

Evaluating the alternative learning system in Biliran, Philippines: A systemic approach to educational change and sustainability for marginalized learners

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Abstract: This study examines the implementation and impact of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Division of Biliran, Philippines, which plays a vital role in extending educational opportunities to out-of-school youth, illiterate adults, and marginalized communities. Despite ALS's significant contributions to increasing educational access, the program faces challenges that limit its effectiveness, highlighting the need for a comprehensive evaluation to guide future policy enhancements and practical improvements. Employing a Convergent Mixed Methods design, this study was conducted across fourteen districts within the Division of Biliran. The sample comprised 399 respondents, including mobile teachers, district ALS coordinators, successful ALS completers, and the division ALS supervisor. Data collection involved surveys and interviews to capture learners' and educators' perspectives on program delivery, curriculum effectiveness, and the challenges and strategies in program implementation. The findings indicate that learners valued the programs' learner-centered discussions and flexible scheduling, although they perceived support services, particularly online guidance and counseling, as insufficient. The curriculum was commended for fostering critical communication and problem-solving skills; however, it was noted to lack emphasis on community awareness and sustainable resource management. Teaching approaches incorporating Individual Learning Agreements and ALS modules were well-received, though group interactions and experiential learning methods were less effectively executed. Assessment methods, such as portfolios and quizzes, were positively reviewed, while assessments involving social interaction were perceived as less beneficial. In terms of outcomes, the program successfully contributed to learners' personality development but showed only moderate success in enhancing employability and entrepreneurial skills. Key challenges identified included learners' attitudes toward schooling and limited systemic support for ALS teachers. To overcome these obstacles, teachers employed adaptive strategies such as community collaboration and flexible teaching approaches. This study provides critical insights into the strengths and areas for improvement within the ALS program, suggesting a foundation for policy reforms and strategic interventions to enhance educational outcomes for its target populations.

Keywords: Educational opportunities, Implementation challenges, Learner-centered curriculum, Mixed methods research.

1. Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as essential for both individual success and national development. Traditionally, formal education—characterized by structured classrooms, standardized curricula, and teacher-led instruction—has been the primary pathway for educational attainment. However, many individuals face circumstances that limit their access to or success within these conventional systems. Recognizing the need for alternative educational routes, the Philippines has implemented the Alternative Learning System (ALS), a non-formal education program targeting out-of-

school youth, illiterate adults, and marginalized communities who may lack access to the formal school system.

The ALS program, established under Republic Act 9155, known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, and supported by laws such as Republic Act 6655 (the Free Secondary Education Act), provides an alternative pathway to education. Managed by the Department of Education (DepEd), ALS is designed to deliver demand-driven, flexible learning that addresses the distinct needs of its diverse learners. ALS curricula aim to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and life skills, with the broader goal of improving both individual quality of life and community well-being.

Despite its noble mission and considerable efforts to expand educational access, ALS encounters numerous implementation challenges. Studies have highlighted various obstacles, such as insufficient teaching resources, irregular funding, and the lack of permanent learning spaces for ALS sessions, as noted by Pinca [25]. Moreover, limited support from stakeholders—including local governments and parents—further impedes the program's success, as observed by Arpilleda [4]. These barriers highlight significant issues that affect ALS's capacity to meet its intended goals, indicating a need for further investigation into the program's operational gaps and opportunities for improvement.

In this context, this study aims to evaluate the implementation and impact of the ALS program in the Division of Biliran, Philippines, with a particular focus on learners' perspectives. Specifically, it seeks to (1) examine the ways in which ALS components are delivered; (2) assess the program's effectiveness in achieving its intended outcomes; (3) identify the primary challenges encountered by learners; and (4) explore the relationships between program implementation, outcomes, and perceived challenges. By doing so, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the program's effectiveness and areas for enhancement, providing a foundation for developing a robust, learner-centered evaluation framework for ALS.

This study addresses a critical research gap by examining the perspectives of learners and implementers within the ALS program—a lens often overlooked in evaluations focused primarily on educational outcomes. For ALS to make meaningful contributions toward the national goal of Education for All (EFA), it must adopt implementation strategies that are adaptable, sustainable, and aligned with the needs of its diverse learners. Scaling and sustaining effective ALS practices will require strong partnerships, advocacy, and institutional support from both the Philippine government and DepEd. By exploring the challenges and successes of ALS program implementation in the Division of Biliran, this study aims to offer insights that can inform policy reforms, improve educational outcomes, and enhance employability and life opportunities for ALS learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Legal Foundations and Government Support for ALS

The 1987 Philippine Constitution emphasizes the recognition and promotion of alternative forms of education, mandating the state to establish a complete, integrated education system to address the needs of society (Article XIV, Section 2, Paragraphs 1 & 4). This includes support for non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems as well as self-learning and out-of-school programs, especially for communities with limited access to traditional education. Further legislative support came with Republic Act 9155, the Governance Act for Basic Education, which established the ALS to provide basic education to out-of-school children, youth, and adults. Republic Act No. 11510, also known as the ALS Act, reaffirms the Department of Education's (DepEd) commitment to inclusive education, especially for out-of-school youth and adults (OSYA), and ensures adequate funding to enhance access to quality education.

