



ALS Research Agenda: **Quality: Assessment Practices**

Institutional and Learners' Perspectives on the Implementation of ALS SHS Programs in Jail Facilities: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

This qualitative descriptive case study investigates the readiness and feasibility of implementing the Alternative Learning System–Senior High School (ALS–SHS) program in jail facilities in the Division of Bukidnon, Philippines, addressing a critical gap in evidence on post-basic education provision for persons deprived of liberty (PDLs). Drawing on purposive sampling, the study engaged ALS mobile teachers, jail administrators and education focal persons, DepEd SHS/ALS coordinators, the Education Program Specialist II for ALS, representatives from TESDA and local government units, and ALS Junior High School completer-PDLs. Data were generated through semi-structured Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions conducted in selected BJMP district jails and the Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center and analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s six-phase thematic analysis with methodological rigor ensured through triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and audit trails. Findings indicate that institutional readiness is present but fragmented. Existing ALS structures, available learning spaces, and high implementer commitment signal feasibility; however, limitations in infrastructure, inadequate SHS-specific teacher preparation, and the absence of context-adapted learning resources constrain effective delivery. Implementation is further complicated by security-driven scheduling disruptions, irregular attendance, competing custodial priorities, and coordination inefficiencies between DepEd and jail management. Despite these constraints, stakeholders consistently view ALS–SHS as a high-impact rehabilitative intervention that strengthens self-efficacy, supports skills development through TVL-aligned competencies, and enhances employability and reintegration prospects, with perceived implications for reducing recidivism. The study contributes empirical evidence on the institutional and operational conditions shaping ALS–SHS delivery in custodial settings. It argues that sustainable implementation requires targeted infrastructure investment, systematic capacity-building for ALS implementers, strengthened inter-agency collaboration among DepEd, BJMP, TESDA, and LGUs, and adaptive local policies integrating post-release education and livelihood pathways.

Keywords: *ALS senior high school, persons deprived of liberty, reintegration*



I. Introduction

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, administered by the Department of Education (DepEd), serves as a vital conduit for educational access among out-of-school children, youth, and adults who face barriers to formal schooling (Llego, 2022; Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2021). Among the most marginalized of these learners are Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), whose right to education within correctional institutions has been actively upheld through ALS initiatives (Lansang, 2021). While ALS Junior High School (JHS) programs have seen widespread implementation in numerous detention centers, the extension of these opportunities to the Senior High School (SHS) level under ALS remains limited, especially in regions such as Bukidnon, leaving a crucial gap in the educational continuum for incarcerated individuals (DepEd, 2019b).

DepEd's commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education is enshrined in several policy directives, including DepEd Order No. 021, s. 2019 (Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program) and DepEd Order No. 013, s. 2019 (Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of the Enhanced ALS 2.0) (DepEd, 2019a, 2019b). These issuances reinforce the government's mandate that every Filipino, irrespective of personal circumstance or incarceration status, should access lifelong learning opportunities. However, despite progressive policy frameworks, implementing ALS SHS in jail settings remains fraught with operational, institutional, and resource-related constraints such as limited qualified teachers, insufficient learning spaces, and the absence of context-specific instructional materials (Bautista, 2020; Lansang, 2021).

In Bukidnon, ALS programs have succeeded in supporting PDLs at the JHS level through mobile teachers and robust Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) assessments, helping many attain basic education certification (PSA, 2021). Nevertheless, stakeholders increasingly recognize the need to extend learning beyond JHS. Providing ALS SHS, particularly via the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track, could significantly enhance employment, rehabilitation, and reintegration prospects for PDLs by equipping them with practical skills for social and economic reintegration (Bautista, 2020; DepEd, 2019b). As DepEd advances ALS under the MATATAG agenda and refines the ALS 2.0 curriculum, examining the readiness and feasibility of introducing ALS SHS in carceral settings has become both timely and critical.

This study aimed to (1) explore the readiness of correctional institutions, ALS implementers, and PDL learners for the implementation of the ALS Senior High School (SHS) program in Bukidnon's jail facilities; and (2) examine the challenges, opportunities, and contextual factors that shape the feasibility of delivering ALS–SHS education to persons deprived of liberty.

II. Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive case study design, chosen for its capacity to provide an in-depth exploration of the perceptions, experiences, and insights of key stakeholders regarding the readiness and feasibility of implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Senior High School (SHS) program in jail facilities. Qualitative inquiry allows for rich, contextual understanding of complex institutional and personal realities in Bukidnon—a depth and nuance not easily captured by quantitative approaches. To systematically analyze



these experiences, the study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, which provided a rigorous framework for identifying patterns, generating themes, and interpreting stakeholders' perspectives in a coherent and meaningful way.

Research Locale

The research was conducted in selected jail facilities within the Division of Bukidnon, notably BJMP-managed district jails in Manolo Fortich, the Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center, and other municipalities with active ALS programs. Bukidnon's status as a large, rural province in Region X with diverse educational needs provided a vital context for examining how ALS SHS might be implemented in carceral settings.

Sampling Design

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with direct experience or substantial involvement in implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) within local jail facilities. The sample included ALS Mobile Teachers managing jail-based programs, the Education Program Specialist II for ALS, and jail wardens or education focal persons from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). Selected persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) who had completed or were currently enrolled in ALS Junior High School were also involved to provide learner perspectives. Additionally, Division-level stakeholders—such as Senior High School (SHS) Coordinators and officials from the Curriculum Implementation Division (CID) were included, along with representatives from TESDA, local government units, and other partner agencies supporting corrections education. In total, eighteen (18) participants took part in the study.

Data Gathering

Data were gathered through two primary qualitative techniques: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Semi-structured KIIs were conducted with ALS teachers, jail officials, the Education Program Specialist II for ALS, and other relevant stakeholders to explore institutional readiness, learner needs, available resources, and perceived challenges in implementing the ALS Senior High School program. In addition, FGDs were held with ALS learners deprived of liberty to gain deeper insight into their educational aspirations, perceived benefits of pursuing Senior High School, and expectations regarding the program. Each FGD comprised five to seven participants and was carried out in accordance with BJMP protocols to ensure security and ethical compliance.

Data Analysis

All qualitative data gathered from the interviews and FGDs were transcribed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach. The analysis followed their six-phase framework, which involved familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for potential themes, reviewing and refining these themes, defining and naming them, and finally producing the analytical report. Manual coding was employed throughout the process to systematically identify and organize recurring patterns. This allowed the emergence of core themes related to institutional readiness, learner needs, feasibility



considerations, as well as the barriers and enabling factors influencing the implementation of the ALS Senior High School program in jail settings.

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, the study adhered to Lincoln and Guba's criteria. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation and member checking, which allowed participants to validate the accuracy of the interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and institutional settings, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar environments. Dependability was maintained through careful and systematic documentation of all research procedures, ensuring that the study could be traced and evaluated by external reviewers. Confirmability was strengthened through ongoing researcher reflexivity and peer validation, minimizing bias and ensuring that the findings were grounded in the participants' narratives rather than the researchers' assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

Before data collection, the researcher secured informed consent from all participants and obtained the necessary permissions from the DepEd Division of Bukidnon, the BJMP Regional Office, and the heads of the participating jail facilities. Participation was voluntary and confidential, with all identities anonymized, and the study adhered strictly to ethical protocols governing research with vulnerable groups such as persons deprived of liberty (PDLs). However, several limitations must be acknowledged in interpreting the findings. As a qualitative case study focused on selecting correctional facilities in Bukidnon, the results may not be fully generalizable to other regions or institutional contexts due to the specificity of local conditions. Although the study engaged eighteen purposively selected participants, this number may not capture the full diversity of perspectives among all stakeholders and incarcerated learners.

Additionally, qualitative inquiry involves research interpretation, and despite safeguards such as reflexivity and peer validation, some degree of subjectivity may remain. Data collection within jail environments also posed constraints, such as security protocols, restricted mobility, and institutional procedures may have influenced participant openness and limited access to some individuals or documents. Time and resource limitations necessitated a cross-sectional rather than longitudinal design, preventing an examination of changes over time or long-term outcomes of ALS SHS implementation. Furthermore, variability in the availability and currency of institutional documents may have affected the depth of contextual analysis. Recognizing these limitations is essential for situating the study's conclusions within both local and broader educational landscapes.

