

# EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM AMONG THE SELECTED BARANGAYS IN THE CITY OF DASMARIÑAS

<sup>1</sup>NICOLE KAEZLLE VALEZA, <sup>2</sup>HYUNGMIN CHOI, <sup>3</sup>JOHANNA KAYE SANTILLANA

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Social Sciences Department, De La Salle University - Dasmariñas

Email: <sup>1</sup>valezanic@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>hyungmin5355@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>johannasantillana0905@gmail.com

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**Abstract** - This study evaluates the effectiveness of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program conducted by the Arnold Janssen Catholic Mission Foundation (AJCMF) among the selected barangays in Dasmariñas City. It cites specific barangays that are currently providing the learning centers for the program, and the demographic profiles of both learners who are enrolled in the program and their instructional managers. Moreover, it determines and evaluates the motivation factors of the ALS learners which will acquaint their objectives and aspirations through the program. Drop-out factors among the ALS learners which contributes to the challenges of the current system were also discussed. Furthermore, it deliberates the effectiveness on the learning standards of the program and how those standards are achieved as evaluated by the learners and instructional managers. The following are the key findings: First, there is no significant relationship between the effectiveness of the ALS program and the demographic profile of learners. Second, the primary motivation and objective of the ALS learners is to have the opportunity in attaining a job. Third, lack of interest is the primal cognitive which prompts ALS learners to drop out of the program. Finally, both learners and instructional managers deems the program effective overall. However, the learners evaluated it as moderately effective while the instructional managers consider the program highly effective. Therefore, the study recommends to revamp the module to suit the difference in learners' capacities and capabilities.

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**Keywords** - Alternative Learning System, Drop out, Effectiveness Motivation

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## I. INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. It is a prerequisite for ensuing an evolving global society and contributes national and human development. Countries that are successful in giving their population with literacy and lifelong skills are usually in a better position to meet the economic demands of operating in a globalized information economy (Apao, Dayagbil & Abao, 2014). With this context, individuals must be literate to become globally competitive but to accomplish this lies in the education process.

Education is more than just transmitting knowledge from one source to another, it is a vital element in the development of skills and capabilities in all essential areas in a certain extent. To improve a country's education is strengthening the skills of its citizens hence their total potential may be exploited to the nation's advantage. Yet several young illiterate adolescents are not able to attend or complete basic education.

To weaken social injustice, diminish social disparities and strengthening economic growth is to equalize education among individuals. To uphold the right to education of those who are not enrolled in schools, diverse forms of provision through different learning pathways are required (Yasunaga, 2014).

To address this matter, the international development community in 1990, conceived a massive global education initiative called Education for All 2015 (EFA 2015), which aims to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015 (UNESCO, 2015). Most countries of the world have pledged and signified their commitments to the EFA goals, especially in tackling literacy rates and school drops (Arzadon & Nato, 2015). One of these countries is the Philippines and in 2001, the country has also supported Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and the Decade for Literacy in 2003.

For past decades, the Philippines had made improvements when it comes to the quality of education but at the same time, the country's education system has confronted several challenges. While the literacy rate is between 94 to 96 percent, functional illiteracy is relatively high (Pinca, 2015). There is also a disturbingly high number of students who drop out of school. The most prominent reasoning behind this is that most individuals have been assailed with economic crisis impelled by poverty which are credited to illiteracy. Given the lack of education as the unwarranted situation that caused poverty, illiteracy continues to occur among the poor and the marginalized.

The Philippine government subsequently implemented the Alternative Learning System (ALS) under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education as a necessary component of Philippine education system to provide each and every Filipinos with

unrestricted access to basic education to decrease the illiteracy rate as proposed in the Education for All (EFA) 2015 Philippine Plan of Action.

The Alternative Learning System is conceptualized as a non-formal modular education program which caters to the learning needs of non-schoolers, drop-outs, illiterate adults and other learners from marginalized groups who have never experienced formal education but can learn in an out of school setting. In the study conducted by Apao, on the implementation of the alternative learning system program along provision of life skills, increased literacy and quality of living which was revealed that the provision of life skills was attained to a great extent.

