

# Exploring Gender Equality in Alternative Learning System (ALS) Non-Formal Classrooms: Teachers' Roles in Addressing Gender Inequality and Promoting Equal Opportunities

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## Article Details:

Received: 11 April 2026

Revised: 25 April 2026

Accepted: 30 April 2026

Published: 15 May 2026

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## Recommended Citation:

Calosa J R. P., Medina R. E. (2026). Exploring Gender Equality in Alternative Learning System (ALS) Non-Formal Classrooms: Teachers' Roles in Addressing Gender Inequality and Promoting Equal Opportunities. *The International Review of Multidisciplinary Research*. 1 (5), 543-560.  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20215236>

## Index Terms:

Adaptive Gender-Inclusive Pedagogy (AGIP), Alternative Learning System (ALS), Gender-Responsive Education, Project G.R.E.E.T., Social Science Education.

**Abstract.** This study, aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality), explored how Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers in Candelaria, Quezon addressed gender inequalities within the non-formal education contexts. Despite the increasing policy attention to gender-responsive education, limited research has examined how these frameworks are enacted in ALS settings. Anchored in Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Learning Theory, this qualitative phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of ALS teachers in promoting gender equality. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with selected ALS educators and analyzed using thematic analysis to capture recurring patterns and insights. Findings revealed that teachers actively employed Adaptive Gender-Inclusive Pedagogy (AGIP), integrating gender-fair language and inclusive instructional strategies to challenge entrenched sociocultural norms, including patriarchal beliefs and gender stereotypes. However, these efforts were significantly constrained by systemic barriers, such as limited access to specialized gender-responsive training, inadequate instructional resources, and the competing domestic responsibilities of adult learners. A critical contribution of the study is the identification of a policy-practice gap, particularly the absence of ALS-specific Classroom Observation Tools (COTs) aligned with gender-responsive standards. To address this, the study proposes Project G.R.E.E.T. (Gender-Responsive Education for Empowered Teaching), grounded in the Integral Gender-Responsive ALS Framework (IGRAF), which responds to the multidimensional challenges within the ALS ecosystem. The findings underscore the need to institutionalize a contextualized gender-responsive tool to transform gender equality from a policy aspiration into sustained classroom practice. These insights also inform policymakers and stakeholders in strengthening inclusive ALS programs nationwide.

## Introduction

Global frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) explicitly stipulated that education is a fundamental human right. In the Philippines, the non-formal education system operationalized the Alternative Learning System (ALS) as an intervention to provide marginalized sectors with opportunities to complete basic education. This affirmed the study of Ofreneo and Castillo (2020), who described how the government's intervention extended and opened opportunities for out-of-school youth, adults, and marginalized learners to access education, and emphasized the State's commitment to inclusive and equitable access to education.

However, beyond these transformative initiatives, inequalities related to gender still exist in non-formal education, particularly in ALS. According to Kuteesa et al. (2024), several factors were identified as part of the existing problems and challenges, namely social, cultural, and economic barriers. This revealed how teachers, specifically in non-formal education,

advanced gender-responsive practices aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, such as Quality Education (SDG 4) and Gender Equality (SDG 5), serving as both timely and necessary in this period.

Moreover, despite the challenges, teachers perceived this profession as serving beyond of being instructors to being agents of change, emphasizing the mission of challenging stereotypes by fostering equal participation and empowering marginalized learners. This affirmed the mandates of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, specifically in Article XIV, indicated that education is a constitutional right, must be protected and promoted by the government, which aims to provide quality education at all levels. These fundamental and legal mandates led to the adoption of several measures to combat educational inequalities. Specifically, this was operationalized through Republic Act No. 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, which formally recognized non-formal education as an integral part of the national education system. Additionally, this measure was strengthened by the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which included ALS as part of a modern approach to education in the country.

Furthermore, additional legislative measure was created to strengthened the entire concept of non-formal education particularly the ALS Act of 2020 (RA 11510) in our country through the complementing laws and rules such as Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (DO No. 32, s. 2017), which emphasized the general idea of gender-sensitivity and non-discrimination in the teaching and learning practices, aligned to Magna Carta for Women and the country's obligation in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Conversely, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2024) reported that, despite benchmarking laws and interventions, gaps remained, including ALS being underfunded, leading to capacity constraints for educators in fulfilling their primary mandates. In addition, Kohler (2022) demonstrated that these challenges were associated with the absence of clear indicators of program effectiveness and ineffective coordination in social protection to address the increasing needs of diverse learners.

A notable point was the study by Darnell (2020), which highlighted that teachers are crucial for facilitating learners and for bridging policy with local realities. However, gaps in relation to teachers' capacity persist. In fact, only 38% of ALS implementers were duly qualified to address the demanding needs of the ALS environment (Casingal, 2025; Salendab & Cogo, 2022). Also, challenges like these left many teachers underprepared to combat gender inequality effectively (Albert et al., 2024; Parto & Yango, 2023).

In view of these conditions, this research examined how ALS implementors in the Municipality of Candelaria perceived and addressed the unresolved challenges about gender inequality and promotion of equal learning opportunities. Through teachers' lived experiences, the study sought to uncover solutions that demonstrate evidence-based reforms, strengthen inclusivity measures, and increase access to quality education in the country's non-formal learning system. Examining and understanding lived experiences in promoting gender equality in the alternative learning system is expected to contribute to an accessible and equitable learning system for all learners from diverse backgrounds.

#### *Objectives of the Study*

The present study explored the roles of Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers in addressing gender inequality and promoting equal opportunities within the non-formal education in the Municipality of Candelaria. Given the situation that ALS through its legislative mandates provides flexible opportunities for marginalized learners, several studies revealed existing problems which this paper aimed to explore.

Specifically, the study sought to understand how ALS teachers perceived their roles in promoting gender equality as well as the pedagogical practices, and barriers they encountered with existing gender norms to empower learners.

1. What are the participants lived experiences in dealing with specific gender inclusive teaching methods that are utilized by ALS teachers?
2. What challenges and barriers do ALS teachers encounter in integrating gender-sensitive and inclusive pedagogical practices to promote equitable learning opportunities in non-formal classrooms?
3. How do ALS teachers interpret their responsibilities in promoting gender equality and equal opportunities among learners?
4. What themes emerge from the testimonies of ALS teachers regarding their roles in addressing gender inequality and promoting equal opportunities in non-formal classrooms?
5. Based from the findings, what program/framework may be proposed to improve gender equality and inclusive practices in non-formal classrooms?

By understanding these lived experiences, the proponent aimed to provide insights that provided gender-responsive pedagogical practices which served as a potential solution that ensures a strengthened inclusive education in ALS.

