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A process evaluation of the Philippine Alternative Learning System

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DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES NO. 2024-31

A Process Evaluation of the Philippine Alternative Learning System

Jose Ramon G. Albert, Ronald U. Mendoza, Deanne Lorraine D. Cabalfin, Mohammad A. Mahmoud, and Mika S. Muñoz



Philippine Institute for Development Studies

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18th Floor, Three Cyberpod Centris - North Tower EDSA corner Quezon Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines A Process Evaluation of the Philippine Alternative Learning System

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive process evaluation of the Department of Education's Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, examining its effectiveness in providing second-chance education opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults (OSYAs). While the ALS plays a vital role in the Philippine education system, systematic evidence on its implementation effectiveness, operational processes, and institutional capabilities has thus far been limited. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of administrative data, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and an online survey of 4,933 ALS past and current learners. This multi-faceted methodology provides both broad insights into system-wide patterns and granular understanding of implementation challenges.

The evaluation reveals significant institutional strengths, particularly in teacher dedication and program adaptability. However, severe resource constraints hamper program effectiveness. Key findings demonstrate that the ALS faces significant operational constraints. Most notably, despite serving 0.8 percent of basic education learners, ALS receives only 0.1 percent of DepED's budget. This resource disparity manifests in concerning ways: a pupil-teacher ratio of 75:1 (compared to an ideal 25:1), inadequate facilities with 61 percent of Community Learning Centers below standard size requirements, and limited learning materials.

Results from the online survey reveal high satisfaction with teaching quality (95%), though only 54 percent of program completers are employed, with 51 percent reporting high job-skill alignment. Work-study balance emerges as a significant challenge, particularly for working learners (45%), while financial difficulties affect 22 percent of participants. Gender disparities are notable, with female employment rates lagging significantly behind males, particularly in the 25-35 age group (34% versus 65%).

The analysis also examines trends in the out-of-school youth population, considering the complementary effects of other interventions like the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). Projections suggest this population could decrease to approximately 500,000 by 2035, requiring strategic recalibration of the ALS program's scope and delivery models. This potential reduction raises fundamental questions about the program's "endgame" - specifically, what constitutes a manageable level of out-of-school youth based on Philippine context and international standards.

The recommendations emphasize the need for increased funding, improved resource allocation, enhanced teacher training, stronger coordination among stakeholders, and innovative approaches to curriculum design and delivery. Additionally, the study calls for better alignment between ALS and other social protection programs, clearer metrics for measuring program effectiveness, and more targeted support for working learners and female participants. These findings are expected to inform evidence-based policymaking and catalyze strategic reforms to enhance the accessibility, quality, and relevance of alternative education in the Philippines.

Keywords: alternative education, out-of-school youth, program evaluation, educational governance, implementation efficiency, Philippines

Abbreviations

A&E	Accreditation and Equivalency
ADM	Alternative Delivery Modes
ALS	Alternative Learning System
APIS	Annual Poverty Indicators Survey
BAE	Bureau of Alternative Education
BALS	Bureau of Alternative Learning System
BLP	Basic Literacy Program
CLC	Community Learning Center
DepED	Department of Education
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EDCOM2	Second Congressional Commission on Education
FLO	Flexible Learning Options
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLT	Functional Literacy Test
GAA	General Appropriations Act
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IP	Indigenous Peoples
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGU	Local Government Unit
LIS	Learner Information System
LSB	Local School Board
LRN	Learner Reference Number
MEA	Monitoring, Evaluation and Adjustment
MIS	Management Information System
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
OSYA	Out-of-School Youth and Adults
OOSY	Out-of-School
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
RA	Republic Act
SDO	Schools Division Office
SEF	Special Education Fund
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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A Process Evaluation of the Philippine Alternative Learning System

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1. Introduction

The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 emphasizes the development of individual and family capabilities as a key strategy for societal progress (NEDA 2022). A critical component of this strategy is expanding access to transformative and high-quality lifelong learning opportunities. Despite significant strides in improving basic education access over recent decades, a substantial number of Filipino youth and adults still lack basic education credentials.

As of 2022, estimates from the Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS) suggest that approximately 3.6 million out-of-school youth (OSY) have not completed basic education. While this number has decreased from 5.2 million in 2016, it underscores the persistent challenge and the critical importance of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) of the Department of Education (DepED) as a parallel learning system designed to provide a second chance at basic education for out-of-school youth and adults (OSYAs).

Figure 1 illustrates the trends in youth aged 15-24 years old by current school attendance and basic educational attainment from 2016 to 2022.

Figure 1. Youth aged 15-24 years old, by current attendance in school and basic educational attainment, 2016-2022 (in Millions)



Source: Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS), 2016-2022, PSA Note: Estimates derived by authors from APIS 2019, APIS 2020 and APIS 2022 microdata

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The data shows a gradual increase in school attendance rates among youth aged 15-24 years, rising from 41.5% in 2016 to 64.9% in 2022. This improvement has been more pronounced among girls (41.7% in 2016 to 68.3% in 2022) compared to boys (41.2% in 2016 to 61.7% in 2022). Correspondingly, the proportion of youth not currently enrolled and who have not finished basic education has decreased from 26.3% in 2016 to 17.7% in 2022. These findings appear consistent with the literature on social safety nets in the Philippines, particularly the impact evaluations on the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) which reveal some success in mitigating school dropouts. (See, e.g., DSWD, PIDS, World Bank and ADB 2020)

Despite these improvements, the 2022 data reveals persistent challenges, with approximately 2.3 million males and 1.3 million females remaining out of school without completing basic education. These figures reflect the pandemic's significant impact on vulnerable households during the 2020-2022 period and its immediate aftermath. During this period, the incomes and assets of low-income and poor Filipino households were severely depleted, with studies showing widespread socioeconomic disruptions. The study of Cho et al. (2021) analyzes these impacts on education and health services for low-income households using panel data from December 2019 to October 2020, revealing significant challenges in distance learning and lack of access to gadgets. These findings are further corroborated by UNDP and UNICEF's (2020) assessment of Metro Manila households, which documented substantial income reductions alongside educational disruptions despite government social protection efforts. The severity of household impacts is further illustrated by Angeles-Agdeppa et al. (2022), who found that 62.1% of Filipino households experienced moderate to severe food insecurity during strict quarantines. Lubangco and Tuano (2023) demonstrate through CGE-microsimulation analysis that without cash assistance interventions, poverty levels would have increased dramatically, highlighting the critical role of social protection during this period. This confluence of economic hardship, educational disruption, and household stress likely contributed to the persistent gender disparity in out-of-school youth, with more boys being left out of learning opportunities - a concerning trend that requires attention.

Table 1 presents the primary reasons for non-attendance in school among youth aged 15-24 years old who have not completed basic education, based on APIS 2022 data.

Reason	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Accessibility of school	0.3	0.4	0.4
Illness/disability	4.4	5.6	4.9
Pregnancy	0.0	7.1	2.6
Marriage	7.9	33.8	17.1
High cost of education	10.8	8.9	10.1
Employment	34.0	14.6	27.1
Looking for work	6.8	2.9	5.4
Lack of personal interest	27.3	9.9	21.1
Due to Covid-19	0.2	0.3	0.2
Bullying	0.6	0.5	0.6
Family matters	5.6	13.7	8.5

Table 1. Distribution of Out-of-School Youth Aged 15-24 Years by Reason for Non-Attendance and Sex: 2022 (in percent)

Reason	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Others, specify	2.0	2.3	2.1

Source: Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS), 2022, PSA Note: Estimates derived by authors from APIS 2022 microdata

The data reveals that the main reasons for non-attendance differ significantly between genders. For young males, the primary reasons are employment (34.0%), lack of personal interest (27.3%), and the high cost of education (10.8%). In contrast, young females predominantly cite marriage (33.8%), employment (14.6%), and family matters (13.7%) as their top three reasons for not attending school. These findings highlight the complex interplay of economic and gender issues affecting educational attainment among Filipino youth.

The ALS aims to offer flexible learning opportunities for those who cannot access or have dropped out of the formal education system. It provides basic literacy programs as well as elementary and secondary equivalency programs, allowing learners to earn certifications equivalent to formal school diplomas. However, the scale of the need far outstrips the current capacity of the ALS. At present, the system can only accommodate about 600,000 learners out of the targeted population of millions. The total potential beneficiaries has not been clarified by the program, and its link to other safety nets like 4Ps in arresting the growth in the total number of out of school youth can be further clarified.

A stark illustration of the resource constraints facing the ALS is evident in its budget allocation. Despite serving 2.7% of all learners in basic education as of SY 2024-2025, the ALS receives only 0.09% of the DepED's total budget. This significant disparity between the proportion of learners served and the proportion of budget allocated is an indicator of the resource limitations under which the ALS operates. According to the DepED, the authorized appropriation allocated to the ALS in 2024-2025 stands at Php 632 million. Nevertheless, clarifying the total potential beneficiaries and the narrative around managing this total number over time will be critical in strategically investing in ALS, to prevent a direction-less expansion in the program whose endgame remains unclear. This narrative must also be made coherent with its role vis-à-vis other major safety nets like the 4Ps.

Furthermore, the current state of the ALS is characterized by severe understaffing. While the ideal pupil-teacher ratio for effective instruction is around 25:1, the actual ratio in the ALS stands at an alarming 75:1. This high ratio not only places an enormous burden on ALS teachers but also raises serious concerns about the quality of instruction and individual attention that learners can receive.

Given these challenges, it is critical to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of ALS program implementation. This study aims to conduct a comprehensive process evaluation of the ALS to assess its design, implementation, and outcomes. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Map and analyze existing workflows, guidelines, monitoring, and decision-making processes in ALS implementation;
- Identify strengths and gaps in governance, budgeting, curriculum, and other key processes;
- Assess the efficiency and agility of procurement, coordination, and knowledge management;

- Evaluate the impact of resource constraints, including budget limitations and high pupil-teacher ratios, on program effectiveness;
- Provide evidence-based recommendations to strengthen ALS processes and systems, with a particular focus on addressing resource allocation and staffing challenges.

The findings of this evaluation will provide crucial evidence-based guidance to DepED and other stakeholders on improving the delivery and impact of ALS. By examining the enabling and constraining factors in ALS operations, including the significant resource limitations, the study aims to inform policy and practice to enhance educational opportunities for marginalized OSYAs in the Philippines.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Evolution and Policy Context of ALS

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines has undergone significant evolution since its origins in early 20th-century basic adult education policies. Arzadon and Nato (2015) trace this progression to the recent enactment of the Alternative Learning System Act in 2020, which emphasizes improving access for out-of-school children and youth. The ALS serves as a parallel non-formal education program designed for out-of-school youth and adults, integrating independent learning, tutorials, and flexible group sessions to offer accessible basic education culminating in a high school equivalency certificate. This approach reflects a growing recognition of the need for flexible learner-centered educational options that can accommodate the diverse needs and circumstances of OSYAs (David et al. 2018).

Several key policy developments have shaped the current incarnation of ALS:

- The 2001 Governance of Basic Education Act recognized ALS as a "parallel learning system" alongside formal schooling, legitimizing its role in the broader educational landscape.
- In 2004, the Bureau of Non-Formal Education was renamed the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS), signaling a shift in focus and approach towards more comprehensive and structured alternative education options.
- The passage of the Alternative Learning System Act in 2020 further institutionalized ALS, reflecting a growing recognition of the need for flexible learning options to reach out-of-school populations. This act aimed to strengthen the ALS framework and improve its implementation across the country. In place of the BALS, the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE) now manages the ALS.

These policy changes reflect growing recognition of the need for flexible learning options to reach out-of-school populations. The ALS was positioned as a key strategy to achieve Education for All goals and provide second-chance education opportunities (UNESCO 2015). The Department of Education's ALS Roadmap (DepED, 2020) further outlines the strategic plan for enhancing access, equity, and quality of alternative education in the Philippines. This roadmap details goals,

strategies, and initiatives aimed at improving ALS implementation, including teacher training, curriculum development, and partnerships with local governments and NGOs.

2.2. ALS Participation and Outcomes

Literature on ALS participation and outcomes reveals a mixed picture. While enrollment data indicates a significant increase in participation, with over 800,000 learners reported in 2018 (Pimentel and Bañares 2018), the outcomes have been less consistent. Pass rates on the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) exam ranged from only 9-28% over the period 2000-2014, with many examinees requiring multiple attempts (Arzadon and Nato 2015). These low pass rates raise questions about the effectiveness of the program in preparing learners for certification and highlight the need for improved instructional quality and learner support.

Figure 2 presents the ALS enrollment by region and by program for School Year 2023-2024, based on the DepED's Learner Information System (LIS), as of February 2024.





Source: Department of Education Learner Information System (LIS), Feb. 2024

The data indicates that the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Secondary level accounts for the majority of enrollments, comprising approximately 75.2% of all ALS learners. Geographically, the regions with the highest concentration of ALS enrollees are Region V (Bicol), Region XI (Davao), and Region IV-A (CALABARZON), demonstrating significant participation in these areas.

According to Igarashi and Yamauchi (2015), the ALS target population of OSYAs who have not completed basic education ranges from 5-6 million. However, ALS enrollment has remained relatively low compared to the size of the target population. In 2017, only about 10% of potential learners were enrolled in ALS programs (World Bank 2016). Key barriers to participation include high opportunity costs for working youth/adults and uncertainty about economic returns (Yamauchi et al. 2016). Recent data from the APIS 2022 suggests that the ALS target population has come down to around 3.6 million, about two-thirds (64.6%) of which are boys, who are predominantly not in school because of employment (while among girls predominantly, they are not in school more because of marriage, though employment and family reasons are also important reasons).

According to the World Bank (Yamauchi et al. 2016), the chances of employment and monthly income increase with the level of achievement in ALS programs, particularly for those progressing from non-learner status to passing the A&E Secondary Level exam. However, the same report also noted that even among A&E Secondary Level passers, 50% reported being unemployed, highlighting ongoing challenges in translating educational achievements into improved economic outcomes.

A recent study by UNICEF (2021) examines the barriers faced by out-of-school adolescents in accessing and completing the ALS program across seven regions in the Philippines. The research highlights financial constraints, lack of parental guidance, and disinterest as major factors influencing dropout rates, providing valuable insights into the challenges of ALS implementation.

The magnitude of non-completers in secondary school compared to elementary remains high, accompanied by a relatively low enrollment rate at the high school level (**Figure 3**). This population of formal education dropouts represents the primary target market for ALS interventions, underscoring the critical role of ALS in addressing educational inequities. From this trend it is possible to consider how the total ALS potential target beneficiaries could be declining over time due to the effectiveness of 4Ps in also reducing school dropouts. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, the recent trends during and the immediate aftermath of the pandemic requires that this premise be revisited and analyzed.



Figure 3. Cohort Survival Rates in Philippine Basic Education: 2000-2020

Source: DepED, various years

2.3. ALS Program Components

The ALS comprises two main program components (DepED 2019):

- 1. Basic Literacy Program (BLP) Aims to develop basic literacy skills among non-literate youth and adults
- 2. Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Program: Offers elementary and secondary level equivalency programs leading to certification.

The BLP and A&E programs are delivered by ALS teachers/facilitators known as Instructional Managers and Mobile Teachers. Learning typically occurs through a combination of self-learning modules, face-to-face sessions, and other flexible delivery modes. Learners who complete the programs can take the A&E test to earn elementary or secondary level certification (DepED 2019).

The ALS 2.0 Monitoring and Evaluation System Operations Handbook (DepED 2022) outlines several key processes for learner entry into the ALS:

1. *Community Mapping*: ALS implementers, particularly ALS teachers, conduct community mapping to identify potential learners. This involves collaborating with local government units, barangay officials, and community organizations to locate out-of-school youth and adults who might benefit from the program.

- 2. Advocacy and Social Mobilization: The ALS program conducts awareness campaigns and community outreach to inform potential learners about the opportunities available through ALS. This may include information sessions, distribution of promotional materials, and engagement with local media.
- 3. *Learner's Registration*: Interested individuals can register for ALS at Community Learning Centers (CLCs) or with ALS mobile teachers. The registration process typically involves:
 - Filling out a basic information form
 - Providing proof of identity (where available)
 - Participating in an initial interview to assess learning needs and goals
- 4. *Functional Literacy Test*: New registrants typically undergo a Functional Literacy Test (FLT) to determine their current level of basic literacy and numeracy skills. This helps in placing learners in appropriate learning groups or streams.
- 5. *Learning Agreement*: Once registered and assessed, learners enter into a learning agreement with the ALS provider. This outlines the expectations, schedule, and commitments from both the learner and the program.

ALS offers various modes of learning to accommodate different learner needs and circumstances:

- Face-to-face sessions at Community Learning Centers
- Modular distance learning
- Online or digital learning platforms
- Radio-based instruction
- TV-based instruction
- Blended learning approaches

Based on the initial assessment and learner goals, individualized learning plans are developed to guide each learner's progression through the program.

Unlike the formal school system, ALS allows for continuous enrollment throughout the year, providing flexibility for learners who may need to start at different times due to work or family commitments.