The Philippine Department of Education further expanded the ALS program through establishing partnerships with non-government organizations in order to deliver the program's objective in ensuring that all individuals, especially the indigenous and the marginalized, have access to quality non-formal education and skills training.

The program is conducted either in school campuses and community halls or on private places depending on the delivery of instructions provided by government-paid instructors or by private non-government organizations.

The Arnold Janssen Catholic Mission Foundation, Inc. (AJCMFI), a non-profit international aid organization operated and funded by the Societas Verbi Divini (Society of the Divine Word), is funding several Community Learning Centers located in Cavite and Palawan. The Foundation started with its first established learning center in Dasmariñas, Cavite with the Sagip Dunong Learning Center, which attends to illiterate youth and adults who did not complete their elementary or high school education but are eager to undergo and finish the ALS program as an alternative method to acquire a diploma.

The Foundation is currently focusing on the literacy improvement of out of school individuals and the indigenous communities. At present, AJCMFI has a total of ninety-four (94) learning centers under its supervision in the National Capital Region (Manila and Quezon City), Province of Cavite (Dasmariñas City, Bacoor, and Tagaytay City), and in the southern Palawan Province (Rio Tuba and Balabac Island).

The Local Government Unit (LGU) of Dasmariñas City has been a partner of the Foundation in the formation of Functional Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in every community or barangay by providing funding assistance. The LGU of Dasmariñas City distributes and assigns a specific reasonable segments of its Special Education Fund (SEF) to finance Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs and projects. There are eleven (11)

institutions and fifty-seven (57) CLCs in every area in Dasmariñas City.

The primary focus of this study is to assess the implementation of the Alternative Learning System conducted by the Arnold Janssen Catholic Mission Foundation at the Area C of Dasmariñas City in the Province of Cavite, Philippines. Furthermore, this study intends to find out the effectiveness of the program and determine whether it's objectives on improving the provision of life skills, literacy and the program outcome of quality of living have been achieved.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research Design

The descriptive method of research employed in this study. This method of research can be defined as a critical process of observing, describing, analyzing and documenting quantifiable information. This method can also be a mixed research, in which quantitative and qualitative methods, techniques, or other paradigm characteristics are mixed in one overall study. With this approach, researchers used the qualitative research paradigm for one phase of a research study and the quantitative research paradigm for another phase of the study.

The methods of data collection for this descriptive research are utilized in several combinations and arrangement based on the formulated research questions. Various common data collection methods or techniques within the field of descriptive mixed research include surveys, interviews, portfolios and observations. This study in particular used the collective approach of using surveys and interviews to collect data. The collected data were analyzed in order to formulate and recommend specific approaches or strategies to further improve the subject of this study, which is the Alternative Learning System conducted by the Arnold Janssen Foundation in Area C of Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

### 2.2. Sampling

A non-random quota sampling design was used for the study. A quota sampling is the critical process of selecting or gathering representative data from the population chosen by the researchers. As of 2016, the AJMF Inc. supervised one hundred ten (110) community learning centers, fifty-one (51) of which are located at the Dasmariñas City. This study was conducted at only thirteen (13) learning centers in Area C of the Dasmariñas City. The respondents of this study were learners who enrolled in the ALS program at Area C from the year 2016 to 2017, and their Instructional Managers (IMs) as well. All learner respondents were in the secondary level, three (3) learners from each learning center were selected by their Instructional managers (IMs) to be surveyed

and interviewed. Thus, a total of thirty-nine (39) learners and five (5) instructional managers answered the survey questionnaires and be interviewed.