#### *Scope and Limitation*

The study was mainly attributed to explore gender equality in the ALS as part of the non-formal education system in the country. This was through an examination of lived experiences of ALS teachers in addressing gender inequality and promoting equal opportunities.

In light of this, the study utilized an in-depth interviews and thematic analysis within a phenomenological framework. The study was primarily limited using the lens of the ALS implementors and excluding other stakeholders such as learners and secondary elements which provided the specific findings of inclusive pedagogical practices. Additionally, the study concluded certain limitations within the population, having only seven of the eight active practitioners in a single municipality.

In relations, findings may not be generalizable to all ALS teachers across the country. The study was shaped by specific socio-cultural context in Candelaria, Quezon due to self-reported data influenced by the participants' preferences in discussing sensitive matters. Lastly, this study does not measure or conclude quantitative measurements with regards to level of effectiveness of pedagogical practices related to the outcome of this work. However, the study provided an interpretive account of teachers lived experiences in promoting gender equality in ALS.

## **Methodology**

#### *Research Design*

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to investigate the lived experiences of Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers in addressing gender inequality and promoting equal opportunities within non-formal classrooms in Candelaria, Quezon. This approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of how ALS teachers perceived their roles and implemented strategies that fostered gender-inclusive practices in their teaching contexts.

#### *Selection of Co-Participants*

The researcher employed a purposive census sampling design to accommodate the total population of active ALS teachers in the Municipality of Candelaria, Quezon. This is an approach if the selected research locale consists of small population. The study identified eight educators however, only seven of them participated voluntarily. To adhere the ethical protocols, the non-response of the remaining prospective participant was taken as refusal without further inquiry.

In order to guarantee the depth and usefulness of the data, respondents were also chosen using the following criteria: (1) Active Statues. At the time of the study, the participant was employed as an ALS teacher at either the Candelaria West or East District Schools in the Municipality of Candelaria. Instructional Roles (2). The trainees directly assisted with administrative tasks in the classroom. (3) Diversity in the population. With the aim to present a comprehensive range of experiences with gender-inclusive teaching, the participant met the minimal requirements for being in the teaching profession, including legal age, educational background, and years of service.

#### *Data Gathering Procedures*

The researcher explored the lived experiences of ALS teachers in addressing gender inequalities using a semi-structured interview guide that was in line with the study's four research areas. The Public Schools District Supervisor's approval was obtained, and then Candelaria's ALS coordinators were consulted. Seven of the eight teachers who were identified consented to take part. Interviews lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes, were done in person or virtually, and were audio recorded with permission. Additionally, field notes were made. Verbatim transcriptions of the data were verified by member verification. Triangulation was complemented by additional information, such as lesson plans and observations made in the classroom. To protect participant privacy and confidentiality, all digital and physical data was safely stored.

### *Research Instrument and Validation*

The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions to capture participants' experiences. Document analysis of lesson plans and policy materials complemented the interviews, enhancing credibility. The instruments were validated by three experts who assessed their clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Their feedback was incorporated to improve the final version.

### *Thematic Reflection*

In *Exploring Gender Equality in Alternative Learning System (ALS) Non-Formal Classrooms: Teachers' Roles in Addressing Gender Inequality and Promoting Equal Opportunities*, the interpretive stance that enabled the study's engagement with participant narratives was thematic reflection. This inquiry, which was grounded in a phenomenological perspective and derived from the thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006), focused on the process of meaning-making as opposed to merely coding or theme development. It involved carefully reviewing teachers' testimony, thinking back on what they said, and examining how their experiences revealed both similar and unique perspectives on promoting gender equality in non-formal classrooms.

Unlike the technical stages of data analysis, which explained how codes and themes were systematically produced, thematic reflection focused on the researcher's interpretive responsibility. It showed how, by focusing on context, nuance, and lived experience, the researcher acknowledged the conflicts, silences, and aspirations in teachers' narratives while keeping their opinions front and center. Instead of merely identifying patterns, this methodical approach positioned the study as a way to understand how ALS teachers managed their obligations and constructed meaning in connection to societal and cultural restrictions.

This thematic reflection supplied the conceptual foundation necessary for the data to progress from description to interpretation through this process. In keeping with the phenomenological goal of illuminating how individuals made sense of their situations, it ensured that the results represented the diversity of individual perspectives as well as the essence of lived experiences. By emphasizing the study's interpretive depth, theme reflection enhanced rather than replicated data analysis, data synthesis, and literature comparison.

### *Literature Comparison*

Several studies highlighted the absence of gender-sensitive strategies like inclusive language, diverse representation, and participatory learning methodologies hindered teachers' ability to overcome systemic and cultural barriers in ALS non-formal classrooms. Due to this absence, learner participation was influenced by the persistence of traditional gender stereotypes. This is corroborated by Peralta et al.'s study from 2025, which discovered that these gaps in inclusive practices had a harmful impact on students' academic performance and reading outcomes as well as their ability to critically reflect and cultivate an inclusive mindset.

In a bigger picture, the study of Mendizabal (2024), emphasized the significance of a whole-school strategy that inspired stakeholders to combat prejudice and provide equitable chances. In a similar perspective, Nkansah (2023) urged a more thorough examination of systemic power systems. Additionally, Canavan and Drew (2020) emphasized educators' transformative role in undermining repressive norms. When collectively addressed, these viewpoints were strong evidences to call for the necessity of a multifaceted approach to promote an inclusive, equitable, and safe learning environment.

In light of this, the current study, aimed to comprehend how ALS teachers actually dealt with these issues in their day-to-day work. The study places the problem in the perspective of both local reality and more general international discussions on education, concentrating on the particular setting of non-formal classrooms in Candelaria, Quezon. The research provided insights that both supplement and expand on previous studies on equity and inclusion in the field of education examining and understanding teachers lived experiences with supporting materials like lesson plans, teaching manuals, and policy papers.

The proponent utilized three complementing theories such as Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP), Transformative Learning, and Critical Pedagogy that were often used in the social sciences and education to frame this investigation.

Together, these viewpoints highlighted that teaching was about more than just imparting knowledge. It was also about addressing inequality, changing perceptions, and comprehending how people interact with wider social systems. In the study of Nigraha et al. (2024) Critical pedagogy was described as a theory that creates transformative learning experiences by encouraging students to rethink and reshape their perspectives as well as examining critically a wide range of social issues.

Furthermore, another theory was utilized in this study to understand how the teachers maximized their roles and capabilities in challenging societal issues particularly to gender topics. This theory is on the notion of Transformative Learning which described that when students are exposed to new material, they critically assess their preexisting beliefs and viewpoints, which leads to a redefined worldview that is created via continuous reflection (Western Governors University, 2020; Mezirow, 1991). Lastly, this study adapted the IMP which was relevant in understanding the multidimensional status of ALS in the Municipality of Candelaria, Quezon that explained how connected personal experiences, cultural values, classroom practices, and systemic conditions to each other (Johnson, 2025).

