

The Developmental Assets Profile in the Philippines

The Educational Development Center (EDC) based in the north eastern United States, is an international non-profit that works on projects with the goals of “enhancing learning, promoting health, and fostering a deeper understanding of the world.” With 325 projects that it manages in 35 countries around the world, the EDC is a wealth of research and resources. One of these projects is a collaborative effort between Dr. David Sloan Wilson of Binghamton University, the EDC and Search Institute’s Arturo Sesma using the Developmental Assets Profile to work with out of school youth in the Philippines.

Arturo Sesma, a lead researcher at Search Institute, has been working in partnership with Dr. Wilson to develop a version of the DAP that can be used with youth in the Philippines. Working specifically on the island of Mindanao, Sesma and Wilson hope to learn more about the school-aged population of children on the island, nearly half of whom do not attend school because of various issues of war, poverty, inter-clan fighting and ethnic marginalization. In search of a tool not based on academic outcomes, Wilson learned about Search Institute and the DAP on the internet. Together Sesma and Wilson have come up with a version of the DAP that is relevant to students and youth in the Philippines.

To do this, the survey first had to be carefully translated to Filipino. “The first item on the DAP says something like, ‘I stand up for my beliefs,’” said Sesma of the survey items. “When it was originally translated, it came out as when I *literally* stand up for my beliefs, which is not what we wanted to communicate,” said Sesma, standing up to emphasize his point.

After translating both the language and the ideas of the survey, Sesma traveled personally to the Philippines to administer the DAP to a preliminary group of roughly 100 students. “Basically, this first test was a pilot test,” concluded Sesma. The first 100 students that took the survey helped Wilson and Sesma decide whether it was even possible to translate the values and ideas in the survey into the Pilipino culture. However, with positive results coming back from the first 100 surveys given to youth, the two innovators plan on implementing a much larger data collection, administering the DAP to perhaps 700 students. After several more trials to verify the validity of the tests, the survey results will be open for use by community members.

Wilson hopes to be able to use the results of the DAP to help leaders in Pilipino communities, called barangays, see where the strengths lie in their youth. He wants to encourage the barangay captains to mobilize their communities to create a more positive environment for the youth that find themselves outside of the classroom. “We hope that all local children will receive a basic education that is of high quality,” says Bill Potter, one of the lead staff at the EDC involved in the Philippines project. “We want to increase the number of children who are involved in learning, whether inside or outside of school.”¹ With the goal of becoming more informed about learning both inside and outside of school, Wilson turned to Search Institute and the DAP. So far, results have proved successful.

¹ “Educating Children in a Conflict Zone: Muslim Mindanao Reforms its Education Sector,” featured article, April 2007, Education Development Center, Inc. webpage, <http://main.edc.org/>