

Challenges and Support Needs of Teachers in Implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program: Basis for a Teacher Education Institution Extension Program

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Alternative Learning System (ALS), ALS teachers, challenges, support needs, non-formal education, teacher education institution extension program

Abstract. This study explored the demographic and professional profile, challenges, and support needs of teachers implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program in the Schools Division of Puerto Princesa City, serving as the basis for a proposed teacher education institution extension program. Specifically, it examined teachers' sex, educational attainment, specialization, teaching position, years of service, and strand specialization alignment, alongside the challenges encountered and support needs. A quantitative descriptive-survey design was employed, involving all 17 permanent teachers selected through total population sampling. Data were gathered using a validated researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed through frequency, percentages, and weighted means. Results indicated that most teachers were female, held entry-level positions, and had diverse academic specializations, particularly in General Science and Social Science. However, many were assigned to strands outside their specialization. The overall level of challenges was rated as moderately challenging ($\mu=2.76$), with teaching learning strands beyond specialization and low learner attendance or engagement as the most challenging. Conversely, the overall level of support needs was rated as highly needed ($\mu=3.45$), especially in instructional and academic support systems. In response, the study proposed Project ALSsa Bayan: Empowering ALS Implementation in Puerto Princesa City through Collaborative Partnerships, an extension program designed to strengthen ALS implementation through sustained instructional support, capacity-building, resource development, and institutional collaboration. The findings underscore the importance of robust professional support systems and multi-sectoral partnerships in enhancing teacher competencies, learner engagement, and the overall effectiveness of implementing ALS program in Puerto Princesa City.

Introduction

Globally, around 250 million children and youth remain out of school (UNESCO, 2023). This claim was supported by Action Education (2023), stating that many children struggle to have access to formal education due to overlapping barriers. Such barriers are poverty, child labor, discrimination, early marriage, and armed conflict. In response, non-formal education plays a vital role in providing opportunities for those who are not able to access formal education. Almeida and Morais (2025) further emphasized that non-formal education helps reduce educational inequalities by offering accessible and alternative learning opportunities, especially in developing countries.

In the Philippines, to ensure that no Filipino learner is left behind and everyone has access to quality basic education, the Department of Education (DepEd) has developed the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program. Under Republic Act No. 11510, also known as the Alternative Learning System Act, it is institutionalized and recognized as a vital component of basic education. As a non-formal education program, it serves as an alternative for out-of-school youths and adults (OSYA) and it provides a second-chance pathway for individuals who are unable to complete formal education. This program aims

to deliver quality, relevant, and inclusive education responsive to the needs of diverse learners through continuous reforms and policy support (DepEd, 2026).

Despite its significance, implementing the ALS program faces various challenges. Flores (2022) reported that teachers encounter problems related to inadequate instructional materials and financial support, and the need to handle multiple learning strands. Magatines and Flores (2024) found that teachers experience difficulties in instructional delivery and learner attitudes. Paez (2024) observed that teachers face challenges associated with distance, limited resources, and diverse learner needs, particularly in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDAs). Ordanza-Cortez (2023) further emphasized that capability-building programs and institutional support mechanisms often remain insufficient to address the growing professional demands experienced by teachers.

Locally, teachers in the Schools Division of Puerto Princesa City experience instructional and administrative challenges despite having an established operational foundation (Laquiores & Perez, 2021). These challenges are intensified by the need to address diverse learners' needs, such as that of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), and members of the Batak indigenous community. Teachers also face difficulties in delivering scientific literacy and critical thinking skills due to limited pedagogical support (Valdez, 2026). In response, collaborative initiatives such as partnership between Palawan State University and DepEd Puerto Princesa City were established to strengthen mathematics literacy and problem-solving skills among ALS learners (Palawan State University, 2025). Such partnerships are crucial for implementing localized, responsive, and sustainable ALS programs.

Despite the growing body of literature on the implementation of the ALS program, limited studies have examined the challenges encountered by teachers and the support they need in Puerto Princesa City. Most studies focus primarily on learners and broader national implementation issues, leaving a gap in more localized investigations centered on the implementation of the ALS program. Considering the gap and all the points mentioned in this section, the conduct of this study is deemed necessary. Moreover, the findings serve as the basis for proposing a teacher education institution extension program through collaborative partnerships to address the challenges and support needs of teachers.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the challenges encountered and support needs by teachers in implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program in the Schools Division of Puerto Princesa City. This study specifically sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic and professional profile of the Alternative Learning System teachers in terms of:
 - a. sex;
 - b. educational attainment;
 - c. specialization;
 - d. teaching position;
 - e. years of service; and
 - f. strand specialization alignment?
2. What are the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the Alternative Learning System program?
3. What support needs are identified by teachers in implementing the Alternative Learning System program?
4. What teacher education institution extension program can be proposed to support the teachers in implementing the Alternative Learning System program?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-survey research design to determine the challenges and support needs by ALS teachers in Puerto Princesa City. Quantitative research requires collecting and analyzing numerical data using structured and standardized instruments. Specifically, a descriptive survey design is a non-experimental method used to observe, measure, and describe the characteristics of a certain population. In this study, this research design was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researcher to systematically collect quantitative data related to the challenges and support needs of ALS teachers. It was also suitable for determining the extent or level of challenges encountered and the support needs identified by the respondents.

