

Empowering Literacy: A Comprehensive Study of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Implementation in the 4th Congressional District of Iloilo, Philippines

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Abstract

The study investigates the status of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementation in the 4th Congressional District of the Iloilo province, Philippines, emphasizing the significance of literacy in individual well-being and societal contribution. The research addresses the persistent issue of illiteracy, particularly in regions such as South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, impacting economic growth. Focusing on the Philippines, a country grappling with high poverty rates, the study underscores the plight of Out-of-School children, youth, and adults, linking their challenges to educational opportunities. The ALS program, implemented by the Philippine government, emerges as a vital strategy to address illiteracy and educational gaps. A ladderized, modular non-formal education program, ALS caters to diverse learners, including dropouts, working individuals, and senior citizens. The subsequent sections present a comprehensive descriptive-correlational analysis of ALS implementation in the 4th Congressional District, employing a mixed methodology. Results indicate a commendable “very good” status for ALS basic literacy and an “excellent” status for the accreditation and equivalency program. Challenges, though present, are labeled as “less serious,” with variations across municipalities. The lack of significant differences in implementation status and challenges among municipalities and classifications suggests a uniform and effective ALS implementation. The study contributes valuable insights for targeted interventions to further enhance ALS efficacy. Future research avenues are proposed to delve deeper into identified challenges, offering tailored solutions for continuous improvement in basic literacy and accreditation and equivalency programs. Overall, the study provides a foundational understanding of ALS implementation in the district, emphasizing its positive trajectory and resilience in the face of challenges.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System (ALS), policy evaluation, out-of-school youth, educational innovation, educational challenges*

Introduction

Literacy, being a fundamental cornerstone of an individual's quality of life, transcends the boundaries of basic reading ability, embodying a crucial indication of how adults utilize written information to navigate and contribute to society. The acquisition of literacy and lifelong skills is not only a personal enrichment but a necessity for securing employment, earning decent wages, and accessing high-quality learning opportunities (Burns, 2022). Nations that successfully endow their populations with literacy and lifelong skills find themselves better equipped to meet the economic demands inherent in a globalized information economy. Moreover, a highly literate population is better suited to address governance challenges in a highly diverse society.

However, the Philippines faces a persistent lower-middle-income trap, where inadequate education systems fail to equip the workforce with the necessary skills, further entrenching poverty (Masatoshi, 2023). Filipino students struggle with reading comprehension and critical thinking, largely due to socioeconomic factors and insufficient resources (Idulog et al., 2023). In this context, the need for effective and inclusive educational programs, such as the Alternative Learning System (ALS), becomes critical. ALS offers a pathway to literacy and skills development for marginalized groups, including out-of-school youth and adults, thus addressing the systemic barriers to education and contributing to overall national development.

The Philippines, amid its vibrant culture and economic potential, is not immune to the economic crises spawned by poverty. A recent study by Deutsch, Silber, Wan, and Zhao (2020), revealed that the Philippines has one of the highest poverty incidence rates in Southeast Asia, reaching 15.5%. The dire implications of this poverty are vividly seen in the plight of Out-of-School Children (OSC), Out-of-School Youth (OSYs), and Out-of-School Adults (OSAs), who bear the brunt of poverty due to a lack of educational opportunities. The DepEd reports 4 million enrollment in ALS from 2016-2021 out-of-school Filipino citizens. The Department of Education (DepEd) has underscored the enhancement of pass rates in the Presentation Portfolio Assessment (PPA). At the Elementary Level, there was an improvement in pass rates from 71.42% (School Year 2019-2020) to 87.55% (School Year 2020-2021). For the Junior High School Level, the PPA success rates increased from 83.56% (School Year 2019-2022) to 93.51% (School Year 2020-2021).

The PSA report underscores poverty as the primary driver of the surge in out-of-school youth (Castillo, et al., 2023). Despite poverty being identified as the root cause, the lack of education perpetuates the OSY phenomenon among the impoverished.

In response to these challenges, the Philippine government, through the Department of Education, has implemented the Alternative Learning System (ALS) as a pivotal component of Philippine education. This initiative seeks to provide every individual with access to quality basic education and aims to reduce the illiteracy rate in alignment with the Education for All (EFA) 2015 Philippine Plan of Action. Section 12.1 Rules XII of R.A. 9155 solidifies ALS as a parallel learning system, offering a viable alternative to formal education instruction by encompassing both non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills (Official Gazette, 2001).