III. Results and Discussions

Thematic Analysis of Key Informant Interviews on Institutional Readiness

Theme 1: Institutional Readiness and Resource Limitations

Table 1 reveals that the readiness of correctional institutions to implement the ALS Senior High School (SHS) program is shaped largely by the availability and quality of physical infrastructure. Respondents noted that although some classrooms and learning spaces exist, these facilities are often shared with other programs, resulting in limited access and



overcrowding. Such constraints highlight the persistent challenges correctional facilities face in allocating dedicated, functional learning environments. These findings mirror broader national observations that insufficient physical resources, particularly in detention-based educational settings, can undermine the continuity and quality of instructional delivery (Valencia City Bukidnon Jail Management, 2022–2023). For ALS learners, the condition of learning spaces directly affects engagement, attendance, and overall learning outcomes—critical considerations in a high-stakes environment where education is closely tied to rehabilitation and future reintegration.

Theme 2: Professional Capacity and Training Needs of ALS Implementers

A second key theme centers on the professional readiness of ALS implementers. While teachers expressed motivation and a strong commitment to supporting PDL learners, they also acknowledged gaps in their preparedness to handle SHS-specific curricula. Senior High School demands specialized competencies, particularly in applied and technical-vocational subjects, yet many ALS implementers have not received adequate training tailored to SHS requirements. This gap underscores a systemic need for targeted professional development, including curriculum orientation, differentiated instruction strategies, and SHS content mastery. Existing literature reinforces that the quality of instruction—and consequently, learner success—is significantly influenced by educators’ training, confidence, and pedagogical competence (Senior High School Learners' Satisfaction Study, San Fernando, Bukidnon, 2025). Thus, without structured capacity-building initiatives, the aspiration to deliver responsive and effective ALS–SHS programs in correctional facilities remains difficult to achieve.

Table 1
Emerging Themes from Key Informant Responses

Selected Statements	Codes	Themes
“We have classrooms, but sometimes we need to share with other programs.”	Limited physical space, shared learning areas, inadequate facilities, and resource constraints	Institutional Readiness: Facility and Resource Limitations
“We are eager to teach, but Senior High requires new skills and curriculum understanding.”	Need for SHS-specific training, lack of curriculum expertise, motivation, with capacity gaps	Implementer Readiness: Professional Development Needs
“We coordinate with the jail, but scheduling conflicts and policy gaps affect smooth implementation.”	Weak institutional coordination, bureaucratic delays, scheduling issues, unclear policies	Inter-agency Coordination Challenges



Theme 3: Inter-agency Coordination and Policy Alignment

The third theme highlights the importance of institutional collaboration and policy coherence in enabling successful implementation of ALS SHS in jail facilities. DepEd coordinators reported that while partnerships exist, operational bottlenecks such as scheduling conflicts, inconsistent communication, and unclear policy guidelines hinder smooth implementation. Given the sensitive operational environment of correctional facilities—where learning activities must align with security protocols—stronger coordination between DepEd, BJMP, and partner agencies is essential. These challenges align with findings from earlier studies showing that effective inter-agency collaboration enhances program delivery, resource mobilization, and long-term sustainability (Status of SHS Implementation, 2019). Strengthening communication channels, clarifying policy responsibilities, and institutionalizing coordination mechanisms can therefore significantly improve program readiness and reduce bureaucratic hurdles.

Overall, the themes show that readiness to implement the ALS Senior High School program in Bukidnon’s correctional facilities rests on three interconnected pillars: adequate learning infrastructure, professionally trained ALS implementers, and cohesive inter-agency coordination. While facilities and personnel demonstrate initial readiness, critical gaps in SHS-oriented resources, teacher training, and policy alignment must be addressed. Improving these areas is essential to ensuring that incarcerated learners receive meaningful, uninterrupted learning experiences that support rehabilitation, skill development, and reintegration into society.

Challenges Hindering ALS–SHS Implementation for PDLs

Theme 1: Learner Engagement and Motivation Challenges

Responses from ALS teachers revealed that keeping PDL learners consistently engaged is a major challenge in implementing ALS SHS within correctional facilities. Learners’ attendance fluctuates due to competing responsibilities inside the facility, fluctuations in personal motivation, and episodes of emotional or psychological stress. Such inconsistency undermines continuity of learning and affects mastery of SHS competencies. Similar findings in correctional education literature note that motivation among incarcerated learners is often fragile, influenced by personal circumstances, facility routines, and limited incentives for participation. Addressing these barriers requires structured learner-support programs, motivational strategies, and meaningful recognition systems to sustain engagement and strengthen academic persistence.