Research Respondents

This study consisted of 17 ALS teachers with permanent positions under the Schools Division of Puerto Princesa City. Because the population was small, highly specialized, and clearly defined, the researcher utilized total population sampling. It is a type of purposive sampling technique that involves examining the entire population that have a particular set of characteristics. This technique is specifically suitable for this study because it allowed the researcher to gather quantitative data from all identified ALS teachers and ensured complete representation of the population. In this study, an inclusion criteria was used in selecting the respondents. They should be currently employed as full-time ALS teachers in the division during the data collection period and were willing to voluntarily participate in the study.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in the Schools Division of Puerto Princesa City under DepEd-MIMAROPA. The division manages the ALS program through 44 Community Learning Centers (CLCs) strategically located across rural and urban barangays within the city. These locations allow the program to reach out-of-school youth and marginalized learners across the entire city.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made structured questionnaire was used in this study. Before administering the questionnaire to the respondents, it was validated by experts in the field to ensure validity and reliability. The questionnaire consisted of three parts to address the study's objectives. Part I gathered the demographic and professional profile of the respondents; Part II measured the level of challenges they encountered; and Part III assessed the respondents' identified support needs. To determine the levels of challenges and support needs, the researcher employed a 4-point Likert scale using the following score points: 1 (Not Challenging/Not Needed), 2 (Slightly Challenging/Slightly Needed), 3 (Moderately Challenging/Moderately Needed), and 4 (Highly Challenging/Highly Needed).

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering started in May 2026 and ended in July of the same year. The researcher requested approval from the College of Teacher Education, Palawan State University, and the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Puerto Princesa City to conduct the study. Upon approval of the request, the researcher coordinated with the assigned ALS Education Program Specialist, who assisted in facilitating communication with the ALS teachers. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the respondents across the division. Before they completed the questionnaires, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and provided instructions for completing the instrument. The completed questionnaires were then collected from the respondents, and the data were organized, tabulated, and prepared for analysis. In addition, all data were handled with care and stored securely in a password-protected device accessible exclusively to the researcher.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data gathered from the respondents were compiled, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive statistics. To summarize the demographic and professional profile of the respondents, frequencies and percentages were used. The weighted mean was calculated to determine the levels of the challenges encountered and support needs identified by the respondents. To interpret the results, the weighted means were matched with score ranges. A weighted mean of 3.25 to 4.00 indicated highly challenging, 2.50 to 3.24 indicated moderately challenging, 1.75 to 2.49 indicated slightly challenging, and 1.00 to 1.74 indicated not challenging. The same score ranges were also used to interpret support needs, indicating highly needed, moderately needed, slightly needed, and not needed, respectively.

Ethical Considerations

This study secured the necessary approval from the relevant individuals and institutions before it was conducted. To ensure voluntary participation, the researcher secured an informed consent form from each respondent before administering the questionnaire. This provided them with information about the study's objectives, their right to withdraw from it at any time, and the benefits and risks associated with it. Strict confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect their privacy and all collected data were stored securely in a password-protected device. Additionally, this study strictly observed the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for grammar correction, language refinement, and formatting. It was limited only to language support and was not used to influence the research design, data collection, or analysis.

Results and Discussion

Demographic and Professional Profile of Alternative Learning System Teachers

Understanding the demographic and professional profile of ALS teachers provides important context for the study. This reflects the diversity of teachers implementing the ALS program in Puerto Princesa City. By examining variables such as sex, educational attainment, specialization, teaching position, years of service, and alignment of teaching assignment with specialization, this profile provides an understanding of the composition of teachers involved in ALS implementation.

