Saving Angels Program: An Intervention for Students at Risk of Dropping Out (A Community of Practice Action Research)

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ABSTRACT

The Department of Education and the Schools Division of Camarines Sur, in its support to the mission and vision of the department to keep students in school, Bagacay National High School came up with the Saving Angels program, a community of practice for excellent school's project that addressed the Students-at-risk-of-Dropping out. The Saving Angels initiative looked into the dropout rate of the school, the level of effectiveness of the program, and its effect on the dropout rate. The research followed a descriptive-quantitative design where the level of effectiveness was taken from a survey questionnaire, whereas the dropout rate was computed at the end of each quarter. The interventions conducted in this study are Teacher's Bank, Model Class, Hiking Society, *Gulayan sa Bawat Bagacayenong Tahanan*, and Ambassadors of Academic Instruction. These interventions targeted the generation of instructional materials, classroom modification and attendance monitoring, student home visitation, open vegetable garden, and teacher leaders and heroes in instruction. A learning action cell served as the backbone of the sharing. The said interventions were conducted

from June 2018 to February 2019. The program resulted in a decrease of the school dropout rate from 10.43% (52 students) in 2016-2017, 3.2% (20 from 623) in 2017-2018, to only 2.8% (20 out of 717) of 2018-2019. The program continues and grows to sustain the development of the Bagacañeno learners.

Keywords — Social Science, Dropout, Effectiveness, SARDO – students-at-risk-of-dropping-out, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the mission of the department to uphold quality education, the Division and its schools aim to improve the promotion rate, one means of which is attaining a minimal to zero drop out rate. Drop our rate pertains to the number of students who went out of school in the middle of the year without completing the course. In 2014 alone, 606,000 students drop out of high school. The reasons range from physical, financial, emotional, and others. (Poverty and School Dropouts, 2017).

To address the different reasons for dropping out, there must be a specific activity that will target each of the identified causes. In the study of the Community in Schools (CIS) Model of Somers and Haider (2017), they stated that providing students with integrated and tiered support services base on their level of need leads to a good result. They do this by engaging the parents. This means that the community needs to be involved in making sure that students stay in school.

One program that champions this platform is the Community of Practice, modified in the school's division of Camarines Sur as Community of Practice for Excellent School. Mercieca (2017) defined Community of Practice or COP as "*voluntary groups of people who, sharing a common concern or a passion, come together to explore these concerns and ideas and share and grow their practice.*"

It was further discussed by Wenger (2011) that such communities are formed by people who engage in the process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor. This endeavor in the case of the education system may be paralleled to a network of teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members who willingly work together to increase the effectiveness and upgrade the quality of learning. There are different activities that the local society and teachers have been practicing to attain this endeavor.

Park (2003), in his paper of Family Perspective on Home Visitation, shared aspects of visitation such as support and responsibility, stability, member

involvement and independence, partnership and empowerment, and family diversity. Using this as a backbone, advisers and educators conducting home visitation not only look into the learner's situation but also observe the family dynamics. Although the teacher will not directly address the family concerns, home visitation is still essential for it will encourage the learners and create rapport between the family and the institution.

The teachers have been sharing their finances with the learners and the institution, especially if the concern is an adviser or an activity under the teacher. This practice for some is considered bothersome and abusive, but according to Tan (2017), voluntary sharing of funds without pressure from a higher office and the clear presentation of a good cause gains approval and assistance from colleagues. The donations increase from smaller groups to bigger ones, expanding the call for financial and material support outside the school.

The most practical approach will be a feeding program to address the nutritional and health-related concerns of the dropout. However, there is no school-based feeding program in high school and even more in Bagacay, where there is limited source and facility. In this regard, the idea of a home-based garden was opened. A model from Gulayan sa Bawat Tahanan of Gainza National High School was use as inspiration to create the Gulayan sa bawat Bagacayenong Tahanan. Somerset, Ball, Flett, and Geissman (2005) shared that opportunity to embed nutrition, give physical activity at community or home gardening. Moreover, it contributes to environmental sustainability, which is in front of the curricula.

Another major concern that greatly contributes to dropout is the lack of interest, peer influence, and even the physical environment of the classroom. In this regard, Tety (2016) revealed that teachers used different strategies to minimize the challenges of attaining and using quality instructional materials like borrowing books and improvisation. The ways of 'minimizing challenges' sometimes lead to simplification and may not result in an exciting discussion.