Together, these theories provided a comprehensive framework for examining the real-life experiences of ALS teachers and for formulating recommendations that promoted gender-inclusive practices and equal chances in informal learning settings.

#### *Data Analysis*

In this study the utilization of semi-structured interviews of the lived experiences of ALS teachers in challenging gender imbalance in non-formal classrooms were investigated through a methodical analysis. Using qualitative phenomenological research, the proponent identified patterns, insights, and shared experiences among participants. This kind of approach was derived from the study of Bryne (2022) who explained how thematic analysis improved understanding of participants' perspectives by systematically finding, examining, and interpreting recurring themes in qualitative data. By collecting both common and unique aspects of instructors' experiences, this method made a strong connection between the findings and the research themes.

#### *Ethical Considerations, Credibility, and Dependability*

Credibility was ensured through triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents, as well as member checking. Dependability was established through an audit trail and peer debriefing with academic mentors. These measures ensured the accuracy, consistency, and trustworthiness of the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Lived Experiences of ALS teachers in Delivering Gender-Responsive Education*

In this section, three overriding themes were identified and presented in a matrix that described the pedagogical environment of Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers in Candelaria, Quezon. These findings explained how the study's transformative learning processes were revealed and how the analysis was based on the participants' real-world experiences, bridging the gap between student reaction and instructional practice.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>	<b>Narratives of the Participants</b>
Adaptive Gender-Inclusive Pedagogy	Differentiated and Flexible Instructions	"I use differentiated instructions" (P1) "Those who are capable of writing an essay [they are allowed to do so] ... others who can speak up could go through an interview" (P2) "I use collaborative group work where roles are not assigned based on gender, gender-neutral language in instruction, and learning materials that show both men and women in diverse roles." (P7)
	Inclusive Language and Representation	"I use inclusive languages in teaching my learners." (P3) "I make sure that classroom discussions... do not favor one gender." (P4)
Safe Learning Environment	Increased Confidence and Participation	"They become more active and participative." (P1) "Learners feel respected and valued." (P5)

Professional Growth and Pedagogical Convergence	Freedom of self-expression	“...learners feel respected and valued, which increases their confidence to participate regardless of gender.” (P7)
	Challenging the stereotypes and becoming gender-sensitive	“They can express freely; they can say what they want.” (P2)
		“Accepting them is allowing them to express their authentic self.” (P4)
		“I am able to remove the stereotypes.” (P1)
		“Simply as they feel included.” (P3)
	“We need to be more gender-sensitive, we need to accept them.” (P4)	
	“I learned that small changes in language and classroom setup greatly influence learners’ self-esteem and participation.” (P7)	

*Matrix 1: Emergent Themes from the Lived experiences of ALS teachers in delivering gender-responsive education*

### *Adaptive Gender-Inclusive Pedagogy (AGIP)*

This study found the Adaptive Gender-Inclusive Pedagogy (AGIP) to be the unquestionable pedagogical cornerstone of instruction in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) specifically in the Municipality of Candelaria. This method shown that de-prioritizing strict, teacher-centric preferences in favor of highly localized, learner-centered experiences accommodated the expressed needs and lived realities of the learners, thereby fundamentally deviated from conventional instruction. Additionally, the practice was aligned and affirmed the ALS Version 2.0 Strategic Roadmap that was formally operationalized through this paradigm change. This roadmap described a systematic change away from traditional "school-like" institutions and toward flexible, practical curriculum that are particularly and well-suited to the needs of the Out-of-School Youth and Adult (OSYA) population in the Philippines.

The findings revealed that these adaptive learning environments performed noticeably better than conventional pedagogical approaches. In fact, the study of Ayeoribe and Ayeoribe (2025) revealed that children who participated in these systems shown a significant increase in academic performance. Therefore, enabling students to take back control of their educational paths, enabled a significant restructuring of conventional learning acquisitions.

Furthermore, the study of Harmat (2020) highlighted the significance of intersectional knowledge that enabled educators to design classrooms which actively supported a variety of gender identities. This idea supported the mandates of DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017 (Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy) that required educators to practice non-discriminatory actions and behaviors in order to lessen and challenge the sociocultural norms and beliefs that fosters gender inequality.

Moreover, this study indicated that teachers promoted a culture of genuine self-expression by means of allowing students to show mastery through multi-modal expressions such as writing, debate, and role playing that was definitely pertaining with the concept of AGIP. This strategy was in line with the results of a study on gender-responsive, localized instruction by Lopez and Andal (2024), which primarily showed that inclusive and location-based assessments could significantly increase students' sense of academic belonging. Similarly, the study of Albert et al. (2024) revealed that those teachers had to adapt courses into regional dialects in order to ensure a positive learning outcome. In relation, this method reflected the concept of transformative learning theory in which teaching went beyond simple knowledge acquisition but instead sparked a process that reinforced their critical thinking towards social issues.

In contrary, the study of Lalanan & Oco (2025) affirmed Sutton (2021) that a severe lack of learner involvement led to a split in the educational process. This immediately impeded the acquisition of the essential knowledge and abilities required for academic achievement. This only shows that that the absence of active engagement and participation will result to students being passive consumers of knowledge. Noting that this study primarily focused on non-formal education shown the reality that the aforementioned challenges were existing in the ecosystem of the alternative learning system. If changed and recalibrated, educational system will able to transform from a rigid framework to a dynamic engine for social mobility.

### *Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment*

The main objective of ALS is to create an inclusive and safe learning environment specifically by offering an aligned and flexible schedules for learners as they are being identified to be part of the marginalized sector. The AGIP being main response of the teachers effectively caused positive learning environment. In fact, this study indicated that the participants saw that giving students the chance to provide freedom and non-prescriptive answers was a vital support system for those who were having poor self-esteem. These approaches reinforced and created a respectful environment where students felt safe, comfortable, and encouraged to participate confidently and cooperatively.

However, these measures were frequently threatened the durability of this inclusive environment. In fact, according to Smith (2015) as cited by Hatmanto and Rahmawati (2023), time constraints and a lack of pedagogical resources was one of the reasons why difficulties occur along the way. This only showed that educators initiatives in prioritizing safe learning environment were hampered by institutional support and contextual factors.