The ALS program aims to provide support services to address barriers to participation, which may include:

- Provision of learning materials
- Guidance and counseling
- Referrals to other social services as needed

From the outset, ALS implementers work with learners to plan for their transition after completing the program, whether to further education, employment, or other personal goals.

2.4. Challenges in ALS Implementation

A comprehensive overview by Yamauchi et al. (2016) examines ALS's objectives, challenges, and outcomes, underscoring its vital role in providing educational opportunities to out-of-school populations. The study identifies several key challenges, including low enrollment and passing rates, high opportunity costs for learners, and uneven regional effectiveness in program implementation.

Based on these findings, researchers have proposed various recommendations to enhance the ALS program. These include improving resource allocation to address regional disparities, enhancing learning environments to better support diverse learner needs, and developing strategies to address the socioeconomic obstacles that often prevent participation or completion of the program. Yamauchi et al. (2016) and other researchers advocate for differentiated programming based on remedial needs, economic barriers, and regional variations to optimize ALS's potential for transforming literacy skills and livelihoods among its target population.

The World Bank's (2018) assessment of the ALS program provides insights into its effectiveness in developing human capital among out-of-school youth and adults. The report highlights challenges and offers recommendations for policy and practice to enhance ALS outcomes.

A comprehensive analysis of ALS Community Learning Centers (CLCs) conducted by DepED, USAID, EDC, and SEameotec (2024) reveals key findings on the nature, ownership, physical profiles, accessibility, sanitation, and learning environments of CLCs. This study provides crucial policy recommendations aimed at improving the sustainability and effectiveness of ALS programs.

Several qualitative studies have provided deeper insights into ALS operations, contexts, and impacts:

- Arzadon and Nato (2015) conducted a case study of 52 ALS centers using teacher education student narratives, highlighting the dedication of ALS teachers but also noting uneven learner outcomes.
- Pimentel and Bañares (2018) performed a needs analysis of 25 ALS teachers in Antipolo City, revealing challenges such as high teacher-learner ratios (1:65), communication skills gaps, and pedagogical difficulties.
- Tindowen et al. (2017) surveyed 150 ALS learners in Northern Philippines, finding low attainment of 21st century skills among ALS youth.
- Guiamalon (2022) conducted a qualitative study of ALS success stories in Cotabato, demonstrating positive social and economic impacts of the program but also highlighting the need for ongoing curriculum development and teacher capacity building.
- Bantulo and Guhao (2016) carried out a phenomenological study of 26 ALS learners in Sarangani, finding that self-direction, diligence, and a positive attitude were key factors enabling progress despite various difficulties faced by learners.

A study by Mehra et al. (2021) evaluated the cost-effectiveness of the ALS program offered by the Balay Rehabilitation Centre in Manila, targeting out-of-school youth at risk of urban violence.

It found that the ALS intervention significantly improves educational attainment and is costeffective compared to a "do nothing" approach.

The literature collectively indicates ALS has provided marginalized Filipinos alternate pathways to complete basic education. However systemic issues around resources, teaching capacities and learning supports have persisted. Yamauchi et al. (2016) and others advocate differentiated programming based on remedial needs, economic barriers and regional variations to optimize ALS potential for transforming literacy, skills and livelihoods.

2.5. Recent Developments and Ongoing Challenges

Recent efforts to strengthen the ALS system are outlined in the ALS 2.0 Handbook (2022), including the development of a comprehensive Monitoring Evaluation and Adjustment (MEA) System, the establishment of Community Learning Centers (CLCs), and a renewed focus on improving teacher competencies and learning materials.

A recent hearing of the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM2) on the ALS highlighted several persistent challenges facing the ALS program (EDCOM2, 2024). These include limited funding, with ALS representing only 1% of the basic education budget (considering that ALS learners comprise 0.8% of total learners in basic education), uneven distribution of resources across regions, and high learner-to-teacher ratios (currently at 75:1 compared to the ideal 25:1).

Recent studies have also focused on the broader ecosystem surrounding OSY in the Philippines. USAID's (2022a) rapid assessment of out-of-school youth engagement highlights key factors such as socio-economic barriers, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of community-based programs in supporting OSY. Additionally, USAID's (2022b) Opportunity 2.0 OSY Ecosystem Findings and Recommendations identifies key stakeholders, their roles, and dynamics within the OSY ecosystem, providing recommendations for improving coordination and enhancing employment outcomes for OSY.

Looking towards future opportunities, Accenture and EDC's (2022) Blue and Green Economy Labour Market Assessment explores the potential for integrating sustainable industry sectors into the labor market for out-of-school youth in the Philippines. This assessment identifies key growth areas and necessary skills, pointing towards potential directions for ALS curriculum development and vocational training.

The transition of ALS graduates to higher education or employment remains a significant challenge, suggesting a need for stronger linkages with technical-vocational institutions, higher education institutions, and potential employers. This highlights the importance of not only providing educational opportunities through ALS but also ensuring that these opportunities translate into tangible improvements in learners' life prospects.

While the literature suggests that the ALS system has made efforts to adjust its resources, instructional materials, teacher quality, and training to meet these challenges, questions remain about the cost-effectiveness of this approach. There is ongoing policy debate about whether resources might be better directed towards addressing root causes of educational deficits in the

formal education system rather than channeling resources to "stop the hemorrhage" through ALS. This perspective underscores the need for a holistic approach to education reform that considers the interconnections between formal and alternative learning systems.

3. Study Methodology

This study employs an integrated mixed-methods approach that combines: (1) quantitative analysis of administrative data and survey responses; (2) qualitative insights from key informant interviews and focus group discussions; and (3) document analysis of policy materials and program guidelines. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The mixed methods design leverages the strengths of quantitative indicators from administrative data and an online survey of past and current ALS learners, as well as qualitative narratives to capture both broad trends and in-depth insights into ALS implementation effectiveness and outcomes.

3.1. Data Sources

This study utilizes a comprehensive range of data sources to ensure a thorough evaluation of the ALS program:

- (i) Administrative data from DepED's BAE on ALS enrollment, completion, and certification;
- (ii) 2017 ALS Snapshot Survey conducted across 5 regions, covering facilitators, current learners, and former learners;
- (iii) 2015 ALS National Data Collection Survey of ALS facilitators and former/prospective learners across 81 school divisions;
- (iv) Key informant interviews with ALS officials at national, regional, and local levels
- (v) Focus group discussions with ALS learners, teachers, and administrators
- (vi) Online survey of ALS learners and completers

Administrative data sources provide valuable quantitative insights into the operational aspects and outcomes of the ALS program. Additionally, the study draws upon existing datasets on ALS participation and outcomes as well as relevant policy documents and program guidelines to contextualize current practices within the broader policy framework.

To complement and enrich the quantitative data, the study also incorporates primary data collection. This involves in-depth interviews with key officials in ALS governance bodies at national, regional, and local levels. These interviews provide crucial insights into decision-making processes, implementation challenges, and strategic priorities. Furthermore, focused group discussions with ALS learners, teachers, and administrators offer ground-level perspectives on the program's effectiveness and areas for improvement. The study also makes use of an online survey of ALS learners and completers to determine issues about ALS implementation, including prospects of employment of ALS graduates.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

The study employs a multi-faceted approach to data collection, leveraging the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. It entails compiling and analyzing administrative data

from DepED, focusing on key metrics such as enrollment rates, completion rates, and assessment outcomes. This analysis is supplemented by a thorough review of existing datasets on ALS outcomes, providing a broad view of program performance over time.

Quantitative Data Collection:

In addition to administrative data, the study involved conducting an online survey of past and current ALS learners. This survey aimed to gather comprehensive data on learners' experiences with ALS implementation, their perceptions of program quality, and post-program outcomes, including employment prospects for ALS graduates. The survey was designed to reach a broad cross-section of ALS participants across different regions and program types. It included questions on:

- Demographic information
- Reasons for enrolling in ALS
- Experiences with ALS curriculum and teaching methods
- Perceptions of program quality and relevance
- Challenges faced during the program
- For graduates: post-ALS educational or employment outcomes
- For current learners: expectations and aspirations post-ALS

The online survey was distributed through ALS centers, the DepED, social media channels to maximize reach. To address potential bias due to digital access limitations, the research team also provided options for paper-based survey completion in selected ALS centers.

Qualitative Data Collection:

Qualitative data collection centers on two main methods. First, the research team has conducted in-depth interviews with 10 key officials, including one at the national level, three at the regional level, and six at the local level. These semi-structured interviews explores topics such as policy implementation, resource allocation, and strategic planning for ALS.

Second, a series of focused group discussions has been held with ALS stakeholders. These involves 50 learners (10 in each of four study areas - Metro Manila, Luzon outside Metro Manila, Visayas, and Mindanao), along with their teachers and administrators. The discussions delve into experiences with the ALS program, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.

A grand total of 41 ALS teachers and 66 ALS learners were interviewed in the FGDs across various regions, from National Capital Region, Balance Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao in November 2024. About half (51%) of the interviewed teachers were from urban areas, and the other half from rural areas (**Figure 4**). Half of the total ALS teachers-respondents have obtained around 11 to 20 years of teaching under their belt. ALS teachers who have stayed long in the program commonly cited their life mission and passion for teaching the underserved to be the reason why they stayed despite the challenges they encounter as mobile teachers.



Figure 4. Profile of Teachers Interviewed

Source: Focus group discussions by PIDS researchers, Nov. 2024

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of ALS learners interviewed were currently taking up the ALS Junior High School program (**Figure 5**).





Source: Focus group discussions by PIDS researchers, Nov. 2024

Majority of them expressed their intention and motivation to undergo the portfolio assessment and the A&E examination in order to complete the program. Most of them would like to continue their studies and complete the equivalent diploma for Senior High School. Subsequently, they would

like to pursue higher education, with many citing their interest to enroll in a technical-vocational program or college course after graduating.

Thirty-eight (38%) of the ALS learner-respondents are within the age range of 15 to 18 years old. For those learners within the school age range, they expressed interest to shift to formal school after completing the 10-month ALS intervention, due to their teacher's advice and motivation. Older ALS learners, especially those who are mothers returning to school, are content with completing and obtaining the ALS equivalent diploma for personal development purposes, even though they would likely remain at home to care for family, due to limited employment opportunities at their age.

Eighty-three (83%) of the ALS learner-respondents are currently taking the program, while seventeen (17%) have completed and graduated from it. ALS program graduates-respondents were more confident and engaged during the focus group discussions, often expressing their renewed self-confidence that they owe from the program. Some of them are continuing their studies in college or a technical-vocational course, while others have gained employment. Familial support are often cited as playing a strong factor in their completing the ALS program.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis process integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the ALS program. Quantitative analysis will be conducted using Stata software, encompassing descriptive statistics, trend analysis, and, where appropriate, inferential statistical methods. This will allow for a detailed examination of patterns in enrollment, completion, and assessment data, as well as the identification of significant factors influencing program outcomes.

The online survey data has been analyzed using statistical software to identify trends in learner experiences and outcomes. Particular attention has been paid to analyzing employment outcomes for ALS graduates, including factors that may influence successful transitions to the job market.

Qualitative data, including transcripts from interviews and focus group discussions, has undergone thematic analysis using NVivo software (Braun and Clarke 2006). This process involves coding the data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights across different stakeholder groups and geographic regions. Additionally, content analysis of policy documents and guidelines has been performed to understand the alignment between policy intentions and implementation realities.

The research team triangulated findings from these multiple data sources and analytical approaches. This integration of quantitative trends with qualitative insights enabled the development of nuanced, context-sensitive recommendations for improving the ALS program.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount throughout the research process. The study adheres to strict ethical research guidelines to protect participants and ensure the integrity of the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in interviews or focus group discussions. This process includes clear explanations of the study's purpose, potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation.

Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents have been maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. Personal identifiers have been removed from all data sets, and pseudonyms are used in any direct quotations in the final report. Data storage and handling follow secure protocols to prevent unauthorized access.

For the online survey, additional measures have been taken to ensure data privacy and security. The survey platform used encryption to protect respondent data, and IP addresses were not collected. Participants were also informed about data usage and storage practices before beginning the survey.

Additionally, the research team is committed to considering the gender dimension and social inclusion aspects of the ALS. Analysis examines variations in access, experience, and outcomes for different demographic groups, ensuring that the study's findings and recommendations account for the diverse needs of ALS learners.

By adhering to these ethical principles and methodological rigor, this study aims to provide a comprehensive, reliable, and ethically sound evaluation of ALS processes and systems. The resulting insights and recommendations are intended to contribute meaningfully to evidence-based policymaking and reforms in alternative education in the Philippines.

4. Empirical Findings and Discussions

4.1. ALS Community Learning Center Profile and Physical Environment

The 2024 ALS Community Learning Centers (CLCs) Inventory conducted by the DepED's BAE revealed a total of 26,209 CLCs across all regions, excluding BARMM. This comprehensive inventory provides crucial baseline data in compliance with the ALS Act and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), informing budgeting, investment plans, and future policy formation.

The nature and ownership of CLCs reflect a diverse and complex landscape. Of the total CLCs, 72.8 percent (19,092) are community-based, with only 0.8 percent (206) being DepED-owned. The remaining 27.2 percent(7,117) are school-based, of which 68.2 percent (4,857) being DepED-owned. Overall, 19.3 percent (5,063) of CLCs are DepED-owned, while the remaining 80.7 percent (21,146) are not. This distribution highlights the significant reliance on community resources and support for the ALS program, which presents both opportunities and challenges.

While this distribution indicates a strong reliance on community participation, it also highlights critical concerns regarding the consistency and sustainability of ALS infrastructure. In areas where

local governments and communities are proactive, CLCs benefit from strong support, with some LGUs contributing resources for the construction of new centers. However, in many regions, especially rural and remote areas, CLCs are often makeshift spaces, lacking the necessary facilities to provide a conducive learning environment. For example, some regions reported that classes were held in barangay halls, chapels, or even in open fields, depending on weather conditions. The variability in physical environments can lead to significant disparities in learner outcomes, with well-resourced centers often experiencing better learner retention and success rates.

The ownership status of ALS CLCs further illustrates this diversity, with more than two fifths (44.2%) being community-owned, a fifth (20.0%) DepED-owned, and the remaining (35.8%) under various other types of ownership, including local government units, NGOs, and private entities. This diversity in ownership underscores the participation of different segments of society in the ALS Program but also presents challenges in terms of management, maintenance, and ensuring consistent quality across centers.

CLCs vary widely in terms of infrastructure and physical environment, reflecting the uneven allocation of resources across regions. CLCs are categorized into five types based on their infrastructure and resources, ranging from simple, temporary meeting places to fully equipped buildings with comprehensive facilities. Notably, about 97 percent of CLCs are not specifically equipped for ALS, which may significantly impact the quality of learning environments.

Some CLCs have benefited from significant local government support, where LGUs have constructed type 5 centers that offer conducive learning environments. However, many regions face severe deficits in infrastructure. In numerous cases, ALS classes are held in makeshift classrooms, such as open spaces under trees, chapels, or abandoned buildings. This disparity is particularly evident in geographically disadvantaged regions, where logistical challenges complicate the construction and maintenance of adequate learning centers.

The size of CLCs also varies considerably:

- 31.1 percent (8,162) are smaller than 4 x 5 meters
- 21.2 percent (5,557) are approximately 4 x 5 meters 8.9 percent (2,343) are larger than a typical multi-purpose barangay hall room but smaller than a standard-sized classroom
- 27.4 percent (7,174) are standard-sized classrooms (7 x 9 meters)
- 11.3 percent (2,937) are larger than standard-sized classrooms

with more than half (61.3%) not meeting the standard classroom size requirements. This variation in size and quality of facilities likely affects the learning experience and outcomes for ALS learners.

The physical profile of CLCs reveals significant challenges in terms of accessibility, safety, and basic amenities. While more than two-thirds (69.4%) of CLCs are accessible through various modes of transport at low costs, a tenth (10.7%) are not accessible by public transport, indicating potential barriers to access for some learners. The topographical distribution of CLCs, with 65.6 percent in flat areas, 23.9 percent in mountainous or hilly areas, and others near bodies of water or in urban areas, presents unique challenges for operations and learner access.

Safety and security concerns are prevalent, with many CLCs exposed to natural hazards such as typhoons (52.3%), earthquakes (38.5%), floods (25.9%), and landslides (16.0%). While human-related hazards are less common, issues such as pollution (10.9%) and industrial hazards (8.4%) affect some CLCs. Beyond natural hazard exposure, CLCs face varying security challenges depending on their location and physical setup. Teachers report developing informal protocols for managing these risks - from coordinating with barangay officials for security support to establishing communication systems for emergency situations. In areas with seasonal challenges like flooding, teachers have developed flexible scheduling systems, adapting class times to weather patterns and agricultural seasons to maintain program continuity.

The disparity in basic amenities reveals broader equity issues. While some CLCs in urban areas report access to digital resources and stable internet connectivity, many others lack even basic sanitation facilities. Teachers often engage in direct advocacy with local officials to secure essential improvements, though success rates vary significantly. The most effective examples of infrastructure improvement typically involve coordinated efforts between multiple stakeholders - teachers, local officials, and community leaders.

