

Alternative learning system program's implementation landscape of a division in the Philippines

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program's implementation landscape in the Division of Dapitan City, Philippines, through the support mechanism's lens to instruction, teachers' attitude, and best practices. It utilized survey and correlational methods of research using a questionnaire checklist. Results revealed that ALS instruction's high support mechanism was small and positively low but significantly related to the teachers' highly positive attitudes towards work and the teachers' best practices in implementing the program. However, room for more significant improvement is deemed essential to raise the high to very high support since the teachers as implementers of the program possessed high disposition and registered best practices in embracing the program's implementation in the city. Hence, the division's administration should look for the best ways to raise funds and not rely only on the government's budget. The effort may be moderated by the proposed Enhanced Alternative Learning System Development Plan.

Keywords: Support mechanism, attitude, best practices

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1. Introduction

Education worldwide has long been identified and recognized as a significant partner in pursuing holistic human development. It has been equated with educational reforms, which underscore the importance of academic competence for all. It also plays a dominant role as an instrument for large-scale achievement and revolution in all spheres of human endeavor. It can be claimed to be equally vital as any basic needs of individuals in its broadest sense.

In the Philippines, De Guzman (2015) asserted that Filipino families recognize the importance of acquiring education towards productive living. However, Greenbaum (2017) posited that poverty drove many children and young individuals to experience child labor, child prostitution, and human trafficking. Although basic education is free, many are still not in school because of the lack of other essential needs (Roggero, Mangiaterra, Bustreo & Rosati, 2007). Eborá and Guillo (2018) reported that out of 100 Grade-One pupils, only 66 finished Grade Six, only 58 of the 66 enrolled in Grade 7, and only 43 completed high school. The report added that of the 43 who finished high school, only 23 enrolled in college, and only 14 of the 23 graduated from college (Eborá et al., 2018).

With this, the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) recommended the adoption of the expanded vision of Education for All (EFA) through the eradication of illiteracy and provision of basic education and life skills for out-of-school youths and adults (Tindowen, Bassig, & Cagurangan, 2017). It is identified as one of the strategies for poverty alleviation. But the government's goal to educate the Filipinos has not been addressed alone by the formal systems of education. Thus, the Governance Act for Basic Education, otherwise known as the Republic Act 9155, establishes the Alternative Learning System (ALS), which aims to provide out-of-school children, youths, and adults' population with basic education. Furthermore, Executive Order No. 356 stipulates that the ALS has a crucial role in enabling school dropouts to develop human capital and improve long-term educational outcomes and employment prospects.

However, many challenges have emerged in the implementation of the ALS since its inception. Lack of community-based instructional materials, delayed release of travel allowance, and absence of permanent room during the conduct of the learning sessions were reported by mobile teachers of the ALS (Pinca, 2015). Arpilleda (2018) added that stakeholders' inadequacy is evident, particularly those coming from the local government officials and the students' parents. Thus, despite the remarkable progress in expanding access to basic education, ALS instruction's support mechanisms such as instructional materials, facilities and equipment, financial resources, and cooperation from stakeholders remained elusive (Abasolo, 2017).

Although Tomacruz (2018) exposed that there were low participation and passing rates in ALS, which are indications that the implementation is not entirely convincing. Yet, an impressive number of students went on to surpass the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) examination and eventually earned degrees in college. In the realm of teaching, given a performing teacher, learning can still be made to happen despite deficiencies in the curriculum, technologically deprived classrooms, the inadequacy of instructional materials, unmotivated learners, inadequate facilities and equipment, insufficient financial support, and lack of stakeholders' support as long as the teachers are committed in their job (Anwer, Tahir, & Batool, 2012). Accordingly, teachers only need to be equipped with a positive attitude, best practices and be abreast of the global trend to stay ahead of their students because teachers' improved quality will inevitably redound to an enhanced quality of education. Gourneau (2005) supported that teachers' significant attitudes and practices can ultimately make a meaningful difference in their students' daily activities.

