

Concurrent Evaluation of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program Implementation in Public Island School: Basis for Program Enhancement

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Abstract. The Philippines experienced a high rate of illiteracy and lack of access to primary education, resulting in a high rate of out-of-school youths and adults (OSYA). To alleviate the concerns about illiteracy, lack of access to basic education, and other barriers experienced by those struggling learners, the Department of Education established the Alternative Learning System. This is to allow the aspirant Filipinos to finish their basic education more inclusively. Thus, this study aimed to evaluate the status of implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program of one public island school in the City of Meycauayan and guided by a descriptive survey method as the study's research design. Moreover, the study utilized a self-developed survey questionnaire to dissect the understudied program's implementation status. The study's findings revealed that the status of implementation to the identified key areas of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program is implemented. Thus, the school adheres to shared governance and program implementation for inclusive education. The stakeholders' view in the assessment provides a statistically significant difference. Hence, the null hypothesis of the study is rejected. The proposed inputs and management implications show how the program will be enhanced in the long run of its implementation in the locale. It is recommended that the proposed enhancement plan be utilized to improve the implementation of ALS in the school.

Keywords: Alternative Learning System; Program implementation; Public island school; Philippines.

1.0 Introduction

The Philippines has a very high appreciation for education. Out of all the social service fields, it gets the highest funding. However, the nation's high debt service load made it impossible for the educational sector to provide each consumer with essential and sufficient services. The children who encountered the most significant obstacles to education – such as those related to gender, poverty, displacement, disability, and, or ethnicity – remain behind in the Philippines and some other nations. Many of these kids are never allowed to go because their families rely on them for labor, the distance, and the risk of attending school. Some of them cannot participate because there are no drinking fountains, restrooms, or facilities accessible to learners with disabilities in the nearby schools (Baccal & Ormilla, 2021).

To alleviate the concerns about illiteracy, lack of access to basic education, and other barriers experienced by those struggling learners, the Department of Education created the Alternative Learning System. This movement by the Philippine government through the Department of Education with the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) as a crucial component of Philippine education provides every individual with access to quality basic education to reduce the illiteracy rate as envisioned in the Education for All (EFA) 2015 Philippine

Plan of Action (Apao et al., 2014). It further explains that ALS is a parallel learning system that provides a viable alternative way for learners who cannot attend a formal and regular school to finish their basic education (Zulueta et al., 2022; Hero, 2023).

However, due to the strategic and geographical location of the school, since it is a public island school in the City of Meycauayan, problems and concerns arise, such as the cohort survival rate, possible learners that will enroll in the program, supplies, and services, etc. Hence, it becomes the intention of the researcher to describe and evaluate the implementation status of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program of one public island school in the City of Meycauayan for the School Year 2023-2024. The findings and management implications of the study will be used to develop and harmonize the inputs that will enhance and strengthen the ALS program in the said school.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The descriptive research method was used in this study to obtain information concerning the status of the phenomena to be described, that is, "what exists" concerning variables as conditions in a situation. According to Bueno (2016), the purpose of survey studies is to collect detailed information that describes existing phenomena, to identify problems or justify current conditions and practices, to make comparisons and evaluations, and to determine what others are doing with similar issues or situations and benefit from their experience in making plans and decision. The descriptive research method employing a questionnaire was used in conducting this study. The questionnaire was administered to the teacher respondents to obtain information on the status of the implementation of the Alternative Learning System program in one public island school in the City of Meycauayan.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in one public island school in Meycauayan. Simple terrain and gently sloping hills encircle the City of Meycauayan. May kawayan, which translates to "with bamboo" in Filipino, is the source of Meycauayan's name. This area comfortably above sea level, is a network of concrete roads intertwined with lush vegetation.

2.3 Research Participants

The total population of the study was 38 respondents. Five teachers, two school administrators, six learners, and 25 alumni graduated from the ALS program at the said school. Universal and voluntary sampling were used as the sampling procedures in compliance with the ethical considerations of the study.

