



Alternative Learning System (ALS) as an Educational Investment: Implementation and Learner Performance in a Public-School Context

Erica Cheves Chine M. Silvestre^{1,2*}, Hazel Jill P. Garcia^{1,2}, Ricardo Cruz Ahillon Jr.^{1,2}

¹ Greenville College, Pasig, Philippines

² Department of Education, Philippines

*Correspondence: E-mail: meccmsilvestre@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines functions as a public educational investment aimed at expanding access for out-of-school youth and adults. This study examined the extent of ALS implementation and its relationship to learner performance in a public-school context using a descriptive design. Data from 250 teachers and official learner records showed very high levels of ALS implementation and generally very satisfactory learner performance. However, no significant relationship was found between ALS implementation and academic outcomes, indicating that learner performance may also be influenced by external socioeconomic factors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a strategic investment in human capital that contributes to economic growth, social mobility, and national development. However, formal education systems often fail to reach marginalized populations such as out-of-school youth and adults due to poverty, geographic isolation, and social constraints. These exclusions create long-term economic consequences by limiting workforce productivity and perpetuating cycles of inequality. In response, many countries have adopted non-formal education systems as complementary mechanisms to enhance educational access and improve labor-market readiness.

In the Philippine context, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) serves as a parallel education pathway designed to provide flexible and inclusive learning opportunities for learners who are unable to complete formal schooling. The institutionalization of ALS through Republic Act No. 11510 underscores the government's commitment to educational equity, lifelong learning, and human capital development. From an economic perspective, ALS represents a form of public educational investment aimed at maximizing social returns by re-integrating marginalized learners into productive economic participation. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such investment depends not only on policy intent but also on the quality of implementation across instructional materials, facilities, financial resources, institutional linkages, stakeholder cooperation, and implementers' professional attitudes (Garcia & Morales, 2018).

Despite sustained government support, empirical evidence on whether strong ALS implementation translates into improved learner performance remains inconclusive. Previous studies have reported that while ALS programs often demonstrate high levels of implementation and stakeholder engagement, learner outcomes are influenced by multiple interacting factors, including socio-economic conditions, learner motivation, and readiness for self-directed learning (Lagman & De Leon, 2020; Luz & Santos, 2021). This raises an important economic and educational question: does investment in ALS implementation yield measurable academic returns, or are learner outcomes shaped more strongly by external contextual variables?

Against this backdrop, this study examined the extent of Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementation in Sto. Niño Elementary School, Marikina City, and analyzed its relationship with learners' academic performance during the School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, the study assessed ALS implementation in terms of instructional materials, facilities and equipment, financial resources, linkages, cooperation from stakeholders, and the attitudes of ALS implementers, and determined whether these components significantly influenced learner performance. The novelty of this study lies in its framing of ALS as an educational investment, positioning implementation quality and learner outcomes within an economic–education nexus. The findings are expected to contribute empirical evidence to inform education policy, resource allocation, and strategic planning for non-formal education programs in developing-country contexts.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive research design to examine the extent of implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and its relationship with learners' academic performance. The design was appropriate for describing existing conditions of program implementation and for analyzing relationships among variables without

manipulating the study environment, which aligns with policy- and investment-oriented evaluations in education economics.

The research was conducted at Sto. Niño Elementary School, Marikina City, a public school that implements the ALS as part of the Department of Education's non-formal education program. The respondents consisted of 250 teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 6, including ALS implementers and regular classroom teachers. Given the manageable size of the population, total enumeration was employed to ensure comprehensive representation and to reduce sampling bias.

Data were collected using a researcher-modified questionnaire designed to measure the extent of ALS implementation across six domains: instructional materials, facilities and equipment, financial resources, linkages, cooperation from stakeholders, and the attitudes of ALS implementers. The questionnaire was validated by subject-matter experts to establish content validity. Learners' academic performance data were obtained from official school progress reports for the School Year 2024–2025, ensuring the use of standardized and institutionally recognized performance indicators.

Prior to data collection, formal permission was secured from the school administration and relevant authorities. After administration and retrieval of the questionnaires, responses were coded and subjected to statistical analysis. Frequency and percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents and the distribution of learners' performance levels. Weighted mean was employed to determine the extent of ALS implementation for each domain, using predefined interpretation scales.