ALS, is a free education program under the Department of Education's Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) (Executive Order No. 356, s. 2004; Nonong, 2022). It

endeavors to create more educational opportunities for Filipino citizens of diverse interests, capabilities, and socio-economic backgrounds, addressing the needs of marginalized groups while significantly reducing the time and expenses associated with completing high school (Abad & Galleto, 2020; Bacal & Ormilla, 2021). This ladderized, modular non-formal education program caters to dropouts from elementary and secondary schools, out-of-school youths, non-readers, working Filipinos, and even senior citizens, offering flexibility in scheduling and location choice (Abasolo, 2017; Ucab & Luzano; Villaber, 2023).

The subsequent sections of this research delve into a descriptive-correlational inquiry, utilizing a one-shot survey design, to assess the status of ALS implementation and the extent of problems encountered by implementers in the 4th Congressional District of the Iloilo province. Employing descriptive and correlational research, this study aims to illuminate the nuances of ALS implementation and identify significant differences in the extent when classified according to the municipality within the 4th Congressional District of the Province of Iloilo. This mixed methodology endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent of ALS implementation in this specific geographic context.

The objectives of this study are to:

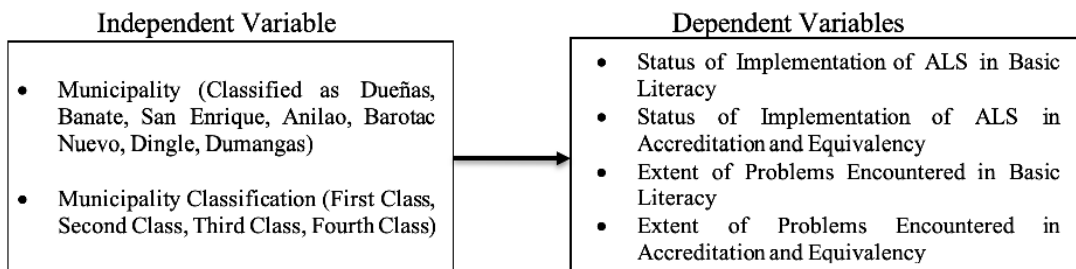
1. Assess the overall status of the ALS Basic Literacy Program implementation in the 4th Congressional District and compare it across municipalities and municipality classifications;
2. Evaluate the overall status of the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Program implementation and identify differences among municipalities and municipality classifications;
3. Identify the extent of problems encountered in the ALS Basic Literacy Program and compare these problems across municipalities and municipality classifications;
4. Determine the extent of problems encountered in the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Program and examine variations across municipalities and municipality classifications;
5. Analyze whether the status of ALS Basic Literacy Program implementation differs significantly across municipalities and municipality classifications;
6. Investigate whether the status of ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Program implementation differs significantly across municipalities and municipality classifications; and
7. Examine the relationship between the implementation status of ALS programs (Basic Literacy and Accreditation and Equivalency) and the extent of problems encountered.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are the municipalities and their classification, such as Dueñas, Banate, San Enrique, Anilao, Barotac Nuevo, Dingle, and Dumangas, as well as the classification of municipalities into first, second, third, and fourth classes. The dependent variables include the status of ALS implementation in Basic Literacy, Accreditation and Equivalency, and the extent of problems encountered in both areas. This framework examines how the municipalities’ characteristics influence the ALS program’s outcomes

Figure 1

Conceptual Proposition of the Study



Methods

The participants in this study comprised all ALS implementers in each municipality within the 4th Congressional District of the Iloilo province, excluding those from Passi City, as they do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Division of Iloilo. The respondents were purposively selected, aligning with the study’s aim to determine the status of implementation and the extent of problems encountered by ALS implementers in the specified locale. The study encompassed a total of 21 ALS implementers in the 4th Congressional District of Iloilo.

The research instrument employed in this study was adapted from Perocho (2012) and underwent validation and reliability testing. Comprising three parts, the instrument covered personal data, the status of ALS implementation, and the extent of problems encountered. The reliability coefficients for the status of implementation and extent of problems encountered were found to be 0.9934 and 0.9718, respectively.

Part One: Gathered information about the respondent’s name, designation, municipality, and municipality qualification.

Part Two: Includes two areas – Area A assessed the status of implementation of ALS in the Basic Literacy Program (27 items), and Area B evaluated the status of implementation of ALS in the Accreditation and Equivalency Program (28 items). Responses were measured on a scale ranging from “Very Often (VO)” to “Not at All (NA)” with corresponding weights.