Theme 2: Institutional and Security Constraints

Correctional staff emphasized that institutional routines—including lockdowns, headcounts, inspections, and restricted movement—frequently delay or interrupt classes. These security protocols are unavoidable and necessary, yet they significantly reduce available instructional time. In many instances, ALS teachers must adjust schedules on short notice or compress lessons, affecting instructional quality. These structural constraints highlight the need for coordination between BJMP personnel and ALS implementers to design predictable, protected learning periods. This theme aligns with national reports indicating that



educational programs in correctional settings often struggle due to operational demands that supersede academic schedules.

Table 2

Emerging Themes on Challenges Hindering ALS–SHS Implementation for PDLs

Selected Statements	Codes	Themes
“Some learners attend irregularly because they have other priorities or lose interest quickly.”	Low motivation, irregular attendance, competing priorities	Learner Engagement and Motivation Challenges
“Sometimes classes are delayed due to lockdowns or security routines.”	Scheduling disruptions, security-driven delays, restricted movement	Institutional and Security Constraints
“We don’t always have textbooks or references for Senior High subjects.”	Lack of SHS materials, limited access to resources, inadequate learning support	Insufficient Learning Resources
“The standard approach is difficult; we need flexible strategies to match learners’ progress.”	Need for adaptive pedagogy, difficulty differentiating instruction, mismatched learning pace	Instructional Adaptability and Pedagogical Gaps

Theme 3: Insufficient Learning Resources

PDL learners themselves identified a lack of textbooks, reference materials, and SHS-specific resources as a major hindrance to comprehension and performance. Unlike JHS content, SHS subjects—especially applied and technical courses—require specialized instructional materials that many jail-based ALS programs currently do not possess. Limited access to digital tools further compounds this challenge, particularly in facilities where electronic devices are heavily regulated. Without adequate learning resources, PDLs experience gaps in content mastery and diminished learning confidence. Addressing this issue calls for targeted resource allocation and stronger partnerships with DepEd, TESDA, and LGUs to ensure that SHS programs meet minimum quality standards.

Theme 4: Instructional Adaptability and Pedagogical Gaps

ALS implementers reported difficulty applying standard SHS teaching approaches within the unique context of jail-based learning. PDL learners often progress at varying paces and require individualized strategies, yet ALS teachers lack specialized training in differentiated instruction and SHS-level pedagogy. This gap reduces instructional effectiveness and affects learner comprehension. The theme underscores the need for capacity-building initiatives focused on learner-centered methods, modular delivery, and adaptive strategies tailored to correctional environments. These findings reinforce prior research indicating that teacher preparedness is strongly correlated with learning success in alternative education modalities.



Collectively, the four themes illustrate the complex environment shaping ALS SHS implementation for PDLs. Learner motivation, institutional constraints, resource shortages, and pedagogical challenges intersect to create significant barriers. Overcoming these requires a holistic intervention—one that simultaneously strengthens teacher capacity, enhances facility readiness, improves resource availability, and institutionalizes coordinated protocols between DepEd and correctional authorities. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that PDL learners receive meaningful, equitable, and sustained access to Senior High School education as part of their rehabilitation and reintegration journey.

Opportunities and Benefits of Extending ALS Education to SHS for PDLs

Theme 1: Personal Development and Empowerment

Table 3 reveals that ALS Senior High School significantly contributes to the personal growth and self-confidence of PDL learners. Participants expressed that SHS education empowers them to envision a more positive future and prepares them emotionally and mentally for life after incarceration. This aligns with research showing that participation in education builds resilience, enhances self-worth, and fosters intrinsic motivation—critical components of rehabilitation (Temario, 2025). The acquisition of new knowledge and skills instills a renewed sense of purpose, which helps learners sustain positive behavior and commit to long-term personal improvement.