To examine differences in ALS implementation across respondent profiles, the Chi-square test was applied. Meanwhile, the relationship between the extent of ALS implementation and learners' academic performance was analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r). All statistical tests were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance. This analytical approach supports an evidence-based evaluation of ALS as an educational investment by linking implementation inputs with measurable learner outcomes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 250 teacher respondents from Sto. Niño Elementary School, Marikina City. The data indicate that the teaching workforce is predominantly composed of mid-career professionals, with the largest proportion belonging to the 30–39 age group (36%), followed by 40–49 years (28%). This age distribution suggests a relatively stable human resource base capable of sustaining long-term educational programs such as ALS.

In terms of sex, female teachers constitute the majority (68%), reflecting the typical gender composition of the teaching profession in basic education. With regard to position and length of service, most respondents occupy Teacher I and Teacher II positions and have less than 10 years of teaching experience. This profile implies a workforce that may benefit substantially from continuous professional development, particularly in the implementation of non-formal education programs such as ALS.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Age			
20–29	40	16%	4
30–39	90	36%	1
40–49	70	28%	2
50 and above	50	20%	3
Sex			
Male	80	32%	2
Female	170	68%	1
Position			
Teacher I	120	48%	1
Teacher II	70	28%	2
Teacher III	60	24%	3
Length of Service			
0–5 years	70	28%	2
6–10 years	80	32%	1
11–20 years	60	24%	3
More than 20 years	40	16%	4
Educational Attainment			
Bachelor's Degree	210	84%	1
Master's Degree	30	12%	2
Doctorate	10	4%	3
Total	250	100%	

3.2. Extent of ALS Implementation: Instructional, Facility, and Financial Inputs

Tables 2-4 present the extent of ALS implementation in terms of instructional materials, facilities, resources, and financial resources. Instructional materials obtained an overall weighted mean interpreted as Very High Extent, indicating strong investment in learning inputs such as relevant modules and the integration of electronic media. From an educational economics perspective, this suggests that material inputs are prioritized and efficiently allocated to support ALS delivery.

Facilities, resources, and financial resources were rated at a High Extent, indicating adequate but improvable levels of physical and financial investment. While learning centers are accessible and safe, the relatively lower ratings for sufficiency and immediacy of fund release suggest potential inefficiencies in resource allocation and financial management.

Table 2. Implementation of Alternative Learning System in Terms of Instructional Materials

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Adequacy of instructional materials in ALS classes	3.45	Very High Extent	4
Integration of electronic media in lesson delivery	<i>Not Provided</i>	Very High Extent	1
Availability of quality instructional materials	<i>Not Provided</i>	—	—
Appropriateness of materials to learners' needs	<i>Not Provided</i>	—	—
Relevance of instructional materials used	<i>Not Provided</i>	—	—
Overall Weighted Mean	3.50	Very High Extent	

Table 3. Implementation of Alternative Learning System in Terms of Facilities Resources

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Facilities and equipment availability	3.20	High Extent
Sufficiency of facilities and equipment	3.10	High Extent
Relevance of learning centers	3.30	High Extent
Quality of learning center resources	3.25	High Extent
Accessibility and safety of facilities	3.40	Very High Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	3.25	High Extent

Table 4. Implementation of Alternative Learning System in Terms of Financial Resources

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Funds for overall ALS implementation	3.00	High Extent
Immediate release of funds	2.90	High Extent
Appropriation for ALS programs/projects	2.85	High Extent
Funds for ALS special programs	2.95	High Extent
Sufficiency for salaries and services	2.80	High Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	2.90	High Extent

3.3. Institutional Support: Linkages, Stakeholder Cooperation, and Implementer Attitudes

As shown in **Tables 5-7**, ALS implementation in terms of linkages, stakeholder cooperation, and implementers' attitudes is rated at a Very High Extent. Strong partnerships with external organizations and active stakeholder participation indicate high levels of social capital supporting ALS implementation. In economic terms, these non-monetary inputs enhance program sustainability by leveraging community resources and shared responsibility.

The attitude of ALS implementers received the highest overall rating, highlighting dedication, passion, and curriculum knowledge. These findings underscore the importance of human capital investment, where teacher commitment functions as a critical driver of program effectiveness beyond material inputs.