2.4 Research Instrument

This study used a self-developed survey questionnaire patterned from the indicators from the study of Besmonte (2023) and Hero (2023). It is a Likert scale-type questionnaire that ranges from 1 (not implemented) to 5 (very much implemented). The constructed survey questionnaire underwent a series of validation and reliability tests to assure its validity and reliability in the context of the study's respondents. The researcher invited five experts to validate and check the alignment of the self-developed survey questionnaire to the study's rationale. The comments and suggestions were applied to modify and improve the survey tool. The internal consistency was evaluated using a test-retest and split-half method. The computed overall Cronbach's Alpha equals 0.82, making the survey tool reliable.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study used specific steps to impose the data collection needed for the study. The researcher sought the school principal's permission, together with the Division Research Committee, to implement the data collection procedure. After documenting the necessary procedures, the research instrument was disseminated to the target respondents. Before participating in the study, they signed an informed consent attesting to their voluntary participation. After disseminating the research instrument, the researcher checked all the indicators to see if all the boxes were answered.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

To establish and safeguard ethics in conducting this study, the researcher firmly observed the following actions regarding research ethics: the teacher participants' names and identities were not declared in any part of the study, and the researcher used codes for them; teachers as the respondents were not emotionally or physically harmed during the conduct of data collection. The study's participants were not forced to participate; thus, they had the right to refuse participation. They had the right to refuse to answer the question if they felt that they were not comfortable with the given question/s. The researcher cited and observed proper referencing of literature and promoted copyright laws. All participants of the study signed informed consent forms before participating. During the study, all ethical principles were observed. Lastly, the researcher declared no conflict of interest in conducting this study.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Status of ALS Implementation

In terms of Instructional Methodologies

Results of the analysis in Table 1 posit that, in general, the status of implementation of the ALS program in terms of instructional methodologies is described as implemented, as shown by the general mean value of 4.12 with a standard deviation of 0.56

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the status of implementation of the ALS program in terms of instructional methodologies

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Uses a variety of methods, strategies, and techniques suited to the needs of ALS learners	4.45	0.75	Implemented
2. Engages ALS learners in oral and written activities.	4.25	0.55	Implemented
3. Prepares ALS learners to learn at their own pace and style.	4.18	0.51	Implemented
4. Shows the importance of learning through modeling and team teaching	3.75	0.55	Implemented
5. Interacts in authentic contexts align with the learning competencies	3.99	0.45	Implemented
Average	4.12	0.56	Implemented

It also indicates that all indicators are rated implemented based on the assessment done by the respondents. The findings show that the instructional practices in the school are suited to the diverse needs of the ALS learners and cover what they need to accomplish and provide to their portfolio. The way the learners are engaged in the learning process is how they want to experience the lesson they are tackling and mastering. The findings corroborate the study of Belmonte (2023), in which ALS learners agreed on the methods and instructional procedures that their teachers and facilitators implemented during the group discussion. The ALS instructional manager uses general principles, pedagogy, and management strategies used for classroom instruction.

In terms of Instructional Materials

The analysis of data on the status of implementation of the ALS program in terms of instructional materials shows that the understudied indicator is described as implemented as a whole based on the general average of 4.15 with a standard deviation of 0.84 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the status of implementation of the ALS program in terms of instructional materials

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Prepare the needed materials like the FLT, interview, and ila before engaging the other learner in an activity.	4.10	0.75	Implemented
2. Designs a program of lessons and sessions suited for a certain learner and follow contextualization and andragogy	4.18	0.78	Implemented
3. Uses a variety of instructional materials for every learning strand, which is contextualized and localized	4.01	0.83	Implemented
4. Make sure the instructional materials are suited to the level of the learner for independent learning	4.32	0.95	Implemented
5. Furnishes a copy of evidence of every activity during the learning process.	4.12	0.89	Implemented
Average	4.15	0.84	Implemented

It also shows that all indicators, as perceived and assessed by the respondents, are described as implemented. This implies that the schools provide the necessary instructional materials, learning activity sheets, and other related learning evidence to sustain the continuity of their independent learning. Moreover, the school is faithful to following contextualization and localization in adult learning instruction or andragogy. As stated in the study of Hero & Cruz (2023), contextualizing the learning materials and the learning process is how ALS learners will

easily acquire learning. Using their experience, ALS learners can easily connect to the topics and lessons they have encountered. Also, the materials they use should differ from those that the learners in formal school use since the learning materials in ALS should focus on relating experiences and life skills.