The passage of the ALS Act expanded partnerships with local government units, private sectors, NGOs, and other stakeholders, further strengthening the program's reach. To improve ALS teacher capabilities, the ALS Teacher Program offers pre-service and in-service training and equitable support for teachers serving diverse communities (rural, urban, and disadvantaged areas). The creation of the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE) centralized ALS leadership and coordination to facilitate continuous improvement and implementation.

2.2. ALS Program and Educational Objectives

The ALS program provides non-traditional learning pathways for OSYA who cannot access formal education. Its Basic Literacy Program and Continuing Education Program–Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) offer modular and flexible options to suit learners' schedules and locations, particularly in marginalized areas such as remote communities and conflict zones. According to DepEd, ALS learning strands parallel those in formal education, including literacy, numeracy, communication, critical thinking, and life skills (Tindowen et al., [30]). The aim is to empower learners with practical knowledge and skills that enhance their quality of life and societal contributions.

The program serves diverse groups, including street children, indigenous peoples, single parents, and children in conflict areas. ALS contributes to the Philippines' literacy goals aligned with UNESCO's Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education. However, according to DepEd [13], only six in ten students complete Grade 6, with an even smaller proportion finishing high school, underscoring the need for flexible educational models like ALS to bridge these gaps.

2.3. Challenges in ALS Implementation and Support Mechanisms

Several studies highlight the challenges ALS implementers face, including the need for localized instructional materials to accommodate learners' specific needs (Tindowen et al., [31]). Factors such as diverse learner abilities, limited resources, and varying levels of stakeholder engagement create implementation obstacles. For instance, Moralista and Delarierte [23] discuss how the differing competencies and cognitive abilities among learners impact lesson delivery and task complexity. To address these challenges, ALS teachers and stakeholders are encouraged to balance task difficulty with learners' capacities and to request greater support from government agencies for training and resources.

Additionally, the role of the community and collaboration with barangay officials is crucial for effective ALS implementation Abasolo, [2]. Community involvement promotes the program's visibility and supports teachers and learners alike. NGOs and local government units (LGUs) have been active in supporting ALS by organizing community campaigns and providing logistical support

2.4. Evaluation and Effectiveness of ALS Program

Program evaluation is essential to ensuring ALS's success and improving its structure. Spaulding [30] emphasizes that program evaluations assess overall value, efficacy, and program objectives. For ALS, evaluations consider internal and external stakeholder feedback to identify areas for improvement. According to Spaulding [30], programs benefit from diagnostic evaluations that highlight strengths and weaknesses, facilitating adjustments in teaching practices and resources.

Furthermore, studies on alternative learning methods for behavioral management, such as those by Davis et al. [11] and Dunlap & Fox [14], suggest that ALS programs offer restorative practices, smaller class sizes, and intensive behavioral support. Kilmer [18] and Jones [17] found that ALS positively impacts students' perceptions of school, relationships, and self-confidence. Additionally, Jones [17] identified small class sizes, ongoing professional development, and collaboration with school counselors as key factors contributing to ALS's success. The presence of a supportive environment fosters students' emotional and social growth, enabling them to re-integrate or complete their education effectively.

2.5. ALS as a Tool for Lifelong Learning and Skill Development

The ALS approach aligns with adult learning principles, particularly in promoting lifelong learning for individuals with diverse life experiences. Pappas [24] emphasizes Knowles' andragogical model, which advocates for adult learners' involvement in setting learning goals, drawing from personal experiences, and focusing on relevant, practice-based topics. Apao et al. [3] found that ALS participants gain life skills that improve their socio-economic conditions, illustrating the program's potential to break poverty cycles and enhance participants' quality of life. Through formal and informal learning, ALS equips learners with the competencies needed to adapt to the evolving demands of the labor market Le Clus [19].

3. Methods

3.1. Design

This study employs an embedded mixed-methods design, as outlined by Creswell and Plano Clark [9]. This approach involves the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data within the same phase of the research process, giving equal importance to each method.

The embedded mixed-methods design is particularly well suited to achieving the study's objectives. This design was chosen due to the complexity of the study's aim: to evaluate the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program from multiple perspectives. A comprehensive evaluation requires quantitative measurements to assess variables such as learners' perceptions and curriculum outcomes of ALS graduates, while also needing qualitative, in-depth data to examine teachers' challenges and coping mechanisms. By integrating both data types, this mixed-methods approach provides a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the various dimensions involved in ALS program implementation.

3.2. Sampling

This study's participants included mobile teachers (MTs), district ALS coordinators (DALCs), successful ALS passers, and the division ALS supervisor. A complete enumeration sampling method was applied to mobile teachers and district ALS coordinators, ensuring that all individuals in these roles were included in the study. This approach is appropriate, as it captures the full scope of experiences and insights from all key stakeholders actively involved in ALS implementation at the district level, thereby enhancing the validity and comprehensiveness of the data collected.