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Female	11	64.7%
	Male	6	35.3%
Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	8	47.1%
	With Master's Units	7	41.2%
	Master's Degree	2	11.8%
Specialization	English	2	11.8%
	Filipino	1	5.9%
	General Science	4	23.5%
	Home Economics	2	11.8%
	Mathematics	1	5.9%
	Music, Arts, Physical Education, & Health (MAPEH)	1	5.9%
	Social Science	4	23.5%
	Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE)	2	11.8%
Teaching Position	Teacher I	10	58.8%
	Teacher II	0	0.0%
	Teacher III	6	35.3%
	Master Teacher I	1	5.9%
Years of Service	3 years and below	1	5.9%
	4 to 6 years	5	29.4%
	7 to 9 years	4	23.5%
	10 years and above	7	41.2%
Strand Specialization Alignment	Assigned outside field of specialization	10	58.8%
	Assigned within field of specialization	7	41.2%

Note: N=17

Table 1. Distribution of Alternative Learning System Teachers According to Their Demographic and Professional Profile

Table 1 shows the demographic and professional profile of ALS teachers in Puerto Princesa City. In terms of sex, 64.7% (n=11) of the respondents were female, while 35.3% (n=6) were male. With respect to specialization, the largest proportion of respondents specialized in General and Social Sciences, each with 23.5% (n=4). Meanwhile, the smallest proportion specialized in Filipino, Mathematics, and Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH), each accounted for 5.9% (n=1). As for teaching positions, 58.8% (n=10) were Teacher I, and only 5.9% (n=1) of the total population was Master Teacher I. With regard to years of service, the majority of respondents had been in service for 10 years or more, comprising 41.2% (n=7). Only 5.9% (n=1) of respondents had served for 3 years or less. Lastly, regarding the alignment of teaching assignments with specialization, 58.8% (n=10) of the respondents reported being assigned outside their field of specialization, while 41.2% (n=7) were assigned within their specialization.

The findings show that a large proportion of the ALS teachers in Puerto Princesa City is composed of females. The findings also suggest that ALS teachers possess varied specializations, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of ALS teaching. This view is consistent with the study of Paez (2024), which revealed that ALS teachers come from diverse areas of specialization

due to the broad and flexible nature of ALS teaching. ALS teachers in the Schools Division of Puerto Princesa City are concentrated at the entry level teaching position. However, the findings further show that many of them have considerable teaching experience in the field. Lastly, the findings indicate that most ALS teachers handle learning strands beyond their academic preparation. This view supports the study of Flores (2022), which revealed that ALS teachers often encounter difficulties in instructional delivery because they were assigned outside their specialization.

Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Implementing the Alternative Learning System Program

Implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program requires teachers to navigate various challenges that affect both teaching and learning. In Puerto Princesa City, these challenges reflect the realities of teaching in a non-formal education program, such as ALS. This section presents the level of challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the ALS program, highlighting areas where they experience difficulties in performing their responsibilities.

Challenges	Weighted Mean (μ)	Interpretation
1. Teaching subjects outside my area of specialization/learning strand	2.94	Moderately Challenging
2. Lack of training or professional development	2.69	Moderately Challenging
3. Inadequate instructional materials, teaching aids, lack of access to ICT tools or multimedia resources, etc	2.88	Moderately Challenging
4. Difficulty in preparing lessons and activities aligned with learning competencies	2.62	Moderately Challenging
5. Low learner attendance or engagement	2.94	Moderately Challenging
6. Limited community or barangay support	2.50	Moderately Challenging
Overall	2.76	Moderately Challenging

Note: N= 17; 1.00 - 1.74 - Not Challenging, 1.75 - 2.49 - Slightly Challenging, 2.50 - 3.24 - Moderately Challenging, 3.25 - 4.00 - Highly Challenging

Table 2. Weighted Mean of the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Implementing the ALS Program

Table 2 presents the level of challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the ALS program. The most significant challenges encountered by the respondents include teaching subjects outside their specialization ($\mu=2.94$) and low learner attendance or engagement ($\mu=2.94$), which are both described as moderately challenging. On the other hand, the challenge on limited community or barangay support was rated by the respondents the lowest ($\mu=2.50$), which was also described as moderately challenging. The overall findings further show that the respondents described the challenges they encountered in implementing the ALS program as moderately challenging ($\mu=2.76$).

The findings resonate with the claim of Valdez (2026) on ALS implementation stating that ALS teachers often handle multiple learning strands beyond their field of specialization due to limited personnel constraints. This situation resulted in challenges in teaching unfamiliar subject content, preparing instructional materials, and addressing learners' diverse needs. Meanwhile, the findings on low learner attendance or engagement is supported by Ligutom et al. (2025), explaining that many ALS learners face socioeconomic problems and work responsibilities, which negatively affect their attendance. Finally, the results are supported by the study of Nonong (2022), highlighting that cooperation from local government officials and other stakeholders plays a vital role in providing instructional resources for the ALS program.

