



ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM PRACTICES, ASPIRATIONS AND PROSPECTS: A FRAME TO REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Globally, education has long been regarded and acknowledged as a key ally in the pursuit of full human development. It has been compared to educational reforms, which emphasize how crucial it is for everyone to be academically competent. In all areas of human activity, it also plays a significant part as a tool for massive advancement and revolution. It can be argued that, in the broadest sense, it is just as important as any of a person's essential requirements.

KEYWORDS: *Alternative Learning System, Teaching Strategies, Project for Implementation*

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) of the Department of Education (DepEd) administers the Alternative Learning System (ALS), a free educational program that supports students who cannot afford to attend traditional schools and works around their schedule. The curriculum, which incorporates both non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills, offers a strong substitute for the current formal school instruction.

When it was first introduced in 1984 under the term Non-Formal Education, its main goal was to aid students in acquiring technical skills that they could use to support themselves. Its focus broadened to include literacy classes with the goal of eventually awarding Elementary and High School diplomas to eligible students who were forced to drop out of primary and secondary school after having its name changed to Alternative Learning System in 2004.

In addition to addressing the needs of underprivileged groups, ALS aspires to expand educational possibilities for Filipino individuals with a variety of interests, capacities, demographic traits, socioeconomic origins, and statuses.

The method shortens the time needed to complete elementary and high school, drastically lowering costs in the process. Along with giving hope to those in need, it also offers opportunities to Out-of-School Youth (OSY) and Adults, elementary and secondary school dropouts, workers in the private sector, housewives, maids, factory workers, drivers, people from culturally and racially marginalized groups, and people who are physically or mentally disabled.

Classroom instruction takes place in Community Learning Centers. There are various CLCs located throughout each municipality or city for interested learners to visit. These CLCs can be public elementary or secondary schools, barangay halls, buildings lent by governmental bodies, for-profit businesses, or other organizations, or any other empty location where students can congregate. 800 classroom hours, or 10 months, of instruction are required for ALS students.

Since ALS uses a module-based learning method, students arrive at a predetermined time and select a module to read. The modules may be taken home by students so they can study them whenever and wherever they choose if other commitments prevent them from attending class. These modules conclude with questions and exercises that students must complete in order to gauge their level of understanding of the material.

The learners will take the Accreditation and Equivalency (A and E) Test after a period of time. The ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Test seeks to provide students with two learning achievements at Elementary and Secondary levels. It is a multiple-choice and composition writing test that is administered using paper and pencil. The test questions are based on the five learning strands of the ALS Curriculum's five learning skills.

The multiple choice tests and the composition writing are the two sections of the exam. For the elementary Level, the test lasts for three hours and thirty minutes, and for the secondary Level, four hours and fifteen minutes. A certificate with the Secretary of the Department of Education's signature is given to exam takers of either the Elementary or Secondary Level. This enables a passer to integrate into the nation's educational system. The following opportunities are provided to him or her: the ability to enroll in post-secondary courses (technical or vocational, two, four, or five year courses) at institutions that are members of the MFI and



TESDA, as well as the CHED (for private colleges and universities) and PASUC (for government owned / controlled) member institutions.

De Guzman (2020) claimed that Filipino families in the Philippines understand the value of education in achieving a fruitful lifestyle. However, according to Greenbrae (2020), poverty is a major factor in the prevalence of child labor, child prostitution, and human trafficking among children and young adults. Despite the fact that basic education is free, many children still do not attend school due to a lack of other necessities (Ruggeri, 2020).

According to Eborá (2020), only 66 out of 100 Grade one students completed Grade Six, 58 out of the 66 who enrolled in Grade 7, and only 43 graduated high school. According to the research, only 23 of the 43 students who completed high school chose to attend college, and only 14 of those 23 completed their studies (Eborá, 2020).

In light of this, the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) advocated for the implementation of the extended vision of Education for All (EFA) by eradicating illiteracy and providing basic education and life skills to adults and young people who are not currently enrolled in school (Tendon, 2020). It is listed as one of the ways for reducing poverty. However, the official educational systems have not been the only means by which the government has attempted to educate the Filipino people. In order to provide basic education to the population of out-of-school children, teenagers, and adults, the Governance Act for Basic Education, also known as Republic Act 9155, creates the Alternative Learning System (ALS).

Executive Order No. 356 also specifies that the ALS is essential in assisting school dropouts in building human capital, enhancing long-term educational outcomes, and increasing employment chances. However, since the ALS's conception, numerous difficulties have surfaced in its implementation. Mobile teachers of the ALS claimed that there was a lack of community-based instructional resources, a delay in the provision of trip reimbursement, and a lack of a fixed space to hold the learning sessions (Pincay, 2020).

According to Aprilia (2020), it is clear that the stakeholders are inadequate, particularly those who are associated with the local government and the parents of the kids. Therefore, ALS instruction's support mechanisms, such as instructional materials, facilities, and equipment, financial resources, as well as stakeholder participation, remained elusive despite the tremendous achievement in increasing access to basic education (Absalom, 2020).