To represent ALS learners, a substantial sample size (75%) of the total ALS student population was selected, amounting to 267 students. This proportionate sampling strategy strengthens the study's findings by providing a broad, representative view of the learners' perspectives on the ALS program, while remaining manageable for data analysis.

For the qualitative aspect of the study, purposive sampling was employed to select interview participants, ensuring that those with the most relevant experience and insights were included. Seven mobile teachers and four district ALS coordinators were interviewed. This purposive selection is appropriate for qualitative research, as it focuses on participants who are well-placed to provide in-depth insights into the challenges and coping mechanisms within the ALS program, allowing for a richer, more nuanced exploration of the program's implementation.

3.3. Instruments

This study employed two primary instruments: a survey questionnaire and an interview guide. The survey questionnaire, adapted from Carmencita L. Castolo and Diana Lee Tracy Kerr Chan's [7] study "Assessment Framework in the Alternative Learning System: A Systemic Approach", consisted of three sections: (1) Learners' Perceptions of the ALS Program, (2) Implementation of Intended ALS Outcomes, and (3) Curriculum Exits of ALS Passers. This questionnaire facilitated quantitative data collection, allowing the study to identify trends and patterns across a broad population of respondents.

The interview guide, meanwhile, was designed to collect qualitative data, focusing on eliciting in-depth insights from teachers about the challenges they encountered in implementing the ALS program and the coping mechanisms they utilized to address these challenges. This instrument was essential for capturing the teachers' lived experiences, providing a nuanced perspective on the complexities involved in ALS program implementation.

To ensure reliability and validity, the interview guide was validated by experts prior to use, achieving an Item-Content Validity Index (I-CVI) of .86. This score indicates that the questions were suitable for their intended purpose. The combination of the validated survey questionnaire and interview guide provided a comprehensive approach to data collection, effectively aligning with the objectives of this study.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to analyze the study data. For the quantitative analysis, various statistical tools were applied to interpret the data. Specifically, Spearman's rank correlation coefficients, a non-parametric measure, were used to assess correlations among the implementation of program components, intended outcomes, and the challenges encountered. This approach provided evidence-based insights into the program's environment from the perspective of the learners actively engaged in these settings.

For qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis was conducted using an inductive approach. The researcher followed the six-step process outlined by Saldaña [29], which includes familiarization, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up the results. During familiarization, the researcher immersed in the data by listening to audio files and thoroughly reading interview transcripts multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the content. This was followed by a systematic coding process to identify recurring themes, ideas, and patterns of meaning. This iterative analysis allowed for a nuanced exploration of teachers' experiences and the complex dynamics involved in ALS program implementation.

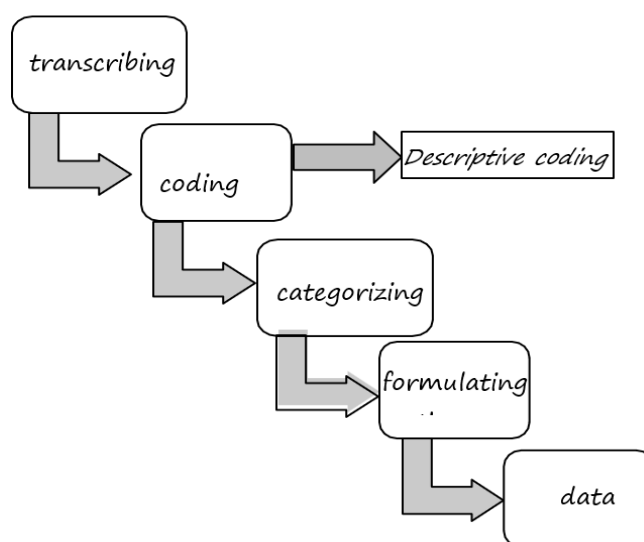


Figure 2.
Qualitative data analysis flow adopted from Saldaña (2009).

3.5. Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to ethical practices regarding anonymity and confidentiality. Prior to their participation, respondents were asked to provide informed consent, ensuring they understood the purpose, nature, and scope of the study, as well as the extent of their involvement. In addition, participants' convenience was prioritized by considering their available time and preferred location for participation.

All data collected were treated with strict confidentiality and were used exclusively for research purposes. To ensure the reliability and validity of the qualitative data, the researcher maintained detailed field notes, utilized recording devices, and transcribed the digital files for accuracy.

Trustworthiness in the study was ensured through key principles such as credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators was employed to enhance the credibility of the findings. Additionally, a thick description of the data was provided to ensure that the results could be transferred and understood both by the researcher and the participants.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the learners' perceptions of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program in terms of delivery system, learning support, curriculum content, instructional materials, teaching strategies, and learning assessment. Each of these variables includes a specific number of indicators, as shown in the table: the delivery system comprises nine indicators, learning support includes six, curriculum content has six, instructional materials consist of seven, teaching strategies include 18 indicators, and learning assessment features seven indicators.

Table 1.

