

Innovative Approaches in the Alternative Learning System Strategies for Life Long Learning

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Abstract: This study investigated innovative approaches in Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) within Zone II Division of Zambales, focusing on accessibility, relevance, quality, support and resources, and its suitability. It employed a descriptive quantitative design, data were collected thru survey questionnaires from 32 teachers and 328 students. The results indicated that teachers, predominantly female and mid-career, strongly agreed on the relevance of innovations, while agreeing on other factors. The students, mainly male adolescents and high school undergraduates, strongly agreed on relevance, quality, support and resources, and suitability, but agreed on accessibility; their academic performance was generally poor. It revealed that the teacher's perceptions of quality and suitability varied by education and training, and student perceptions differed in accessibility and relevance by age, quality by education, and support and resources by employment status. Significant differences existed in student perceptions based on these demographics, but no significant relationship was found between perceptions and academic performance. The study recommends a strategic enhancement plan for ALS which includes an offline mobile application, curriculum enhancement, and facility improvements to improve its accessibility. An exploration regarding the effectiveness of ALS innovations in relation to the job market, learner's success, and factors affecting academic performance is suggested to future researchers.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System, Innovative Approaches.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In an ever-evolving global landscape, education systems must adapt to meet the needs of diverse learners, particularly those outside the traditional classroom environment. Across the globe, policy makers recognized the importance of the provision of non-formal education. Institutions for the provision of non-formal learning vary more in their structures than those where formal learning takes place, but flexibility is perhaps a common attribute that they share: non-formal learning institutions' sizes, locations and activities (UIL, 2022). Two emerging dimensions related to empowerment and sustainability are identified, allowing us to extend the theoretical knowledge in the non-formal education field (Almeida & Morais, 2024).

UNESCO and the Philippine's Department of Education (DepEd) partnered to improve the quality of the non-formal education in the country, and ensure inclusive education through an intensified Alternative Learning System (ALS), (UNESCO, 2023). The ALS, a non-formal education initiative in the Philippines, serves as a critical mechanism for

reaching marginalized sectors of society by offering flexible and accessible learning opportunities, ALS addresses educational inequality and lifelong learning, in promotes line with its mission to deliver inclusive education to underserved populations (DepEd, 2020).

Despite its significant contributions, ALS faces persistent challenges that necessitate the development in the programs. Data from DepEd showed that there is an alarming disparity between the number of learners who enroll in ALS and those who successfully complete the program. Moreover, there are other issues hound the ALS Program such as the governance and financing issues, and lack of support for ALS teachers. (EDCOM, 2024). A severe resource and operational constraints hamper program effectiveness. Inadequate facilities with 61 percent of Community Learning Centers below standard size requirements, and limited learning materials (Albert et al., 2024). While andragogical principles and learner-centered methods are effective, adapting policies and resources to meet adult learners' needs is crucial (Mahinay & Manla, 2025). Addressing these gaps is critical to ensuring that ALS fulfills its mandate of fostering lifelong

learning opportunities for all. The study explored and evaluated the innovative approaches employed within the ALS in the second district of Zambales to enhance lifelong learning. It assessed the perception of teacher and learners regarding the ALS innovative strategies in terms of its accessibility, relevance, quality, support and resources, and suitability.

The research provided insights into how ALS can improve as well as can contribute to the broader discourse on how non-formal education systems can foster inclusive, sustainable, and lifelong learning opportunities in the Philippines and beyond. It offers practical recommendations for ALS educators and practitioners on how to integrate innovative teaching methods, digital tools, and learner-centered approaches. It is also significant for learners, particularly those excluded from the formal education system. Additionally, it contributes to the educational sector by providing insights into how non-traditional education systems like ALS can be improved to better serve marginalized and underserved populations. On a global scale, the study's findings can inform international education policies and development programs. It will provide a valuable foundation for future researchers who are interested in exploring innovative approaches in ALS.

The research identified key strategies that have been successfully implemented to improve the accessibility, relevance, quality, support and resources, and suitability of non-formal education programs. Additionally, it examined the challenges faced in adopting these innovative approaches and propose solutions to overcome these barriers to better support lifelong learning.

