

ALTA Impact Survey 2001-2011

by **Andrew Hosein**, BSc. Economics UWI, MSc Development Statistics, SALISES UWI Andrew Hosein has over five years' experience conducting social and economic research for local, international and multilateral organizations.

Summary

In 2012 ALTA undertook a tracer study to determine the impact that the programme has had on its students. The study sought responses from students who attended ALTA classes during the period 2001 to 2011. During June and July ALTA volunteers conducted telephone interviews to complete 189 questionnaires.

The study showed that the majority of past students strongly agreed that the service provided by ALTA was beneficial to them, not only in the expected ways of increasing their ability to read and write (48%), but also in secondary ways, like boosting their self-confidence and self-esteem (41% strongly agreed), and helping them to earn higher salaries after they completed the programme (52% strongly agreed). On average, persons saw an increase of 32% in their salary after completing the programme. Specifically, many participants said that they are much happier now since they can do things for themselves, like reading the newspaper, reading in church, completing forms and helping their children/grandchildren with school work.

86% of survey participants achieved the expectation that they had when they first enrolled in the programme. This rate is even more noteworthy since more than half of those surveyed entered the programme at Level 1 (53%) and 21% started at Beginner Level. Those at the lower literacy levels have more work to do to become readers and writers, so achieving their expectations is more difficult and takes more time. The respondents to the survey praised the ALTA tutors (82% excellent) for their quality of delivery and for providing a comfortable learning environment. The tutors were also responsible for creating their most memorable ALTA experiences (52%). Most survey participants also said that they found it easy to relate to the ALTA workbooks (69%).

100% of the students said that they would recommend ALTA to others.

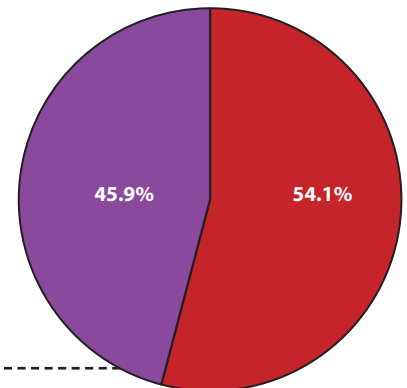
While ALTA received top marks from the respondents, one-third of respondents experienced challenges that interfered with their class attendance. For instance, 19% of persons found it challenging to manage work and classes at the same time which often (35%) led to them dropping out of classes. Other challenges include some sort of family problem (6%), for instance a family member falling ill or having to take care of a child or elderly person for an extended period of time.

Overall it was concluded that the ALTA programme provided significant benefits to all the persons that enrol and especially those who complete the programme. Students agree that the service offering of ALTA meets their needs and it also helps them both economically and socially.

Characteristics of survey participants

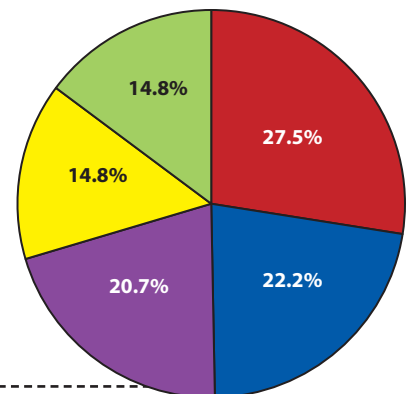
Sex profile: 54% of respondents were female, while 46% were male. This mirrors the profile seen in the ALTA student database (54:46).

Sex	Per cent
Female	54.1
Male	45.9
Total	100.0



Location: The higher proportion of respondents in North (27%) and East (22%) reflects the geographic distribution of students. ALTA South has fewer volunteer tutors, and so fewer classes and students, while North has the highest student population.

Location	Per cent
North	27.5
East	22.2
Central	20.7
South	14.8
West	14.8
Total	100.0



Income: Nearly half of the respondents had incomes of between \$0-\$2500, while 27% earned between \$2,501-\$5,000.

Family members with literacy problems: 62% of respondents have family members who have problems with reading and writing. Of those who have family members with problems reading, 15% are one of their parents, 36% are one of their siblings, and 23% are one of their children.

Considering that many hide their low literacy even from close relatives, this is a very high rate. This reinforces that literacy is influenced by heredity (dyslexia is genetic) and environment. The child from a home where reading and writing are a part of daily life is much more likely to become literate at school, providing a strong case for adult literacy instruction.