*Professional Development and Pedagogical Convergence*

This research found that there was a pedagogical convergence among ALS educators in the Municipality of Candelaria. This is where both newly hired and experienced teachers utilized almost identical adaptive and gender-responsive practice having gender-neutral languages integrated to differentiated instructions based on learner’s preferences. This implied that teaching approaches were more heavily influenced by the demanding requirements of the non-formal education context than by overall years of competence. The result was in line with the findings of Khan et al. (2020), who argued that teaching strategies mainly had a significant impact on students’ attitudes and participation. Furthermore, this highlighted the vital role of ALS teachers in creating inclusive and engaging learning environments. In fact, involvement has a major impact on students’ motivation and focus (California Learning Resource Network, 2025).

However, the efficacy of each of these unique teaching approaches did not exist on its own. According to Cardona-Molto (2022) the institutional support is as important for integrating equality into educational practices and institutions. For the educators in this study, the application of adaptive gender inclusive approaches served as educational innovations personal to them, which helped enhancing their gender sensitivity and capacity to break stereotypes. On the other hand, for these improvements to be sustained, the Community Learning Center's (CLC) as the leading institutions in the non-formal education must take them into account. This result showed how poor learning environments hindered learning and led to low completion rates.

The transition to the CLC required a change toward promoting greater student autonomy, even though many teachers came to the ALS from formal education, which was described by teacher-led planning and predetermined guidelines. Ultimately, the findings showed that while the Alternative Learning System (ALS) had the potential to be transformative, the complex interplay between a teacher's personality, their prior training, and the structural reality of the ALS framework was what made it effective. As suggested, these viewpoints demonstrated that genuine educational equity was achieved when significant institutional support was given to individual pedagogical excellence.

*Challenges and Barriers in Gender-Inclusive Practices in the Alternative Learning System (ALS)*

There are still a number of major obstacles in the way of implementing gender-sensitive instruction, despite the efforts of ALS teachers in Candelaria, Quezon. These challenges, which range from a lack of specialized training and resources to cultural norms that determine learners' behavior, were thematically analyzed in Matrix 2. The following data illustrated below explained the lived reality of stakeholders through the lens of educators which highlighted the particular limitations that hampered educational advancement such as time constraints and traditional norms.

Themes	Subthemes	Narratives of the Participants
Institutional and Capacity Constraints	Lack of Trainings	“I am lacking on the knowledge about gender-responsive education in ALS.” (P1)
		“Lack of training... especially in gender-sensitive teaching methods.” (P2)
	Time and Resource Limitations	“Limited training materials and traditional mindsets in the community sometimes makes it difficult to fully implement gender-sensitive strategies.” (P7)
Cultural and Social Barriers	Traditional Gender Norms	“...limited instructional materials specifically designed for gender-sensitive teaching methods” (P5)
		“One big challenge is time and resource constraints.” (P6)
	Family and Community Expectations	“Women stay at home... while men are working looking for life.” (P1)
		“Cultural or societal norms...” (P3)
Cultural and Social Barriers	Traditional Gender Norms	“a group activity failed because some male learners refused to be grouped under a female leader due to cultural beliefs” (P7)
		Female learners... cannot go to school since she cannot take care of her child.” (P2)
	Family and Community Expectations	“They are working... they are breadwinners.” (P4)
Cultural and Social Barriers	Traditional Gender Norms	“Some families still believe that women should prioritize household responsibilities over education.” (P7)

Pedagogical Uncertainty and Resistance	Fear of Offending Learners	“I overthink if these strategies could offend my learners.” (P1) “...handling those students makes it difficult for me to understand... it’s different shifting and handling classes from regular to ALS” (P2) “Yes, especially when examples in modules unintentionally reflects stereotypes.” (P7)
	Unequal Participation and Learner Resistance	“They are uncomfortable expressing themselves in front of the class.” (P2) “Fear of judgement.” (P5)

Matrix 2: Emergent Themes from Challenges and Barriers in Promoting Gender Equality in (ALS)

### *Institutional and Capacity Constraints*

In this theme, findings revealed that there was a notable policy-practice disjunction. This finding showed that formal institutionalization of gender equity mandated by the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (DO No. 32, s. 2017) does not have the operational framework needed to be implemented successfully. These shortages were consistent with the findings of Abenes and Caballes (2020), who found that despite of community-centered approach being well-received in theory, its implementation is often hampered by a lack of staff and resources in Community Learning Centers (CLCs). As a result, instead of receiving the comprehensive institutional backing the ALS implementers are frequently forced to rely on individual initiatives.

This structural gap was furtherly demonstrated by participants’ reports of overwhelming challenges on the lack of specialized preparation. On that note, participants identified several workloads as another burden to them romanticized by the system of being and functioning as generalists and leading them to have the lack specific expertise or exposure to gender-sensitive education. This situation affirmed the study of Mahinay and Manla (2025) who echoed that chronic personnel and financial shortages worsen these capacity limitations and endangering the long-term viability of gender-responsive programs. This revealed that in the absence of robust resource allocation, gender equality in the ALS will continue to be a rhetorical goal rather than a classroom reality.

Apart from that, the study found out that there was a mismatch between the high-risk, modular, and community-based realities of ALS and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). This is due to PPST indicators’ continued emphasis on formal education, which ignores the changing needs of multigrade instruction and interrupted educational paths. As a result, teachers lack a contextualized framework to measure gender-responsive indicators.

### *Cultural and Social Barriers*

This research proved that based on the insights and lived experiences of the participants this is not solely a pedagogical issue and gender inequality in the Alternative Learning System was a systemic problem deeply ingrained in the students’ sociocultural lives. This has been proven in the participation patterns of learners being dictated by traditional gender roles. In fact, according to the participants female students and young people were expected to choose household works over education.

In the study of Lalanan and Oco (2025), asserted that community culture is a key component of ALS programs’ effective execution. The local community’s support makes sure that students don’t feel alone in their academic and personal hardships, encouraging them to believe that they can fulfill their goals in spite of obstacles. Regardless of the socioeconomic background of the students, it is critical that community norms and values actively foster a pleasant, encouraging learning environment. The local ecosystem becomes a safety net that encourages disenfranchised children to persevere when community expectations are in line with educational objectives.

Furthermore, despite the ALS being adaptable, modular structure, which was created especially to suit working people, ingrained social conventions still disproportionately disadvantage women (Butch et al., 2025). As a result, the classroom turns into a crucial setting where educators have to deal with outside “gendered power relations” that prevent students from participating completely. This implied that a change that goes beyond the classroom and into the larger community landscape is necessary to achieve true equity. This change was consistent with the findings of Churwell et al. (2020), who contended that underprivileged and marginalized populations are disproportionately affected by resource distribution inequities, further challenging the reach of non-formal education

*Pedagogical Uncertainty and Resistance*

Teachers' efforts to advance equality are hampered by an outdated, "gender-blind" educational system, creating a "pedagogical friction." Teachers frequently feel alone and overburdened as a result of this infrastructure, which disregards particular gender needs and overwhelms them with paperwork. Because they lack the contemporary, contextualized resources necessary to do things differently, this "role strain" causes even the most well-meaning educators to inadvertently rely on biased materials and antiquated techniques (Lomibao, 2024).