The digital divide manifests in nuanced ways across different CLC contexts. Field reports indicate that even in centers with basic digital infrastructure, practical usage often falls short of potential due to maintenance issues, limited technical support, or inadequate teacher training. Some teachers have developed hybrid approaches, using personal devices to supplement center resources or organizing shared access schedules to maximize limited equipment. However, these adaptations often strain both personal resources and teaching time.

Innovation in resource utilization varies significantly. Some CLCs have successfully implemented mobile learning solutions, creating rotating schedules for shared devices or establishing partnerships with local internet cafes. Others have developed low-tech alternatives, such as printed modules with supplementary radio-based instruction. These diverse approaches reflect both the constraints and creativity inherent in program implementation.

Perhaps most concerning are the gaps in basic sanitation and hygiene infrastructure. The inventory reveals that more than three-fifths (61.3%) of CLCs do not comply with DepED's potable water standards, 40.24% do not have handwashing facilities, and 25.69% do not have toilet facilities. These deficiencies in basic amenities not only affect the health and comfort of learners but also pose significant challenges to creating a conducive learning environment.

The variation in learning environments significantly impacts program delivery. While some areas benefit from air-conditioned facilities with donated technology, others conduct classes under trees, in corridors, or on makeshift stages. Teachers report creative adaptations to these constraints - using available community spaces, coordinating with barangay officials for facility access, and sometimes conducting home-based instruction for remote learners. These improvisations, while demonstrating program resilience, highlight the urgent need for standardized infrastructure support.

These infrastructure challenges are further validated by an online survey of about 5,000 ALS learners and program completers. While 87 percent express overall satisfaction with facilities and

Community Learning Centers, only 49 percent are "very satisfied," the lowest among all program components. Moreover, 5 percent of learners specifically cite inadequate facilities as a challenge, with rates higher among past working learners (11%). Regional variations are notable, with satisfaction levels for facilities ranging from 85 percent in NCR to 89 percent in Mindanao. This triangulation of administrative data with learner perspectives and results from fieldwork reinforces the need for targeted infrastructure investment, particularly in regions showing lower satisfaction rates.

The reality of CLC operations reveals complex operational dynamics beyond basic infrastructure challenges. Field evidence indicates wide disparities in learning environments, with profound implications for program delivery. While some CLCs benefit from formal structures with basic amenities, many operate in improvised spaces ranging from barangay halls to outdoor areas. Teachers report creative adaptations to these constraints - some conducting early morning sessions to avoid extreme heat in poorly ventilated spaces, others rotating between multiple temporary locations to accommodate learner accessibility.

Resource management at CLCs demonstrates both innovation and strain. Teachers frequently report developing informal resource-sharing networks, exchanging learning materials and teaching aids across centers to maximize limited supplies. Some have established partnerships with local businesses or community organizations to secure basic needs like drinking water or electric fans. However, these grassroots solutions, while demonstrating remarkable resilience, underscore the systemic resource gaps facing the program.

The severe resource constraints faced by the ALS program are starkly illustrated by the fact that despite serving 0.8% of all learners in basic education, ALS receives only 0.1% of DepED's total budget. This disproportionate allocation of resources is likely a significant factor contributing to many of the challenges observed in the program's implementation, particularly in terms of infrastructure and learning resources.

The importance of infrastructure in ensuring learner retention and engagement cannot be overstated. Interviews with ALS teachers and focal persons revealed that learners who study in proper CLCs tend to be more consistent in attendance and perform better in assessments compared to those who study in makeshift classrooms. These facilities not only provide a space for learning but also contribute to the dignity of learners, many of whom face stigma for being OSY or adults pursuing basic education later in life. The construction of new CLCs, particularly in underserved regions, has been a priority in some regions, where partnerships with local governments and private organizations have made significant headway. However, nationwide, the pace of CLC construction has not kept up with the growing need, and more strategic partnerships between DepED and LGUs are needed to address this gap.

4.2. Learning and Instructional Profile

The learning and instructional profile of ALS CLCs reveals several critical issues that impact the quality of education provided. A striking finding is that 85.01% of CLCs have only one ALS teacher, often managing multiple learners across different levels and programs. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that 66.16% of CLCs have fewer than 25 learners, 22.89% have 25-49 learners, and 10.95% have 50 or more learners. The resulting high teacher-learner ratio, currently

standing at 75:1 compared to the ideal 25:1, raises serious concerns about the quality of instruction and individual attention that learners can receive.

The diversity of programs offered within CLCs further complicates the instructional landscape. CLCs offer a range of programs including :

- Basic Literacy Program: 57.81%
- A&E Elementary Level: 90.58%
- A&E Junior High School: 97.86%
- A&E Senior High School: 2.24%
- Indigenous Peoples Education: 2.17%

Many CLCs run multiple programs concurrently, highlighting the diverse educational needs served by ALS but also raising questions about the depth and quality of instruction across these diverse programs when often delivered by a single teacher.

With many teachers responsible for multiple grade levels and programs, the demands of multigrade teaching complicate the delivery of lessons. Teachers must often develop their own instructional materials due to delays in the provision of standardized resources from the DepED. While this has encouraged innovation and resourcefulness among ALS teachers, it has also led to uneven quality across regions. Some teachers have had success in contextualizing learning materials to better meet the needs of their learners, but this is not always the case, especially in areas where teachers have limited access to professional development opportunities or learning resources.

The reality of teacher workload extends beyond high numerical learner to teacher ratios. Teachers regularly manage multiple education levels simultaneously - from basic literacy to secondary education - within single sessions. Class sizes vary dramatically, from intimate groups of 10 to large classes exceeding 100 learners, particularly in urban areas. This complexity is amplified by learners' diverse literacy levels, with many performing below their enrolled grade level.

Despite these high learner-teacher ratios, the online survey conducted for this study reveals remarkably high satisfaction with ALS teachers, with 95 percent of learners reporting being satisfied or very satisfied with their instructors (70% very satisfied and 25% satisfied). This suggests that ALS teachers are managing to maintain educational quality despite resource constraints. However, the survey also indicates that 5 percent of learners face challenges related to lack of learning materials, while 12 percent report difficulty with lessons. When examined by region and employment status (Table 12), teacher satisfaction remains consistently high across all contexts, exceeding 90 percent in all regions for both working and non-working learners. This strong and consistent approval of teaching quality, despite significant resource constraints, speaks to the dedication and adaptability of ALS teachers.

The scarcity of educational resources and equipment in CLCs is also quite alarming. Only 3.45% of CLCs have cupboards, half (47.0%) have electric fans, nearly nine out ten (88%) lack reference materials such as atlases, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, and 99% lack assistive devices like braille materials, hearing aids, and assistive software. This severe shortage of basic educational

resources and equipment necessary for effective learning likely has a significant impact on the quality of instruction and the ability of learners to fully engage with the curriculum.

The impact of resource constraints on teaching quality is particularly evident from teacher accounts. ALS teachers report adapting curricula for multiple grade levels simultaneously, often translating materials into local dialects to ensure comprehension. Many teachers cover expenses out-of-pocket for basic supplies and minor repairs. The challenge is compounded when managing diverse learner needs, including those requiring special education support or indigenous learners, significantly increasing teacher workload.

Moreover, the inadequate digital infrastructure compounds learning challenges, particularly in foundational skills like reading comprehension. Based on 2023 functional literacy assessments conducted by BAE, only 45% of ALS learners demonstrated grade-level reading comprehension upon entry, though this improved to 68% after program completion. These literacy gaps present significant hurdles for learners attempting to engage with more advanced content. Teachers report dedicating additional instructional time to basic literacy skills, often developing supplementary reading materials in local languages to support learner comprehension. The challenge is particularly acute among working learners, who have less time for supplementary reading practice.. The digital divide is particularly evident in ALS CLCs, with only a third (30.5%) reporting reliable internet connections, half (50.4%) having no internet connection, and two-fifths (42.3%) reporting no TELCO service. In an increasingly digital world, where technology is becoming integral to education and employment, this lack of connectivity could be putting ALS learners at a severe disadvantage particularly when compared to their peers in the formal education system. The inability to fully integrate online resources, digital learning tools, and ICT skills development into the ALS curriculum due to these infrastructure limitations is a significant concern that needs to be addressed to ensure ALS learners are not left behind in the digital age. Moving forward, greater investment in digital infrastructure and teacher training on the use of technology in instruction will be to ensuring that ALS remains relevant and effective in preparing learners for the modern workforce.

Despite these challenges, there are some encouraging signs in terms of learner outcomes. The relatively high pass rates for A&E tests (66.6% for elementary and 73.0% for secondary in SY 2018-2019) indicate that despite resource constraints, many ALS learners are achieving certification. However, these rates also suggest room for improvement, particularly at the elementary level. The issue whether the certification leads to employment, and currently no data is available to clarify this.

4.3. Stakeholder Support and Program Sustainability

The ALS program benefits from diverse sources of support, reflecting broad recognition of its importance. Support comes from various levels of government, NGOs, and community organizations. The DepED Central Office provides in-kind support to 45.7% of CLCs and program support funds to 31.7%. Regional Offices offer in-kind support to 40.6% of CLCs, while School Division Offices provide in-kind support to 63.8% and MOOE support to 29.8%. Municipal or Provincial Governments contribute in-kind support to 45.1% of CLCs and support during A&E tests to 32.9%. NGOs, CSOs, or Faith-based Groups provide in-kind support to 9.19% of CLCs.

Despite these support structures, the consistency and sustainability of stakeholder involvement remain uneven across regions. In areas where LGUs and private sector partners are more engaged, ALS programs tend to be better funded and more effectively implemented. These regions benefit from the construction of new CLCs, scholarships for learners, and additional resources for instructional materials. However, in regions where stakeholder engagement is weaker, ALS programs struggle to sustain operations. Some regions report a reliance on ad-hoc contributions, with support fluctuating from year to year, making long-term planning difficult. The reliance on non-DepED-owned facilities, in particular, complicates efforts to standardize program delivery across the country. There is a need for more consistent and equitable funding mechanisms to ensure that all learners, regardless of location, have access to high-quality education through ALS.

Community integration emerges as a critical factor in CLC effectiveness. Successful centers often benefit from strong community ownership, with local stakeholders contributing resources and support. Examples include community members offering spaces for temporary classrooms, local businesses providing occasional supplies, and barangay officials facilitating security and maintenance. These community connections often extend beyond physical resources to include mentorship opportunities, cultural activities, and employment networking.

Private sector engagement with ALS has evolved beyond traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives into more structured partnerships. Several large companies have developed integrated support models combining infrastructure funding, mentorship programs, and employment pathways for ALS graduates. For example, some retail chains have established "learn-and-earn" programs where ALS learners can work part-time while completing their studies, with guaranteed full-time positions upon certification. Manufacturing companies in special economic zones have partnered with nearby Community Learning Centers to align technical skills training with industry needs. These partnerships demonstrate the potential for sustainable private sector involvement in alternative education, though such initiatives remain concentrated in urban and industrial areas. The challenge lies in expanding these models to reach underserved regions where private sector presence is limited.

The variation in local government support creates distinct operational patterns across regions. Some CLCs benefit from substantial municipal investment, including dedicated buildings and regular maintenance budgets. Others operate on minimal support, relying heavily on teacher initiative and community goodwill. This disparity in resource allocation often correlates with local economic conditions but is also influenced by the strength of advocacy networks and historical relationships with local officials.

The availability of post-ALS opportunities is a positive finding, with over 60.0% of CLCs reporting employment prospects for graduates, 50.4% indicating nearby higher education institutions, and 45.1% noting access to Technical-Vocational Education Training (TVET). However, the variability in these opportunities across regions and the challenges in transitioning to these pathways need further exploration to ensure that ALS is effectively preparing learners for their next steps after completing the program. Further, there is also no assurance that employment prospects actually lead to employment. Metrics are needed to determine actual employment among certified ALS, and/or scholarship opportunities obtained for higher education or tech-voc.

The online survey provides important insights into the effectiveness of support systems, with 36 percent of learners reporting receipt of government assistance during their ALS participation. Among those receiving support, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) emerges as the most common form of assistance (74% of supported learners), followed by Student Financial Assistance (6%). However, challenges persist: work-study balance emerges as the primary obstacle (26% of all learners), while financial problems affect 22 percent of learners. These challenges are particularly acute for working learners, where 45 percent of current working learners struggle with work-study balance. The data suggests that current support mechanisms, while reaching a significant portion of learners, may not be sufficiently comprehensive to address the complex barriers facing ALS participants.

Administrative data from DepED suggests that for 2024, the approved budget for the ALS was Php 632 million, about 15 percent of the budget for DepED's Flexible Learning Options (FLOs). The ALS budget has historically been combined with other FLOs in DepED's budget allocation. The total FLO budget, which includes ALS, Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs), and Education in Emergencies (EiE), ranged from Php 315 million in 2014 to Php 601 million in 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this combined budget from ALS, ADMs and EiE saw a dramatic increase to Php 16,616 million in 2021, likely in response to emergency learning needs. The allocation subsequently decreased to Php 15,216 million in 2022, and was further reduced to Php 4,295 million in 2023 and Php 4,278 million in 2024. Within this FLO budget, the specific allocation for ALS in 2024 stands at Php 632 million, representing approximately 15 percent of the total FLO budget.

4.4. Policy and Governance Implications

The evolution of ALS policies, culminating in the Alternative Learning System Act of 2020, demonstrates a growing recognition of the importance of flexible learning options. This policy development reflects an increasing awareness of the need to cater to out-of-school youth and adults through alternative educational pathways. However, the gap between policy aspirations and implementation realities is evident in the resource constraints and operational challenges observed in the ALS program.

The decentralized nature of ALS implementation, with significant reliance on community-based and non-DepED-owned facilities, presents both opportunities and challenges. While this model allows for greater community involvement and potentially better responsiveness to local needs, it also leads to inconsistencies in program quality and resource availability across different locations. This variability raises questions about equity in access to quality alternative education across different regions and communities.

The governance structure of ALS, spanning from the central DepED office to regional and local implementers, requires careful coordination to ensure consistent implementation of policies and standards. The varying levels of support and resources available at different governance levels suggest a need for more robust mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of resources and consistent quality of program delivery across all ALS implementation sites.

While the ALS Act has provided a framework for improving governance, many regions have struggled to fully implement its provisions due to a lack of resources and guidance from the central office. Some regions have taken the initiative to develop their own contextualized learning materials, but this has led to varying standards across the country. Additionally, the lack of a comprehensive MEA system for the ALS hampers efforts to assess the effectiveness of ALS programs and identify areas for improvement. Strengthening the governance structure, particularly by granting more autonomy to regional offices, will be crucial to addressing these challenges and ensuring that ALS can effectively meet the needs of its learners.

Teachers' experiences highlight critical gaps between policy intentions and implementation realities. Many report struggling with administrative burdens from portfolio requirements and assessment documentation, while simultaneously managing multiple grade levels and learning modalities. The pandemic's shift to modular and online learning exposed infrastructure inadequacies, with many teachers noting challenges in maintaining learner engagement through distance learning platforms.

4.5. Equity and Inclusion Considerations

The ALS program plays a crucial role in addressing educational inequities, but several challenges remain in ensuring truly inclusive access to quality education. The gender disparities observed in out-of-school youth statistics, with more males being left out of learning opportunities, highlight the need for targeted interventions. The different reasons for non-attendance between genders (employment and lack of interest for males; marriage and family matters for females) suggest that ALS programs may need to be tailored to address these gender-specific barriers.

Beyond gender disparities, equity issues also arise from geographic and socioeconomic factors. Learners in remote areas often face additional barriers to participation, including a lack of transportation, limited access to learning materials, and the absence of qualified teachers. The fact that many CLCs lack basic amenities, such as water and sanitation facilities, further exacerbates these challenges.

The limited availability of assistive devices and specialized support for learners with disabilities is a significant concern from an inclusion perspective. With 99% of CLCs lacking assistive devices such as braille materials, hearing aids, and assistive software, ALS appears to be struggling to fully cater to the needs of learners with diverse abilities. This gap suggests that some of the most vulnerable out-of-school youth and adults may be excluded from benefiting fully from the ALS program.

Furthermore, the varied topographical distribution of CLCs, with some located in remote or hardto-reach areas, raises questions about equitable access to ALS programs for learners in different geographical locations. The challenges in accessibility, particularly for CLCs not served by public transport, may be disproportionately affecting learners from more marginalized or isolated communities.

The diversity of programs offered through ALS, including Indigenous Peoples' Education, demonstrates an effort to cater to diverse learner populations. However, the relatively low

percentage of CLCs offering this program (2.2%) suggests that there may be room for expansion to better serve indigenous learners and other specific populations.

Field evidence reveals complex challenges in achieving educational equity. Teachers report diverse barriers faced by learners, from teenage pregnancy and family responsibilities to work obligations in seasonal industries. Language barriers emerge as a significant concern, with teachers often needing to translate materials into local dialects to ensure comprehension. Discrimination remains a persistent challenge - teachers describe instances where both learners and ALS educators face stigma, with some being labeled as "inferior" or excluded from school resources and programs.