Learners' perception on ALS program in terms of delivery system, learning support, and curriculum content.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
<i>Delivery system</i>		
Open access	4.79	Highly implemented
Learner's orientation	4.79	Highly implemented
Offer flexible learning	4.59	Highly implemented
Instructional materials	4.24	Implemented
Collaborative learning	4.14	Implemented
Self-directed learning	4.24	Implemented
Offer review and tutorial	4.06	Implemented
Coping with stress	4.10	Implemented
Critical thinking	4.14	Implemented
Average mean	4.34	Implemented
<i>Learning support</i>		
Learner oriented discussion	4.66	Highly implemented
Online support system	4.22	Implemented
Flexible time	4.65	Highly implemented
Guidance and counselling	4.21	Implemented
Review class	4.02	Implemented
Tutorials	3.92	Implemented
Average mean	4.28	Implemented
<i>Curriculum content</i>		
Learner centered content	4.66	Highly implemented
Communication skills	4.58	Highly implemented
Problem solving skills	4.60	Highly implemented
Sustainable use of resources	4.46	Implemented
Self and community awareness	4.43	Implemented
Exploring the world vision	4.34	Implemented
Average mean	4.51	Implemented
<i>Instructional Material</i>		
Utilization of the module	4.80	Highly implemented
Standardized design and content	4.73	Highly implemented
Objectives and instructions are clear	4.66	Highly implemented
Learning content fits the learner characteristics	4.64	Highly implemented
Provide interactive learning	4.42	Implemented
Learning assessment is aligned to the topic	4.37	Implemented

Average mean	4.60	Highly implemented
<i>Teaching strategies</i>	Mean	Interpretation
Utilize the individual learning agreement (ILA)	4.75	Highly implemented
Recognize prior learning (RPL)	4.72	Highly implemented
Use ALS module in teaching	4.75	Highly implemented
Group interaction	4.40	Implemented
Guest teacher facilitation	4.27	Implemented
Experiential learning	4.28	Implemented
Debate	3.53	Implemented
Peer learning	3.59	Implemented
Printed materials (magazine, etc.)	3.69	Implemented
Poster, billboards, etc.	3.62	Implemented
Other references	3.06	Implemented
Audio-visual presentation	3.67	Implemented
Game	3.54	Implemented
Simulations	3.67	Implemented
Role playing	3.72	Implemented
Demonstration	3.83	Implemented
Frequent test/quizzes	3.93	Implemented
Tutorial session	3.92	Implemented
Average mean	3.94	Implemented
<i>Learning assessment</i>		
Learner's portfolio	4.80	Highly implemented
Quiz	4.72	Highly implemented
Projects	4.64	Highly implemented
Reading, writing, speaking	4.60	Highly implemented
Prior learning experience	4.51	Highly implemented
Social interaction	4.44	Implemented
Behavior modification	4.26	Implemented
Average mean	4.57	Highly implemented
Overall mean	4.37	Implemented

As shown in Table 1, learners perceive several indicators of the ALS program as "highly implemented," including open access, learner's orientation, and flexible learning. These findings suggest that the ALS program effectively meets its goal of providing accessible, community-based education. The statutory mandate of ALS, as outlined in Republic Act 9155, aims to reach marginalized groups such as out-of-school youth, non-literate adults, and Indigenous Peoples (IP), among others Department of Education [13].

The concept of open access aligns with UNESCO's [32] explanation that a learning delivery system should provide unrestricted access to educational resources, including textbooks, videos, interactive modules, and quizzes, which can be accessed online. This system fosters affordability, flexibility, and collaboration, all of which are reflected in the ALS's partnership with local government offices, TESDA, and other stakeholders.

However, several indicators under the delivery system, such as instructional materials, collaborative learning, self-directed learning, review and tutorial, coping with stress, and critical thinking, were

perceived as only "implemented" rather than "highly implemented." These findings highlight areas where ALS program implementers could improve, particularly in the use of instructional materials and the facilitation of collaborative and self-directed learning activities. According to Cohen et al. [8], instructional materials are essential tools that enhance engagement and comprehension. The underutilization of instructional materials may limit the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. Further, the importance of collaborative learning and self-directed learning cannot be overstated. According to research, these teaching strategies encourage problem-solving, critical thinking, and independence Loyens et al., [21]. However, their perceived moderate implementation suggests that more focus is needed on facilitating group interactions and fostering independent learning skills. Another area of concern is the coping with stress indicator. Stress management is vital for learners' well-being and academic performance. Providing support in this area can help learners develop resilience, improve learning outcomes, and equip them with valuable life skills Denovan & Macaskill, [12].

Regarding learning support, the study found that learner-oriented discussions and flexible time were highly implemented, suggesting that these aspects contribute positively to the learners' engagement. However, other aspects such as online support systems, guidance and counselling, and tutorials were only perceived as implemented, signaling areas for improvement in providing personalized assistance to learners. The findings indicate that while the ALS program is largely successful in delivering its core services, there are opportunities to enhance its effectiveness, particularly in improving instructional support and fostering more collaborative, stress-resilient learning environments.

5. Implementation of ALS Intended Outcomes

Table 2 presents the results of the implementation of ALS intended outcomes in terms of personality development, employability, and entrepreneurship. These three variables are integral to ensuring the holistic development of ALS learners.