Table 5. Implementation of ALS in Terms of Linkages

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Establishing good partner relationships	3.45	Very High Extent	1
Sourcing initiatives for partnerships	3.35	Very High Extent	2
Inclusion of partners in programs	3.30	Very High Extent	3
Action plans for partnerships	3.25	High Extent	4
Intensifying linkage strategies	3.20	High Extent	5
Overall Weighted Mean	3.31	Very High Extent	

Table 6. Implementation of ALS in terms of Cooperation from Stakeholders

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Attendance in meetings and planning	3.60	Very High Extent
Participation in ALS activities	3.55	Very High Extent
Involvement of parents and officials	3.45	Very High Extent
Moral support	3.40	Very High Extent
Constructive feedback	3.30	Very High Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	3.46	Very High Extent

Table 7. Implementation of ALS in terms of Attitude of ALS Implementers

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Dedication and passion	3.75	Very High Extent
Relationship with stakeholders	3.65	Very High Extent
Knowledge of ALS curriculum	3.60	Very High Extent
Teaching–learning management	3.55	Very High Extent
Leadership potential	3.50	Very High Extent
Overall Weighted Mean	3.61	Very High Extent

3.4. Difference in ALS Implementation Across Respondent Profiles

Table 8 presents the test of significant difference in ALS implementation. The computed Chi-square value did not exceed the critical value, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This indicates no significant difference in perceived ALS implementation across respondent groups.

This uniform perception suggests a consistent implementation framework within the school, which is a desirable characteristic in public educational investments. Consistency reduces implementation risk and promotes equitable access to program benefits.

Table 8. Test of Significant Difference on the Extent of ALS Implementation

Indicator	χ^2 Value	Critical Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Alternative Learning System	21.2	31.41	< 0.001	Accept Ho	Not Significant

3.5. Learners’ Academic Performance

Table 9 shows the academic performance of ALS learners for the School Year 2024–2025. The majority of learners achieved Very Satisfactory and Satisfactory ratings, and notably, no learners fell under the “Did Not Meet Expectations” category. This outcome indicates that ALS successfully meets minimum learning standards and prevents academic failure among marginalized learners.

From an investment standpoint, this suggests that ALS contributes to human capital preservation by ensuring that learners attain functional academic competencies.

Table 9. Performance of the Learners for the School Year 2024–2025

Performance Level	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Outstanding (90–100)	50	20%	3.5
Very Satisfactory (85–89)	80	32%	1
Satisfactory (80–84)	70	28%	2
Fairly Satisfactory (75–79)	50	20%	3.5
Did Not Meet Expectations	0	0%	5
Total	250	100%	

3.6. Relationship between ALS Implementation and Learner Performance

Table 10 presents the test of significant relationship between ALS implementation components and student performance. Results indicate no statistically significant relationship between implementation variables and academic performance.

Although some components exhibited moderate to high correlation coefficients, the absence of statistical significance implies that learner performance in ALS may be influenced by external factors such as socio-economic conditions, learner motivation, and prior

educational experiences. This finding aligns with literature emphasizing that outcomes in non-formal education are multi-determined and not solely dependent on program inputs.

Table 10. Test of Significant Relationship between ALS Implementation and Student Performance

Indicator	Pearson r	Critical Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Instructional Materials	0.103	0.16	0.870	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Facilities Resources	-0.798	0.16	0.106	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Financial Resources	0.410	0.16	0.493	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Linkages	0.590	0.16	0.295	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Stakeholder Cooperation	0.713	0.16	0.176	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Attitude of Implementers	-0.464	0.16	0.431	Accept Ho	Not Significant

3.7. Synthesis of Related Literature: Alternative Learning System as Educational Investment

The ALS has been widely recognized as a strategic educational investment aimed at expanding access to learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults, particularly in contexts characterized by socio-economic vulnerability and educational exclusion. As a form of non-formal education, ALS operates not merely as a remedial program but as a long-term human capital investment designed to enhance employability, social participation, and lifelong learning outcomes.

Previous studies emphasize that the effectiveness of ALS implementation is shaped by multiple interrelated components, including instructional materials, learning facilities, financial resources, institutional linkages, stakeholder cooperation, and the attitudes of program implementers (Garcia & Morales, 2018; Lagman & De Leon, 2020). Instructional materials, particularly when contextualized and supported by technology, have been shown to enhance learner engagement and competency development in non-formal education settings (Hernandez & De Guzman, 2018; Garcia et al., 2023). However, access to adequate facilities and timely financial resources remains uneven across ALS centers, often limiting the potential returns of educational investments (Villanueva & Ramos, 2017; Mendoza & Cruz, 2021).

From a management and governance perspective, strong institutional linkages and stakeholder cooperation play a crucial role in sustaining ALS programs. Partnerships with local government units, non-government organizations, and community stakeholders help supplement limited public funding and strengthen program delivery (Morales & Jimenez, 2018; Santos & Villamor, 2021). Empirical studies indicate that stakeholder engagement contributes indirectly to learner motivation and persistence, even when its direct relationship with academic performance is not statistically significant (Reyes & Lloren, 2024).