Expanding the scope of ALS to better serve these vulnerable populations, especially those with multiple sources of disparities, e.g. children with disabilities from poor, rural areas, will require targeted investments in infrastructure, teacher training, and support services. Moreover, partnerships with local governments and NGOs could play a critical role in providing the resources needed to make ALS more inclusive and equitable.

4.6. ALS as an Educational Safety Net and Future Projections

The ALS serves as a critical educational safety net in the Philippines, providing a second chance for those who have dropped out or been unable to access formal schooling. This role is particularly vital given the persistent challenges in ensuring universal access to and completion of basic education through the formal system.

The interaction between ALS and the 4Ps reveals complex dynamics in addressing educational disadvantage. While 4Ps provides direct incentives to keep children in formal schooling, evidence suggests these incentives compete with immediate economic pressures, particularly among older youth. Analysis of 2022-2023 enrollment data shows that approximately 35% of current ALS learners come from 4Ps beneficiary households, indicating that the conditional cash transfer program alone may not be sufficient to prevent school dropout. The economic calculus facing potential learners often weighs immediate income needs against longer-term educational benefits. This suggests the need for more integrated support mechanisms that combine educational opportunities with immediate livelihood support. Success stories from the field indicate that when ALS is coupled with income-generating opportunities or flexible work arrangements, retention rates improve significantly, particularly among working-age youth.

Field evidence reveals nuanced patterns in program effectiveness across different learner groups. Teachers report particularly strong outcomes among older learners with clear career goals, who often demonstrate higher persistence rates despite facing multiple barriers. By contrast, younger learners more frequently require intensive support and motivation, though they often show greater facility with technological aspects of learning. This age-related pattern suggests the need for differentiated support strategies to maximize program effectiveness across diverse learner populations.

The impact of socioeconomic factors on learner outcomes manifests in complex ways. In agricultural communities, teachers report developing flexible scheduling systems aligned with farming seasons to accommodate working learners. Urban centers face different challenges, with teachers noting the need to compete with immediate employment opportunities that may lure learners away from completing their education. Some successful programs have integrated immediate income-generating skills into the curriculum to help learners balance economic pressures with educational goals.

Local support ecosystems play a crucial role in determining program success. Field interviews reveal that areas with strong inter-agency coordination - particularly among the BAE, the Technical Education And Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and local employers - show notably better completion and transition rates. However, these support systems vary significantly across regions, with some areas benefiting from robust networks while others operate in relative isolation. The most successful examples typically feature strong engagement from local government units, though the form and extent of this support varies considerably.

To understand the future role of ALS, it is crucial to analyze the trends in its primary target population: out-of-school youth aged 15-24 who have not finished basic education. Recent data shows a significant decrease in this population, with projections suggesting a continued rapid decline. Based on the observed 14% annual reduction rate since 2019, we can project the number of OOSY 15-24 who have not finished basic education, and together with PSA projections on the total number of youth aged 15-24, obtain the projections in **Table 2**.

Year	Total Youth 15-24	OOSY 15-24 not	Proportion (%)
	(PSA projection)	finished basic	
		education	
2022	20,183,465	3,575,249*	17.71*
2023	20,308,433	3,074,714	15.14
2024	20,433,401	2,644,254	12.94
2025	20,558,369	2,274,058	11.06
2026	20,683,337	1,955,690	9.45
2027	20,808,305	1,681,893	8.08
2028	20,933,273	1,446,428	6.91
2029	21,058,241	1,243,928	5.91
2030	21,183,209	1,069,778	5.05
2035	21,808,049**	503,252	2.31

Table 2. Projected Number of youth aged 15-24 and Number of OOSY 15-24 who have not finished basic education

Notes:

* = APIS estimate

**= Extrapolated based on the trend from previous years.

These projections suggest that by 2035, the number of out-of-school youth aged 15-24 who have not finished basic education could fall to around half a million, representing about 2.31% of the youth population in that age group. This is a significant decrease from the 3,575,249 (17.71%) in 2022.

While this projected decrease is encouraging and reflects improvements in the formal education system, it also presents challenges and opportunities for the ALS program:

- 1. Changing role: As the primary target population decreases, ALS may need to evolve its focus from a large-scale alternative system to a more targeted, specialized program.
- 2. Resource allocation: The decreasing numbers could allow for more intensive, personalized support for each learner, potentially improving the quality of education provided.
- 3. Expanded scope: ALS may need to consider broadening its scope to include other underserved populations or to offer more specialized services to remain relevant and effective.
- 4. Integration with formal education: There may be opportunities for closer integration between ALS and the formal education system to prevent dropouts and provide immediate support when students leave the formal system.
- 5. Long-term planning: While the target population is projected to decrease significantly, ALS will likely need to continue operating for at least the next two decades, albeit potentially at a reduced scale.

It's important to note that these projections assume a consistent 14% reduction each year, which may not hold true over such an extended period. Various factors could accelerate or slow this trend. Additionally, while the primary target population may be decreasing, ALS serves a broader

population, including adults over 24 who have not completed basic education. The total target population for ALS is likely larger than these figures suggest.

As the number of out-of-school youth continues to decline, ALS will need to adapt its focus to meet the changing needs of its target population. Projections suggest that the number of youth who have not completed basic education will continue to decrease in the coming years, but the challenges faced by those who remain in the system may become more complex. ALS will need to shift from a broad-based system to one that provides more personalized, intensive support for learners who face significant barriers to education. Additionally, there is a growing need to align ALS more closely with technical-vocational education and training (TVET) programs to ensure that graduates are equipped with the skills needed for employment. Moving forward, ALS will play a crucial role not only in providing education but also in helping learners transition to the workforce or further education.

Moreover, it is worth noting that while the formal education system provides support for needy learners, such as school feeding programs and conditional cash transfers through the Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program, these support systems are largely absent for ALS learners, despite the fact that ALS participants often come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This disparity highlights the need for more comprehensive support for ALS learners, potentially through joint programming with other social support initiatives.

The evolving role of ALS in the educational landscape is reflected in changing learner demographics and needs. Industry partners report increasing demand for workers with both basic education credentials and technical skills, suggesting a continued need for ALS even as formal school retention improves. However, the nature of this demand is shifting, with employers increasingly emphasizing digital literacy and adaptable skill sets. This evolution suggests that while the absolute number of potential ALS beneficiaries may decrease, the program's role in workforce development and lifelong learning may actually expand.

In conclusion, while the primary target population for ALS appears to be decreasing more rapidly than previously estimated, the program's role as an educational safety net remains crucial. The challenge moving forward will be to adapt ALS to serve a changing demographic landscape while maintaining its core mission of providing quality educational opportunities to those who have been left behind by the formal education system. The significant absolute numbers of out-of-school youth, even in 2035, underline the ongoing importance of ALS in the Philippine education landscape. However, the rapid decrease in the target population also suggests that ALS may need to evolve its focus and potentially expand its scope to remain relevant and effective in the long term.

4.7. Key Findings from Desk Review, Interviews, and Discussions

Program Evolution and Structure

Interviews with ALS administrators and educators revealed several significant developments in the program's structure. One of the most notable changes is the formal establishment of the BAE, which aims to streamline and focus the management of ALS programs. This organizational shift

has helped create a dedicated office within the DepED to oversee ALS implementation and policy formation. However, the transition has not been without challenges. Several key informants noted delays in the issuance of guidelines and materials from the central office, which have affected the smooth implementation of new ALS programs, particularly the ALS Senior High School track.

Despite the establishment of the BAE, the interviews revealed that many regions face operational challenges in adapting ALS programs to local contexts. In some regions, ALS teachers have developed their own contextualized learning modules to address the needs of their learners. This is particularly true in regions where the DepED has been slow to provide updated materials or where the standard modules do not adequately reflect the local culture or employment opportunities. While this has encouraged innovation at the local level, it has also led to uneven quality across regions. Some regions have developed highly effective localized materials, while others struggle with outdated or incomplete resources.

Budget Allocation and Resource Constraints

A consistent theme throughout the interviews was the issue of underfunding for ALS programs. Key informants repeatedly highlighted the severe resource constraints under which ALS operates. The disparity between the percentage of learners served by ALS and the proportion of the DepED budget allocated to the program remains stark. Despite serving 0.8% of basic education learners, ALS receives only 0.1% of the total DepED budget. This underfunding is most apparent in the lack of resources for teacher training, instructional materials, and infrastructure improvements.

The resource constraints also extend to staffing. With the pupil-teacher ratio standing at 75:1 in many regions, ALS teachers are often overwhelmed by the sheer number of learners they must manage. This not only affects the quality of instruction but also places significant stress on teachers, many of whom must travel long distances to reach their assigned CLCs. Interviews with ALS teachers indicated that the lack of transportation allowances and teaching aids further exacerbates these challenges. Several informants called for an immediate increase in the ALS budget to address these issues, with a particular focus on reducing the pupil-teacher ratio and providing additional support for teachers working in remote or underserved areas.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention of ALS teachers remain a significant challenge. Many teachers expressed concerns about the lack of competitive salaries and limited career advancement opportunities within the ALS system. The demanding nature of the job, particularly for mobile teachers who must travel between multiple learning centers, makes it difficult to retain highly qualified educators. Additionally, the unique demands of teaching in ALS require specialized training, which many teachers reported is insufficient or inconsistent.

Several interviewees suggested that offering more robust professional development opportunities could help address these retention challenges. For instance, regional offices that have established partnerships with higher education institutions (HEIs) to provide specialized training for ALS teachers have reported higher retention rates and better learner outcomes. Expanding these

partnerships and offering more formal recognition for the specialized skills required to teach in ALS could help attract and retain more qualified educators.

Curriculum Development and Innovation

The interviews revealed ongoing efforts to align the ALS curriculum with the broader educational reforms under DepED's MATATAG curriculum. Key informants emphasized the importance of ensuring that ALS remains a parallel and equivalent system to formal schooling, with learners able to transition smoothly between ALS and the formal education system. However, the lack of updated materials, particularly for the ALS Senior High School program, has hindered the full implementation of these reforms.

The curriculum's effectiveness varies significantly across contexts. Teachers note particular success with integrated livelihood components - such as soap-making, food processing, and technical skills training - which provide immediate practical value to learners. However, they also identify gaps in the standardization of materials, especially for Senior High School levels. Language of instruction emerges as a critical factor, with many teachers reporting the need to translate materials into local dialects to ensure comprehension. The balance between academic content and practical skills remains an ongoing challenge, particularly for learners juggling work and study commitments.

In regions where resources are particularly scarce, ALS teachers have taken innovative approaches to curriculum development. For example, some teachers have collaborated with local industries to create modules that focus on skills relevant to the local labor market, such as agriculture, small-scale manufacturing, or tourism. These localized modules have helped increase learner engagement by providing a clear link between their education and future employment opportunities. However, these innovations are not yet widespread, and many regions lack the resources to develop and implement similar localized curricula.

Employability of ALS Graduates

Analysis of interview data reveals multiple pathways to employment for ALS graduates. These pathways include structured partnerships with service sector employers and technical industries, with varying requirements and success rates. In the hospitality sector, for instance, employers report that ALS graduates often demonstrate strong performance when equipped with additional TESDA certifications, particularly in housekeeping and food service roles. Technical industries similarly value ALS graduates who pursue additional certifications in areas such as welding, automotive services, or IT-related skills.

The role of skills certification emerges as critical in employment transitions. Private sector informants consistently emphasize that while ALS completion provides a foundation, industry-specific certifications significantly enhance employability. This pattern is particularly evident in technical fields where employers actively seek candidates with both ALS credentials and TESDA certifications. Some firms have developed structured pathways for ALS graduates, combining on-the-job training with continued skills development.
Gender dynamics play a significant role in employment outcomes. Female ALS graduates often gravitate toward service sector roles, homemaking or caregiving positions, while male graduates more commonly pursue technical certifications in areas such as welding, electrical and automotive services. This gendered pattern in career choices suggests a need for more targeted interventions to broaden employment opportunities across gender lines.

Local economic contexts heavily influence employment prospects. In areas with strong industrial presence, ALS graduates benefit from established partnerships between education providers and employers. Some regions report success with "study now, pay later" schemes in technical training, particularly in partnership with industry consortia. However, in areas with limited industrial development, graduates often face more challenging transitions to employment.

Entrepreneurship emerges as an important alternative pathway. Some ALS programs incorporate practical entrepreneurship training, teaching skills like soap-making, food processing and preservation, and basic business management. These skills enable graduates to pursue self-employment options, particularly in communities where formal employment opportunities are limited.

The quality of employment outcomes varies significantly. While some ALS graduates secure stable positions in technical or service industries, others face challenges in finding employment that matches their skills and aspirations. Employers note that ALS graduates often demonstrate strong work ethic and practical skills, though some require additional support in developing workplace communication and professional skills.

Support systems for employment transition show varying levels of effectiveness. Some regions have developed robust partnerships with TESDA and local industries, creating clear pathways from education to employment. Others struggle to provide consistent employment support, relying more on informal networks and individual teacher initiatives. The most successful models typically involve triangulated partnerships between ALS programs, technical training providers, and local employers.

Monitoring employment outcomes remains a challenge. While anecdotal evidence suggests positive trajectories for many graduates, systematic tracking of employment outcomes is limited. Teachers often maintain informal connections with graduates, providing insight into career progression, but formal tracer studies are rare. This gap in data collection affects the program's ability to adapt to changing labor market needs and demonstrate its impact on employment outcomes.

Data Systems

The current fragmentation of learner data systems poses challenges for tracking long-term outcomes and program effectiveness. Integration with the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) presents a strategic opportunity to enhance data interoperability and longitudinal tracking. PhilSys integration would enable better monitoring of learner transitions between formal education, ALS, technical-vocational training, and employment. It would also facilitate more

accurate assessment of program impact on socioeconomic mobility. Several regions have piloted PhilSys integration in their enrollment processes, reporting improved ability to track learner movement between educational modalities and verify certification credentials with potential employers. However, full integration requires addressing technical infrastructure limitations and data privacy considerations across implementing units.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Adjustment (MEA)

One of the critical gaps identified in the interviews was the lack of a robust MEA system for ALS programs. While DepED has made strides in developing the ALS 2.0 Monitoring and Evaluation System Operations Handbook, the implementation of these MEA practices has been slow, particularly in regions with limited technical capacity. Without comprehensive data on learner outcomes, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of ALS programs and make informed decisions about where to allocate resources.

Implementation monitoring faces significant practical challenges. Teachers report substantial administrative burdens in documenting learner progress, particularly with the dual requirements of portfolio assessments and equivalency examinations. The tracking of radio-based and modular learning during the pandemic posed particular challenges, with teachers developing informal systems to monitor engagement and progress. Some regions have innovated with digital tools and group messaging platforms to maintain contact with learners, though connectivity and device access remain significant barriers.

Improving the M&E system for ALS will require investment in both technology and training. Many regions still rely on manual data collection methods, which are time-consuming and prone to error. By investing in digital tools for data collection and analysis, DepED could improve the efficiency and accuracy of its MEA processes. Additionally, providing training for ALS implementers on how to use these tools and interpret the data could help ensure that MEA findings are used to inform policy and practice at both the regional and national levels.

Reportedly, the BAE has developed an Alternative Learning System (ALS) Management Information System (MIS) that gathers key demographic details such as the learner's name, sex, age, date of birth, mother tongue, ethnicity, and religious affiliation, along with geographic information like the home address. It also tracks whether learners belong to Indigenous Peoples (IP) groups and provides insights into the religious backgrounds of the ALS participants. Educational background is another important aspect of the ALS MIS, which includes details of the last grade level completed in formal education. For learners already enrolled in the ALS program, the system records their preferred program (whether elementary, junior high school, senior high school, or the Basic Literacy Program), along with the date of their first attendance and learner reference number (LRN). In addition, the MIS gathers data on accessibility and learning preferences, such as the distance learners need to travel to reach learning centers, the mode of transportation used, and the days and times they are available to attend ALS sessions.

The system also captures disability and special needs information, identifying whether learners have any disabilities and specifying the type of disability if applicable. Additionally, it includes information on the support services or accommodations provided to learners with special needs.

Performance data is another critical component of the MIS, where learners' pre- and postassessment scores, including functional literacy assessments and revalidas results (oral reading, writing, and interview), are recorded to track their progress and achievement.

Despite the comprehensive nature of the data collected in the ALS MIS, it is worth noting that performance indicators for the ALS program are currently not publicly available. This limits the ability of stakeholders and the public to evaluate the effectiveness and success of ALS in addressing the educational needs of out-of-school youth and adults. Public access to such indicators would enhance transparency, enabling better monitoring and assessment of the program's outcomes and its impact on learners' lives and the broader goal of educational inclusion.