II. METHODOLOGY

➤ Research Design

The research study utilized a descriptive research design, which helped the researcher collect information that best described the existing problem by asking respondents about their perceptions of the innovative approaches in non-formal education that effectively enhanced lifelong learning in Zone II, Division of Zambales. Descriptive research was an appropriate choice as the research aimed to identify

characteristics, frequencies, trends, and categories. Survey research allowed the researcher to gather large volumes of data that were analyzed for frequencies, averages, and patterns.

➤ The Instrument

A set of questionnaires was the primary tool used in this research study designed to gather relevant data from the respondents, which includes a profile section as well as items assessing innovative approaches in the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Before finalizing the questionnaire, the instrument's first draft was presented to the panel of oral examiners at the PRMSU Graduate School for validation purposes. Based on their suggestions and corrections, amendments and revisions were made to improve the clarity and alignment of the questions with the study's goals.

A pilot test was also necessary to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The pilot test was conducted among the ten (10) ALS Teachers and twenty (20) ALS Junior High School learners at the Cabangan ALS Main School-based Learning Center from the first District of Zambales. The researcher followed a purposive sampling approach to ensure that only those directly involved in ALS programs were included. Cronbach's alpha was calculated which determined the reliability of the responses in the pilot test.

Through these steps validation by experts, feedback incorporation, and reliability testing, this study guaranteed that the research instrument was both valid and reliable, thereby allowed accurate data collection and meaningful insights into the effectiveness of innovative approaches in ALS programs.

➤ Respondents and Location

The respondents of the research study were the ALS Teachers and Junior High School students from the different Alternative Learning System (ALS) implemented in ALS Learning Centers within Zone II in the Division of Zambales. Table 1 below presents the frequency distribution of the respondents by district. A total population of thirty-five (35) ALS teachers from various districts and nine hundred five (905) ALS Junior High School learners were the respondents of the research study.

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of the Respondents

District of Zambales in Zone II	Population of Teacher Respondents	Sample of Teacher Respondents	Population of learners' respondents	Sample of learners' Respondents
1. Palauig	5	5	170	62
2. Iba	12	11	283	103
3. Botolan	18	16	452	163
TOTAL	35	32	905	328

According to Muchaendepi et al. (2019)) a sampling frame is a list of cases from which a sample can be chosen from and as indicated by a representative sample is one which is at least 10% margin of error from the population. In this

way the decision of sample size of teachers and learners which was considered as representative was determined by utilization of Slovin's formula which composed of thirty-two (32) teachers and two hundred seventy-eight (328) learners.