In terms of Evaluative Techniques

As shown in Table 3, analysis regarding the status of implementation of the ALS program in terms of evaluative techniques is described as implemented as a whole as resonated by the mean values of 4.39 with a standard deviation of 0.73.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the status of implementation of the ALS program in terms of evaluative techniques

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Make the portfolio important for the learners.	4.48	0.70	Implemented
2. Discuss the result of every test / exam with learners and analyze data correctly.	4.37	0.69	Implemented
3. Record data of what has been assessed in the session.	4.21	0.77	Implemented
4. Asks for feedback from the principal or division als focal person	4.30	0.95	Implemented
5. Gives a certificate of appreciation/recognition of learners with remarkable achievement	4.58	0.54	Highly Implemented
Average	4.39	0.73	Implemented

It also shows that most indicators under evaluative techniques are rated implemented. The findings illustrate an understanding that the school is also recognizing ALS learners' hard work and astonishing accomplishments, just like what they are practicing in formal education. Also, I have a portfolio of the management's practical moves, especially during the pandemic. This portfolio helps the learners to be more motivated to finish the ALS program. Thus, the evaluative techniques employed in the program are successful because they are not just to monitor them but also to evaluate their hard work with the principles of quality education. An instructional manager notes information on the things that have been assessed during the session and emphasizes the importance of the portfolio for the students. This further implies that the ALS instructional manager uses formative evaluation procedures for classroom assessment that are comparatively rapid and simple, enabling him to measure student understanding in "real time" (Guerero, 2017; Besmonte, 2023).

In terms of Community Stakeholders and Linkages

As can be gleaned from the analyzed data (Table 4), the ALS program's implementation status in terms of community stakeholders and linkages is described as implemented as a whole based on the general mean value of 4.08 with a standard deviation of 0.78.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the status of implementation of the ALS program in terms of community stakeholders and linkages

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Sourcing out initiatives for prospective linkages and partners.	4.48	0.70	Implemented
2. Inclusion of community partners and linkage to ALS programs and projects.	4.37	0.69	Implemented
3. Intensifies strategies to gain linkages inside and outside the community.	4.21	0.77	Implemented
4. Implements a plan of action for linkages and partners to see the outcome.	4.30	0.95	Implemented
5. Supports morally the ALS programs and projects.	4.58	0.54	Highly Implemented
Average	4.39	0.73	Implemented

It is also noted that all of the indicators are rated implemented. The school needs to intensify the external stakeholders' coordination to ensure their commitment and support for the achievement of learning outcomes and to sustain the good plan implementation performance. This impression corroborates the findings of Cabardo (2016), which highlighted that to sustain good performance, the school and its people should ensure the commitment and trust of the external stakeholders since they play a significant role in sustaining good performance of the implemented plan and program in the school. If the school does not investigate this, it may result in a poor outcome, and even worse, they will not support the school (Hero & Cruz, 2023).

3.2 Difference in the Evaluation of Respondents

As shown in Table 5 is a significant difference in the status of the implementation of the ALS program when grouped according to the perceived assessment of the respondents. The inferential findings and the results of Laquiores & Perez (2021) on the evaluation conducted in the City of Puerto Princesa, in terms of instructional competence, impact on learners, program delivery, advocacy, and social mobilization on the implementation of

Alternative Learning System, there was a significant difference between how implementers and stakeholders perceived the ALS program performance indicators.