Figure 6. ALS MIS forms o	n (a) learn	er demographics	and (b)	learner	performance
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Autism Spectrum Disorder	Learning D	sability		a 11 11 5	Cancer	Non-Cancer	
Cerebral Palsy	Multiple Di	sabilitios		Vis	ual Impairmo	nt*	
Emotional-Behavior Disorder	Orthopedic	Physical Hundica	p	C	Blind	Low Vision	
Hearing Impairment	Speechla	nguage Disorder					
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Name of ALS Teacher/Community	y of Baliwag	Bulacan	Name of ALS Teacher/Community		
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ASSESSMENT RESULTS	Pre	Post	ASSESSMENT RESULTS	Pre	Post
Assesment for Basic Literacy (ABL)	Pre	10 Pre	Assesment for Basic Literacy (ABL)	Pre	Pre
Neo Literate	N/A	N/A	Neo Literate		
Post Literate	N/A Pre	N/A Post	Post Literate	Pre	Post
S 1 - Communication Skills (English)	10	14	LS 1 - Communication Skills (English)	FIE	FUSI
Multiple Choice	3	7	Multiple Choice		-
Listening/Speaking	4	4	Listening/Speaking	and and and	
S 1 - Communication Skills (Filipino)	9	14	LS 1 - Communication Skills (Filipino)		
Pagsulat	1	4	Pagsulat		-
Pakikinig/Pagsasalita	2	4	Pakikinig/Pagsasalita		-
S 2 - Scientific Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills	12	9	LS 2 - Scientific Literacy and Critical Thinking S LS 3 - Mathematical and Problem Solving Skills	ikills	
S 4 - Life and Career Skills	7	10	LS 4 - Life and Career Skills		
S 5 - Understanding the Self and Society S 6 - Digital Citizenship	9	8	LS 5 - Understanding the Self and Society LS 6 - Digital Citizenship		-
Overall Score	73	86	Overall Score		
PRESENTATION PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT		Remarks	PRESENTATION PORTFOLIO ASSES	SMENT	Remarks
Date of Presentation Portfolio Assessment		May 02, 2024	Date of Presentation Portfolio Assessment		
LS 1 - Communication Skills (English)		4	LS 1 - Communication Skills (English)		12.2.2
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(b)

Currently, based on the ALS MIS, the BAE can regularly create useful summary tables that would help in profiling respondents and measuring the performance of the ALS program. These tables can summarize the key data collected in the ALS MIS and offer insights into learner demographics, educational background, accessibility, disability status, and performance. Below are examples of the types of summary tables that could be generated by the BAE:

a. Demographic Profile Summary Table

This (dummy) table can provide an overview of the learners' demographic characteristics based on MIS data collected.

Demographic Variable	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	2,143	43%
Female	2,762	56%
Mother Tongue		
Tagalog	XX	XX
Bisaya	XX	XX
Others	XX	XX
IP Status		
Yes	213	4%
No	4,720	96%
Religion		
Catholic	XX	XX
INC	XX	XX
Others	XX	XX

b. Educational Background Summary Table

This (dummy) table can highlight the educational background and current ALS enrollment status of learners.

Educational Variable	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Last Grade Level Completed		
Kinder	XX	XX
Grade 1-6	XX	XX
Grade 7-10	XX	XX
Enrolled in ALS		
Yes	XX	XX
No	XX	XX
Preferred Program		
Elementary	XX	XX
Junior High School	XX	XX

Educational Variable	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Senior High School	XX	XX
Basic Literacy Program (BLP)	XX	XX

c. Accessibility and Learning Preferences Table

This (dummy) table captures data on how accessible ALS learning centers are for learners and their preferred learning days.

Accessibility Variable	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Distance to Learning Center (km)		
0-5 km	XX	XX
6-10 km	XX	XX
>10 km	XX	XX
Mode of Transportation		
Walking	XX	XX
Motorcycle	XX	XX
Bicycle		
Others		
Preferred Learning Days	XX	XX
Monday-Friday	XX	XX
Weekend	XX	XX

d. Disability and Special Needs Table

This table summarizes the presence of learners with disabilities and the type of disability.

Disability Status	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Has Disability		
Yes	XX	XX
No	XX	XX
Type of Disability		
Hearing Impairment		
Learning Disability	XX	XX
Orthopedic	XX	XX
Bicycle		
Others		

e. Performance Indicators Table

This (dummy) table summarizes learners' performance based on pre- and post-assessment scores and revalidas results.

Performance	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment	Change	Remarks
Indicator	Average Score	Average Score	(%)	
Communication				
Skills (English)				
Communication				
Skills (Filipino)				
Mathematical				
Problem-Solving				
Scientific Literacy				
Life and Career				
Skills				
Digital				
Citizenship				
Overall Score				
Revalidas (Oral				
Reading)				
Revalidas				
(Writing)				
Revalidas				
(Interview)				

These tables provide a clear and concise way to profile learners and measure ALS performance. The demographic and educational background tables highlight key characteristics of learners, while the performance table allows tracking of academic improvements through pre- and post-assessments. These summaries could be further refined and adapted based on available data.

Cross tabulations are powerful tools that can provide deeper insights into intersectionalities, which refer to how various aspects of learners' identities—such as sex, age, disability status, and socioeconomic factors—intersect and affect their inclusion in the ALS. By examining these intersections, we can assess the extent of inclusion within the ALS program and identify groups that may face additional barriers.

f. Cross Tabulation of Sex and Enrollment Status

This (dummy) table helps identify whether there are significant differences in ALS enrollment between male and female learners, and would highlight potential gender disparities in enrollment and participation in ALS programs, giving insights into gender-based inclusion.

Sex	Targeted Number of ALS (from Population	Total	Enrollment Rate
	Projections or APIS)	Learners	(%)
Male	XX	XX	XX
Female	XX	XX	XX

g. Cross Tabulation of Disability and Enrollment Status

This table can help determine whether learners with disabilities are equitably participating in ALS compared to learners without disabilities. The resulting data can reveal the extent to which learners with disabilities are included and identify any potential barriers to their enrollment.

Disability	Targeted Number of ALS	(from	Total	Enrollment Rate
Status	Population Projections)		Learners	(%)
with Disability		XX	XX	XX
without		XX	XX	XX
Disability				

h. Cross Tabulation of Socioeconomic Status and Learning Mode Preferences

Cross tabulating socioeconomic status (e.g., learners from rural vs. urban areas) with learning mode preferences can show if there is a digital divide or differences in the resources available to learners based on their socioeconomic background. This can help understand how learners from different backgrounds prefer or are able to access learning, shedding light on digital inclusion and access disparities.

Socioeconomic Status (Area)	Modular (Print)	Modular (Digital)	Online	Face-to- Face	Total Learners
Rural	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
Urban	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX

i. Cross Tabulation of Age and ALS Performance

This cross tabulation compares performance across different age groups, which can highlight how learners' outcomes vary based on their age, possibly reflecting differences in cognitive development or life responsibilities. This cross tabulation can help identify whether older learners are performing as well as younger learners and can inform decisions on providing additional support to different age groups.

Age	Average Pre-	Average Post-	Performance
Group	Assessment Score	Assessment Score	Improvement (%)
14-18	XX	XX	XX%
19-25	XX	XX	XX%
26-35	XX	XX	XX%
36+	XX	XX	XX%

j. Cross Tabulation of Sex and Disability with Performance Indicators

This provides insight into how sex and disability intersect with educational performance in ALS, revealing disparities in learning outcomes. This table can allows DepED to identify gaps where with disabilities, and/or those of a specific sex, may need additional support to perform equally.

Sex	Disability	Average	Post-	Overall	Remarks	
	Status	Assessment Score		Improvement (%)		
Male	With Disability				Potential Barriers	
Male	Without Disability					
Female	With Disability				Need Support	for
Female	Without Disability					

By using cross tabulations, ALS managers and policymakers can better understand the **extent of inclusion** for various groups:

- **Gender inclusion**: Are male and female learners equally participating and performing well in the ALS program?
- **Disability inclusion**: Are learners with disabilities as likely to be enrolled and perform as well as those without disabilities?
- **Socioeconomic inclusion**: Does socioeconomic background (e.g., rural vs. urban) affect access to different learning modes or digital resources?
- **Age-related inclusion**: Are older learners being adequately supported, or are there agebased disparities in performance and engagement?

These intersectional analyses can highlight **inequities** within the ALS and help target interventions where they are most needed, ensuring that no ALS learner is left behind in the pursuit of nonformal education.

4.8. Results of 2024 PIDS Online Survey of ALS Learners

To complement the process evaluation findings from the desk review, administrative data and qualitative interviews, the 2024 PIDS Online Survey of ALS learners was conducted between October and November 2024. The survey aimed to gather direct feedback from both current and past learners about their experiences with the ALS program, challenges faced, and outcomes achieved. More than 5,000 respondents participated in the online survey, though only 4933 completed all survey questions, 84 percent of whom are current learners.

a. Respondent Profile and Program Participation

Looking first at demographic patterns shown in **Table 3**, the age distribution reveals that while ALS serves a predominantly young population, with 68 percent of learners under age 25, there is also significant participation from older adults. The substantial proportion of learners aged 25-35 (24%) and above 35 (7%) suggests that ALS successfully provides second-chance education opportunities across different life stages. The distribution of respondents by sex showing 56 percent female participation presents an interesting contrast with the broader out-of-school youth population, where males predominate. This suggests that while more males are out of school,

females may be more likely to seek alternative education pathways when available. This is, however, consistent with school participation patterns with a bigger share of females in school compared to male counterparts. The relatively low representation of Indigenous Peoples in the survey sample (4%) highlighted in Table 3 warrants particular attention, especially given the Philippines' significant indigenous population. Similarly, the finding that 33 percent of learners report having functional difficulties indicates both the program's inclusivity and the substantial need for disability-sensitive support services.

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group		
Below 15	127	2.6
15-18	1,836	37.2
19-24	1,465	29.7
25-35	1,156	23.4
Above 35	349	7.1
Sex		
Male	2,143	43.4
Female	2,762	56.0
Prefer not to say	28	0.6
Indigenous Peoples		
Yes	213	4.3
No	3,710	75.2
Prefer not to say	1,010	20.5
Learners with Disability		
Yes	1,223	24.8
No	3,710	75.2

 Table 3. Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents (n=4,933)

Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

Examining program awareness channels in **Table 4** reveals the critical role of informal networks in ALS recruitment. The finding that 45 percent of learners discovered ALS through family and friends underscores the importance of word-of-mouth promotion, with this effect particularly strong among male learners (49%) compared to females (42%). The relatively low utilization of social media as an information channel (6%) represents a missed opportunity, particularly given the Philippines' high social media penetration rates. The gender differences in information sources are noteworthy - female learners are more likely to learn about ALS through teachers and school staff (30%) compared to males (26%), suggesting different patterns of institutional engagement between genders.

	Both	Sexes	Μ	ale	Female	
Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Source of ALS						
Information						
Teachers/School						
Staff	1,321	26.9	539	25.1	782	28.3
Family/Friends	2,396	48.8	1,115	52.1	1,281	46.4
Local						
Government Unit	168	3.4	71	3.3	97	3.5
Social Media	285	5.8	100	4.6	185	6.7
Awareness						
Campaigns	735	15.1	318	14.9	417	15.1
Main Reason for						
Enrollment						
To complete basic						
education	2,972	60.3	1,216	56.8	1,742	63.2
To improve job						
prospects	1,094	22.3	520	24.3	574	20.8
Personal growth	489	10.0	213	9.8	276	9.9
Family						
encouragement	310	6.3	160	7.5	150	5.4
Encouragement						
of Friends	54	1.1	34	1.6	20	0.7

Table 4. ALS Program Awareness and Enrollment Motivations, by Sex

Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

The motivation data in Table 4 reveals important insights about learner goals. The strong emphasis on completing basic education (60%) indicates that learners primarily view ALS as an educational rather than purely vocational pathway. The gender difference in this motivation - 63 percent of females versus 57 percent of males prioritizing education completion - may reflect different perceptions of education's value or different employment pressures between genders. The secondary emphasis on job prospects (22%) suggests a need to strengthen the program's labor market linkages.

b. Challenges and Support Systems

The patterns of challenges faced by ALS learners, detailed in **Table 5**, reveal a complex interplay of personal, logistical, and institutional barriers. While 43 percent of learners report no significant problems, the majority face at least one substantial challenge. Work-study balance emerges as the most prevalent issue (26%), followed by financial problems (22%), highlighting how economic pressures intersect with educational pursuit. The relatively low reporting of inadequate facilities (5%) and lack of learning materials (5%) might seem to contradict infrastructure challenges noted in administrative data, suggesting possible differences between learner expectations and official standards, or adaptation to existing conditions.

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage	
Financial problems	1,112	22.2	
Transportation issues	467	9.3	
Work-study balance	1,306	26.0	
Inadequate facilities	266	5.3	
Difficulty with lessons	604	12.0	
Lack of learning	235	4.7	
materials			
Limited family support	443	8.8	
Bullying	177	3.5	
No problems reported	2,180	43.4	

Table 5. Problems Faced During ALS Participation

Note: Multiple responses allowed, percentages sum to >100% Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

Table 6 provides a more nuanced view of these challenges across different learner categories. The stark contrast in work-study balance difficulties between working and non-working learners is particularly revealing. Among current learners, 45 percent of those working struggle with this balance compared to only 15 percent of non-working learners. This pattern persists among past learners (32% versus 19%), suggesting that the challenge of balancing work and study remains significant throughout the program. Interestingly, financial problems show a counterintuitive pattern - working learners report higher financial difficulties than non-working learners, possibly indicating that employment itself creates additional costs (such as transportation) or that working learners come from households with greater financial needs.

 Table 6. Distribution (in Percent) of Main Challenges Faced by ALS Learners, by Learner Status and Employment (n=4,933)

Challenge	Curre	nt Learners	Past Learners		
	Working	Not working	Working	Not working	
Financial problems	22.3	21.4	9.9	9.6	
Transportation					
issues	7.1	10.9	5.3	4.4	
Work-study					
balance	44.5	15.2	31.7	19.2	
Inadequate					
facilities	4.1	5.3	11.4	5.1	
Difficulty with					
lessons	11.1	12.9	13.2	11.1	
Lack of learning					
materials	4.7	4.5	7.8	3.9	
Limited family					
support	9.1	7.9	14.3	9.0	
Bullying	5.3	3.3	5.7	4.8	

Notes: (i) Multiple responses allowed, percentages sum to >100%; (ii) Percentages within each learner status/employment category

Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

The support systems data presented in **Table 7** reveals both the reach and limitations of existing social protection mechanisms. While 36 percent of learners receive some form of government assistance, the heavy reliance on 4Ps (74% of those receiving support) suggests a need to diversify support channels. The limited reach of other support programs is striking - student financial assistance reaches only 6 percent of learners, while feeding programs benefit just 3 percent. This pattern suggests potential gaps in targeting or program design that could be addressed to better support ALS learners.

Support Type	Frequency	Percentage
Government Assistance		
Received any assistance	1,784	36.2
Did not receive assistance	3,149	63.8
Type of Support		
Program		
4Ps	1,311	73.4
Student Financial	302	16.0
Assistance		10.9
Relief Assistance	170	9.5
Feeding Program	131	7.3
Unconditional Cash	141	7.0
Transfer		1,5
Individual Medical	115	6.1
Assistance Program		0.4
Emergency Shelter	119	67
Assistance		0.7
Other assistance	266	14.9

 Table 7. Support Services Received

Notes: (i) Multiple responses allowed for type of support program, percentages sum to >100% Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

The analysis in **Table 8** uncovers important geographic variations in challenges and support effectiveness. Mindanao shows particularly high rates of financial difficulties among supported learners (27%), even higher than those without support (24%), suggesting that existing support mechanisms may be insufficient relative to need in this region. The variation in transportation challenges across regions - from 9 percent in NCR to 13 percent in Balance Luzon for supported learners - reflects different infrastructure and accessibility contexts that require region-specific solutions.

Challenge	NCR		Balance Luzon		Visayas Region		Mindanao	
	With Support	No Support	With Support	No Support	With Support	No Support	With Support	No Support
Financial								
problems	24.4	24.3	25.0	16.1	15.0	22.3	27.2	24.4
Transporta								
tion issues	8.8	8.0	12.5	8.8	9.8	8.8	10.7	8.9

Table 8. Distribution of Challenges by Support Status and Region

Challenge	NC	'R	Balance	Luzon	Visayas Region		Mind	anao
	With Support	No Support	With Support	No Support	With Support	No Support	With Support	No Support
Work-								
study								
balance	26.0	28.7	24.2	26.8	23.5	27.2	24.8	28.5
Inadequate								
facilities	9.6	3.1	7.8	2.9	7.7	4.8	7.0	5.1
Difficulty								
understand								
ing lessons	15.6	12.1	14.3	9.8	14.4	9.7	17.0	13.3
Lack of								
support								
from								
family	17.0	9.3	9.7	5.3	12.2	7.8	12.0	9.2
Lack of								
learning								
materials	7.2	3.8	4.6	3.1	6.7	5.0	7.0	3.9
Bullying	7.2	4.8	4.6	1.6	4.5	3.2	6.3	2.7

Notes: (i) Multiple responses allowed, percentages sum to >100%; (ii) Percentages within each learner status/employment category

Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

Field interviews also reveal significant variation in local government support across regions. While some areas benefit from substantial LGU investments - including funding for skills training initiatives, honoraria for trainers, and TESDA partnerships offering technical certifications - other regions struggle with minimal support. This disparity is particularly

evident in the provision of learning facilities, where some areas have dedicated ALS buildings and feeding programs while others rely on makeshift classrooms in barangay halls or open spaces.

c. Program Outcomes and Employment

The post-ALS trajectories captured in **Table 9** present a nuanced picture of program effectiveness in facilitating transitions to employment and further education. The relatively low rate of immediate employment (17%) among program completers might initially appear concerning, but this should be interpreted alongside the substantial proportion pursuing further education - 34 percent continuing to college/university and 21 percent entering technical-vocational training. Together, these figures indicate that ALS successfully serves as a bridge to higher learning opportunities for 55 percent of completers. The current employment rate of 54 percent among all completers suggests that many eventually find work, though the timing and pathway to employment varies.