In a similar vein, Methner (2013) pointed out that administrative support improved teachers' attitudes by establishing schools as learning communities. Teachers of different stages in their careers may benefit as well from individualized and contextualized administrative support. In other words, teachers' attitudes could be manifested by adequate and sufficient human and financial support. Furthermore, Hoge (2016) asserted that instruction characteristics have a more significant effect on school development, particularly the students' academic progress. Nevertheless, researchers agree that there is no single, well-defined best way of teaching. The best practice is domain-specific, as well as goal-specific. It depends on the support mechanism to instruction that may influence the teachers' best practices.

However, the link of support mechanism to ALS instruction and the teachers' attitude, as well as their best practices, has not been assessed in depth. This study was set up to dig into the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program's implementation landscape through the lens of the support mechanism to ALS instruction, mobile teachers' attitude, and their best practices to commence in the Division of Dapitan City. The present effort attempted to establish a scientific basis to corroborate or refute the negative feedback regarding the program's implementation as viewed in the local setting. The researchers further looked into where the performance fantastically failed and identified the factors associated with the alleged poor implementation of ALS in the country. Most importantly, the study's upshots served as a basis in designing an enhanced development plan that will work best in the division under investigation and will also help as instrumental to other divisions in the country.

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

The study used survey and correlational methods of research with the aid of the questionnaire checklist. The survey method was used since the researcher gathered data through the use of a questionnaire. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) defined a survey as a research method used for collecting data from a pre-defined group of respondents to gain information and insights on various topics of interest. On the other hand, correlational research is a type of non-experimental research method. A researcher measures two variables, understands and assesses the statistical relationship between them with no influence from any extraneous variable (Bhat, 2019). In this study, a correlational analysis was performed to determine the significant relationship between the level of support mechanism to ALS instruction and the level of ALS teachers' attitude and the extent of their best practices.

2.2 Setting

The study took off in the schools' division in the historical city of Dapitan in the Philippines. At the time of the survey, Dapitan City was composed of seventeen (17) ALS mobile teachers with 258 learners. ALS mobile teachers of the division fulfilled their daily jobs, duties, and responsibilities in the city's 51 barangays. They were also the essential individuals who planned and implemented the daily routines within the educational setting. Likewise, the number of learning sessions (e.g., PBL, elementary, secondary) catered by each mobile teacher was a great challenge. The mobile teachers, in general, were at the forefronts in various learning activities that centrally uphold students' holistic development. Hence, to picture out the ALS implementation level in the division, this study was essential to provide research-based results in responding to the ALS program's negative national feedback that what had been perceived nationally may not be right in the division under study.

Likewise, the survey collected evidence to support that the ALS program's implementation level translates the mobile teachers' attitude and best practices in delivering the ALS curriculum in Dapitan City. As a result of the study, possible corrective measures were crafted to address ALS mobile teachers' ponderous role. Moreover, the study attempt was considered unique because this investigation was of help to support the national government efforts to enhance the implementation of the ALS program in the division under investigation in particular and in the country in general.

2.3 Respondents of the study

The study respondents were the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program mobile teachers and students in the Dapitan City division. No sampling technique was used to get the respondents of the study since they were considered participants. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in the survey.

Table 1. Respondents of the study

Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Teachers	17	6.18
Students	258	93.82
Total	275	100

2.4 Research instrument

The instrument had two (2) sets: research instrument for teachers and research instrument for learners. Each set included four (4) parts. The first part dealt with the personal profile of the respondents. The second part was about the Support Mechanism to ALS Instruction Scale with four (4) indicators, namely: instructional materials, facilities and equipment, financial resources, and cooperation from stakeholders. The third part of the instrument was the Alternative Learning System Teachers' Attitude Scale with five (5) indicators: dedication and passion, leadership potential, knowledge of ALS curriculum, teaching-learning management skills/strategies, and relationship with the internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, the fourth part was the ALS Teachers' Best Practices Scale. Abasolo (2017) provided the indicators and descriptors of the study.