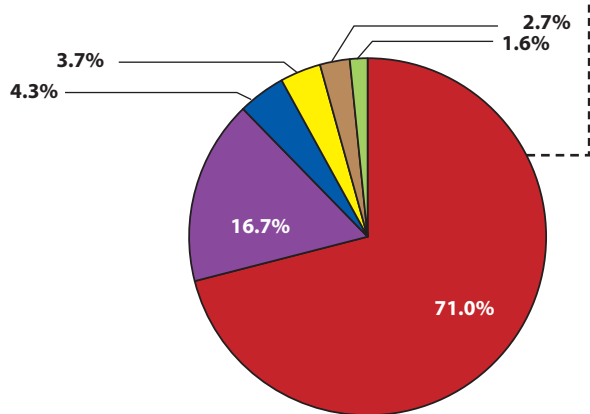
Findings

Drivers for Enrolment

Table 3 shows why students wished to enrol in the ALTA programme. A large majority, 71% of respondents, said they enrolled to learn to read and write, while 17% took a broad view saying that they enrolled to better themselves. Approximately 8% enrolled to improve a specific aspect of literacy: grammar, spelling or writing. Lastly 4% of participants enrolled because they did not attend or did not complete, either primary or secondary school.

Table 3: Reasons Respondents Enrolled in ALTA

Reasons for enrolment	Per cent
To learn to read and write	71.0
To improve self	16.7
Did not attend school	4.3
To improve spelling	3.7
To improve writing	2.7
To improve grammar	1.6
Total	100.0



Challenges

Respondents experienced two types of challenges while attending ALTA classes: internal and external. Internal challenges are those that occur within the programme – 14%

of participants had a challenge with spelling, while 5% had a problem with grammar, 3% with workbook exercises and 1% with the facilities. External challenges experienced were: work (19%), family problems (6%), health problems (6%) and financial problems (2%).

Table 4: Challenges

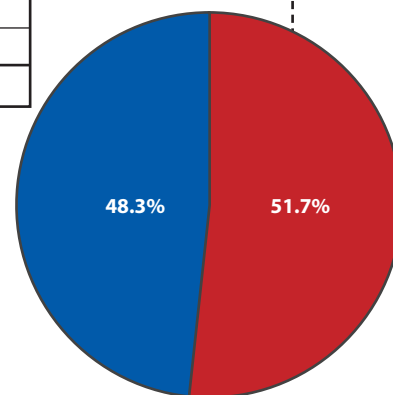
Challenge	Per cent
None	43.3
Internal	
Spelling	14.0
Grammar	4.5
Exercises	3.2
Facilities	1.3
External Work	19.1
Family problems	6.4
Health	5.7
Financial	2.5
Total	100.0

Earnings

Table 5 demonstrates that more than half of the respondents (52%) said that their ALTA experience led to an increase in their salary. For the others (48%), ALTA classes did not improve their salary level.

Table 5: Earnings

Increased Earnings	Per cent
Yes	51.7
No	48.3
Total	100.0

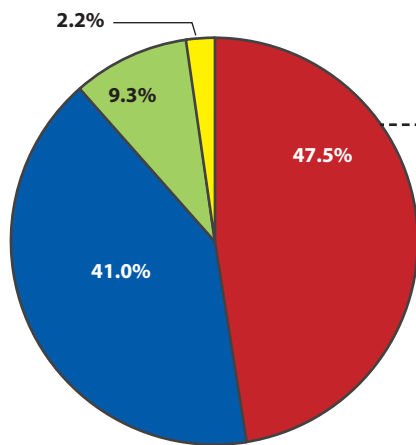


Impact

When respondents were asked about the impact of ALTA, 48% said that its greatest positive impact was on their ability to read and write. 41% of participants said that it vastly improved their confidence, while the remainder said that it helped them get a better job and helped them to help their other family members with their school work. It should be noted that although 48% of respondents said that they are

able to read and write, it does not mean that the other 52% were not. The other responses are actually secondary effects of their advancement in reading and writing.

Table 6: Impact	
Impact	Percent
Able to read and write	47.5
Confidence	41.0
Better employment	9.3
Able to help family members in school	2.2
Total	100.0



Rating

Table 7: Rate – ALTA Programme	
ALTA Programme Rating	Per cent
Excellent	76.0
Satisfactory	21.8
Neutral	2.2
Poor	0
Total	100.0

Table 8: Rate – ALTA Tutors	
ALTA Tutors	Percent
Excellent	81.6
Satisfactory	18.4
Neutral	0
Total	100.0

Table 9: Rate – ALTA Teaching Materials	
ALTA Teaching Materials	Percent
Excellent	68.7
Satisfactory	31.3
Total	100.0