the learners. The program improved the quality of living of the respondent learner-passers as compared to how they lived before ALS engagement. It confirmed that life-long learning is also best acquired beyond the formal school.

LGU and stakeholders supports helped the

sustainability of ALS programs and projects implementations.

The success of ALS cannot only be equated to the quantity of its enrolment, completers and passers but more importantly to how it changes one's life.

ALS is in the right tract and context towards realizing its vision and fulfilling its mission

Thus, it may be recommended to intensify the advocacy and social mobilization of the ALS and to strengthen its connections to and supports from LGU and other stakeholders. The implementers may strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the program implementation. The livelihood programs and projects may be increased, diversified and depoliticized.

Since this study limits only to city or division level, it may be recommended to conduct the same in a larger scale to further validate the results.

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