### 2.3. Method of gathering data

For the purpose of this research, self-made survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used. The survey questionnaires were designed differently for the learners and instructional managers. After the surveys were answered, in-depth interviews were immediately followed and conducted. This method was particularly used in order to collect additional data and to further assess the effectiveness of ALS program as perceived by both students and teachers. In-depth interviews were personal and unstructured interviews that intended to classify the emotions, experiences and opinions of the respondents about a specific subject of study. The questionnaires were divided into five (5) parts in accordance with the five (5) main statement problems of this study. The first part was about defining the learning centers in Area C. The second part was about the profile or background of learners and instructional managers. The third part was about the reasons behind the drop-outs from the ALS program. The fourth part was about the learners' motivation to enroll in the ALS program. Lastly, the fifth part was about the achievement of the learning standards of ALS program as perceived by learners and instructional managers.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Dreams and Promises Dotting the Map

There is a total of 13 barangays in the Area C of Dasmariñas that have ALS under AJMF (**Fig 1**). The ALS learning centers in Area C are mainly located at the vacant room in each barangay hall. The total number of enrollees in all the barangay in Area C is two hundred and two (212) while those who completed the program was reduced into half, with a total number of 106 (**Fig 2**). The total number of Instructional Managers in all the barangays in Area is five (5).

While most of the rooms were located in a good environment where the rooms were isolated and quiet, there are some who were located at a crowded area where there are houses and a basketball hall nearby, and there are times where the rooms are open so you could hear the noises from the outside. Nevertheless, most of the learning centers have good rooms, good ventilation and good environment.

Another is the availability of learning centers, instructional managers and learners tend to transfer from one place to another, depending on the availability, since they do not have their own facilities. This might affect the learner's capacity to attend classes as some places is a little far from their

home, further pushing their decreasing interest in studying lower.

Another factor is the module, while the lessons were relatively easy to follow for most students, especially for those who halt their studies for a long time, the module is a little dragging for some, especially to young ones eager to learn more in preparation for the university.

### 3.2 Demographic Profile of Learners and Instructional Managers

There are more female learners than male learners in the ALS in Area C, Dasmariñas (**Fig 3**). The plausible reason for this may be that females are more emboldened to continue and complete their studies in order to help their relatives than males. Similar to the findings of Fernandez (2013), there are more female learners than male learners. Majority of the learners belongs to the age group between 16 to 18 years old with 33 percent and the age group between 19 to 21 years old with 26 percent. The mean age of total learner respondents is 22 years old. With regard to their marital and employment status, respondents are mostly single and not employed. This indicates that single and unemployed learners are more emboldened to enroll and actively participate in the program. They have more significant amount of time to actively participate in the program due to not having any occupation that will consume most of their time. This may also imply that married individuals are less likely to enroll in the program due to family responsibilities and other responsibilities that may not apply to single learners. Furthermore, majority of the learners attained high school level education in formal school, specifically up to the third year of high school. This implies that learners who have attained secondary level still aspires to continue their studies, despite not being able to finish formal schooling.

**Fig 4** shows that there are more male instructional managers than female instructional managers in Area C, Dasmariñas. This indicates that males are more vigorous in teaching than females, disaffirming the claims of Benseman (2003) that education and teaching is a female-dominated world. It also dissimilar to the findings of Fernandez (2013), that the majority of teachers in ALS are females. It is revealed that majority of instructional managers are single. This indicates that single individuals are more likely to pursue education and teaching as a profession. This may also imply that single Instructional Managers are more common due to the needed personal immersion needed for the job. All instructional managers are college graduate. It is also revealed that majority of the instructional managers are working for 5 to 6 days in one week, and for 7 to 9 hours in one day. Most of them have been teaching ALS for the 4 to 5 years. This implies that the instructional managers are knowledgeable and competent enough to teach a group of learners.

### 3.3 ALS: Opening Up Closed Doors

Majority of the learner respondents stated that the main source which informed or introduced them to the program are their relatives or friends as shown in **Fig 5**. While the second most common channel is their instructional managers with the frequency of 10. Whereas social media was stated as the source with the lowest frequency of 4. While World Bank (2016) found that the most common source where ALS enrollees are informed about the program is generally from the field visiting by ALS implementers, and the second main source is their family members, friends, and peers. It is also mentioned that the other channels such as posters are not very important.

**Fig 6** shows the motivational factors wherein the learner-respondents rated three (3) factors similarly; to continue studying in a university/college, to have an opportunity in obtaining a job, and to just get a secondary level diploma. Whist 'to obtain basic literacy skills' was stated to be the lowest frequency. However, World Bank (2016) found that the primary factor of motivation for the majority of ALS learners in general is to continue schooling in the formal system while only 17 percent of learners enrolled the program to improve chances for employment.