Some other methods to decrease dropout are given from the study of Blount (2012) in Dropout Prevention: Recommendations for School Counselors, High School, is an exciting time, and therefore early warning system for dropout should be implemented to solve the cases early. One method that she used is service learning, where 'learners learn by engaging in community-based projects. This will teach Students at Risk of Dropping out (SARDO) the connection between school and work. In the Literature Map of Dropout Prevention Interventions for Students with Disabilities of Julia Wilkins, dropping from school increases the

likelihood of poverty and health concerns. Sandra Covington Smith proposed that teachers establish rapport with the students as role models and as ambassadors of instruction. Also, Ecker-Lyster and Niileksela (2016) agreed on the importance of academic progress, saying the inadequate academic progress causes learners to fall off track. This means that teachers should help attain a welcoming environment and use various teaching styles to keep hold of the learners.

As an adaptation of all of these ideas, BNHS had a merit scheme where teachers who excelled will be ambassadors of instruction. This will also support the home visitation campaign on learners living in far-flung areas.

In the last two school years, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 of Bagacay National High School, the school attained 6.49% to 3.2% of dropouts. This coming school year, 2018-2019, the school aims to attain a zero dropout rate from the estimated 750 student population. In this regard, the institution has come up with the Saving Angels Program to decrease dropouts and increase retention.

This study aimed to improve the performance of the students by making sure that they stay in school. This can only be attained by working collaboratively with every stakeholder to create a loving learning environment that will help them attain their fullest potential.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to (1) decrease the dropout rate of the learners and (2) measure the effectiveness of the implemented programs (Model Classes, Hiking Society, Gulayan sa Bagacayenong Tahanan, Teacher's Bank, and AAI) that targets the reasons why students drop out.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This action research employed a descriptive-quantitative method to answer the main problem and sub-problems of the study. Quantitative data were derived from the researcher-made questionnaire used in this study. However, other components of this part are the research participants and other sources of data and information, data gathering method, and data analysis plan per research question. The research implemented five interventions, the teacher's bank, ambassadors of academic instruction, hiking society, search for a model class, *Gulayan sa Bawat Bagacayenong Tahanan*, AAI crown.

Participants

The participants of the study were the total enumeration of Bagacay National High School Students at Risk of Dropping out for the school year 2018-2019.

Data Gathering

A researcher-made instrument in the survey checklist form was used to gather the data in this research project. This comprised of the Effectivity Level of the interventions following scale: *5 - Highly effective, 4 - Very effective, 3 – Effective, 2 - Moderately effective, and 1 - Not effective.*

Furthermore, these research instruments are coupled with parameters to assess or measure the competency level of the Saving Angels program.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this research included the computed of the dropout rate taken from the number of dropouts in the school year over the number of students in the current year multiplied to a hundred. In the computation of effectiveness, the researched used frequency distribution and weighted mean computation.

Frequency Distribution

The frequency was utilized to count the number of students' responses at risk of dropping out who were subjected to the research.

Weighted Mean

Weighted mean was used to gauge the respondents' answer in the statements given in each part of the questionnaire that focuses on the effectiveness.

The measuring or rating scales used are as follows:

Table 1. Rating Scales

Scale / Criterion		Descriptor/s
5	Extremely Effective	*Sees very high effectiveness of the program*
4	Highly Effective	*The program exceeds expectations.*
3	Effective	*The project was satisfactory.*
2	Moderately Effective	*Barely any effect of the project.*
1	Not Effective	*Project has no positive effect.*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the implementation of the Saving Angels program is presented in the following part of this research. The dropout rate of Bagacay National High School before the adaptation of the division Community of Practice for Excellent School and the implementation of its SAP for SARDO's were discovered to be high. In the school year 2015-2016, the school dropout rate was 10.43%, equivalent to 52 learners. In the school year 2016-2017, the students who went out of school were 34 out of 525, which equals 6.39% of the learner's population.

In the school year 2017-2018, in the first year of implementation of COP in Bagacay National High School before the conduct of the research, the number of dropouts went down from 34 learners to only 20 learners. The only activities under Saving Angels Program were Search for Model Class, Hiking Society, and Coffee Table (an informal Learning Action Cell, LAC, for teachers).

The Level of Effectiveness of Saving Angels program to Students at Risk of Dropping Out contained 30 students at risk of dropping out (SARDO), 15 male and 15 females from different year levels. The survey tool was in Filipino for easy facilitation of responses. The translation was further explained to learners who had questions during the data gathering. The translation was also modified from the original objective or indicator to make it learner-centered or learners-focused.