Support Needs of Teachers in Implementing the Alternative Learning System Program

As implementers of the ALS program, teachers identified several support needs they believe are necessary to equip them. These support needs reflect both instructional and systemic aspects of implementation, encompassing access to instructional materials and training opportunities, as well as collaboration with stakeholders. This section presents the areas where teachers expressed varying levels of support. Identifying the level of support needed by ALS teachers is essential in determining the areas that require greater attention and intervention from educational institutions and stakeholders.

	Support Needs	Weighted Mean (μ)	Interpretation
1.	Instructional and academic support systems	3.69	Highly Needed
2.	Capacity-building, strand-specific training and content mentoring	3.50	Highly Needed
3.	Instructional and multimedia materials	3.38	Highly Needed
4.	Collaboration Partnership with HEIs and LGU	3.56	Highly Needed
5.	Assistance from pre-service teachers	3.44	Highly Needed
6.	Support from barangay/LGU (venue, logistics, learner support)	3.12	Moderately Needed
	Overall	3.45	Highly Needed

Note: N=17; 1.00 - 1.74 - Not Needed, 1.75 - 2.49 - Slightly Needed, 2.50 - 3.24 - Moderately Needed, 3.25 - 4.00 - Highly Needed

Table 3. Weighted Mean of the Support Needs of Teachers in Implementing the ALS Program

Table 3 shows the level of support needs of teachers in implementing the ALS program. The most critical support need identified was instructional and academic support systems ($\mu=3.69$), which respondents perceived as highly needed. However, support from the barangay or LGU in providing learning venues, logistics, and learner support received the lowest rating ($\mu=3.12$), and was interpreted as moderately needed. Moreover, the results suggest that respondents rated the overall level of support needs to implement the ALS program as highly needed ($\mu=3.45$).

The findings indicate that teachers recognize the importance of instructional and academic support systems in implementing the ALS program. This is consistent with the study by Casingal (2025), which found that ALS teachers need competency-based professional development and instructional support to manage diverse learning strands and learner needs. Moreover, Servando et al. (2026) underscored the importance of coordinated support systems involving schools, communities, and government units to strengthen ALS implementation. This view supported the findings on the level of support needed by ALS teachers from barangay or LGU, although interpreted as moderately needed, indicating that ALS teachers place greater priority on instructional support needs.

Proposed Teacher Education Institution Extension Program in Implementing ALS Program

Based on the findings, the researcher proposed an extension program entitled Project ALSsa Bayan: Empowering ALS Implementation in Puerto Princesa City through Collaborative Partnerships. This title creatively integrates the Alternative Learning System (ALS) with the Filipino word “*alsa*,” meaning to lift or to rise, symbolizing the program’s aims to uplift secondary out-of-school-youth learners through inclusive education. It also aims to strengthen the implementation of the ALS program through collaborative partnerships among institutions, such as Palawan State University, DepEd Puerto Princesa City, and partner barangays. This extension program focuses on addressing the challenges encountered and support needs identified by ALS teachers through the engagement of pre-service teachers and faculty members from the College of Teacher Education. By providing instructional support, academic mentoring, and strand-specific assistance during ALS learning sessions, the program strengthens ALS implementation while allowing pre-service teachers to gain meaningful field experiences and faculty members to extend their expertise to community-based educational initiatives. Through this extension program, partnership with local government units is also strengthened to improve community involvement, improve instructional delivery, and promote sustainable ALS implementation in Puerto Princesa City.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The diverse group of ALS teachers in the Schools Division of Puerto Princesa City indicates the need for continuous professional development, strand-specific training, and stronger institutional support. Furthermore, the challenges encountered by teachers suggest that ALS implementation is affected by instructional and learner-related difficulties, which may be addressed through the provision of adequate instructional resources, targeted capacity-building initiatives, and collaborative support systems. Consistent with these challenges, the support needs identified by the teachers underscore the importance of providing substantial instructional, professional, and institutional assistance to strengthen ALS implementation. The results also indicate the importance of establishing an extension program that integrates professional development, instructional resource development, institutional collaboration, and community involvement. In response to this, a teacher education institution extension program was proposed to strengthen the implementation of ALS. Moreover, this proposed extension program engages pre-service teachers and faculty members in a community-based learning

environment. This initiative may serve as a sustainable mechanism for strengthening the implementation of the ALS program, promoting inclusive and community-responsive non-formal education in Puerto Princesa City.

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Competing Interests Statement

The author declares no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Access to the data used in this study may be granted upon formal request to the author, subject to ethical approval and participant confidentiality.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.