Despite the fact that Tomas (2020) revealed poor participation and passing rates in ALS, these findings do not totally support the adoption. However, a strikingly high percentage of pupils went on to pass the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) test and eventually graduate from college. Given a performing teacher, learning can still occur in the classroom despite curriculum shortcomings, a lack of technology in the classrooms, the inadequacy of the instructional materials, unmotivated students, inadequate facilities and equipment, a lack of financial support, and a lack of support from stakeholders as long as the teachers are dedicated to their work (Anwar, 2020).

As a result, instructors merely need to possess a positive outlook, best practices, and keep up with global trends in order to stay ahead of their students, as an improvement in a teacher's quality will unavoidably result in an improvement in the quality of education. According to Gourneau (2020), instructors' important attitudes and behaviors might ultimately have a substantial impact on the everyday activities of their students.

The workplace is currently a place where people might encounter constantly changing working conditions as a result of the workplace's rising acceptability as an essential setting for acquiring new information and skills. To maintain a competitive edge and their employability, workers in today's complex market are expected to frequently examine their knowledge, abilities, and habits. Learning is seen as a process that results from work-related activities that give employees the chance to learn through apprenticeship and increased involvement in a community of practice.

Workplaces and educational institutions, according to Billet (2020) reports that between Grades 3 and 5, with Grade 4 having the highest occurrence, four out of every five school dropouts occur. Approximately 16% of these dropouts improved their literacy skills by two to five grades, according to a literacy test, while the remaining 84% saw their knowledge and skills deteriorate by 2nd-grade levels.

If a student drops out of school in the third grade or lower, retrogression is more likely. In contrast to being treated as a distinct notion, literacy is intertwined with people's daily lives and communities, according to Doronila's (2020) study.

Recognition of Prior Learning, which manifests in the business, community, and daily life, was inspired by the idea of informal learning (RPL). PLAR stands for "a cluster of ways and procedures for defining, recognizing, and demonstrating the whole spectrum of accomplishments are fundamentally different forms of social activities in which involvement helps learning."

It is essential for workers' daily activities and capacities to learn on the job, especially in the workplace. Using these procedures, previous experience and unofficial learning (whether accredited or not) can be used to satisfy the requirements of vocational colleges and higher education institutions.

The main goal of the ALS program is to give students opportunities who, for a variety of reasons, cannot benefit from traditional schooling. A more focused objective is to develop a learning environment that motivates students to continue their studies as opposed to quitting or re-enrolling dropouts. People with ALS may benefit from adaptability, strict behavioral support, self-control, and emotional support.



To help them meet institutional and national graduation requirements, students will get extensive training and remediation. It offers kids a special way to achieve the same high academic standards as the rest. A particular theme or cutting-edge teaching techniques may be used to determine whether students are accepted into ALS programs or institutions. Programs that enable students who have been suspended or expelled from school for a lengthy period of time to receive a diploma may also be a part of ALS. Certain Alternative Education programs and institutions may place a strong emphasis on behavior control through positive behavioral intervention. To treat behavior as a subject of instruction and lessen the students' loss of educational opportunities, long-term exclusions from school may be transferred to the ALS program.

Depending on the nature of the program, its objectives, and the requirements of the kids it serves, ALS may provide services to them for a considerable amount of time. It might be applied to keep kids in school until they graduate or reassign them to a typical middle or high school.

ALS seeks to expand educational possibilities for Filipino individuals with a variety of interests, capacities, socioeconomic origins, and positions and address the needs of underprivileged populations. The approach drastically reduces the time it takes to finish high school and the costs associated with it. It gives hope to those who are less fortunate, but it also provides possibilities for Out-of-School Learning. The program also provides instructional managers and coordinators training and assists learners with their accreditation and equivalency (A&E) reviews.

According to Paso (2020), the scope and aim of ALS are currently in flux. She also stated that attempting to depict the current state of ALS in the United States generates mixed results. Over time, individual groups or social organizations have developed pockets of practices.

It satisfied the program's learning objectives and was receptive to learning resources and skills to be taught at all levels of learning comparable to the ALS program in Kalapa, Nueva Vizcaya, because of its good facilities.

According to a recent study, ALS is so successful because it emphasizes both academic accomplishment and the development of life skills literacy. According to another study, considerable work remains to be done to ensure that Alternative Learning System programs efficiently develop clientele's livelihood and life-long skills that they may utilize to better their quality of life. (Begawan, 2020). The goal of livelihood programs is to improve the learner's socioeconomic status by focusing on the learner's needs and interests. Those who have chosen to strengthen their moral and social values to survive have made community development possible.

On the other hand, according to Lai (2020), mobile teachers can employ open-ended activities, real-world or "genuine" problem situations and poorly structured problems that demand students to do more than recall or restate previously taught information to foster learners' critical thinking.

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