Table 2. Result Summary of the Level of Effectiveness of the SAP Activities

INDICATOR	HE	VE	E	ME	NE	WM*	WM**	RANK
	5	4	3	2	1			
TEACHE'S BANK								
1. Contributes positively to the financial needs of the students.	15	5	7	2	1	121		
2. Assist the learners in looking for financial solicitors.	17	2	10	1	0	125	123	5
3. Shares food during lunch break and snack time to students who have little nutrition.	9	18	1	1	1	123		

INDICATOR	HE	VE	E	ME	NE	WM*	WM**	RANK
	5	4	3	2	1			
SEARCH FOR MODEL CLASS								
4. Improves the class monitoring of attendance	28	2	0	0	0	148		
5. Promotes recycling of waste leading to student awards	16	10	4	0	0	132	137	3
6. Engages students to become disciplined and attentive learners.	20	5	4	0	1	133		
HIKING SOCIETY								
7. Encourages students from far-flung areas to go to school.	22	5	2	1	0	138		
8. Empathize with the learner's background.	25	5	0	0	0	145	139	2
9. Promote coordination with LGU to monitor students.	21	5	2	2	0	135		
GULAYAN SA BAWAT BAGACAYENONG TAHANAN								
10. Promotes student attendance by providing nutritional needs.	19	3	5	1	2	126		
11. Inculcates the need for sustainable gardens in the household.	18	10	0	1	1	133	130	4
12. Enhance school-parent partnership.	22	1	4	3	0	132		
Ambassador for Academic Instruction								
13. Creates innovative instructional materials.	27	3	0	0	0	147		
14. Helps teachers adopt innovative teaching strategies that increase participation.	26	2	2	0	0	144	145	1
15. Showcases intervention material that in the classroom to encourages learners to come on time.	25	5	0	0	0	145		

The result showed a weighted mean of 123 for Teacher's Bank, 137 for Search for Model Class, 139 for Hiking Society, 130 for GBBT (Gulayan sa Bawat Bagacayenong Tahanan), and 145 for AAI or Ambassador or Academic Instruction.

This shows that among the five activities under the COP Saving Angels program, the learners' rating highest number of effectiveness were the AAI,

followed by Hiking Society at second and Model class at third. Last on the list at GBBT at fourth and the Teacher's bank last.

Table 3. The Level of Effectiveness of the Individual Projects under SAP

Activity	Level of Effectiveness	Result
Ambassador for Academic Instruction	4.83	Highly Effective
Hiking Society	4.63	Highly Effective
Model Class	4.56	Highly Effective
Gulayan sa Bawat Bagacayenong Tahanan	4.33	Very Effective
Teacher's Bank	4.1	Very Effective

(1.0-1.49 - Not Effective, 1.5 to 2.49 - Moderately Effective, 2.5 to 3.49 – Effective, 3.5 to 4.49 - Very Effective, 4.5 to 5 - Highly Effective)

In support of the computed level of effectiveness and interpretation, it showed that Ambassador for Academic Instruction (AAI) was at 4.83, Hiking Society at 4.63, and Model Class at 4.56, all got a result of Highly Effective. At a slightly lower but still favorable result are Gulayan (GBBT) with 4.33 and Teacher's Bank with 4.1, under very effective.

The result for this objective showed that among the intervention that the school creates to make them stay in school, they favor the AAI the most, which is the intervention related to the teaching capacity of the instructors and their gift in motivating and making the learners excited to be in their classroom. This is followed by the Hiking Society, which concentrates on visiting and learners in their community and allowing them to show their teachers the home they grew up in. In return, the teacher grows more appreciative and empathetic to the individual difficulties. The data shows that the students give this high importance.

Another reflection is given from the result of the third intervention, the Search for Model class. This score given by the learners shows their appreciation for beautiful and comfortable surroundings, as is the institution gives the monitoring and reward system to the Best in Classroom (Innovation), Best in Attendance, and Most Disciplined Class.

Furthermore, the result of the GBBT and Teacher's Bank were not as effective for the learners. Therefore, the concern of nutrition and financial needs may be at the top of the mind of the teachers, as observed in the 2018 monthly School form 2, but not for the learners. This means that the last two activities for the said intervention need to be studied more to draw higher appreciation and effectiveness.

The effect of the SAP on the target of 20 SARDOs for the school year 2018-2019 went up to 56 SARDO's during research.