Part Three: Also divided into two areas – Area A gauged the extent of problems encountered in the Basic Literacy Program (30 items), and Area B assessed the extent of problems encountered in the Accreditation and Equivalency Program (30 items). Responses were recorded using a scale ranging from “Very Serious” to “Not a Problem” with assigned weights.

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of Iloilo, with copies furnished to the District Supervisor for each municipality in the 4th Congressional District. A predetermined schedule was established for each ALS Community Learning Center to accommodate implementers’ availability for questionnaire responses. Prior to administration, implementers were briefed on the study’s purpose and were then requested to complete the questionnaire. The gathered data were treated as confidential for subsequent analysis. The collected data underwent various statistical procedures for analysis using SPSS v.25

Results and Discussions

Status of Implementation of ALS Basic Literacy Program

The overall status of ALS basic literacy program implementation in the 4th Congressional District was deemed “very good” ($M=4.15$, $SD=0.29$). When classified by municipalities, Dueñas, Banate, and San Enrique exhibited a “very good” status, while Anilao, Barotac Nuevo, Dingle, and Dumangas demonstrated an “excellent” implementation. Classification by municipality revealed that all classes achieved an “excellent” status, except for fourth-class municipalities, which achieved a “very good” status.

The overall “very good” status of ALS basic literacy program implementation in the district is promising. The classification by municipalities revealed variations in the implementation status, with some municipalities achieving an “excellent” status. Notably, Anilao, Barotac Nuevo, Dingle, and Dumangas demonstrated an “excellent” implementation, showcasing the effectiveness of ALS in these areas. The classification by municipality type indicated that first, second, and third-class municipalities achieved an “excellent” status, emphasizing the success of ALS across diverse socioeconomic landscapes.

Table 1
ALS Basic Literacy Implementation

Category	Mean (M)	(SD)	Implementation Status
Entire Group	4.15	0.29	Very Good
By Municipality			
Dueñas	4.04	0.12	Very Good
Banate	3.84	0.36	Very Good
San Enrique	3.9	0.24	Very Good
Anilao	4.35	0.08	Excellent
Barotac Nuevo	4.33	0.11	Excellent
Dingle	4.33	0.16	Excellent
Dumangas	4.25	0.46	Excellent
By Municipality Classification			
First Class Municipality	4.26	0.46	Excellent
Second Class Municipality	4.34	0.11	Excellent
Third Class Municipality	4.33	0.16	Excellent
Fourth Class Municipality	4.04	0.31	Very Good

Status of Implementation of ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Program

The overall status of ALS in terms of accreditation and equivalency implementation in the 4th Congressional District was assessed as “excellent” (M= 4.25, SD = 0.32). When categorized by municipalities, Dueñas, Dingle, and San Enrique achieved a “very good” status, while Anilao, Barotac Nuevo, Banate, and Dumangas displayed an “excellent” implementation. Classification by municipality showcased that first, second, and fourth-class municipalities attained an “excellent” status, while third-class municipalities achieved a “very good” status.

Table 2
ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Implementation

Category	Mean (M)	SD	Implementation Status
Entire Group	4.25	0.32	Excellent
<i>By Municipality</i>			
Dueñas	4.00	0.11	Very Good
Dingle	4.02	0.13	Very Good
San Enrique	4.05	0.24	Very Good
Anilao	4.37	0.10	Excellent
Barotac Nuevo	4.39	0.03	Excellent
Banate	4.27	0.40	Excellent
Dumangas	4.46	0.42	Excellent
<i>By Municipality Classification</i>			
First Class Municipality	4.46	0.42	Excellent
Second Class Municipality	4.39	0.03	Excellent
Third Class Municipality	4.03	0.13	Very Good
Fourth Class Municipality	4.22	0.28	Excellent

The “excellent” status of ALS in terms of accreditation and equivalency program implementation is commendable. The variations among municipalities indicate a generally positive trend, with some municipalities achieving a “very good” status. The classification by municipality type highlighted that first, second, and fourth-class municipalities attained an “excellent” status. This suggests that ALS is effectively addressing accreditation and equivalency needs across municipalities with varying economic profiles.

Extent of Problems Encountered in the Basic Literacy Program

The extent of problems encountered by ALS implementers in terms of basic literacy in the 4th Congressional District was labeled as “less serious” (M= 2.37, SD = 0.62). When categorized by municipalities, all except Dumangas faced “less serious” problems. Classification by municipality depicted first-class municipalities as facing “moderately serious” problems, while second, third, and fourth-class municipalities encountered “less serious” problems.