2.5 Validation of the instrument

The researchers subjected the instrument to specific validation processes since the researchers adopted the tool from a study with no specific validation procedures. The validation processes included the content and face validity, construct validity using factor analysis, reliability using the test-retest method, and internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient. The exploratory factor analysis revealed six factors, namely: instructional materials, facilities and equipment, financial resources, cooperation from stakeholders, teachers' attitude, and teachers' best practices. The items in the questionnaire revealed factor loadings ≥ 0.5 . Reliability processes also showed a high correlation and consistency of the responses. Likewise, the test-retest statistic examination revealed the stability of the answers at two time points apart. Moreover, the instrument which consisted of 25 items for the support mechanism to ALS instruction (5-instructional materials,

10-facilities and equipment, 5-financial resources, and 5-cooperation from stakeholders), 15 items for the teachers' attitude, and ten items for the teachers' best practices was found valid and reliable.

2.6 Scoring procedure

To draw out the responses of the respondents along with the level of the support mechanism to ALS instruction, scoring using the four-point Likert scale format was employed as follows:

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
4	3.26 – 4.00	Very High	Exceedingly Implemented
3	2.51 – 3.25	High	Properly Implemented
2	1.76 – 2.50	Low	Fairly Implemented
1	1.00 – 1.75	Very Low	Poorly Implemented

Likewise, to draw out the responses of the respondent-groups along with the level of the ALS teachers' attitude, scoring utilizing the four-point Likert scale format was also used as follows:

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
4	3.26 – 4.00	Highly Positive	Very High Disposition
3	2.51 – 3.25	Positive	High Disposition
2	1.76 – 2.50	Negative	Low Disposition
1	1.00 – 1.75	Highly Negative	Very Low Disposition

Moreover, to draw out the responses of the respondents along with the extent of the ALS teachers practices, scoring using the four-point Likert scale format was also employed as follows:

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
4	3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree	Best Practice
3	2.51 – 3.25	Agree	Better Practice
2	1.76 – 2.50	Disagree	Good Practice
1	1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree	Poor Practice

2.7 Data-gathering procedure

Before administering the questionnaires, the researchers wrote a letter of request to the Schools Division Superintendent of the City Schools Division of Dapitan to seek permission to survey the ALS mobile teachers and their students. Furthermore, the researchers also wrote a letter of consent to mobile teachers and the students' parents. The teachers and the students, who refused to participate in the survey, were not included in the research. Those teachers and students whose parents consented but opted not to participate were not forced to do so. The researchers clearly explained to the respondents that their participation is confidential. All information they will provide will be kept safe and will be used for the research only.

Likewise, the researchers closely coordinated with the teacher to let them know when the students will be in the school learning center. The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents and immediately gathered the questionnaires when the participants were done answering to ensure a high return percentage of responses. After the respondents responded to the instrument, the questionnaires were immediately retrieved, tallied, computed, and interpreted.

2.8 Statistical treatment

Weighted Mean. It was used to quantify the ratings of the respondents in the level of support mechanism to instruction. It was also employed to quantify the ALS teachers' attitudes and the extent of their practices.

Standard Deviation. It was used to determine the degree of homogeneity and heterogeneity of the responses where $SD < 3$ is homogeneous and $SD > 3$ is heterogeneous (Aiken & Susane, 2001; Refugio, Galleto, & Torres, 2019; Refugio, Bulado, Galleto, Dimalig, Colina, Inoferio & Nocete, 2020).

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation. It was used to determine the relationship between the level of support mechanism to ALS instruction and the ALS teachers' attitude and the relationship between the level of support mechanism to ALS instruction and the ALS teachers' extent of their best practices.

The following guide in interpreting the value of ρ , suggested by Cohen, West, and Aiken (2014), was utilized.