In relation and viewed through the lens of critical pedagogy, these limitations do more than just restrict material resources. This significantly prevented the critical analysis and reconstruction of presumptions that are important and crucial for real change. In the study of Drew and Canavan (2022) described that the shift toward a heteronormative-challenging practices, importance on the knowledge of multiculturalism, and diversity remained fragmented rather than systematic. These findings were due to the absence of cohesive leadership, community partnerships, and lack of institutional support.

*ALS Teachers' Roles and Responsibilities in Promoting Gender Equality*

This matrix emphasized the particular teaching approaches and perspectives that supported gender equality within the ALS framework. These results highlighted the value of adaptable learning strategies like home visits and modular instruction as well as the crucial part that family involvement plays in removing obstacles to education. These educators demonstrated a comprehensive strategy for student success that goes beyond the conventional classroom by considering gender equality as a transformative practice.

Themes	Subthemes	Narratives of the Participants
ALS Teachers as Facilitators of Equality	Ensuring Equal Access and Participation	"No student should be left behind." (P1) "I see my role as a facilitator... ensures equal access." (P5)
	Teaching Beyond Academic Instruction	"My role is not only to teach academic content, but also to promote fairness and respect." (P4) "My role is to ensure that all learners receive equal opportunities and feel safe and respected in the learning environment." (P7)
	Flexibility and Inclusive Support System	"I have a so-called modular... home visitation." (P1) "ALS teachers must be flexible enough." (P6) "I conduct home visits" (P7)
Gender Equality as Transformative Practice	Community and Family Engagement	"We coordinate with the parents." (P5) "...coordinate with parents to explain the importance of education for all genders" (P7)"
	Empowerment and Life Opportunities	"Education should be inclusive and transformative." (P5) "Gender equality... is about changing lives." (P6) "It empowers learners to break free from limiting beliefs and pursue better opportunities in life."

*Matrix 3: Emergent Themes from ALS Teachers' Roles and Responsibilities in Promoting Gender Equality*

*ALS Teachers as Facilitators of Equality*

The study revealed that ALS teachers perceived themselves as the main forces behind gender-responsive education, going beyond their usual roles as teachers to actively promote equality. As educators, they are the one who faced the challenges of non-formal settings while upholding a commitment to social justice. Abramson and Schachter (2024) resisted that this shift necessitates a strong and durable professional identity. According to Madriaga (2023), a key component of this identity is the ongoing development of specialized knowledge. Teachers must have a thorough understanding of gender-related issues and tactics in order to effectively combat deeply rooted stereotypes in the classroom.

These educators connected their everyday instruction with the gender-responsive objectives of the Department of Education by pushing for equitable participation and demonstrating inclusive practices. This affirmed the study of Lopez and Andal (2024) who discussed how important to encourage students to critically examine their social reality rather than passively absorbing knowledge. By actively addressing systemic inequities rather than just providing materials, this proactive role is deeply rooted in critical pedagogy.

As a result, participants noted that teachers' responsibilities nowadays include more than teaching and beyond being a facilitator such as mentoring, advocates, and emotional support. This affirmed the study of Villaver et al. (2024) who argued that a key requirement for the effective execution of the ALS curriculum is the teacher preparedness. Ultimately, the success of gender-responsive initiatives depends as much on educators' capacity to uphold these principles as it does on the curriculum itself.

#### *Flexibility and Inclusive Support System*

In this study, the researcher discovered that a crucial element of the ALS's operational success is a flexible and inclusive support structure that dismantles obstacles connected to gender and socioeconomic status. As required by the ALS Act (RA No. 11510), teachers demonstrated their awareness of the diverse and often difficult circumstances of their students by using a variety of delivery techniques, including home visits and modular instruction.

The respondents described that active participation of community and family partners support the entire level of learning at the community level. Additionally, teachers specified that they established a long-lasting network that promoted learner equity by collaborating with parents, local authorities, and organizations. These findings affirmed the study of Butch et al. (2025) who highlighted the importance of partnerships with local businesses. The study discussed the context of ALS in urban context specifically in Cagayan de Oro or Iligan City, partnerships facilitated graduates' direct and fair transfer from non-formal education to the workforce by offering internships and job placements. This demonstrated the high potential of having a successful program for ALS learner if coordinated with various sectors.

In line with that, the participants expressed their insights that they really are looking forward to have a strengthened partnership with various industries and sectors. Furthermore, Albert et al. (2024) further demonstrated that areas with strong interagency collaboration particularly between the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and local employers have much higher student completion rates and successful employment transitions.

#### *Gender Equality as Transformative Practice*

In the previous discussion, learners were expected to choose the work over education and jobs were based on the community expectation. This section discussed how Alternative Learning System (ALS) revealed the gender dynamics. Furthermore, the participants frequently expressed that male students typically pursue technical qualifications in industries like welding and automotive services, while female students often move into caregiving or service-oriented roles. These findings affirmed the study of Albert et al. (2024) who argued that these different career paths highlighted the need for gender-responsive interventions that challenge ingrained cultural expectations and broaden work prospects. By addressing these inequalities, the ALS acts as an agent for systemic change which could affect not just the basic skills of literacy and numeracy but also the family and community domains. Lastly, the critical thinking and independence required to challenge these gendered presumptions were strengthened by the transformative learning theoretically based methods of instruction operationalized by ALS teachers. This idea holds that gender equality is a transformative practice believed to be necessary to restore dignity, increase learners' confidence, and open doors to new opportunities. This approach reimagined teachers as essential equity builders who helped marginalized learners to perceive themselves as capable and important. By restoring the learner's sense of potential and ensuring that education serves as a bridge to both economic mobility and personal empowerment the ALS may achieve beyond its current objective.

#### *Teachers' Testimonies on Gender Inequality and Equal Opportunities in Non-Formal Classrooms*

This matrix presented how ALS teachers play a pivotal role in the non-formal education. Teachers expressed how the mandated responsibilities shaped them to serve as connectors between underprivileged students and broader educational and social opportunities by going beyond instructions.