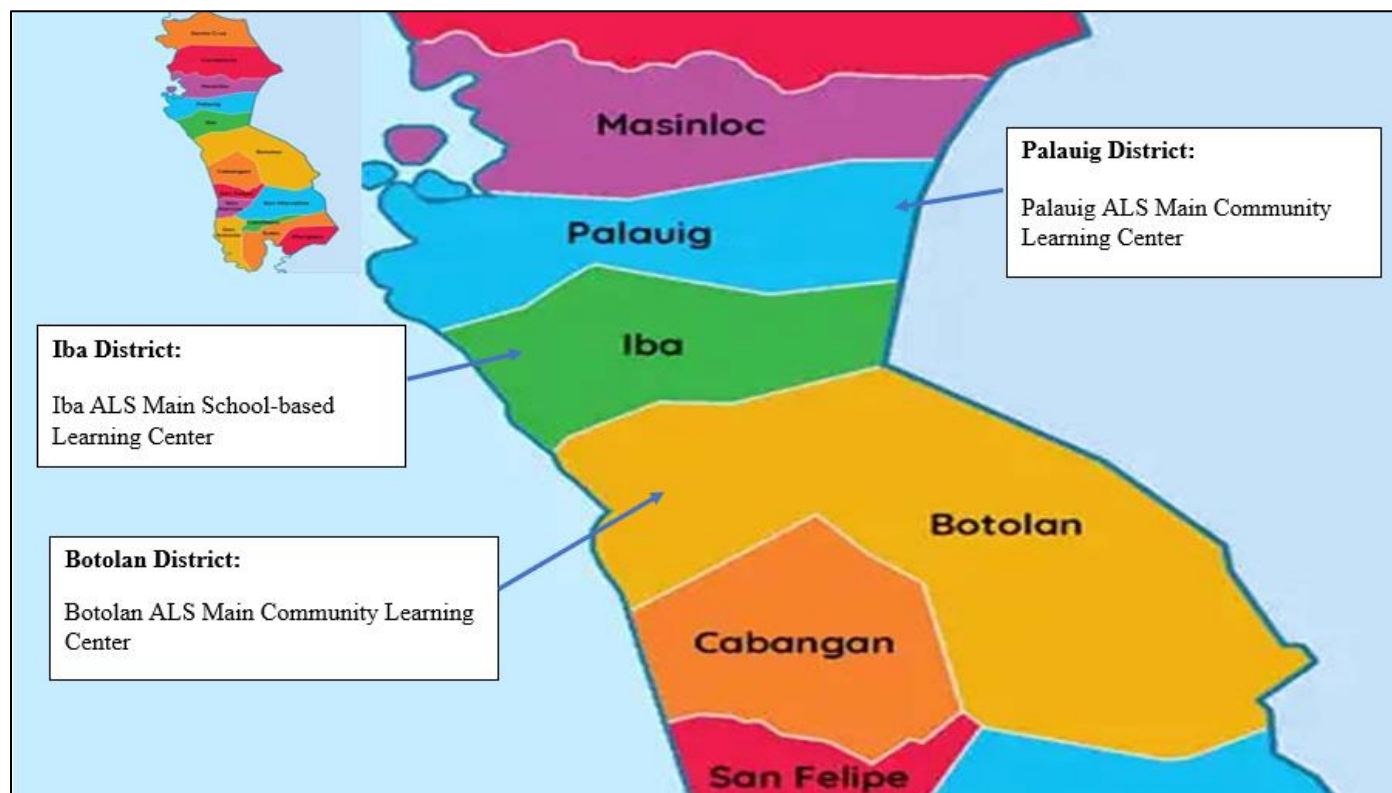


Fig 1 Map of Zone II Zambales Showing the Location of ALS Community and School-Based Learning Center Schools in the Division of Zambales

This research study was conducted at the different ALS Community and School-based Learning Centers of Zone II in the Division of Zambales including Palauig, Iba and Botolan.

➤ Data Collection

After making the final draft of the survey checklist, the researcher sought the permission/approval of the Schools Division Superintendent, Division of Zambales, through letters signed by the Director of Graduate School to administer the survey questionnaire to the respondents. The researcher then informed the respective Public School District Supervisor, School Heads and/or the District ALS Coordinators about the actual distribution of the questionnaires to the respondents after securing the endorsement. The researcher distributed the instruments in person. The objectives of the study were explained to the respondents to ensure they considered and gained a better understanding of the research study's objectives. The respondents' answers were treated confidentially. The researcher ensured a one-hundred-percent retrieval of the questionnaires upon distribution.

➤ Data Analysis

Upon retrieval of the distributed questionnaires, the data had been tallied, tabulated and analyzed accordingly. The gathered data had been subjected to statistical analysis and treated using percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson r . The data were interpreted using Likert Scale. Percentage was used to determine what proportion of the respondents belongs to a specific category. It was used in the distribution of the number of respondents per school. Weighted mean is the sum of the observations divided by the number of observations.

Mean described the central location of the data and was computed using the formula. Pearson r Correlation Coefficient had been used to determine the perception of ALS Teachers and ALS Junior High School learners on the innovative approaches of Alternative Learning System Programs.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

➤ Summary Table on Innovative Approaches of Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) Programs

Table 2 presents the mean, descriptive equivalent, and rank of the Innovative Approaches of Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) Programs, as evaluated by teachers and learners.