Outcome	Frequency	Percentage
Immediate Post-ALS		
Activity		
Found employment	124	17.1
Continued to		
college/university	246	34.2
Pursued TESDA/tech-		
VOC	154	21.4
Started own business	28	3.9
Still looking for work	94	13.1
Stayed at home to take		
care of family	73	10.3
Current Employment		
Status		
Employed	386	53.6
Unemployed	333	46.4
Job Relevance to ALS		
Training		
Highly related	211	55.1
Somewhat related	111	28.5
Not related	44	11.3
Not applicable	20	5.1

Table 9. Post-ALS Outcomes for Program Completers (n=719)

Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

The job relevance data in Table 9 raises important questions about skills alignment. While 51 percent report their jobs as highly related to ALS training and another 36 percent as somewhat related, this leaves a significant portion in positions disconnected from their ALS preparation. This pattern suggests room for strengthening the alignment between ALS curriculum and labor market demands.

The age-gender analysis of employment outcomes in **Table 10** reveals persistent structural challenges in labor market access. The gender gap in employment rates widens with age, reaching its peak in the 25-35 age group where male employment (65%) substantially exceeds female employment (34%). This 31 percentage point gap points to significant gender-based barriers in the transition to work. The pattern of higher educational continuation rates among younger learners, particularly males (11% for ages 15-18), suggests that ALS successfully encourages further education among those most likely to benefit from it.

Age Group	Ma	ale	Fem	ale
	Employed	Further	Employed	Further
		Education		Education
15-18	44.0	11.3	27.8	7.7
19-24	54.1	11.3	35.8	6.3
25-35	64.9	6.9	34.3	4.2
Above 35	59.0	8.2	39.4	5.6

Table 10. Employment Status (in %) by Age and Sex for Program Completers (n=719)

Note: Percentages within each age/sex category Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

d. Program Satisfaction and Quality Assessment

Satisfaction data presented in **Table 11** shows consistently high approval of teaching quality, with 95 percent satisfied with teachers/facilitators (70% very satisfied, 25% satisfied). This strong endorsement of teaching quality stands in contrast to more modest satisfaction with facilities and CLCs, where only half (49%) report being very satisfied. The relatively low dissatisfaction rates across all components (generally below 2%) suggest that while improvements are needed in some areas, the program generally meets basic expectations.

Component	Very	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very
	Satisfied				Dissatisfied
Learning materials	56.0	35.2	8.0	0.4	0.6
Teachers/Facilitators	69.5	25.0	4.7	0.4	0.5
Class schedule	51.0	36.9	10.6	1.0	0.6
Facilities/CLC	48.8	38.0	11.4	1.1	0.7
Assessment methods	46.7	41.1	10.8	0.7	0.7

Table 11. Satisfaction (in %) with ALS Program Components

Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

The regional and employment status variations in satisfaction shown in **Table 12** reveal important patterns in program delivery. Non-working learners consistently report higher satisfaction across most components, with the gap particularly pronounced in class scheduling. In Mindanao, for instance, 91 percent of non-working learners express satisfaction with class schedules compared to 86 percent of working learners. This pattern holds across regions, suggesting a systemic challenge in accommodating working learners' needs. The relatively consistent satisfaction with facilities across working status within each region (varying by only 1-2 percentage points) suggests that facility quality is more influenced by regional resources than by learner employment status.

Challenge	NCR		Balance Luzon		Visayas Region		Mindanao	
	Working	Non- working	Working	g Non- Working	Working	Non- Working	Working	Non- Working
Learning	00.4	02.1	00.6	02 (00 (00.5	00.0	02.1
materials	88.4	93.1	90.6	92.6	89.6	90.5	89.0	93.1
Teachers/								
Facilitator								
S	90.4	95.2	94.5	95.5	92.4	94.7	93.6	96.1
Class								
schedule	82.8	87.5	85.1	89.4	87.0	88.9	85.8	90.9
Facilities/								
CLC	85.6	85.1	84.9	85.6	87.3	87.7	88.7	89.2

Table 12. Program Satisfaction by Learner Type and Location (% Very Satisfied/Satisfied Combined)

Source: PIDS 2024 Online Survey of ALS Learners

These satisfaction patterns, when considered alongside the challenges and outcomes data, point to a program that successfully delivers quality instruction despite infrastructure limitations. However, the data also suggests opportunities for targeted improvements in scheduling flexibility, employment transition support, and gender-specific interventions to enhance program effectiveness for all learner groups.

These findings from the online survey, together with the qualitative data collected in this study, suggest several priority areas for program enhancement. First, addressing the infrastructure needs of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) is critical, as facilities satisfaction remains lower than other program components. Targeted initiatives to improve physical infrastructure, particularly in under-resourced regions, would enhance the overall learning experience. Second, efforts to support female learners' transition to employment should be prioritized, given the persistent gender disparities in employment outcomes. Strengthening the alignment between ALS training and job market demands is equally crucial, as only half of employed graduates find their jobs highly related to their ALS training. Maintaining the high quality of teaching is essential, but further investments in learning resources and flexible scheduling options, especially for working learners, are necessary to boost satisfaction and accessibility. These enhancements would ensure that ALS remains an effective and inclusive education pathway, better serving the diverse needs of its learners.

5. Summary, Policy Implications, and Ways Forward

The evaluation of the ALS program highlights both its successes and persistent challenges in providing second-chance education to out-of-school youth and adults (OSYAs). The ALS program plays a critical role in expanding educational opportunities for those who are unable to access or complete formal education, and it has been instrumental in addressing educational disparities, particularly in marginalized communities. Its flexible, modular approach allows learners to continue their education while balancing other responsibilities, such as work and family, making it a crucial pathway for many OSYAs.

However, several key findings from the process evaluation and interviews reveal that ALS faces significant challenges and opportunities in ensuring equitable and consistent access to quality education across regions.

1. **Infrastructure and Resources**: The ALS operates through 26,209 Community Learning Centers (CLCs), with 73% being community-based. However, over 60% of CLCs do not meet standard classroom size requirements, and many lack basic amenities such as proper sanitation facilities and internet connectivity thus limiting the effectiveness of ALS delivery.

The reliance on CLCs for the ALS, many of which are not specifically designed for ALS, has led to disparities in the physical learning environments available to learners. The program's sustainability is also threatened by chronic underfunding, with ALS receiving only a small fraction of the overall education budget. This underfunding manifests in resource shortages, including inadequate teacher support, limited access to learning materials, and insufficient infrastructure for ALS programs.

Despite serving 0.8% of all basic education learners, ALS receives only 0.1% of DepED's total budget. The severe underfunding of ALS relative to its learner population hampers its ability to provide quality education and reach all potential beneficiaries.

- 2. **Teaching Capacity**: 85% of CLCs have only one ALS teacher, often managing multiple learners across different levels and programs. The teacher-learner ratio stands at 75:1, far exceeding the ideal 25:1 potentially compromising instructional quality and individualized support for learners. Likely many teachers require doing multigrade preparations given the diverse needs of ALS students. Additionally, the high pupil-teacher ratio, particularly in remote regions, continues to be a significant barrier to providing quality, individualized instruction. While ALS teachers and administrators have demonstrated tremendous dedication and resourcefulness, their efforts are often constrained by these systemic challenges.
- 3. **Program Diversity:** CLCs offer a range of programs including Basic Literacy, Elementary and Secondary Accreditation and Equivalency, and Indigenous Peoples Education, demonstrating efforts to cater to diverse learner needs.
- 4. **Resource Scarcity:** 88% of CLCs lack basic reference materials, and 99% lack assistive devices for learners with disabilities, highlighting significant resource constraints.
- 5. **Digital Divide**: Only 30.5% of CLCs report reliable internet connections, limiting the integration of digital learning tools and resources.
- 6. **Stakeholder Support**: Key findings also highlight the role of stakeholders in supporting ALS. The program benefits from diverse sources of support, including various levels of government, NGOs, and community organizations, though support levels vary across stakeholders. While some regions benefit from strong partnerships with local government units (LGUs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector partners, the level of stakeholder engagement varies widely across the country. Regions with less

engaged stakeholders struggle with resource gaps, making it difficult to provide learners with the necessary support. There is also a need for stronger coordination between DepED, LGUs, and other stakeholders to ensure sustainable and effective program implementation.

7. Learner Outcomes and Post-ALS Opportunities: While ALS provides valuable secondchance education opportunities, low pass rates on equivalency exams and challenges in post-program employment indicate areas for improvement in curriculum and learner support.

Over 60% of CLCs report employment prospects for graduates, with access to higher education and vocational training also available in many areas. However, whether prospects translate to actual employment is unknown.

- 8. **MEA** : There is a growing recognition of the need to strengthen MEA systems to ensure that ALS programs are effectively meeting their objectives and that data is being used to inform program improvements. While the BAE is collecting data on ALS learners that help profile who they are, performance indicators for the programme have yet to be publicly released.
- 9. **Target ALS Population Trends**: Since 2016, a rapid decrease in the number of OOSY aged 15 to 24 who are have not finished basic education has been observed (at an annual rate of 14 percent decrease in the period 2019 to 2022), suggesting that this magnitude could drop to half a million by 2035.

The empirical findings point to several critical considerations for ALS's future development. First, the program's sustainability will depend on its ability to adapt to changing learner needs, particularly in aligning more closely with technical-vocational education and training (TVET) programs and addressing the skills gaps in the labor market. With the continued decline in the number of out-of-school youth, the focus of ALS will increasingly shift toward serving more complex learner needs, including those related to employability and lifelong learning.

Results from the 2024 PIDS Online Survey of ALS Learners (n=4,933 completed responses) demonstrate both program strengths and implementation gaps. The high satisfaction with teachers (95% expressing satisfaction, with 70% very satisfied) demonstrates effective human resource management despite constraints. However, several challenges persist: infrastructure and facilities draw lower satisfaction levels (87% satisfied but only 49% very satisfied), work-study balance poses difficulties (45% of working learners struggle with this), and employment linkages need strengthening (only 51% of employed graduates report high job-skill alignment). Financial challenges affect 22 percent of learners, with higher rates among working learners, suggesting the need for more targeted support mechanisms. The survey also reveals important demographic patterns - while females comprise 56 percent of learners, they face greater challenges in employment transitions, particularly evident in the 25-35 age group where female employment rates (34%) significantly lag behind male rates (65%). These findings suggest the need for targeted interventions in facilities improvement, scheduling flexibility, financial support, and gender-responsive employment transition programs.

Based on these study findings, we propose the following policy recommendations:

Short-Term Recommendations (0-2 years)

- 1. Define and articulate a clear, measurable purpose and "endgame" for the ALS program
 - Define and articulate a clear, measurable purpose for the ALS program, including establishing specific, quantifiable goals and timelines for ALS outcomes.
 - Clarify strategically what is the "endgame" for the ALS program, which can be juxtaposed against the impact of other safety nets like 4Ps on school dropouts, as well as what can be declared a "manageable" level of out of school youth based on the Philippine context and international standards.

Defining a clear purpose and "endgame" for ALS is crucial for strategic focus and effective resource allocation. This involves articulating specific, measurable objectives that go beyond general statements about providing educational opportunities. The purpose should detail the intended impact on individuals and society, such as reducing out-of-school youth by a specific percentage or improving employment rates for ALS graduates. The "endgame" should describe what ultimate success looks like for ALS, potentially including scenarios like achieving educational parity between ALS and formal school graduates. If ALS has a target population of OSY, the target outcome of ALS should be clear and measurable. OECD countries, for instance, have a share of OSY that is impractical to drive to zero, but is somehow considered "manageable". This clear direction will enable better tracking of progress, justification of resource needs, and maintenance of focus amidst changing educational landscapes. It will also facilitate more effective monitoring, evaluation, and stakeholder alignment, ensuring all ALS activities contribute directly to its core mission.

- 2. Increase ALS Budget Allocation:
 - Advocate for an immediate increase in ALS funding to at least 0.5% of the total DepED GAA Budget for the next fiscal year, and at least 1% by the following year.
 - Allocate emergency resources to provide basic learning materials and equipment to the most under-resourced CLCs.

The current budget allocation for ALS remains insufficient to meet the growing demand for alternative education. Advocating for an increase to 0.5% of the DepED budget is crucial to addressing resource shortages in both human capital and infrastructure. By gradually increasing this to 1%, the ALS program can ensure sustained improvements in curriculum development, teacher training, and learner support services while considering absorptive capacities. This will enable ALS to become a truly viable alternative education system that can address the education gap for millions of Filipinos. Emergency allocations, meanwhile, are essential to address immediate needs, particularly in under-resourced areas, where learners face the most challenging environments due to the lack of materials, adequate classrooms, and teaching equipment.

Nevertheless, policymakers must take care to clarify the "limit" or "endgame" for the program—essentially a target that guides allocation limits and helps measure success over time. If reducing poverty to single digits is a potential "endgame" for 4Ps, then clarifying the measurable target for ALS will be strategically important and it could motivate reasonable investments in the program over time until the measurable policy objectives of the program are achieved.

- 3. Improve Data Management and Utilization:
 - Conduct a comprehensive audit of existing ALS databases and information systems.
 - Develop and implement a standardized data collection protocol across all ALS programs.
 - Train BAE staff at all levels on data management and analysis for decision-making.

Effective data management is vital for improving the monitoring, evaluation, and overall performance of ALS programs. Conducting a thorough audit of current databases will help identify gaps in data collection, accuracy, and utilization. A standardized data collection protocol would streamline processes across all regions, ensuring consistency in reporting learner progress, teacher performance, and program outcomes. Furthermore, training BAE staff in data management and analysis will empower them to make data-driven decisions, enhancing program delivery and resource allocation. This would also facilitate a more accurate understanding of the impact of ALS and allow for real-time adjustments to program strategies.

- 4. Enhance ALS Teacher Recruitment and Support:
 - Launch an accelerated recruitment campaign to add 2,000 new ALS teachers per year.
 - Develop and implement a fast-track training program for new ALS teachers.
 - Establish a mentoring system pairing experienced ALS teachers with new recruits.

The ALS teacher shortage remains a critical barrier to providing quality education. Launching an accelerated recruitment campaign is essential to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio, which currently hinders effective learning. In addition, a fast-track training program for new recruits can ensure that newly hired teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to handle the unique challenges of ALS learners. Mentoring systems will also provide a support network for new teachers, allowing them to learn from experienced educators and easing their transition into the ALS framework. These measures will help improve teacher retention and enhance instructional quality, especially in underserved areas.

- 5. Streamline ALS Curriculum:
 - Form a task force to review ALS curriculum for identifying and prioritize essential learning competencies in the ALS curriculum.
 - Develop modular, flexible learning materials that can be easily adapted to diverse learner needs.
 - Develop targeted interventions to improve pass rates on equivalency exams.

Streamlining the ALS curriculum is critical to ensuring it remains relevant to learner needs and aligns with formal education competencies. The creation of a task force to identify essential learning competencies will prioritize the skills that learners need to succeed, particularly in today's digital and employment landscapes. Modular, flexible learning materials will allow ALS to cater to diverse learner profiles, including working adults, indigenous populations, and learners in remote areas. In parallel, targeted interventions aimed at improving equivalency exam pass rates—such as focused tutorials, exam preparation modules, and practice tests—will ensure that learners are adequately prepared for academic certification

- 6. Strengthen Learner Support Services and Address Immediate Learner Needs:
 - Pilot a comprehensive learner support program in selected regions, including health services, career guidance, and psychosocial support.
 - Partner with LGUs and civil society to provide wrap-around services for ALS learners.
 - Establish emergency financial support mechanisms (whether with resources from DepED or other national government resources, e.g. DSWD) targeting learners who report financial difficulties
 - Develop transportation support programs addressing needs of learners facing accessibility challenges
 - Create flexible scheduling options for learners struggling with work-study balance
 - Implement rapid facility improvement projects focusing on learners affected by inadequate infrastructure

Strengthening learner support services and addressing immediate learner needs are essential for addressing the diverse challenges ALS learners face outside the classroom. A pilot program offering comprehensive support—such as access to healthcare, career guidance, and psychosocial services—will address barriers that can disrupt learning, such as health issues, mental stress, or the lack of livelihood opportunities. Involving LGUs and civil society in this initiative will create a more holistic support system for learners, making ALS more responsive to their overall well-being. By offering these wrap-around services and immediately addressing extra needs of ALS learners, ALS can become not just a second-chance education system but a broader platform for personal and community development.