Themes	Narratives of the Participants
Gender Equality as a Moral Commitment and Vocation	“If you do not have the passion and love for the ALS, you won’t last long (P4) “ALS teachers [serves] as bridge between learners and opportunities.” (P6) “...we shape mindsets that can influence the community positively.” (P7)
Gender Equality as Learner Empowerment and Confidence-Building	“...we are making them comfortable; they can express themselves.” (P2) “When learners feel respected and empowered regardless of gender, they are more motivated to learn.” (P5)
ALS as a Space of Inclusion for Historically Neglected Learners	“ALS learners are neglected... people think ALS learners are a lesser option.” (P3) “...LGBT learners are the ones who performed well most of the time, they grow.” (P4)
Need for Institutional Support and Skills-Based Programs	“Gender inclusive training must be given priority.” (P1) “What we want to input now is more skills programs...but funds are limited.” (P5)
Community Partnership as Key to Sustaining Gender Equality	“Partnering with barangay leaders... turns our classroom work into community.” (P6) “We coordinate with the parents.” (P5)

Matrix 4: Emergent Themes from the Testimonies of ALS Teachers’ Roles in Addressing Gender Inequality

#### *Gender Equality as a Moral Commitment and Vocation*

This study found that ALS educators perceived gender equality as a moral obligation and a career path. This was beyond simple regulatory compliance to the mandates of teaching profession. Empathy, compassion, and a sincere concern for the children were cited as the core of this approach. ALS Teachers viewed and understood the profession as essential bridge that connects underprivileged students to opportunities that can change their lives. In fact, one unforgettable insight from a respondent was for a practitioner to last long, love for the ALS learners is an important as the profession.

#### *Gender Equality as Learner Empowerment and Confidence-Building*

The study discovered through the participants’ insights a clear link between inclusive pedagogy and learner empowerment through the deliberate use of gender-responsive techniques. ALS Teachers frequently stated that helping learners to develop a feeling of autonomy and self-worth was the starting point of the job. This shows that the practitioner acknowledged their individual realities and goals rather than using one approach. As a result, participants observed that students acquired the confidence they need in pursuing academic and personal goal.

#### *ALS as a Space of Inclusion for Historically Neglected Learners*

In this study, people who have been traditionally marginalized by the formal schooling system. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) served as a critical intervention. This program intervention of the government aligned with the mandates of the fundamental law of the land accommodated people from low-income families, working students, and LGBTQ+ individual whose goal was to complete and get back to schooling. Having its flexible design, the historically neglected individuals were able to perform academically and socially. In an interview from the participants, these people are talented and smart, they were just robbed by the systemic challenges of the life caused by separation of parents, uneducated guardians, and lack of opportunities. These situations were addressed by Agupitan et al. (2025) who suggested that creating safe learning spaces is the first step in addressing a more extensive structural and gender-based barriers in education. This emergent them emphasized how ALS crucially served as custodial place for academic and social growth of historically neglected individuals.

#### *Need for Institutional Support and Skills-Based Programs*

The findings revealed how the participants frequently and strongly calling for a strengthened Alternative Learning System (ALS). The result of this study affirmed the common findings of existing related studies and literature in the last five years specifically on the notion of a strong institutional and structural backing. To be specific, participants echoed the vital role of long-term funding and institutionalized access to specialized gender-responsive trainings in order to achieve a genuine inclusive education in non-formal setting. Furthermore, these views were also highlighted in the recent study by Cagang et al. (2023) who argued that those educators who have been exposed to gender-sensitive practices possessed a thorough understanding of Gender and Development which was an important and critical aspect in delivering a gender-responsive education.

Moreover, participants were confident on their observation that ties or partnerships with various sectors significantly increases participation and completion rate. The participants suggested based from their observation that learners tend to attend face-to-face classes if the topics or activities were on their interests, highlighted that ALS together with TESDA in shaping the lives of these historically neglected individuals could be possible in the near future with guidance and support from the Local Government Unit whose role is to connect graduates with private entities.

### *Community Partnership as Key to Sustaining Gender Equality*

The study found that community relationships are essential for expanding inclusive practices outside of the classroom and that gender equality cannot be maintained in isolation. Challenging conventional norms at the grassroots level requires involving parents, barangay leaders, and local government units. In the study of Abel (2024), rightful attitudes were discussed as essential and required for employment, and suggested that expanding educational opportunities in the community was a good move. This statement recognized the goal of ALS in the holistic development of the marginalized learners to be acceptable in the demanding reality of workforce.

### *Proposed Gender-Responsive Framework and Intervention for the Alternative Learning System (ALS)*

#### *Integral Gender-Responsive ALS Framework (IGRAF) as a Multidimensional Diagnostic Tool.*

In this study, a multidimensional structure was created to offer a multifaceted synthesis of the findings through the Integral Gender-Responsive ALS Framework (ALS). This was derived from the four quadrants of Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP). This is a paradigm for understanding the interactions between various levels and perspectives of reality affecting the educational ecosystem in the country. The IMP was utilized to classify the ALS teachers lived experiences, their sociocultural environment, and the institutional structures. The emergent topics in this research reflected the teachers experiences in the ecosystem of non-formal education context.

Furthermore, the identified themes served as the foundation for the creation of the IGRAF which systematically explained the meanings of each element in the non-formal education context specifically the ALS particularly the relationships of the quadrants. These quadrants refer to themes pertaining to teacher's self-being, observable practices, institutional procedures, and environmental conditions.

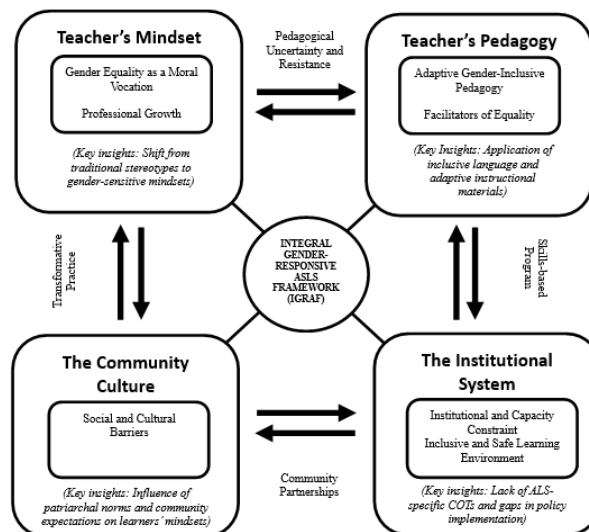


Figure 1: Integral Gender-Responsive ALS Framework

This framework documented the complex interplay between the individual teacher and the larger educational system. The study focused mainly on the teachers' roles in addressing gender inequality by promoting equal opportunities in the non-formal education setting like ALS and was specifically addressed using IGRAF. Grounded in IMP, this study examined the

ALS overall structure through two intersecting dimensions. The framework identified this structure divided to Individual vs Collective and Internal vs External dimensions, which resulted to four quadrants.