Table 4. The Number of Student-At-Risk-of-Dropping-Out Targets before and During the Program

School Year	Targeted SARDO's	Actual SARDO	Number of Dropped Learners	School Population	School Drop Out Rate
2017-2018	No number of targeted SARDO	61	20	623	3.2%
2018-2019	20	56	20	717	2.8%

The number of targeted SARDO for the school year 2018-2019 was based on the number of learners who dropped out in the school year 2017-2018 at the first year of COP implementation, where the school was aiming for a zero dropout case. However, in the school year 2018-2019, 56 SARDOs out of the 717 population (an increase of 115% from the previous population). This resulted in a successful decrease of SARDO from 56 identified in the present school year to the 20 who were dropped.

This also means that the targeted zero dropout rate was not attained. Still, on the other hand, there was a decrease of the dropout rate from 3.2% to 2.8% despite the increase in population, meaning that the program is very much reliable.

Table 5. Rate of Bagacay National High School Dropout before and After the Implementation of COP Saving Angels Program

COP Implementation	School Year	Male	Female	School Drop Out Rate	No. of Learners
No COP	2015-2016	11.52%	8.02%	10.43%	52/530
No COP	2016-2017	6.44%	2.5%	6.49%	34/524
Starting COP	2017-2018	5.56%	2.56%	3.2%	20/623
With COP	2018-2019	4.9%	1.6%	2.8%	20/717

In the school year 2017-2018, in the first trial implementation of COP in the Bagacay, they could record a decrease of only 3.2%, or 20 students. This trend continued in the next two consecutive school years were in the school year

2018-2019. At the peak of the study, the drop out was only 2.8% of 20 out of 717 students.

The progress in this aspect of the school performance visible and appreciated by the institution and its stakeholders.
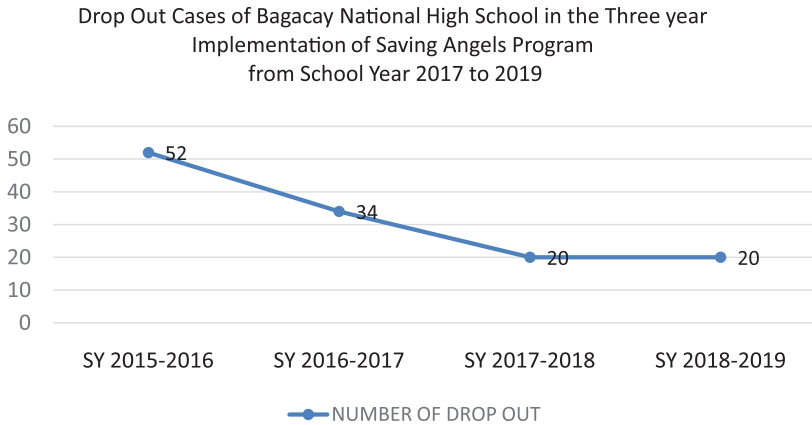
Drop Out Cases of Bagacay National High School in the Three year Implementation of Saving Angels Program from School Year 2017 to 2019

Figure 1. Dropout Cases in the Last Four Years

The trend now shows an overall decrease in the dropout rate, specifically the decrease of male dropout, the contributed to the high promotion of the learners.

The trend in the past five years shows a significant decrease in school dropout from implementating the Community of Practice for Excellent school using the Saving Angels program. Although the research student concentrated on the program's effect of the in the school year 2018-2019, the data shows that COP helped increase the school performance. This implies several things. The program is well accepted by the internal stakeholders as reflected by its years and ongoing implementation. This also shows that the program in itself is effective in addressing the concerns of school dropouts. Lastly, the paper allows the research an avenue to further analyze the strengths and challenges of each activity inside the program.

CONCLUSIONS

In support of the Department's mission and vision to deliver quality education, the presence of the students in the classroom, and the efforts given by the teachers, administrators, policymakers, and all other internal and external

stakeholders of the school, is highly important. They are all relevant in creating and implementing a tangible solution to lower dropouts like the Saving Angels Program that measures, targets, and lowers the SARDO's of the school. This key performance area is a concern in every institution, but with the help of school and division practices of good instruction and leadership, these problems will be solved.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The outcomes of this study may be best translated into a sustainable basis for academic collaboration between internal and external stakeholders within and across the board. This can be linked to DepEd Programs/Projects measurement and evaluation for policy, program development, and utilization.

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