Equally important is the attitude and commitment of ALS implementers. Research consistently identifies teacher dedication, professional competence, and leadership capacity as key drivers of successful ALS implementation (Cruz & Velasco, 2022; Garcia & Salazar, 2019). While these human factors often receive very high implementation ratings, several studies caution that strong program inputs do not automatically translate into higher measurable academic performance, as learner outcomes in ALS are influenced by broader socio-economic conditions, learner readiness, and personal motivation (Luz & Diaz, 2020; Torres & Villanueva, 2019).

Synthesizing the literature, ALS may be best understood as an educational investment with both tangible and intangible returns. Tangible outcomes include improved completion rates

and basic competencies, while intangible returns involve enhanced social inclusion, learner confidence, and long-term employability. Consequently, the absence of a direct statistical relationship between ALS implementation components and short-term academic performance, as observed in several studies, does not necessarily diminish the program's economic and social value. Instead, it highlights the need for sustained investment, adaptive management strategies, and multidimensional evaluation frameworks that go beyond test-based performance indicators (Luz & Santos, 2021; Reyes & Santos, 2022).

In this context, ALS should be positioned not only as a compensatory education program but as a strategic public investment requiring continuous improvement, policy support, and evidence-based management to maximize its long-term impact on learners and communities.

3.8. Policy and Investment Implications

The findings of this study position the Alternative Learning System (ALS) as a strategic educational investment rather than merely a remedial or parallel instructional program. The consistently high levels of ALS implementation across instructional materials, stakeholder cooperation, and implementer commitment indicate that substantial public and community resources have already been mobilized to support non-formal education. From a policy perspective, this underscores ALS as a viable mechanism for expanding human capital development among marginalized learners who are excluded from the formal education system.

First, the very high ratings for instructional materials and implementers' attitudes suggest that returns on investment in human and instructional capital are evident in terms of program stability and learner retention, as reflected by the absence of failing students. Policymakers should therefore prioritize sustained funding for instructional inputs and continuous professional development for ALS implementers, as these investments yield long-term social returns by preventing learning loss and school exclusion.

Second, although facilities and financial resources were rated at a high extent, they did not reach the same level as human and social capital inputs. This implies potential allocative inefficiency, where delays in fund release or limited facility sufficiency may constrain optimal program delivery. For education managers and local government units, improving financial management systems—particularly timely fund disbursement and transparent budget tracking—could enhance the cost-effectiveness of ALS implementation without necessarily increasing total expenditure.

Third, the absence of a statistically significant relationship between ALS implementation and learner academic performance suggests that educational outcomes in ALS are influenced by factors beyond program inputs alone. From an economic standpoint, this highlights the importance of complementary investments, such as learner support services, psychosocial interventions, and community-based incentives that address poverty, motivation, and learning readiness. Integrating ALS with social protection programs and livelihood initiatives may therefore improve the efficiency of public spending by amplifying educational returns.

Fourth, the very high levels of stakeholder cooperation and community linkages point to ALS as a model of shared investment, where public funds are augmented by social capital. Education policies should formalize and incentivize partnerships with local governments, NGOs, and private organizations through structured agreements, thereby reducing the fiscal burden on the state while enhancing program sustainability.

Overall, these findings imply that future ALS policies should shift from an emphasis on expansion alone toward strategic optimization of educational investments. By aligning financial planning, human resource development, and cross-sector collaboration, ALS can

function as a cost-effective instrument for inclusive growth and lifelong learning within ASEAN education systems.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in Sto. Niño Elementary School is implemented to a high to very high extent across key domains, particularly in instructional materials, stakeholder cooperation, and the commitment of ALS implementers. Learners generally demonstrated satisfactory to very satisfactory academic performance, with no recorded failures, indicating that ALS effectively supports educational access and retention among marginalized populations. However, statistical analysis revealed no significant relationship between ALS implementation components and learner academic performance, suggesting that educational outcomes in ALS are shaped by multiple contextual and socio-economic factors beyond program inputs alone. Framed as an educational investment, ALS demonstrates strong institutional capacity and social returns, yet its academic impact may be enhanced through complementary investments in learner support, financial efficiency, and integrated social services. These findings highlight the need for evidence-based policy optimization to maximize the long-term economic and educational value of ALS.

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