Value	Size	Interpretation
± 0.50 to ± 1.00	Large	High positive/negative correlation
± 0.30 to ± 0.49	Medium	Moderate positive/negative correlation
± 0.10 to ± 0.29	Small	Low positive/negative correlation
± 0.01 to ± 0.09	Negligible	Slight positive/negative correlation
0.00		No correlation

3. Results and Discussions

Table 2. The level of support mechanism to alternative learning system instruction

Indicators	Teachers			Learners		
	Mean	SD	D	Mean	SD	D
Instructional Materials	3.02	0.25	High	3.26	0.50	Very High
Facilities and Equipment	2.72	0.48	High	3.01	0.50	High
Financial Resources	2.17	0.44	Low	2.64	0.73	High
Cooperation from Stakeholders	2.92	0.39	High	3.04	0.53	High
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation	2.71	0.31	High	2.99	0.39	High

SD – Standard Deviation, D – Description

Table 2 reveals that the level of support mechanism to ALS instruction as perceived by the teachers and learners was "high." Moreover, the standard deviations for all the indicators were less than 3.00, indicating a close clustering of the mean's responses. It means a higher degree of homogeneity of the respondents' answers to ALS instruction's support mechanism. It further shows that the ALS program's implementation in the division under survey was proper as viewed through the support mechanism to ALS instruction. The finding implies that there are still some improvements to be made for the excellent implementation of the ALS program in the Dapitan City division.

The present finding substantiated Mercado's (2015) result, which revealed that the ALS students were contented with the ALS system in Tanauan City. However, they gave some suggestions to improve further the services that the program provided to the students. Abasolo (2017) also

suggested that the ALS implementation in Talisay City, Cebu, should be strengthened to realize the program's goals fully.

Table 3. The level of teachers' attitude towards the ALS implementation

Indicators	Teachers			Learners		
	Mean	SD	D	Mean	SD	D
Dedication and Passion	3.24	0.36	Positive	3.45	0.45	Highly Positive
Leadership Potential	3.37	0.41	Highly Positive	3.45	0.50	Highly Positive
Knowledge of ALS Curriculum	3.22	0.35	Positive	3.45	0.52	Highly Positive
Teaching-Learning Management Skills/Strategies	3.10	0.41	Positive	3.40	0.54	Highly Positive
Relationship with both Internal and External Stakeholders	3.39	0.39	Highly Positive	3.36	0.54	Highly Positive
			Highly Positive			Highly Positive
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation	3.26	0.35	Positive	3.42	0.47	Positive

SD – Standard Deviation, D – Description

Table 3 presents that the teachers and learners in Dapitan City unanimously indicated that the ALS teachers were "highly positive" in their attitude towards implementing the ALS program. Standard deviations that are less than 3.0 supported a high degree of homogeneity on their responses. It means that the teachers as implementers of the ALS program possessed a high disposition in embracing the program's implementation in Dapitan City. It implies that the ALS teachers are highly and positively optimistic about achieving the program's goals and gradually change the learners' lives.

Abasolo (2017) substantiated the current finding when he revealed that ALS's implementers in DepEd Talisay City were skillful enough to implement the program. However, he stressed that the ALS teachers were still open and welcome to any change and suggestions for improving the ALS program. It is also evident in the Division of Dapitan City, where ALS teachers are submissive to change.

Table 4. The extent of the ALS teachers' best practices in carrying out the ALS instruction as perceived by the respondent-groups

Descriptors	Teachers			Learners		
	AWV	SD	D	AWV	SD	D
1. Ensures participation of the out of school youths and adults in the ALS program.	3.47	0.514	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.59	0.667	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice
2. Optimizes Jail inmates' participation in the ALS program.	3.29	0.470	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.21	0.884	Agree/ Better Practice
3. Establishes a healthy and positive relationship between the learner's parents and implementers.	3.35	0.606	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.50	0.718	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice
4. Links community cooperation with the affairs of the ALS programs and activities.	3.41	0.618	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.47	0.673	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice

			Practice			Practice
5. Increases the number of passers in the ALS Assessment and Equivalency Test.	3.29	0.588	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.48	0.701	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice
6. Develops complimentary views of learners towards education.	3.41	0.507	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.51	0.707	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice
7. Ensures technical support from the local school board and DepEd in the program of ALS.	2.94	1.029	Agree/ Better Practice	3.47	0.744	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice
8. Creates permanent community learning centers.	2.88	1.054	Agree/ Better Practice	3.26	0.904	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice
9. Reaches the poorest of the poor to ensure education for all.	3.65	0.490	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.47	0.749	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice
10. Provides equal opportunities, regardless of the diversity of learners.	3.41	0.712	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.52	0.718	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation	3.31	0.607	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice	3.45	0.545	Strongly Agree/ Best Practice