Table 2.
Implementation of ALS program.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
<i>Personality development</i>		
Helps learners to believe in oneself and realize what they are capable of doing	4.67	Highly implemented
Show the learners how knowledge can change their life and their situation	4.56	Highly implemented
Guide learners on how they can further improve and enhance their capacity and capability	4.53	Implemented
Encourage inquiry and self-expression	4.56	Highly implemented
Reinforce learning by coaching learners to express ideas, concepts and opinions appropriately	4.47	Implemented
Train and discipline learners in the transition from school to work environment	4.47	Implemented
Average mean	4.54	Implemented
<i>Employability</i>		
Provision of technical skills training	2.97	Moderately implemented
Provision for learners to choose the type of technical skills to learn.	3.00	Moderately implemented
Provide on-the-job training	2.44	Slightly implemented
Establish linkages and network among public and private organizations	4.00	Implemented

Training skills are aligned to industry needs	2.75	Moderately implemented
Provisions of internship program	2.08	
Average mean	2.88	Moderately implemented
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>		
Assessment of learner's capability and capacity to become an entrepreneur	2.89	Moderately implemented
Conduct livelihood activities	2.56	Moderately implemented
Provision of extra-curricular programs aligned to technology, livelihood and management of small business	2.58	Moderately implemented
Provision of business incubation for qualified learners	2.61	Moderately implemented
Train and discipline learners in the transition from school to work environment	3.86	Implemented
Average mean	2.90	Moderately implemented
Overall mean	3.44	Moderately implemented

5.1. Personality Development

The results indicate that the ALS program is highly effective in promoting personality development among learners. Specifically, the constructs helping learners to believe in themselves and realize their potential, showing how knowledge can change their life and situation, and encouraging inquiry and self-expression were rated as highly implemented with mean scores of 4.67, 4.56, and 4.56, respectively. On the other hand, constructs such as guiding learners on how they can further improve their capacity, reinforcing learning by coaching learners to express ideas, concepts, and opinions appropriately, and training learners in the transition from school to work were considered implemented, with mean scores of 4.53, 4.47, and 4.47, respectively.

Rothbart et al. [28] define personality development as the process of enhancing one's characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, and qualities to achieve personal growth, self-awareness, and positive interpersonal relationships. Key aspects of personality development, including emotional intelligence, communication skills, self-confidence, resilience, and social skills, are crucial for personal and professional growth. According to Reiss et al. [27], these characteristics are fundamental in fostering well-rounded individuals capable of achieving their goals and building meaningful relationships.

In the context of ALS, personality development is integrated into the ALS 2.0 Curriculum. This is reflected in the first two strands of the curriculum, which focus on communication skills (in both English and Filipino) and scientific, critical thinking, mathematical, and problem-solving skills, all of which contribute to learners' overall personality development.

5.2. Employability

The statistical results show that the constructs related to employability were moderately implemented, as perceived by the ALS learners. These include provision of technical skills training (mean: 2.97), allowing learners to choose the technical skills they wish to learn (mean: 3.00), aligning training skills to industry needs (mean: 2.75), and provision of internship programs (mean: 2.08). Furthermore, on-the-job training was rated as slightly implemented (mean: 2.44). However, the establishment of linkages and networks among public and private organizations was perceived as implemented (mean: 4.00).

These findings indicate that while some aspects of employability are being addressed, there is room for improvement in areas like technical skills training and on-the-job experiences. The ALS curriculum includes strands such as Life and Career Skills, Understanding the Self and Society, and Digital Citizenship, which are designed to enhance employability. However, ALS teachers and policymakers

should reflect on how these strands are implemented in practice and identify necessary adjustments to better address the employability of program completers.

Factors influencing the employability of ALS graduates include local economic conditions, job opportunities in the region, and individual circumstances. Additionally, the level of education, skills, and training received by graduates can significantly impact their employability. To improve employment outcomes, new policy directions should be considered to better align the curriculum with the needs of the workforce.

5.3. Entrepreneurship

The results indicate that the entrepreneurship dimension of the ALS program is moderately implemented, with constructs such as assessing learners' capabilities and capacity to become entrepreneurs (mean: 2.89), conducting livelihood activities (mean: 2.56), and providing extra-curricular programs aligned to technology, livelihood, and small business management (mean: 2.58) receiving moderate ratings. The provision of business incubation for qualified learners (mean: 2.61) and training learners in the transition from school to work (mean: 3.86) were rated as implemented.

These results suggest that the entrepreneurship component of the curriculum needs greater focus and improvement in its implementation. To fully realize the potential of this dimension, it is crucial for relevant agencies to collaborate with government organizations such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the PESO unit of local government units (LGUs), TESDA, and local industries. These partnerships can enhance the delivery of entrepreneurship skills and provide more opportunities for ALS learners to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

Entrepreneurship is a critical component of the ALS 2.0 Curriculum, designed to develop the business acumen of learners. Entrepreneurship involves identifying opportunities, mobilizing resources, and taking risks to create and grow new business ventures. Entrepreneurs are characterized by traits such as creativity, resilience, and a willingness to take calculated risks Audretsch [5]. By cultivating these qualities, ALS learners can contribute to economic growth and societal progress through innovation and value creation.