Most of the learners still have the driving force to continue their studies in order to enter or attend their desired university or college. The plausible reason for this finding is that the learners crave to have a better opportunity to attain better employment and future.

As shown in **Fig 7**, Instructional manager respondents stated that all factors given researchers motivated to their learners to enroll at the ALS program, but 'to have an opportunity in obtaining a job' was stated the highest among the factors. Based on the interviews, the Instructional managers views that their learners only enrolled to program due to wanting to attain better employment since most of the enrolled learners are from poor and marginalized communities.

### 3.4 Drop Out: A Silent Epidemic

Majority of the learners as shown in **Fig 8**, stated that lack of interest, financial problem and time management as the drop out factors of their peers in ALS with the highest frequency of 16, while they stated the long distance from residence to the learning center with the lowest frequency of 5. Some ALS learners who drop out of the program also cited some other reasons; the family problem, becoming pregnant, and peer pressure.

**Fig 9** shows that the Instructional manager respondents stated that lack of interest is the first reason with highest frequency (4). The second reason is that learners were employed so that they couldn't continue the ALS program. But instructional manager did not think the distance from residence to the learning center is drop-out factors for the learners.

The large numbers of drop out learners is a challenge of ALS from its beginning. Atilano, Despeda, Domingo et al. (2016) found that majority

of learners who enrolled in ALS program dropped out, while only 32.95% of learners completed the program. They revealed that the primary factor of learners decided to drop out from ALS program is lack of interest on modules, similarly with this study, the researchers also found out the most common factor of dropout among ALS learner is also lack of interest. Since the major factor motivated learners to enroll in ALS program is 'To have an opportunity in obtaining a job', this result may imply that learners do not feel interests on learning in ALS program because they cannot find several relations between the ALS modules and their future employment. And financial problem that learners are struggling pushes them to use their time to work instead of learning although the work gives lower salary.

### 3.5 Effectiveness: A Wine-Toasted Victory or a Bitter Sigh of Defeat?

Generally, responses from both the learners and instructional managers have been favorable. Based from the research interview, learners generally perceive the system of ALS moderately effective, as "It gives them a second chance to education and in life." While instructional managers perceive the system as highly effective. Thus, the researchers could conclude that the Alternative Learning System has been effective in terms of helping the students go back to education, as it is approachable and accessible to the variation of learners.

**Fig 10** shows the total percentage of the passers from 2011 to 2015 is only 46.05%. Though it showed signs of improvement from the year 2014, especially at year 2015, with a total percentage of 69.70%, there highest rating ever, but still, the gap between the number of takers and passers is huge despite the fact that they are already conducting a qualifying exam to filter those before they take the accreditation and equivalency test. In addition to that, not everyone was given the chance to take the A&E Test because of the qualifying exam that ALS conduct for them "to maintain the high percentage of their passers." Though they are showing signs of improvement through the years, there is still a lot to polish especially in terms of their system in taking the test.'



**Fig 1.**Name and Location of ALS learning centers in Area C, Dasmariñas

ALS Learning Center in Area C	Number of enrollees	Number of completers
Brgy. San Andres II Learning Center	14	8
Brgy. Buro I Learning Center	42	20
Brgy. Buro II Learning Center	30	17
Brgy. Buro III Learning Center	11	6
Brgy. San Nicolas I Learning Center	11	3
Brgy. San Nicolas II Learning Center	28	19
Brgy. San Simon Learning Center	11	5
Brgy. Victoria Reyes Learning Center	21	9
Brgy. Sta. Fe Learning Center	19	8
Brgy. Sta. Cristina I Learning Center	5	3
Brgy. Sta. Cristina II Learning Center	10	6
Brgy. San Francisco I Learning Center	4	1
Brgy. San Francisco II Learning Center	6	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>106</b>

Fig 2. Number of enrollees and completers in secondary level from 2016 – 2017 per learning center