• For Teachers

The highest-rated category is Relevance, with a mean of 3.26, ranked 1, interpreted as "Strongly Agree." This indicates that teachers perceive ALS innovations as highly relevant to their professional and personal goals, emphasizing the practical application and alignment of ALS programs with real-life situations. The second highest-rated category is Accessibility, with a mean of 3.21, ranked 2, interpreted as "Agree," highlighting the role of ALS in making education available to marginalized communities. Ranked 3 is Quality, with a mean of 3.18, showing that teachers acknowledge the improvements in instructional quality brought by innovative approaches. Support and Resources follows with a mean of 3.13, ranked 4, suggesting that while teachers find ALS support beneficial, there is room for improvement in terms of available resources. The lowest-rated category for teachers is

Suitability, with a mean of 2.99, ranked 5, indicating that while teachers acknowledge the appropriateness of ALS programs, aspects such as learning environment conditions and infrastructure could be enhanced.

- *For Learners*

The highest-rated category is Quality, with a mean of 3.36, ranked 1, interpreted as "Strongly Agree." This suggests that learners recognize the improvements in learning experiences through innovative approaches in ALS. Support

and Resources and Suitability both received a mean of 3.29, ranked 2.5, demonstrating learners' appreciation for the availability of resources and the suitability of learning environments for ALS programs. Relevance follows with a mean of 3.28, ranked 4, reflecting learners' agreement on the applicability of ALS lessons to their personal and professional growth. The lowest-rated category for learners is Accessibility, with a mean of 3.17, ranked 5, indicating that while ALS is considered accessible, there may still be challenges in reaching certain learners, particularly in underserved areas.

Table 2 Mean, Descriptive Equivalent and Rank on the Innovative Approaches of Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) Programs

Innovative Approaches of Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) Programs	Teacher			Learners		
	Mean	D.E.	Rank	Mean	D.E.	Rank
Accessibility	3.21	Agree	2	3.17	Agree	5
Relevance	3.26	Strongly Agree	1	3.28	Strongly Agree	4
Quality	3.18	Agree	3	3.36	Strongly Agree	1
Support and Resources	3.13	Agree	4	3.29	Strongly Agree	2.5
Suitability	2.99	Agree	5	3.29	Strongly Agree	2.5
Grand Mean	3.15	Agree		3.28	Strongly Agree	

The overall computed Grand Mean is 3.15 for teachers (interpreted as "Agree") and 3.28 for learners (interpreted as "Strongly Agree"). This indicates that learners have a more positive perception of ALS innovative approaches compared to teachers. The strong agreement among learners regarding quality, support, and suitability suggests that ALS innovations are effectively meeting their needs. However, the lower rating in accessibility highlights areas where further improvements are needed to ensure that all learners can fully benefit from ALS programs. For teachers, the strong agreement on relevance indicates that ALS is effectively addressing their teaching and learning goals, but areas such as support, suitability, and overall quality could be further enhanced to optimize their experience. The integration of technology in alternative learning settings, such as mobile learning applications, digital classrooms, and interactive learning modules, has been found to improve student motivation and academic performance (Ergün & Usluel, 2020). However, disparities in digital access—such as limited internet connectivity, lack of technological devices, and

insufficient digital literacy—can create barriers for both learners and educators.

➤ *Academic Performance of the Student-Respondents*

Table 3 presents the descriptive equivalent, frequency, grade, and percentage of the academic performance of student-respondents in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program.

Out of 328 respondents, the majority (117 or 35.67%) have a Satisfactory academic performance with grades ranging from 80 to 84. This is followed by 108 respondents (32.93%) who Did Not Meet Expectations with grades below 75. Meanwhile, 63 respondents (19.21%) achieved a Very Satisfactory performance with grades between 85 and 89. A smaller portion, 34 respondents (10.37%), attained a Fairly Satisfactory performance with grades between 75 and 79. Lastly, only 6 respondents (1.83%) performed at an outstanding level with grades between 90 and 100.