6. Curriculum Exits of the Alternative Learning System Passers

This section presents the various exits among the successful completers of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs across the eight districts in the province. In this study, exits are categorized into the following: trabaho (employment), negosyo (business), college, middle skills development, still in senior high school, and untraceable outcomes. The table below also provides the distribution of percentages across these exit points, as well as the passing percentages by gender.

Table 3.
Curriculum exits of ALS passers.

	Trabaho (Employment)		Negosyo (Business)		College		Middle skills development		Still on senior high/Untraceable		Total no. of passers	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Almeria district												
Male	66	18.0	19	05.1	22	06.0	35	09.5			207	56.4
Female	32	08.7	14	03.8	28	07.6	37	10.1			160	43.6
Total	98	26.7	33	09.0	50	13.6	72	19.6	114	31.1	367	100.0
Biliran district												
Male	150	26.0	13	02.3	23	04.0	14	02.4			380	65.7
Female	100	17.3	22	03.8	19	03.3	12	02.1			198	34.3
Total	250	43.3	35	06.1	42	07.3	26	04.5	225	38.9	578	100.0
Cabucgayan district												

Male	180	25.6	63	09.0	98	13.9	32	04.6			389	55.3
Female	84	14.7	30	04.3	51	07.3	12	01.7			314	44.7
Total	264	40.3	93	13.3	149	21.2	44	06.3	153	21.8	703	100.0
Caibiran district												
Male	162	40.0	16	04.0	20	04.9	29	07.2			269	66.4
Female	84	20.7	20	04.9	5	01.2	15	03.7			136	33.6
Total	246	60.7	36	08.9	25	06.1	44	10.9	54	13.3	405	100.0
Culaba district												
Male	110	41.4	14	05.3	2	00.8	7	02.6			150	56.4
Female	70	26.3	5	01.9	7	02.6	3	01.1			116	43.3
Total	180	67.7	19	07.2	9	03.4	10	03.7	48	18.0	266	100.0
Kawayan district												
Male	217	28.0	38	04.9	57	07.4	63	08.1			463	59.7
Female	94	12.1	63	08.1	15	01.9	79	10.1			312	40.3
Total	311	40.1	101	13.0	72	09.3	142	18.3	149	19.2	775	100.0
Maripipi district												
Male	39	36.8	12	11.3	0	00.0	0	00.0			56	52.8
Female	31	29.2	6	05.7	0	00.0	0	00.0			50	47.2
Total	70	66.0	18	17.0	0	00.0	0	00.0	18	17.0	106	100.0
Naval district												
Male	415	29.4	24	01.7	70	05.0	57	04.0			820	58.0
Female	204	14.4	32	02.3	51	03.6	36	02.5			593	42.0
Total	619	43.8	56	04.0	121	08.6	93	06.5	524	37.1	1413	100.0

The data in Table 3 reveals that the majority of ALS passers choose trabaho (employment) as their primary exit point. This trend suggests that the development of technical and vocational skills within the ALS program must be intensified to better equip learners for securing stable jobs. Supporting this, a study by Puertos [25] indicates that employment after graduation is a top choice among ALS passers, many of whom are already of working age before joining the ALS system. For these learners, the ALS program serves primarily as a means to enhance their employability, with the goal of obtaining a secondary education diploma—a crucial requirement for many jobs in the country.

The second most common exit point for ALS passers is pursuing a college degree. This finding underscores the importance of balancing academic needs with skills development within the ALS program. While vocational training is crucial, addressing the academic aspirations of learners is equally important to support their pursuit of higher education. According to CHED Memorandum Order No. 2, Series of 2018, ALS graduates are eligible for admission to higher education institutions (HEIs). This initiative aims to make tertiary education more accessible but also introduces challenges for ALS learners. The transition from ALS to HEIs may pose difficulties due to differences in learning settings and pedagogical approaches Lim et al., [20]. Moreover, Puertos [26] notes that many ALS learners anticipate needing to work while pursuing a college degree, as financial constraints may prevent them from fully focusing on their studies.

The third most chosen exit point is middle skills development, which refers to acquiring skills for jobs that do not require a four-year degree but demand more than a high school diploma. These jobs often exist in sectors like healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, and skilled trades. Middle skills are critical for closing the skills gap in the workforce. Battistich et al. [6] describe this as a vital area for economic growth, offering individuals the opportunity to secure well-paying, stable jobs that support long-term career advancement.

The ALS program plays a significant role in shaping the future of its learners by providing diverse exit options that cater to different career pathways. However, ensuring that the program continuously adapts to meet the evolving needs of the labor market and higher education will be key to its continued

success. Efforts to enhance both vocational and academic training, alongside better support for learners transitioning to these diverse exits, will improve the overall outcomes for ALS passers.