Variables	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	14	36%
Female	25	64%
<b>Age</b>		
26 – Above	8	21%
22 – 25	6	15%
19 – 21	10	26%
16 – 18	13	33%
Below – 15	2	5%
$\bar{x}$ : 22.74		
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	33	84.6%
Married	5	12.8%
Widow	1	2.6%
<b>Highest Education Attainment</b>		
Elementary Levels	9	23%
1st year High School	7	18%
2nd year High School	6	15%
3rd year High School	17	44%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed	7	18%
Not Employed	32	82%

Fig 3. Demographic Information of ALS Learners

Variables	Frequency
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	3
Female	2
<b>Age</b>	
41 – 46	1
35 – 40	2
28 – 34	2
<b>* Mean age: 34.80</b>	
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single	3
Married	2
Widow	0
<b>Highest Education Attainment</b>	
Elementary School Graduate	0
Secondary School Graduate	0
College Graduate	5
<b>Working days per week</b>	
5 – 6 days	4
3 – 4 days	0
1 – 2 days	1
<b>Working hours per day</b>	
7 – 9 hours	5
4 – 6 hours	0
1 – 3 hours	0
<b>Years of teaching experience in ALS</b>	
6 – 7 years	1
4 – 5 years	3
2 – 3 years	1

Fig 4. Demographic Information of Instructional Managers

Sources that informed about the ALS program	Frequency
From relatives or friends	25
From teachers	10
Announcement from barangay captain or government officials	7
ALS posters, brochures etc.	8
Social Media	4

Fig 5. Sources that informed learners about the ALS program

Motivation factors perceived by learners	Frequency
To have an opportunity in obtaining a job	25
To just get a secondary level diploma	25
To continue studying in a university/college	24
To obtain basic literacy skills	14

Fig 6. Motivational Factors of learners to enroll at the ALS program as perceived by learners

Motivation factors perceived by IMs	Frequency
To have an opportunity in obtaining a job	3
To just get a secondary level diploma	2
To continue studying in a university/college	2
To obtain basic literacy skills	2

Fig 7. Motivational Factors of learners to enroll at the ALS program as perceived by IMs

Drop Out factors perceived by learners	Frequency
Lack of Interest	16
Financial Problem	16
Time Management	16
Employment	6
Long distance from residence to the learning center	5

Fig 8. Factors that contribute to the learners to drop out of the ALS program as perceived by learners

Drop Out factors perceived by teachers	Frequency
Lack of Interest	4
Employment	3
Financial Problem	2
Time Management	1
Long distance from residence to the learning center	0

Fig 9. Factors that contribute to the learners to drop out of the ALS program as perceived by IMs

Year	Number of enrollees	Number of registrants	Number of Takers	Number of Passers	Passing Percentage
2011	-	53	30	10	33.33%
2012	-	157	93	31	33.33%
2013	298	78	41	16	39.02%
2014	359	79	74	37	50.00%
2015	263	95	66	46	69.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>46.05%</b>

Note: No data on the enrollees for year 2011 to 2012 as ALS only started the headcount of the enrollees at 2013.

Fig 10. Number of enrollees, registrants, takers and passers and passing percentage from 2011 to 2015

## CONCLUSIONS

This study is intended to assess the effectiveness of Alternative Learning System under the supervision of Arnold Janssen Catholic Mission Foundation (AJCMF) among selected barangays in Area C, City of Dasmariñas, Philippines in order to support the said foundation by identifying the factors of motivation and drop out as well as evaluating the effectiveness on specific learning standards this program provides. Perceptively, the Alternative Learning System is effective for learners since majority of learner respondents stated that the program is moderately effective and instructional manager respondents evaluated it is highly effective in terms of the attainment of twenty one (21) specific skills under the learning standards of communication skills, problem solving and critical thinking skills, sustainable use of resources and productivity, development of self and a sense of community and

expanding one's world vision. Statistically, the Alternative Learning System is not effective since the overall passing rate of Accreditation and Equivalency test from the beginning of its implementation to current year is still below 50 percent. It shows that more than half of ALS learners could not accomplish their purpose for this program although they completed the whole modules of ALS. However, it is remarkable that the passing rate of A&E test at 2015 reached 69.7% because it proved the ALS under AJMF has improved.

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