Table 5. Analysis of the difference in evaluation of respondents

Variables	Groups			Source of Variation	SS	MS	F-value	P-value	Decision	Interpretation
	School Personnel	ALS Learners	ALS Alumni							
Perception of Selected Stakeholders on the Status of Implementation of the ALS Program	4.10	4.15	4.05	Between Groups	0.08	0.09	0.12	0.00	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant
				Within Groups	53.88	0.43				
				Total	53.96					

3.3 Proposed Actions

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) was implemented to provide marginalized and out-of-school youths and adults with educational opportunities. Enhancing the ALS program's efficacy necessitates thoroughly comprehending the existing problems and viable solutions. This study aims to suggest specific inputs and management implications that can greatly improve its implementation. Like many other educational institutions, the school has difficulties implementing ALS programs because of resource constraints, differing student demands, and changing educational policies. To address these problems, it is crucial to take a thorough approach, which involves evaluating the current program structure, identifying gaps, and suggesting doable improvement solutions. By focusing on these key areas, this study intends to provide a roadmap for the school to improve its ALS program. This will ensure that more learners can access quality education and develop the skills necessary for personal and professional growth. The ultimate goal is to create a more inclusive and effective learning environment that aligns with the broader objectives of the ALS initiative.

Table 6. Proposed Inputs and Implications

Key-areas	Inputs and Implications	Persons Involved	Time Frame
Instructional Methodologies	Implementing effective instructional methodologies for ALS requires a holistic approach considering its learners' unique characteristics and needs. By ensuring adequate inputs and addressing the management implications, ALS programs can provide meaningful and accessible education to marginalized and underserved populations. This requires coordinated efforts across policy-making, resource allocation, curriculum development, and community involvement, supported by continuous evaluation and improvement.	School Head/Principal, ALS Teacher, External Stakeholder, and Learners	Year-round
Instructional Materials	Contextualized, localized, and indigenous instructional materials are critical for the success of ALS programs. They require careful planning, adequate funding, continuous quality assurance, and regular updates to remain relevant and effective. Managing these materials involves collaboration among educators, policymakers, communities, and learners to ensure that they meet diverse needs and contribute to meaningful learning experiences. By addressing these inputs and management implications, ALS programs can provide high-quality education that is accessible and beneficial to all learners.	School Head/Principal, ALS Teacher, External Stakeholder, and Learners	Year-round
Evaluative Techniques	Effective evaluative techniques are essential for the success of ALS programs, providing critical insights into learner progress and program efficacy. By carefully considering the inputs and addressing the management implications, ALS programs can implement robust evaluation systems that contribute to continuous improvement and better educational outcomes. This holistic approach ensures that evaluation is about measuring performance and enhancing the overall learning experience for all stakeholders.	School Head/Principal, ALS Teacher, External Stakeholder, and Learners	Year-round
Community Stakeholders and Linkages	Engaging community stakeholders and establishing strong linkages are vital for the success and sustainability of ALS programs. By leveraging local resources, knowledge, and support, ALS programs can become more effective and responsive to learners' needs. This involves careful planning, clear communication, and continuous collaboration to build a supportive ecosystem around alternative learning initiatives. By addressing these inputs and management implications, ALS programs can create a more inclusive and community-driven approach to education.	School Head/Principal, ALS Teacher, External Stakeholder, and Learners	Year-round

4.0 Conclusion

The study found that the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program has been effectively implemented, demonstrating that the school adheres to shared governance and promotes inclusive education. A significant difference was observed in stakeholders' views on the program, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis, highlighting the importance of their perspectives in evaluating the program's success. Additionally, the proposed inputs and management strategies are expected to enhance the long-term implementation of the ALS program, ensuring its continuous improvement within the local context. Future research may explore the impact of the ALS program in other schools and community learning centers to gain broader insights.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors of this study have equal contributions to the completed version of the manuscript.

6.0 Funding

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

Regarding this study, the author has no conflicts of interest.

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