The Individual-Internal phase illustrated how themes related to teachers' gender perceptions, personal biases, and evolving professional identities captured the subjective experiences, beliefs, and mindsets of ALS teachers and illustrated how internalized beliefs impacted their understanding and application of gender equality in the classroom. On the other hand, the Individual-External phase, demonstrated how internal beliefs were affected and translated into classroom observable actions by concentrating on quantifiable pedagogical practices. This drawing explained how inclusive practices, adaptive teaching strategies, and the difficulties of implementing gender-responsive instruction related to each other.

Moreover, emergent of themes reflecting prevailing community beliefs, traditional norms, and sociocultural expectations were shown as part of the Collective-Internal phase. This typically explain the teacher-student-community connections and disagreement. Additionally, themes pertaining to the identified practice-policy disjunction on the absence of ALS-specific tools, the lack of institutional support, and systemic limitations affected the implementation of gender-responsive education fell under the Collective-External phase. This phase explicitly described how institutional structures, policies, and environmental conditions have been influencing ALS implementation.

In addition, by synthesizing these quadrants, the multidimensional diagnostic tool created a comprehensive visualization of the interrelated facts about the ALS ecosystem using the lens of the teachers. Through this framework, the connections of localized realities with one sphere both influenced and were influenced by the broader systemic challenges was easily demonstrated.

Additionally, the model depicted a highly interconnected ecosystem in which the IGRAF functioned as an analytical lens to understand transformation in multiple dimensions. In fact, an interesting result showed that the internal-to-external translation of a teacher's professional identity was the first step in change along the Subjective-Objective Axis. This transition from Teacher Mindset (Individual-Internal) to Teacher Pedagogy (Individual-External) was an example of an externalization process. This Adaptive and inclusive teaching practices were the result of cognitive restructuring that specifically served as the shift from gender stereotypes toward gender-responsive perspectives. In this interaction, the education served as the "hardware" and attitude as the "software." The instruction became intentional and context-responsive when educators embraced gender equality as a moral and professional objective. However, as cited in the discussion, studies also revealed that pedagogical resistance and uncertainty frequently strained this relationship specially in the absence of the standardized approaches of inclusive objectives with observable classroom practices.

Moreover, the connection between instructional structures and community beliefs were represented in the Cultural-Systemic Axis. This phase showed the connection between the community culture and the institutional system, which revealed the conflicting structural-cultural gap. As a result, formal gender-responsive measures were frequently affected. This was proven by the statement of some of the participants highlighted that despite of the policy on gender-responsive education, community resistance still persists.

Using this framework, the study emphasized the value of community collaborations to close this gap, especially through context-sensitive and skills-based programs that matched institutional interventions with actual sociocultural conditions as what the ALS implementors was calling for since day one. This dynamic was further reinforced by the findings along the Internal Transformation Axis, which demonstrated that educators assumed the role of social mediators. Participants made it clear based on their insights and experiences that gender-sensitive education and perspectives play a pivotal role in challenging the deeply ingrained cultural norms through transformative practice.

Finally, the integrative equilibrium point at the center of these four spheres was the IGRAF. This provided a strong theoretical and practical foundation for initiatives like Project G.R.E.E.T. by highlighting how fragmented solutions, such as policy reform without intellectual development or teacher training without systemic support remained unsustainable. This output made and offered the possible solution on how to create a comprehensive plan the addresses cognitive, pedagogical, cultural, and structural aspects of the entire ALS ecosystem.

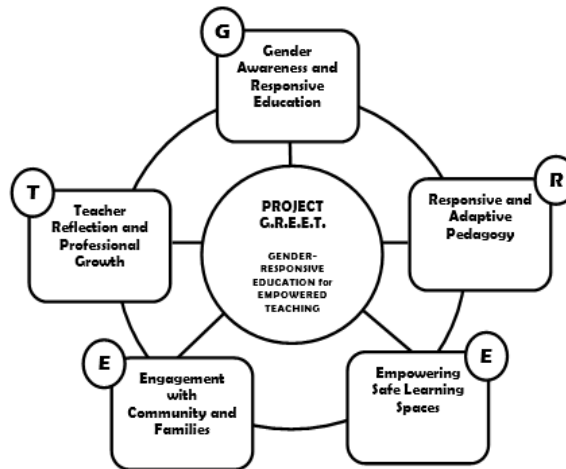


Figure 2: Project G.R.E.E.T.

*PROJECT G.R.E.E.T. (Gender-Responsive Education for Empowered Teaching)*

In this study, to integrate the diagnostic insights of the Integral Gender-Responsive ALS Framework (IGRAF) into practical solutions for the Alternative Learning System (ALS), Project G.R.E.E.T. was created as a comprehensive and context-responsive intervention. This output recognized the different shortcomings and "diagonal misalignments" noted in the IGRAF report. The program sought to provide a structured yet adaptable framework to help teachers implement gender-responsive education. Furthermore, the structure of this output reflected a deliberate alignment with the four quadrants of IGRAF: Individual-Internal, Individual-External, Collective-Internal, and Collective-External. This ensured that interventions concurrently addressed teachers' personal beliefs, classroom practices, community and cultural norms, and larger systemic structures. By combining these features, Project G.R.E.E.T. aimed to enhance pedagogy and create an inclusive learning environment that promotes gender equality and empowerment.

The figure above visualized the five interrelated components of this proposed remedy and designed to address the multidimensional deficiencies identified in IGRAF. The Individual-Internal quadrant was the emphasis of the Gender Awareness and Responsive Education component, which addressed teachers' internalized prejudices and personal gender attitudes. In an attempt to transform teachers' professional identities, it promoted gender equality principles and promoted critical reflection on biases, acknowledging that internalized mindsets had a substantial influence on subsequent teaching practices.

Furthermore, this model intervention concluded internal awareness and was operationalized by the Responsive and Adaptive Pedagogy component into observable classroom practices. This gave educators adaptable and inclusive tactics that allowed them to regularly use gender-sensitive methods while meeting the demands of a wide range of students. By emphasizing the relationship between internal transformation and external action, this component showed that awareness alone was insufficient in the absence of organized educational support.

In this model, one of the main solutions to address major systemic problems in in the alternative learner ecosystem is through empowering Safe Learning Spaces. This addressed systemic Collective-External restrictions in IGRA that includes classrooms with safety concerns and resource constraints on specialized gender-sensitive materials. This means that creating inclusive and secured learning environments where students could participate fully without fear of marginalization helped close the gap between structural constraints and learner participation.