SD – Standard Deviation, D – Description

Table 4 discloses that, on average, teachers and learners both "strongly agreed" on the practices of the ALS teachers in the implementation of the ALS program. It means that the ALS teachers provided best practices in implementing the program in the division of Dapitan City. It implies that the ALS program's continuing implementation is due to the ALS teachers' best practices and their high disposition towards the program's performance despite the perceived low financial resources as a support mechanism to ALS instruction.

The present finding contradicted Abasolo's (2017) investigation, whose study revealed that ALS mobile teachers' practices were only good. The study suggested that ALS mobile teachers should be given more attention by the top-level management of the division of Talisay City to enhance their practices to the fullest.

Table 5. Test of the relationship between the level of the support mechanism to ALS instruction and the level of the ALS teachers' attitude

Variables	<i>p-value</i>	<i>p-value @ .05</i>	<i>Decisions</i>
Support Mechanism to ALS Instruction and	0.240	0.000	Small/Low Positive/ Significant

Teachers' Attitude

The support mechanism to ALS instruction was small and positively low but significantly related to the teachers' attitude towards implementing the ALS program in Dapitan City (Table 5). The computed p -value supported the result with a p -value, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. It means that those teachers and learners who indicated low in the support mechanism to ALS instruction also showed low in the teachers' attitude towards implementing the program. Soibamcha and Pandey (2016) corroborated the present finding. Their study disclosed that the teachers' attitude in implementing school programs depends mainly on how they are implemented.

Table 6. Test of the relationship between the level of the support mechanism to ALS instruction and the level of the ALS teachers' best practices

Variables	<i>p</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value @ .05	Decisions
Support Mechanism to ALS Instruction and Teachers' Best Practices	0.230	0.000	Small/Low Positive/ Significant

Table 6 reveals that ALS instruction's support mechanism was also small and positively low but significantly related to the teachers' best practices in the Division of Dapitan City. The computed p -value ($p = 0.230$) supported the result with a p -value, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. It means that the teachers and learners who indicated high support mechanisms to ALS instruction also showed high teachers' best practices. The present finding substantiated Abasolo's (2017) study, which exposed that the extent of the teachers' best practices in the implementation of the ALS program relied mainly on how the Department of Education supported the program implementation.

4. Conclusions

The mobile teachers and students exposed that the ALS program's implementation in the Division of Dapitan City was high. It can be concluded that the program's performance in the division is proper, as viewed through the lens of the support mechanism to ALS instruction. Although, the support mechanism to ALS instruction is low along with the financial resources, the scarcity of which may be due to the acquisition of instructional materials, facilities, and other school equipment needed in carrying out the ALS program. It can be deduced further that the budget allocated for the implementation reflects the high availability of instructional materials, facilities, and school equipment.

Furthermore, the result disclosed that ALS mobile teachers possessed a high positive attitude towards their work. It can be deduced that the itinerant teachers, as implementers of the ALS program, have a high disposition in embracing the program's implementation in the city. They are highly and positively optimistic about achieving the program's goals.

Moreover, the study revealed that the ALS mobile teachers provided best practices in delivering the community's program. It means that the ALS mobile teachers in the Division of Dapitan City in the Philippines are tightly committed to teaching with the firm belief that education changes the lives of the out-of-school-youth learners in the locality.

5. Recommendations

The study recommends that the Division of Dapitan City's administration look for the best ways to raise funds and not rely only on the government's budget to implement the ALS program. The financial resources as the common denominator in implementing the ALS program could help raise the instructional materials, facilities, and equipment. Likewise, stakeholders' cooperation can be strengthened to boost more financial support to ensure the ALS program's excellent implementation in the Dapitan City Division. The effort may be moderated by the proposed Enhanced Alternative Learning System Development Plan.

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