7. Challenges Encountered by the ALS Teachers in Implementing ALS Programs

The transcription of the data and subsequent coding yielded 11 distinct categories. Based on these categories, the following key themes were identified:

Theme 1. Learners' Attitude Towards Schooling. In this study, learners' attitude towards schooling refers to the learners' behavior, motivation, attendance, prioritization of work over schooling, and absenteeism. The following vignettes illustrate this theme:

"Recruiting potential ALS learners is challenging, as many lack motivation and tend to focus more on finding work than on completing their modules." (MT1)

"One difficulty I encounter is during enrollment. Many out-of-school youth have a negative attitude toward enrolling in ALS. Additionally, maintaining attendance in face-to-face classes is challenging, as some learners already have jobs, while others are busy with household chores. There's also a lack of support for the reproduction of materials or funding to maintain the momentum of learning." (MT3)

"When learners' schedules conflict with their work, they are forced to leave the classes to meet the needs of their families." (MT5)

The introduction of the new ALS 2.0 curriculum, which emphasizes the teaching of 21st-century skills, has brought significant changes to instruction delivery. The learners' somewhat negative attitude towards schooling may be attributed to their struggle in fully embracing these skills. Tindowen et al. [31] found that the acquisition of 21st-century skills among ALS learners is still low. This indicates that learners enrolled in ALS may not yet possess the necessary competencies associated with these skills. Thus, there is a pressing need for community and school collaboration to enrich learners' intellectual and social development. Teachers should also ensure that the content of lessons is culturally relevant, using localized instructional materials that suit the learners' context.

Theme 2. System's Support for Teachers. This theme refers to the support provided by authorities in addressing issues such as disinterest among learners, challenges in enrollment and attendance, adaptability, community support, and the need for better orientation, resources, and curriculum alignment. The following vignettes illustrate this theme:

"Lack of orientation, limited resources, and poor curriculum alignment." (DALSC4)

"Lack of support systems, funding, and challenges in adapting to blended learning adaptability." (MT2)

"Difficulty in finding learners, lack of community learning centers, and challenges with class scheduling." (MT6)

These findings align with those of previous studies, such as those by Moralista and Delarierte [20] and Fernandez [15], which report that increasing learning competencies is a major challenge faced by mobile teachers. This challenge arises due to varying levels of learner ability—some learners are advanced, while others struggle—affecting their cognitive abilities and task performance. Additionally, Abad & Galleto [1] found that the support mechanism for ALS instruction is positively related to teachers' attitudes towards their work and best practices in implementing the program. However, there remains room for improvement in support levels to ensure better implementation.

Moreover, Mercado [22] pointed out that there is insufficient stakeholder involvement, particularly from local government officials and parents. Despite progress in expanding access to education, the lack of support mechanisms—such as instructional materials, equipment, financial resources, and cooperation from stakeholders—remains a challenge. Guerrero [16] noted that low participation and passing rates in ALS suggest that the program's implementation is not fully convincing. However, a significant number of students successfully passed the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) examination and went on to earn college degrees. This shows that despite challenges such as inadequate facilities and resources, teaching can still be effective if the teachers are committed.

Teachers' attitudes and best practices play a crucial role in overcoming these deficiencies. When teachers remain committed to their work, even in the face of challenges, the quality of education can still improve. As such, the continuous professional development of teachers—fostering positive attitudes and

staying updated with global trends—can significantly enhance the quality of education and improve student outcomes.

8. Coping Mechanisms Employed by Teachers in Addressing the Challenges in the Implementation of the ALS Program

The transcription of the data and subsequent coding yielded 11 distinct codes. Based on these codes, the following themes were identified:

Theme 1: Multifaceted Student Support. In the context of this study, multifaceted student support refers to the various forms of assistance that ALS teachers provide to meet the diverse needs of learners and address the challenges in implementing the ALS program. The support strategies include outreach and engagement, individualized guidance, community collaboration, and professional development. The following vignettes illustrate this theme:

“Sustaining home visitation for struggling learners.” (DALSC1)

The mission of ALS teachers to help underserved and unreached learners in the community by offering different learning modalities” (DALSC2)

“Providing alternatives through social media for learners with limitations” (MT5)

David et al. [10] explained that multifaceted student support is important because it recognizes that students have diverse needs and

David et al. [10] explained that multifaceted student support is crucial because it acknowledges the diverse needs and challenges that student face, which can affect their academic success and overall well-being. This type of support has several benefits:

Holistic development: Multifaceted student support considers various aspects of a student's life, including academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being. It recognizes that students are not just learners, but individuals with unique circumstances, strengths, and weaknesses.

Addressing barriers to learning: Students face barriers such as socio-economic challenges, mental health issues, family problems, or lack of resources. Multifaceted support aims to identify and address these challenges, creating a more conducive learning environment.

Personalized approach: Every student is unique, and a one-size-fits-all approach may not meet all needs. Multifaceted support emphasizes personalized interventions that cater to each student's specific strengths and challenges.

Academic success: When students' non-academic needs are addressed, they can focus more effectively on their studies. This comprehensive support enhances students' engagement with learning, helping them to reach their full academic potential.