Medium-Term Recommendations (2-5 years)

- 1. Generate and make publicly available Performance Indicators from the ALS Management Information System (MIS) and for the entire Enhanced Basic Education Information System (eBEIS) at DepED):
 - While a centralized, user-friendly database that tracks learner profile and progress has been developed, no open data on ALS outputs and outcomes are currently made available.
 - The ALS MIS should be integrated with other DepED databases to ensure seamless data sharing and analysis.
 - Establish an advance release calendar for education performance indicators to ensure accountability and transparency in basic education outcomes.

The ALS Management Information System (MIS) is crucial not only for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of ALS programs but also for defining and tracking progress towards the program's "endgame". While the current MIS allows for real-time tracking of learner profiles and progress, the absence of publicly available performance measures on program outcomes hinders informed decision-making and accountability. By generating and publishing these indicators, DepED can provide a clear picture of ALS's impact and progress towards its ultimate goals.

Integration of the ALS MIS with other DepED databases, such as the eBEIS, is essential for comprehensive education sector planning. This integration would allow for a holistic view of the education system, enabling policymakers to assess ALS's role and effectiveness in relation to formal education outcomes.

Resurrecting the practice of releasing yearly education performance indicators, complete with an advance release calendar, would significantly enhance transparency and facilitate evidence-based resource allocation for ALS. This approach aligns with the concept of defining an "endgame" for ALS by providing concrete metrics to measure progress. Over the medium and long term, this data-driven approach will ensure that ALS resources are allocated based on actual needs and demonstrable outcomes, rather than through regular, potentially uninformed expansion.

By implementing these recommendations, DepED can create a robust framework for tracking ALS's progress towards its defined endgame, ensuring that the program remains focused, effective, and accountable in its mission to provide alternative learning opportunities.

- 2. Enhance ALS Teacher Professional Development:
 - Develop a comprehensive, multi-year professional development program for ALS teachers, focusing on adult learning principles, technology integration, and inclusive education practices.
 - Establish partnerships with higher educational institutions (HEIs) to offer specialized courses and certifications in alternative education.

Ongoing professional development for ALS teachers is vital to ensuring they remain equipped to handle the evolving challenges of alternative education. A multi-year development program should focus on areas such as adult learning methodologies, technology integration for blended learning, and inclusive education for learners with disabilities. These areas are crucial for creating a more adaptive and learner-centered ALS system. Partnerships with HEIs can further enhance teacher qualifications by providing specialized certification programs, which could also help professionalize ALS teaching as a distinct career path within DepED.

- 3. Expand and Innovate ALS Program Offerings:
 - Develop and pilot blended learning models for ALS, combining face-to-face instruction with online and mobile learning platforms.

- Create specialized ALS tracks aligned with local labor market needs and opportunities for further education.
- Strategically link ALS trainings to the labor and skills demand in specific economic regions and corridors to which ALS students can best achieve their employment aspirations

Expanding ALS program offerings through innovative approaches like blended learning is necessary to meet the diverse needs of learners. By piloting models that integrate face-toface instruction with online or mobile learning, ALS can reach more learners, especially those in remote or underserved areas. Furthermore, developing specialized tracks that align with local labor market needs (notably those defined by specific economic regions and corridors developed in the Philippine Development Plan) will ensure that ALS learners are prepared for employment or further education. These tracks can focus on vocational skills, entrepreneurship, or other in-demand competencies, helping learners transition from education to livelihood opportunities in ways more catered to their context.

- 4. Strengthen ALS Governance and Coordination:
 - Establish ALS coordination committees at regional and division levels, involving representatives from DepED, local government units, and community stakeholders.
 - Develop clear guidelines and mechanisms for cross-sector collaboration in ALS implementation.

Strengthening governance and coordination at both regional and division levels will ensure better alignment of ALS initiatives with local needs. The establishment of ALS coordination committees involving representatives from DepED, LGUs, and community stakeholders will promote more effective planning and resource allocation. Cross-sector collaboration is essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by ALS learners, including economic, social, and health-related issues. Developing clear guidelines for such collaboration will foster a more integrated and sustainable approach to ALS program implementation.

- 5. Enhance M&E:
 - Design and implement a comprehensive M&E framework for ALS, including both quantitative and qualitative measures of program effectiveness.
 - Conduct regular, independent evaluations of ALS programs and use findings to inform continuous improvement.

A robust M&E framework is critical for ensuring that ALS programs are effective and meet the needs of learners. The framework should include quantitative measures, such as learner completion rates and pass rates on equivalency exams, as well as qualitative feedback from learners and teachers. Independent evaluations conducted at regular intervals will provide valuable insights into program strengths and areas for improvement. These findings should be used to inform continuous improvement efforts, ensuring that ALS remains responsive to changing learner needs and education trends.

Long-Term Recommendations (5+ years)

- 1. Achieve Sustained, Equitable Funding for ALS:
 - Gradually increase ALS funding to reach 3-5% of the total DepED budget, in line with international benchmarks for alternative education programs.
 - Develop sustainable funding mechanisms, including exploring public-private partnerships and dedicated taxes for education.

Achieving sustained and equitable funding for ALS will be critical to its long-term success. Increasing the ALS budget to 3-5% of the DepED budget will align the program with international best practices for alternative education and ensure that it has the resources necessary to expand its reach and improve quality. Exploring public-private partnerships (PPPs) and dedicated education taxes could provide additional funding streams, helping to stabilize ALS finances and ensure that the program can weather economic fluctuations. These funding mechanisms will be essential for ensuring that ALS can meet the needs of future learners and adapt to evolving educational demands.

- 2. Transform ALS Teacher Workforce:
 - Establish ALS teaching as a specialized career track within DepED, with clear pathways for advancement and professional growth.
 - Aim to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio to 30:1 across all ALS programs.

Establishing ALS teaching as a specialized career track would not only enhance the prestige of the profession but also attract more qualified candidates to join and stay within the ALS workforce. Clear pathways for professional growth and career advancement, such as promotions, leadership roles, and specialized training opportunities, will create incentives for teachers to remain committed to ALS. Additionally, aiming to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio to 30:1 is crucial for ensuring that teachers can provide individualized attention to learners. A lower ratio will improve teaching effectiveness, learner outcomes, and overall program quality, allowing teachers to better manage their workloads and focus on student needs.

- 3. Redesign ALS Curriculum for 21st Century Skills:
 - Undertake a comprehensive review and redesign of the ALS curriculum, focusing on essential 21st-century skills, digital literacy, and lifelong learning competencies.
 - Develop adaptive learning technologies tailored to ALS learners' needs and contexts.

The redesign of the ALS curriculum should align with the demands of the modern workforce and global education trends. By integrating 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration, as well as digital literacy, ALS learners will be better equipped to thrive in an increasingly digital and interconnected world. The curriculum should also emphasize lifelong learning competencies to promote adaptability and continuous development. In parallel, developing adaptive learning technologies that cater to diverse learner profiles and contexts—such as low-literacy learners, those with disabilities, or those in remote areas—will further enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of ALS.

- 4. Institutionalize Lifelong Learning Pathways:
 - Develop a national qualifications framework that recognizes and accredits learning acquired through ALS and other non-formal education pathways.
 - Establish seamless transitions between ALS and formal education, technical-vocational training, and higher education.

Institutionalizing lifelong learning pathways is key to ensuring that ALS graduates can continue their education or enter the workforce with recognized qualifications. Developing a national qualifications framework that accredits ALS learning and other non-formal education will legitimize ALS as a credible alternative to formal education. Furthermore, creating seamless transitions between ALS, formal education, technical-vocational training, and higher education will provide learners with multiple pathways for further education or employment. This integration will enhance the overall impact of ALS, ensuring that learners can build on their achievements and continue to develop professionally and academically.

- 5. Foster a Culture of Innovation in Alternative Education:
 - Establish an innovation fund for piloting and scaling up new approaches to alternative education.
 - Create a national center for excellence in alternative education research and practice.

Fostering a culture of innovation in ALS will require both financial investment and a commitment to continuous improvement. An innovation fund dedicated to alternative education could support the piloting of new teaching methods, learning technologies, and program models, allowing ALS to test and scale innovative solutions that address current challenges. A national center for excellence in alternative education research and practice would serve as a hub for developing best practices, conducting rigorous research, and sharing knowledge across regions. This center could collaborate with international organizations and other countries with successful alternative education systems, ensuring that ALS remains at the forefront of educational innovation and reform.

Implementation of these recommendations will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, local government units, and community partners. Given the critical role of ALS in addressing educational inequities and providing second-chance learning opportunities, investing in its improvement is crucial for the Philippines' broader educational and socio-economic development goals.

The mixed-methods approach in. this study, particularly the integration of large-scale learner survey data with administrative and qualitative insights, provides a robust evidence base for program improvement. The findings of the online survey of ALS learners highlight that while ALS demonstrates strengths in teaching quality and basic program delivery, significant gaps remain in infrastructure, support services, and employment linkages. These insights, combined with the broader evaluation findings, suggest the need for a comprehensive but targeted approach to program enhancement.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies of ALS learner outcomes (building on the ongoing BAE work on graduate tracer studies), cost-effectiveness analyses of different intervention strategies, and pilot studies of innovative approaches to alternative education delivery. Additionally, comparative studies with similar programs in other countries could provide valuable insights for further improving the Philippine ALS.

By addressing the resource constraints, improving program implementation, and enhancing learner support, the ALS can more effectively fulfill its mission of providing quality educational opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults, contributing to a more equitable and skilled Philippine society.

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Annex 1. FGD Instruments

Alternative Learning System (ALS) Teachers and Administrators

This is the instrument for focus group discussion with ALS teachers and administrators. The FGDs are conducted across different geographic areas, in Metro Manila, Balance Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. These are conducted for the researchers to better understand regional variations and challenges regarding ALS implementation.

Note: The facilitator can be flexible in the method of questioning to allow teachers to raise important points. This document serves only as a guide for the flow of discussion. Adjustments can be made based on specific context or additional information needed during the interviews.

Profile of ALS Teachers and Administrators

- 1. Age and gender of participants
- 2. School-based or community-based ALS
- 3. Years of experience

Program Logic/Framework

1. **Program Objectives**

- a. What are the objectives of the ALS program?
- b. Do you think the objectives have been met?

2. **Program Evolution**

- a. From your point of view, how has the ALS program changed since its inception?
- b. Have there been any policy changes? If yes, how did these affect the program's effectiveness?

Implementation Variations, Outcomes, and Challenges

3. Community Mapping of Learners, Awareness Campaign

- a. As ALS teachers, do you do community mapping of potential learners?
- b. When and where do you do the community mapping?
- c. Is there a target number of enrollees per ALS teacher?
- d. Have you seen a trend in the enrollment size and the completion rate over the years? If so, what are these?
- e. What are the challenges in community mapping? How do you address these?
- f. Does the local government assist you in identifying out-of-school youths and adults?

4. Implementation

- a. How many ALS classes do you handle in a year? What ALS level do you teach? *Basic Literacy Program (BLP), A&E Elementary, Secondary*
- b. What is the typical class size?
- c. Has the pandemic affected the ALS program? How? Did it affect you and how you delivered your classes?

5. Resources and Support

- a. Are you provided with teacher trainings, learning materials and transportation allowance? Is the support given on a regular basis? Is it given on time?
- b. From whom is the support coming from? Do you also receive support from the local government? What is the particular support from each sector? *Inquire about specific support from DepED BAE, Regional Office, Provincial, City or Municipal Offices, Private Entities or Non-Government Organizations.*
- c. Do you feel that the support is adequate?
- d. Are the programmed budget or funding consistent and stable throughout the years? What factors influence the funding for ALS in this region/area?
- e. Are there existing support services for ALS Learners that you are aware of? What services, and do learners avail them?
- f. Can additional support be helpful? If yes, what are these?

6. Curriculum and Modality of Delivery

- a. Do you think that the current ALS curriculum and implementation in your area is effective?
- b. Do you adjust the curriculum based on learner's needs or backgrounds? If so, how? Inquire if there are adjustments done for learners with disabilities, or those with specific needs (e.g., indigenous peoples, people deprived of liberty, working, pregnant learners).
- c. How do you think the current ALS curriculum can be improved?
- d. Did you find any difficulties by learners on any part of the ALS curriculum or program? If so, how do you address these?
- e. Do you provide online learning modules? Besides these, do you use other digital means of learning in class? If so, do you find the online means of learning effective? Why?

7. ALS Learner Environment

- a. Have you encountered learners dropping out of the program? If yes, what do you think are their reasons?
- b. What factors do you think influence the retention of learners in ALS? In your opinion, what could be done to help learners get into or stay in school?
- c. Does gender, age and accessibility of learning centers affect learners and teachers?
- d. Are there instances of ALS learners shifting to formal school? If so, what do you think motivates out-of-school youths (OSYs) in ALS to shift into formal school?
- e. Were family's or communities of ALS Learners supportive of them while in the program? In what way?
- f. Have you handled ALS learners from disadvantaged groups such as persons with disabilities or indigenous people? What was your experience in such cases?
- g. What is the commonly-used local language or dialect in your ALS class? Why? Do the learning materials used reflect the local language or dialect used?
- h. Have you felt different treatment or discrimination as an ALS teacher? Have your students also felt the same for being in the program?

8. Industry Employability

- a. Do you believe that ALS program completers (Secondary level) are readily employable? Why?
- b. Do you have students who have completed and are now finished with tech-voc course/college, or are now employed? Where are most of your student-completers now?
- c. How do you think the ALS completers fare compared to their formal school counterparts?
- d. In your school or community, are there partnerships with local businesses or vocational training centers for training of ALS learners or completers? If so, please describe the partnerships and the impact of these trainings. How are the programs sustained?

9. Impact and Ways Forward

- a. How would you personally assess the impact of the ALS program?
- b. What do you think can be done to improve the ALS program?

Alternative Learning System (ALS) Learners

This is the instrument for focus group discussions with ALS learners. The FGDs are conducted across different geographic areas, in Metro Manila, Balance Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. These are conducted for the researchers to better understand the variation in learner experiences, outcomes, expectations and challenges in the ALS program.

Note: The facilitator can be flexible in the method of questioning to allow learners to raise important points. This document serves only as a guide for the flow of discussion. Adjustments can be made based on specific context or additional information needed during the interviews.

Profile of ALS Learners

- 1. Age and gender of participants
- 2. School-based or community-based ALS
- 3. Are you studying at the Elementary or Secondary level in the ALS program?
- 4. Are you currently working? If yes, what type of work do you do?

Introduction

1. Introduction and Enrollment Experience

- a. How did you first learn about the ALS program?
- b. Can you share your experience of enrolling and participating in the ALS program?
- c. When did you start your enrollment in ALS?
- d. How long have you been in the program?
- e. Were you enrolled during the years 2020 to 2022? If yes, which specific years?
- f. How would you describe the enrollment process?

2. Reasons for Choosing ALS

- a. Prior to ALS, did you attend formal school classes? If so, what are your reason/s for dropping out of school?
- b. What motivated you to choose ALS over formal schooling?
- c. In your opinion, how does ALS differ from formal schooling?
- d. Did the COVID-19 pandemic influence your decision to enroll in ALS? If so, how?

3. Learning Experience and Challenges

- a. How flexible is the class schedule in accommodating your needs?
- b. Have there been times when you could not attend class? If yes, how frequently does this occur? What are the main reasons for your absences?
- c. How would you describe the quality of your ALS learning center?
- d. Do you find it conducive to learning? Why or why not?
- e. What local language/dialect is the medium of teaching? Why?
- f. Are the learning materials provided reflect the local language/dialect used?
- g. What issues, if any, have you encountered at the learning center? Inquire about the state of facilities such as availability of water, electricity, furniture.
- h. Have you felt different treatment or discrimination among your peers or friends for being in the ALS program?
- i. What improvements would you suggest for the learning environment?
- j. If you were enrolled during the pandemic, how did the pandemic affect your learning experience?

4. Learning Materials and Resources

- a. Did you receive learning materials from ALS? What are your thoughts on these materials?
- b. Are they provided regularly and on time? Who provides these materials?
- c. Are they complete and adequate for your learning needs?
- d. Are the materials accessible online? Would you prefer if all learning materials were available online?
- e. How could these learning materials be improved?
- f. Do you have access to technology like laptops, smartphones or computers? Are you able to use these to support your learning?
- g. Do you also learn about digital literacy and access to technology in your classes? If so, how are these lessons delivered?

5. Learner Support System

a. Have you received any form of support while enrolled in ALS? If yes, what type of support did you receive?

- b. Who provided this support?
- c. Are you aware of any government programs that support families like yours?
- d. Is your family receiving any government support or assistance? If so, what are these?
- e. Does your family or community support you while studying in ALS? In what ways?
- f. Have you heard of any support services available to you? Do ALS teachers connect learners to counseling and career guidance services?
6. Skills Acquisition from Curriculum

- a. Can you identify one or two important life skills you've acquired through ALS? Consider inquiring about life skills gained, such as communication, problem-solving, and time management.
- b. Can you tell us what job-related skills you have learned through ALS? Inquire to the extent how ALS prepares learners for technical abilities or vocational training.
- c. Why do you believe these skills are important? Can you share an example of how you've applied these skills in your everyday life?
- d. Are there any aspects of the curriculum you particularly like or dislike?
- e. Do you believe that the skills you have acquired from ALS will help you later on at work, or are helping you now at work?