The identification of “less serious” problems encountered in terms of basic literacy indicates a generally smooth implementation process. While Dumangas faced “moderately serious” problems, other municipalities encountered problems at a “less serious” level. The classification by municipality type revealed that first-class municipalities faced “moderately serious” problems, while second, third, and fourth-class municipalities encountered “less serious” problems. This indicates a need for targeted interventions in specific areas to further enhance the basic literacy program.

Table 3
Problems Encountered in ALS Basic Literacy

Category	Mean (M)	(SD)	Extent of Problems
Entire Group	2.37	0.62	Less Serious
<i>By Municipality</i>			
Dueñas	2.33	0.11	Less Serious
Anilao	2.03	0.10	Less Serious
Barotac Nuevo	2.00	0.18	Less Serious
Dingle	2.22	0.13	Less Serious
Banate	2.36	0.39	Less Serious
San Enrique	2.26	0.60	Less Serious
Dumangas	2.76	1.00	Moderately Serious
<i>By Municipality Classification</i>			
First Class Municipality	2.76	1.01	Moderately Serious
Second Class Municipality	2	0.18	Less Serious
Third Class Municipality	2.22	0.13	Less Serious
Fourth Class Municipality	2.26	0.27	Less Serious

Extent of Problems Encountered in the Accreditation and Equivalency Program

The extent of problems encountered by ALS implementers in terms of accreditation and equivalency in the 4th Congressional District was identified as “less serious” ($M= 2.41$, $SD = 0.68$). When classified by municipalities, all municipalities, except Dumangas, encountered “less serious” problems. Classification by municipality revealed that first-class municipalities faced “moderately serious” problems, while second, third, and fourth-class municipalities encountered “less serious” problems.

Table 4
Problems Encountered in ALS Accreditation and Equivalency

Category	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Extent of Problems
Entire Group	2.41	0.68	Less Serious
<i>By Municipality</i>			
Dueñas	2.57	0.08	Less Serious
Anilao	2.08	0.07	Less Serious
Barotac Nuevo	2.07	0.14	Less Serious
Dingle	2.57	0.10	Less Serious
Banate	2.00	0.09	Less Serious
San Enrique	2.13	0.52	Less Serious
Dumangas	2.87	1.11	Moderately Serious
<i>By Municipality Classification</i>			
First Class Municipality	2.87	1.11	Moderately Serious
Second Class Municipality	2.07	0.14	Less Serious
Third Class Municipality	2.57	0.10	Less Serious
Fourth Class Municipality	2.19	0.27	Less Serious

The extent of “less serious” problems encountered in terms of accreditation and equivalency is a positive finding. However, Dumangas faced “moderately serious” problems, suggesting a need for focused attention in this municipality. The classification by municipality type indicated that first-class municipalities faced “moderately serious” problems, while second, third, and fourth-class municipalities encountered “less serious” problems. Tailored strategies for addressing challenges in first-class municipalities may contribute to further improvements.

Differences on the Status of Implementation (ALS Basic Literacy Program)

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no significant differences in the status of ALS basic literacy implementation when categorized by municipality ($p = 0.097$) or municipality classification ($p = 0.544$). This lack of significant variation indicates that the ALS program’s implementation has been consistent across different municipalities, regardless of their specific classification or economic profile. Whether a municipality is classified as first-class or third-class, or whether it is located in a more urban or rural area, the status of basic literacy implementation in ALS remains largely the same. This suggests that the program has been applied uniformly across the region, fostering a cohesive and equitable educational environment. The consistent implementation highlights the program’s adaptability and effectiveness in reaching diverse communities, ensuring that ALS is meeting its goals of improving literacy across the 4th Congressional District of Iloilo.

Table 5
Kruskal-Wallis Test on ALS Basic Literacy Implementation

Classification	H	df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
By Municipality	10.74	6	0.097	Accept H_0	No significant difference in the status of Implementation of ALS in Basic Literacy.
By Classification of Municipality	0.34	3	0.544	Accept H_0	No significant difference in the status of Implementation of ALS in Basic Literacy.