Theme 2: Flexibility and Adaptability. This theme highlights the need for ALS teachers to be flexible and adaptive in their teaching strategies and interactions with students. This adaptability is essential in responding to the varying needs of learners and the changing circumstances of the educational environment. The following vignettes support this theme:

“Agreement on and setting schedules based on learners' available time to ensure their participation.” (DALSC3)

“Mapping out-of-school children and youth, attending Barangay sessions, and involving ALS learners in community activities to generate interest” (MT2)

“Advocacy within the community about ALS programs, house-to-house mapping, and building partnerships” (MT4)

Flexibility and adaptability are critical in various aspects of life, including education, work, and personal growth. These skills enable individuals to:

Meet changing needs: Teachers can adjust to learners' evolving circumstances, such as fluctuating availability or differing learning preferences. **Demonstrate resilience and problem-solving:** Flexibility allows teachers to tackle unexpected challenges and find solutions to issues that may arise. **Embrace innovation:** Adaptability encourages the adoption of new teaching methods and technologies to better serve students. **Promote collaboration:** Flexibility fosters more effective teamwork among teachers, learners, and the community, enhancing the overall learning experience. **Enhance well-being:** Teachers' adaptability and flexibility help create a supportive and inclusive learning environment, boosting

learners' emotional and psychological well-being. According to Castolo & Chan [7], developing and nurturing flexibility and adaptability can empower individuals to navigate life's complexities, ultimately achieving both personal and professional success.

The study's findings highlight two essential themes that carry significant implications for improving and enhancing the effectiveness of the ALS program: 1.) Multifaceted Student Support: The study emphasizes the critical role of ALS teachers in addressing the diverse needs of learners. By offering various support strategies—such as outreach, individualized guidance, community partnerships, and professional development—teachers create a learning environment that is responsive to learners' academic, social, emotional, and physical needs. This holistic approach helps to identify and remove barriers to learning, such as socio-economic challenges or lack of resources. It also ensures that interventions are personalized to meet individual needs, ultimately supporting academic success. The theme reinforces the importance of policies and practices that foster comprehensive support systems for students in the ALS program. 2.) Flexibility and Adaptability: The study highlights the need for ALS teachers to be adaptable in their teaching approaches. The ability to adjust schedules and teaching methods based on learners' availability and needs is crucial for the effective implementation of the ALS program. Moreover, active participation in community activities and building partnerships with local organizations are necessary for generating interest and sustaining the program's impact. The findings suggest that teachers require ongoing support to develop these adaptive skills, and that system-wide strategies should promote flexibility to ensure the program's relevance and effectiveness for diverse learners.

9. Conclusion

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) program in the Division of Biliran exhibits a mixture of high and moderate implementation across various aspects such as learning support, curriculum content, teaching strategies, and learning assessment. While there are areas where the program excels, there are also areas where improvement is needed. The study also highlighted that there are challenges in the learners' attitudes and the system's support for the teachers, but the teachers employ multifaceted student support and flexibility as coping mechanisms.

The implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program in the Division of Biliran shows a mix of strengths and areas for improvement across several key aspects, including learning support, curriculum content, teaching strategies, and learning assessment. While the program demonstrates notable success in some areas, challenges persist, particularly in relation to learners' attitudes toward schooling and the level of support provided to teachers by the system.

Despite these challenges, ALS teachers have adopted effective coping mechanisms, such as providing multifaceted student support and demonstrating flexibility and adaptability in their teaching approaches. These strategies help address learners' diverse needs and ensure continued engagement with the program. While the ALS program in Biliran has made significant strides in supporting out-of-school youth, there remains a need for ongoing improvements in system-level support and addressing learners' attitudes toward education. By building on the strengths of multifaceted student support and flexible teaching methods, the ALS program can further enhance its effectiveness and sustainability, offering more comprehensive and accessible learning opportunities for all learners.

10. Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made to further strengthen the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program in the Division of Biliran.

First, enhancing online support systems, guidance and counseling, review classes, and tutorials will ensure comprehensive learner support, particularly for those with limited access to face-to-face instruction. These initiatives will provide learners with additional resources, personalized assistance, and the necessary skills to overcome barriers to learning.

Second, it is essential to incorporate sustainable use of resources and raise community awareness within the curriculum content. By integrating these elements, the program can foster a deeper

connection between learners and their local contexts, promoting environmental sustainability and empowering learners to become active participants in community development.

Additionally, providing training and resources to ALS teachers will help them effectively employ diverse teaching strategies that cater to the varied needs of learners. These professional development opportunities will equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt their teaching methods to different learning styles, improving overall instructional quality.

Furthermore, learning assessments should be modified to more comprehensively address social interaction and behavior modification. This would help in understanding not only academic progress but also the development of essential social and behavioral skills, which are vital for students' holistic growth.

The program should also focus on developing partnerships with government agencies and industries to enhance the entrepreneurship aspects of ALS. Collaboration with external stakeholders can create opportunities for learners to gain practical skills, access resources, and explore potential career paths, thereby increasing the relevance and sustainability of the ALS program.

Finally, it is crucial to provide ongoing support to teachers to help them address the challenges related to learners' attitudes and the system's support. This support can include strategies for improving student motivation, managing absenteeism, and addressing the specific needs of learners who may struggle with the demands of the ALS curriculum.

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