7. ALS Curriculum

- a. If you could change anything about the ALS program, what would it be?
- b. Are there any subjects or topics you would like to add or remove from the curriculum?

8. Impact of ALS on Your Life

- a. How has the ALS program impacted you so far?
- b. Do you believe the ALS program will have a significant impact on your future?

9. Learner Motivations and Future Plans

- a. Do you plan to complete the ALS program and take the assessment exam?
- b. If yes, what are your primary motivations for completing ALS?
- c. What are your plans after completing ALS?
- d. Are you motivated to continue studying/enrolling in college or a technical-vocational course?
- e. Do you intend to start working immediately after ALS?

Annex 2. KII Instruments

Department of Education (DepED) and Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE)

These are the key questionnaires for the key informant interview with a national official from the Department of Education. The KII with DepED/BAE is conducted to gain insight into national policy, planning and oversight mechanisms guiding ALS governance frameworks, reform priorities, resourcing and quality assurance.

Evaluation of ALS Design and Implementation

Policy, Governance and Budgeting

- 1. What are the primary goals and objectives that guide the DepED Central Office's policy development for the Alternative Learning System (ALS)? How does the Central Office (CO) prioritize budget allocation for ALS within the broader education system?
- 2. Who are the key stakeholders involved in shaping policies for ALS? How does the CO engage the Regional Offices (RO) and Schools Division Offices (SDO) in its policy and planning functions for ALS?
- 3. How does the CO extend support to the RO for their respective ALS regional policy formulation and program design and development? Is there coordination with local governments? If "yes" then please describe how this coordination takes place.
- 4. How does the CO determine budget allocation per ROs and SDOs for the ALS Program? What are the considerations why certain ROs or SDOs may get a larger budget for ALS?
 - a. Is it because some ROs/SDOs can readily absorb and easily implement ALS within their areas of jurisdiction?
 - b. Do certain ROs/SDOs have higher demand for ALS or are their learner populations larger?
 - c. Do local government contributions help "crowd in" more CO resources? Or the other way around?
- 5. What do you consider are the strengths within the DepED system with regards to ALS governance and budgeting? What are the gaps or areas where assistance is needed in allocating and mobilizing resources for ALS?

Monitoring Systems

- 1. How are the ALS outcomes monitored and evaluated? What outcomes does the CO focus on, and does it have a target/goal for ALS per year?
- 2. In the CO, what are the systems and practices already in place to support ALS Program monitoring and evaluation? How were they developed and who are the key individual and organizational leaders/decision-makers?
- 3. How is the monitoring and evaluation process unique to CO, RO, SDO and Community Learning Centers (CLCs)?

Implementation

- 1. What are the specific bottlenecks or challenges in ALS implementation? Organizationally, what aspect of the ALS is the most difficult to carry out?
 - a. Do the implementers encounter procurement issues (e.g., for project-based activities, external/DepED-procured providers to supplement the current pool)?
 - b. How is the coordination between the national and local levels? Does the local government play a role in more effective implementation? If "yes" please describe that role. If "no" please elaborate on what you think that role could have been.
 - c. Are there knowledge management practices for ALS? Is there sharing of best practices on ALS between the CO, RO, SDOs?
- 2. Are there regional differences in ALS implementation and outcomes? If yes, what could be the reason for this? Which ROs cater to more ALS learners and mobilize more teachers?
- 3. From a DepED perspective, is there a special focus on ROs that tend to face larger numbers of prospective ALS students? Why, or why not?
- 4. After the pandemic, did the DepED increase its scope to provide different modes of instruction, such as virtual and blended learning modules for ALS?
- 5. Does the DepED consider the importance of tapping information and communication technologies (ICT) in the procurement, monitoring and evaluation, and program management aspects of the ALS?
- 6. Are there mechanisms in place for the continuity or sustainability of outcomes for ALS?

Teacher Competencies

- 1. How does the CO support the ROs and SDOs in teacher training and improvement of competencies? Do all mobile teachers including external/DepED-procured providers receive the same training for ALS?
- 2. How does the CO support the ROs on ALS technical assistance (TA) and learning materials development?

Curriculum Relevance

- 1. Is the ALS curriculum being enhanced presently, and if so, what learning strands or skills would be added or enhanced? The importance of 21st century skills, soft skills and links to industry needs would be relevant considerations in the ALS curriculum.
- 2. Does the DepED CO consider linking with industry to gain perspectives on the relevance and enhancement of the ALS curriculum according to the skills needed by the industry?
- 3. Does the DepED CO have a graduate tracer study for ALS?
 - a. Are there cases of ALS learners who have immediately worked after passing the senior high school level Portfolio Assessment and certification process? If so, how do they fare in the workplace in terms of skills learned from the current curriculum?
 - b. Would you say that ALS completers of senior high school level assessment are readily employable? Why or why not?

Reform Initiatives and Priorities

- 1. What are the current and planned reforms in ALS governance, administration and implementation?
- 2. What are the specific planned reforms for ALS?
 - a. Would this include supplementing the budget for ALS? How about hiring more ALS teachers and providers?
 - b. How does the DepED CO and BAE ensure that ALS teachers and DepED-procured providers are regularly trained? Does the planned reform include expanding capacity building programs for teachers?
 - c. Is there a system to encourage or incentivize ALS teachers?
 - d. Is there a teacher specialization area for ALS? Is there a standard for training of ALS teachers?

Data Systems

1. Does the CO take advantage of existing data management systems, including the use of the Learner Information System (LIS) and ALS M&E data for the improvement of policies, administration and outcomes for ALS?

Stakeholder Engagement

1. Does the DepED have ongoing collaboration on ALS with other government agencies, local government units (LGUs) and private sector partners including employers? In what areas do you think would collaboration or partnership benefit the DepED and the ALS learners?

Gender Dimension and Social Inclusion

- 1. Are there any gains documented on the ALS Program, such as employment outcomes and personal testimonies from graduates/passers? Are there instances of success stories from distinct groups? Are there significant numbers of ALS graduates eventually completing TVET programs or going to college?
- 2. Is there a difference among outcomes and experience for girls/women compared to boys/men? What is the usual age group of those who enroll and complete the ALS up to senior high school level? What are the usual reasons why ALS learners drop out or choose not to take the Portfolio Assessment?
- 3. Are there particular ALS activities that seek to reach out to certain vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, or indigenous peoples?

Department of Education (DepED) Regional Offices (Balance Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao)

This is the questionnaire for the key informant interview with regional officials from the Department of Education. The KII with regional officials is conducted to analyze decision-making, administration and support processes at decentralized levels, regional planning, localization of policies, monitoring and issues, and coordination.

Evaluation of ALS Design and Implementation

Policy, Governance and Budgeting

- 1. What are the priorities of the Regional Office (RO) for Alternative Learning System (ALS) and how does this align with the Central Office (CO) policy and direction?
- 2. Does the RO receive support for ALS policy formulation, program design, development and management?
- 3. Does the RO have a formal feedback communication with the CO to elevate recommendations regarding ALS policy?
- 4. Is there coordination with local governments? If "yes" then please describe how this coordination takes place.
 - a. Do local government contributions help "crowd in" more RO resources? Or the other way around?
- 5. How does the RO support Schools Division Offices (SDOs) to provide technical assistance and operationalize ALS (ALS planning, monitoring and evaluation, teaching assistance, and curriculum)?
- 6. Would you consider the RO support received or the budget for ALS implementation to be adequate? What are the strengths of the RO in the ALS implementation? What are the gaps or areas where the RO needs assistance for ALS?

Monitoring Systems

- 1. How are the outcomes monitored and evaluated in the RO level? What outcomes does the RO focus on, and does it have a target/goal for ALS per year?
- 2. In the RO, what are the systems and practices already in place to support ALS Program monitoring and evaluation? How were they developed and who are the key individual and organizational leaders?
- 3. How is the monitoring and evaluation process unique to RO, SDO and Community Learning Centers (CLCs)?

Implementation

- 1. What are the specific bottlenecks or challenges that the RO experience in ALS implementation? Organizationally, what aspect of the ALS is the most difficult to carry out?
 - a. Do the implementers encounter procurement issues (e.g., for project-based activities, external/DepED-procured providers to supplement the current pool)?
 - b. How is the coordination between the national and local levels? Does the local government play a role in more effective implementation? If "yes" please describe that role. If "no" please elaborate on what you think that role could have been.
 - c. Are there knowledge management practices for ALS in the RO? Is there sharing of best practices on ALS between the CO, RO, SDOs?
- 2. From a DepED perspective, is there a special focus on ROs that tend to face larger numbers of prospective ALS students? Why, or why not?
- 3. After the pandemic, did the RO and SDOs increase its scope to provide different modes of instruction, such as virtual and blended learning modules for ALS?
- 4. Does the RO consider the importance of tapping information and communication technologies (ICT) in the procurement, monitoring and evaluation, and program management aspects of the ALS?
- 5. Are there mechanisms in place for the continuity or sustainability of outcomes for ALS within the RO?

Teacher Competencies

- 1. How does the RO support the SDOs and CLCs in teacher training and improvement of competencies? Is the support received from the CO on training adequate? Do all mobile teachers including external/DepED-procured providers receive the same training for ALS?
- 2. Does the RO receive support on ALS technical assistance (TA) and learning materials development?

Curriculum Relevance

- 1. Does the RO provide feedback or recommendation to the CO with regards to ALS curriculum enhancement?
- 2. What is the language or dialect used in the delivery of ALS in this region?
- 3. Does the RO consider linking with companies in the region to gain perspectives on the relevance and enhancement of ALS according to the skills needed by the local industry?
- 4. Does the RO have a graduate tracer study for ALS?
 - a. Are there cases of ALS learners in the region who have immediately worked after passing the senior high school level Portfolio Assessment and certification process? If so, how do they fare in the workplace in terms of skills learned from the current curriculum?
 - b. Would you say that ALS completers of senior high school level assessment are readily employable? Why or why not?

Reform Initiatives and Priorities

- 1. Are there any current and planned reforms in ALS governance, administration and implementation?
- 2. What are the specific planned reforms for ALS in the region?
 - a. Would this include supplementing the budget for ALS in the RO? How about hiring more ALS teachers and providers in the region?
 - b. How does the RO ensure that ALS teachers and DepED-procured providers are regularly trained? Does the planned reform include expanding capacity building programs for teachers in the region?
 - c. Is there a system to encourage or incentivize ALS teachers?
 - d. Is there a teacher specialization area for ALS? Is there a standard for training of ALS teachers?

Data Systems

1. Does the RO take advantage of existing data management systems, including the use of the Learner Information System (LIS) and ALS M&E data for the improvement of administration and outcomes for ALS?

Stakeholder Engagement

1. Does the RO have ongoing collaboration on ALS with other government agencies, local government units (LGUs) and private sector partners including employers? In what areas do you think would collaboration or partnership benefit the RO and the ALS learners in the region?

Gender Dimension and Social Inclusion

- 1. Are there any gains documented on the ALS Program by the RO, such as employment outcomes and personal testimonies from graduates/passers in the region? Are there instances of success stories from distinct groups? Are there significant numbers of ALS graduates eventually completing TVET programs or going to college?
- 2. Is there a difference among outcomes and experience for girls/women compared to boys/men in this region? What is the usual age group of those who enroll and complete the ALS up to senior high school level? What are the usual reasons why ALS learners drop out or choose not to take the Portfolio Assessment?
- 3. Are there particular ALS activities that seek to reach out to certain vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, or indigenous peoples?

Department of Education (DepED) Schools Division Offices

This is the questionnaire for the key informant interview with division officials from the Department of Education. The KII with division officials is conducted to examine frontline perspectives on how national/regional policies, resources and capacities shape local implementation scenarios, such as access to resources, infrastructure/staffing, learner outreach, assessment mechanisms.

Evaluation of ALS Design and Implementation

Policy, Governance and Budgeting

- 1. What are the priorities of the Schools Division Office (SDO) for Alternative Learning System (ALS) and how does this align with the Regional Office (RO) and Central Office (CO) policy and direction?
- 2. Does the SDO have a formal feedback communication with the RO and CO to elevate recommendations regarding ALS policy?
- 3. Does the SDO receive support for ALS operationalization (providing technical support to Community Learning Centers, mobile teachers, distribution of learning materials)?
- 4. Is there coordination with local governments? If "yes" then please describe how this coordination takes place.
 - a. Do local government contributions help "crowd in" more CO resources? Or the other way around?
- 5. Would you consider the SDO support received or budget for ALS implementation to be adequate? What are the strengths of the SDO in the ALS implementation? What are the gaps or areas where the SDO needs assistance for ALS?
- 6. How many are the Community Learning Centers (CLCs) and mobile teachers assigned to this SDO? Does the SDO have a target of ALS teachers deployed every year?

Monitoring Systems

- 1. How are the outcomes monitored and evaluated in the SDO level? What outcomes does the SDO focus on, and does it have a target/goal for ALS per year?
- 2. In the SDO, what are the systems and practices already in place to support ALS Program monitoring and evaluation? How were they developed and who are the key individual and organizational leaders?
- 3. How is the monitoring and evaluation process unique to RO, SDO and Community Learning Centers (CLCs)?

Implementation

- 1. What are the specific bottlenecks or challenges that the SDO experience in ALS implementation? Organizationally, what aspect of the ALS is the most difficult to carry out?
 - a. Do the implementers encounter procurement issues (e.g., for project-based activities, external/DepED-procured providers to supplement the current pool)?
 - b. Are there locational or transportation issues that mobile teachers encounter?
 - c. How is the coordination between the national and local levels? Does the local government play a role in more effective implementation? If "yes" please describe that role. If "no" please elaborate on what you think that role could have been.
 - d. Are there knowledge management practices for ALS in the SDO? Is there sharing of best practices on ALS between the CO, RO, SDOs?
- 2. From a DepED perspective, is there a special focus on ROs or SDOs that tend to face larger numbers of prospective ALS students? Why, or why not?
- 3. After the pandemic, did the SDO increase its scope to provide different modes of instruction, such as virtual and blended learning modules for ALS?
- 4. Does the SDO consider the importance of tapping information and communication technologies (ICT) in the procurement, monitoring and evaluation, and program management aspects of the ALS?
- 5. Are there mechanisms in place for the continuity or sustainability of outcomes for ALS within the SDO?

Teacher Competencies

- 1. How are the SDOs and CLCs supported in teacher training and improvement of competencies? Is the support received from the CO and RO on training adequate? Do all mobile teachers including external/DepED-procured providers receive the same training for ALS?
- 2. Does the SDO receive support on ALS technical assistance (TA) and learning materials development?

Curriculum Relevance

- 1. Does the SDO provide feedback or recommendation to the CO and RO with regards to ALS curriculum enhancement?
- 2. What is the language or dialect used in the delivery of ALS in this area?
- 3. Does the SDO consider linking with companies in the province to gain perspectives on the relevance and enhancement of ALS according to the skills needed by the local industry?
- 4. Does the SDO have a graduate tracer study for ALS?
 - a. Are there cases of ALS learners in the province who have immediately worked after passing the senior high school level Portfolio Assessment and certification process? If so, how do they fare in the workplace in terms of skills learned from the current curriculum?

b. Would you say that ALS completers of senior high school level assessment are readily employable? Why or why not?

Reform Initiatives and Priorities

- 1. Are there any current and planned reforms in ALS governance, administration and implementation?
- 2. What are the specific planned reforms for ALS in the province?
 - a. Would this include supplementing the budget for ALS in the region or province? How about hiring more ALS teachers and providers?
 - b. How does the SDO ensure that ALS teachers and DepED-procured providers are regularly trained? Does the planned reform include expanding capacity building programs for teachers in the region?
 - c. Is there a system to encourage or incentivize ALS teachers?
 - d. Is there a teacher specialization area for ALS? Is there a standard for training of ALS teachers?

Data Systems

1. Does the SDO take advantage of existing data management systems, including the use of the Learner Information System (LIS) and ALS M&E data for the improvement of administration and outcomes for ALS?

Stakeholder Engagement

1. Does the SDO have ongoing collaboration on ALS with other government agencies, local government units (LGUs) and private sector partners including employers? In what areas do you think would collaboration or partnership benefit the SDO and the ALS learners in the province?

Gender Dimension and Social Inclusion

- 1. Are there any gains documented on the ALS Program by the SDO, such as employment outcomes and personal testimonies from graduates/passers in the province? Are there instances of success stories from distinct groups? Are there significant numbers of ALS graduates eventually completing TVET programs or going to college?
- 2. Is there a difference among outcomes and experience for girls/women compared to boys/men in this region/province? What is the usual age group of those who enroll and complete the ALS up to senior high school level? What are the usual reasons why ALS learners drop out or choose not to take the Portfolio Assessment?
- 3. Are there particular ALS activities that seek to reach out to certain vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, or indigenous peoples?