Differences on the Status of Implementation (ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Program)

Kruskal Wallis test results suggested no significant difference in the status of ALS accreditation and equivalency implementation when categorized by municipality ($p = 0.247$) or municipality classification ($p = 0.163$). Similarly, the lack of significant differences in the status of ALS accreditation and equivalency implementation across municipalities and municipality classifications signifies a consistent and effective implementation strategy. This indicates that ALS has been successful in tailoring its approach to meet the diverse needs of different municipalities.

Table 6
Kruskal-Wallis Test on ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Implementation

Classification	H	df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
By Municipality	7.88	6	0.247	Accept H_0	No significant difference in the status of implementation across municipalities.
By Classification of Municipality	5.12	3	0.163	Accept H_0	No significant difference in the status of implementation across classifications of municipalities.

Differences on the Extent of Problems Encountered (Basic Literacy Program)

Kruskal Wallis test results revealed no significant difference in the extent of problems encountered in basic literacy when categorized by municipality ($p = 0.728$) or municipality classification ($p = 0.543$). The absence of significant differences in the extent of problems encountered in basic literacy across municipalities and municipality classifications suggests that challenges are distributed uniformly. Addressing challenges may benefit from a standardized approach, with specific interventions where “moderately serious” problems are identified.

Table 7
Kruskal-Wallis Test on Problems in ALS Basic Literacy

Classification	H	df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
By Municipality	3.62	6	0.728	Accept H_0	No significant difference in the extent of problems encountered across municipalities.
By Classification of Municipality	0.62	3	0.543	Accept H_0	No significant difference in the extent of problems encountered across classifications of municipalities.

Differences on the Extent of Problems Encountered (Accreditation and Equivalency Program)

Kruskal Wallis test results indicated no significant difference in the extent of problems encountered in accreditation and equivalency when categorized by municipality ($p = 0.350$) or municipality classification ($p = 0.491$).

Table 8
Kruskal-Wallis Test on Problems in ALS Accreditation and Equivalency

Classification	H	df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
By Municipality	3.62	6	0.728	Accept H_0	No significant difference in the extent of problems encountered across municipalities.
By Classification of Municipality	0.62	3	0.543	Accept H_0	No significant difference in the extent of problems encountered across classifications of municipalities.

The non-significant differences in the extent of problems encountered in accreditation and equivalency across municipalities and municipality classifications indicate a consistent pattern of challenges. Targeted interventions, particularly in Dumangas and first-class municipalities, may enhance the effectiveness of the accreditation and equivalency program.

Relationships between the Status of Implementation and Extent of Problems Encountered

Spearman’s results unveil no significant relationship between the status of implementation and problems encountered in alternative learning systems, basic literacy, and accreditation and equivalency. The p-values were greater than 0.05, indicating that the extent of problems encountered by ALS implementers did not influence the implementation of alternative learning systems in basic literacy and accreditation and equivalency status.

Table 9
Spearman's Correlation Test

Variable Pair	r_s	Sig	Decision	Interpretation
Overall Status of Implementation and Problems Encountered	-0.203	0.378	Accept H_0	No significant relationship between overall status of implementation and problems encountered.
Basic Literacy Status and Problems Encountered	-0.301	0.185	Accept H_0	No significant relationship between basic literacy status and problems encountered.
Accreditation and Equivalency Status and Problems Encountered	-0.287	0.207	Accept H_0	No significant relationship between accreditation and equivalency status and problems encountered.

The lack of significant relationships between the status of implementation and the problems encountered in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), basic literacy, and accreditation and equivalency programs suggest that the challenges faced by ALS implementers have not had a major impact on the overall success of the program. This indicates that even though some challenges exist, such as logistical issues or resource limitations, the ALS has proven to be resilient. The system continues to operate effectively and maintain a positive trajectory, demonstrating the program's adaptability and the dedication of its implementers in overcoming obstacles. The results highlight the strength and sustainability of the ALS model, reinforcing its role in addressing literacy gaps despite the hurdles it faces.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study reveals an *overall positive status* of ALS implementation in the 4th Congressional District of the Iloilo province. While challenges exist, they are generally *less serious*, and the lack of significant differences across municipalities and municipality classifications suggests a uniform and effective implementation. This study provides a foundation for targeted interventions, ensuring the continued success and improvement of the ALS program in the region. Future research should focus on identifying region-specific barriers and developing targeted strategies for overcoming them. Additionally, the ALS program could benefit from enhancing community engagement and resource allocation to strengthen its impact on both basic literacy and accreditation programs, ensuring greater accessibility and success for out-of-school youth and adults in the region. These interventions would support long-term educational equity and development.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that they have no conflict of interest related to this research.

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