Table 3 Descriptive Equivalent, Frequency, Grade and Percentage on the Academic Performance of the Student-Respondents

Descriptive equivalent	Grade	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding	90 - 100	6	1.83
Very Satisfactory	85 - 89	63	19.21
Satisfactory	80 - 84	117	35.67
Fairly Satisfactory	75 - 79	34	10.37
Did not Meet Expectation	Below 75	108	32.93
Total		328	100.00
Mean: 75.32 (Fairly Satisfactory)			

The computed mean grade of the respondents is 75.32, which falls under the Fairly Satisfactory category. This suggests that while some students perform well, a significant number struggle to meet the expected academic standards, highlighting the need for further support and intervention in the ALS program. A study by García and Weiss (2019) emphasizes that students in non-traditional education settings

often face a range of challenges that can significantly impact their academic achievement. Limited instructional time is a key barrier, as many alternative education programs. Additionally, resource constraints, such as outdated or insufficient learning materials, a lack of technological support, and limited access to well-trained educators, further hinder students' ability to reach their full academic potential.

Another critical issue is the varying levels of foundational knowledge among learners, as ALS programs cater to individuals with diverse educational backgrounds, learning paces, and prior experiences. This diversity in learning readiness requires differentiated instructional approaches and personalized support to ensure that all students can progress effectively.

➤ *Significant Relationship Between the Perception of the ALS Learners on the Innovative Approaches Employed in Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) and Academic Performance of the Students*

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation (r) analysis between ALS learners' perception of innovative approaches and their academic performance.

Table 4 Pearson R on the Perception of the ALS Learners on the Innovative Approaches Employed in Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) and Academic Performance of the Students

Academic Performance			Interpretation
Accessibility	Pearson Correlation	0.001	Negligible Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.99	Not Significant
	N	328	
Relevance	Pearson Correlation	0.037	Negligible Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.51	Not Significant
	N	328	
Quality	Pearson Correlation	0.022	Negligible Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.70	Not Significant
	N	328	
Support and Resources	Pearson Correlation	0.040	Negligible Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.47	Not Significant
	N	328	
Suitability	Pearson Correlation	0.052	Negligible Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.35	Not Significant
	N	328	

Therefore, there is no significant relationship between the perception of ALS learners regarding innovative approaches and their academic performance. These findings imply that while learners may hold various opinions on the effectiveness of ALS innovations, these perceptions do not necessarily translate into measurable differences in academic achievement. Other factors such as teaching methodologies, learner motivation, socioeconomic conditions, and access to educational resources may play a more significant role in shaping academic performance. Research supports the idea that the learner motivation remains a key determinant of academic achievement, as students who exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation tend to perform better regardless of their views on educational innovations (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researchers have arrived to conclude that the teacher-respondents perceived strongly agree on the innovative approaches of Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) programs in terms of relevance while they agree on accessibility, quality, support and resources and suitability. And, the students-respondents strongly agree on relevance, quality, support and resources and suitability while agree on accessibility. According to the study, the academic

The computed Pearson correlation coefficients for Accessibility ($r = 0.001$), Relevance ($r = 0.037$), Quality ($r = 0.022$), Support and Resources ($r = 0.040$), and Suitability ($r = 0.052$) indicate negligible correlations with academic performance. This suggests that the learners' perception of ALS innovations has little to no direct relationship with their academic outcomes. Moreover, the computed significance values 0.99, 0.51, 0.70, 0.47 and 0.35 respectively are all greater than the 0.05 alpha level of significance, indicating that none of these correlations are statistically significant.

performance of the students is poor. The perception of ALS teachers on quality and suitability of innovative approaches varies based on educational background and training. There is a significant also difference in ALS learners' perceptions of accessibility and relevance based on age, quality based on educational attainment, and support and resources based on employment status. However, there is no significant relationship between the perception of ALS learners regarding innovative approaches and their academic performance.

The researchers have offered recommendations based on the results of the conducted study. To strengthen the accessibility, and support and resources of the ALS Program in technology integration initiatives particularly in their online teaching/learning options, the ALS Program may create an offline classroom application which includes a recorded discussion video, learning materials, and assessments that could be accessed by the teachers/learners anytime and anywhere they want. To ensure a more relevant innovative approaches, the ALS facilitators and administrators may review the ALS curriculum to ensure it is updated and aligned with the modern job market requirements. Also, they may include more employability and life skills in their learning outcomes to ensure that learners

acquire practical knowledge that aligns with industry demands. Future researchers may also explore a more in-depth analysis of effectiveness of the ALS innovative approaches as well as a study regarding the factors that affect the academic performance of the ALS learners.

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