Additionally, as the findings emphasized that participants observed trends on the success of learners depends on the availability of opportunities. This is where Project G.R.E.E.T. aimed to address and formalized the institutionalization of a strengthened partnership of various sectors in the community. The Engagement with Families and the Community component concentrated on the Collective-Internal quadrant by promoting collaboration between educators, families, and the greater community. This was aligned to the institutional objectives with local cultural realities by resolving structural and cultural incompatibilities and promoting support for gender-responsive behaviors outside of the classroom.

Lastly, the Teacher Reflection and Professional Growth supported each quadrant by providing resources for ongoing feedback, self-evaluation, and professional growth. This ensures that Project G.R.E.E.T. remained responsive to changing

circumstances while bridging gaps in practice, culture, and policy. On that note, this iterative process allowed teachers to modify interventions based on lived classroom experiences.

Taken together, the five components of Project G.R.E.E.T. were arranged in a circle to represent the interconnectedness of gender-responsive interventions. By concurrently addressing personal mindsets, instructional methodologies, community involvement, and structural reasons, the strategy offered a potentially comprehensive path toward equitable learning outcomes in ALS classrooms. In short, rather than being a prescriptive solution, Project G.R.E.E.T. was positioned as a flexible and dynamic framework that could adapt to different scenarios while fixing the multidimensional gaps and "diagonal misalignments" observed in IGRAF.

Overall, this Project G.R.E.E.T. simply operationalized IGRAF's diagnostic insights into context-responsive, practical strategies, providing a cogent model that combined systemic support as well leading to pedagogical innovation, cultural alignment, and mindset transformation to promote long-term gender-responsive education.

## Conclusions and Implications

### *Conclusions*

In light of these findings, the study on how ALS teachers understand their roles and addressed gender inequality in the non-formal classrooms by promoting equal opportunities. The key conclusions are as follows:

1. **Inclusive Teaching Practices:** The proponent found that the existence and frequent use differentiated instructions were observed with the emphasis of using a gender-neutral terminology. Students were able to participate confidently and challenge traditional gender stereotypes because ALS teachers employed flexible and adaptive strategies that suited to students' diverse identities and skill sets.
2. **Challenges in Implementation and Policy Gaps:** Despite of the initiatives being taken subjectively by various stakeholders, this study concluded that gaps and challenges still persist in terms of insufficient specialized training, lack of resources, tons of workload leading to burnout, and deeply ingrained sociocultural norms. These are systemic barriers that hinder the consistent deployment of gender-sensitive initiatives. Moreover, special requirements of Alternative Learning System (ALS) contexts are frequently overlooked by current Gender-Responsive Basic Education (GRBE) frameworks.
3. **Teachers as Change Agents:** The study also concluded that despite the difficulties, teachers were found and thinking themselves as the primary driver of change in the educational landscape particularly in the Alternative Learning System (ALS).
4. **Empowering Systems and Sustainable Practices:** Based on the findings the ALS teachers concluded that partnerships with different institutions shown a significant increase on the success of the students. This is an indicator to guarantee a long-lasting and successful gender-responsive education in ALS. This served as a crucial aspect to revisit and reconsider to increase institutional support and broaden teacher competencies.
5. **The Integral Gender-Responsive ALS Framework (IGRAF):** This study concluded the development of the IGRAF. This was a comprehensive model that synthesized the multifaceted roles of ALS teachers derived from the lens of Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP). This demonstrated that while teachers have made significant progress in the individual aspects of internalized gender sensitivity and adaptive pedagogy, their influence is currently being hindered by sociocultural resistance and systematic policy gaps. The recorded reality indicated in this study particularly to gender equality in non-formal education was mapped out by the IGRAF, which also supplied the framework required for contextualized interventions like Project G.R.E.E.T.

### *Implications*

In light of the findings, this study offered several significant implications for educational practice, policy development, theoretical advancement, and future research, particularly within the context of the Alternative Learning System (ALS).

### *Practical Implications*

Considering the findings based on inclusive teaching methods, ALS teachers are essential in creating classrooms that are gender-responsive by using gender-neutral terminology and tailored instruction. This indicates that in order to further improve teachers' competencies in inclusive and adaptive pedagogies, initiatives for ongoing professional development should be strengthened. The effectiveness of adaptable teaching methods further highlights the necessity of educational resources and instructional materials that are tailored to address a range of gender identities and learning requirements in non-formal learning environments.

### *Policy Implications*

Systemic gaps in the implementation of gender-responsive education were indicated by the problems that have been discovered, including inadequate training, lack of resources, excessive workload, and enduring sociocultural barriers. This suggests that in order to make sure that current frameworks, especially the Gender-Responsive Basic Education (GRBE) framework, are sensitive to the particular circumstances of ALS, legislators and educational leaders should review and improve them. To successfully assist ALS teachers, policies must also give priority to specialized training programs, targeted funding, and less administrative stress.

### *Theoretical Implications*

The creation of the Integral Gender-Responsive ALS Framework (IGRAF) adds to the expanding body of research on gender and non-formal education. The framework, which is based on Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP), offers a comprehensive perspective for comprehending the various roles that educators play as both educators and social change agents. This suggests that including multidimensional and context-sensitive techniques, especially in marginalized and non-traditional learning situations, may be beneficial for future theoretical discussions on gender-responsive education.

### *Institutional and Collaborative Implications*

The partnership-related findings highlighted how working with different institutions greatly improves student outcomes and the long-term viability of gender-responsive approaches. This suggests that more robust connections should be established between ALS programs, local government entities, non-governmental organizations, and community stakeholders. These kinds of partnerships can offer extra resources, opportunities for training, and support networks that are critical to the long-term sustainability of the program.

### *Implications for Teachers as Change Agents*

Teachers have a crucial role in promoting gender equality in education, as evidenced by their acknowledgement as the main forces behind change. This suggests that it is essential to empower educators through capacity-building programs, leadership chances, and recognition. However, institutional support must be in line with the demands made of them as transformative educators because their efficacy depends on addressing systemic limitations.

### *Research Implications*

Future research may examine the IGRAF model's applicability in different geographical areas and educational contexts given the study's limitations and contextual focus. The long-term effects of gender-responsive interventions, like Project G.R.E.E.T., on students' academic achievement, social attitudes, and empowerment outcomes might also be the subject of future research. Finally, studies that compare formal and non-formal education systems may offer more in-depth understanding of the most effective ways to advance gender equity.

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the colleagues who provided guidance, feedback, and support throughout the conduct of this research and the preparation of this manuscript.

## **Funding**

This research received no external funding from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency, and no organization provided financial support for the conduct of the study, authorship, or publication of this article.

## **Competing Interests Statement**

The authors declare that there were no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

## **Data Availability Statement**

Data sharing of the whole responses is not applicable to this article as some of the participants invoked the right to privacy.

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## Appendices

Appendix upon request