Theme 2: Employability and Economic Reintegration

A prominent benefit highlighted by ALS teachers is the increased employability of PDL learners who complete SHS. Skills gained through ALS SHS, particularly under TVL tracks, equip learners with competencies sought by employers. International and local studies consistently demonstrate that education significantly improves post-release employment outcomes; in fact, ALS completers are reported to be twice as likely to secure full-time work compared to non-completers (World Bank, 2018). By enhancing job readiness, ALS SHS bridges the gap between incarceration and sustainable livelihood, reducing the economic vulnerabilities that often contribute to reoffending.

Theme 3: Institutional Behavior Improvement and Reduced Recidivism

Correctional administrators emphasized that educational participation leads to observable improvements in behavior inside the facility. Engaged learners follow rules more consistently, demonstrate greater self-regulation, and participate positively in structured activities. This reflects global evidence that correctional education is one of the most effective interventions for reducing recidivism, as it promotes discipline, purpose, and constructive engagement (BuCor Reports, 2025). Structured SHS programs keep learners meaningfully occupied and support behavioral rehabilitation, ultimately benefiting both institutional management and the learners themselves.



Table 3

Emerging Themes on Opportunities and Benefits of Extending ALS–SHS for PDLs

Selected Statements	Codes	Themes
“I feel more confident and prepared for life outside.”	Increased confidence, personal growth, readiness for reintegration	Personal Development and Empowerment
“Those who finish Senior High will have better chances to work after release.”	Employability enhancement, skills acquisition, economic opportunities	Employability and Economic Reintegration
“Engaged learners tend to follow rules and participate positively in the facility.”	Behavior improvement, reduced misconduct, rehabilitation support	Institutional Behavior Improvement and Reduced Recidivism
“Education strengthens family ties and prepares learners for reintegration.”	Strengthened relationships, reintegration readiness, community reattachment	Social Reintegration and Community Connection

Theme 4: Social Reintegration and Community Connection

DepEd coordinators stressed the role of ALS SHS in strengthening family ties and preparing learners for reintegration into their communities. Education fosters communication skills, emotional maturity, and renewed social identity—factors that ease the transition from prison to community life. Reintegration is a complex process requiring not only employability but also psychosocial readiness, and ALS programs create opportunities for PDLs to rebuild trust and relationships. Holistic support networks involving DepEd, LGUs, and community partners enhance learners’ reintegration pathways, ensuring continuity of support post-release (Ramos & Gonzales, 2025).

The findings summarized in Table 3 affirm that ALS SHS programs offer multi-dimensional benefits to PDLs, extending far beyond academic attainment. These programs cultivate personal empowerment, improve employability, foster positive institutional behavior, and strengthen pathways to reintegration. They represent a transformative intervention that contributes not only to individual rehabilitation but also to broader institutional and societal well-being. However, maximizing these advantages requires sustained collaboration among DepEd, correctional institutions, TESDA, LGUs, and community stakeholders. When these partnerships function cohesively, ALS SHS becomes a powerful catalyst for rehabilitation, reduced recidivism, and successful reintegration into society.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that implementing the ALS Senior High School (SHS) program in Bukidnon’s correctional facilities is both a timely and transformative initiative that holds significant promise for the rehabilitation and reintegration of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). While the readiness assessment revealed existing strengths—such as motivated ALS implementers, basic instructional spaces, and institutional willingness also exposed critical gaps in infrastructure, SHS-specific teacher training, coordination mechanisms, and learning



resource availability that must be addressed to ensure program viability. The challenges identified, including inconsistent learner engagement, security-driven scheduling disruptions, limited instructional materials, and the need for adaptive teaching strategies, highlight the complex environment in which jail-based education operates. Yet, despite these constraints, the perceived opportunities and benefits of extending ALS to the SHS level are substantial: learners gain confidence, essential life and employability skills, improved behavior, and strengthened prospects for social and economic reintegration. The partnership between DepEd, correctional institutions, TESDA, LGUs, and community stakeholders emerges as a crucial factor in maximizing these benefits and ensuring sustainable program delivery. Overall, the findings affirm that with targeted investments in capacity-building, resource provision, and inter-agency collaboration, the ALS SHS program can serve as a powerful vehicle for rehabilitation, reduced recidivism, and meaningful second chances for incarcerated learners in Bukidnon.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that the implementation of ALS Senior High School in Bukidnon's correctional facilities be strengthened through targeted improvements in infrastructure, teacher capacity, and inter-agency coordination. Correctional institutions should prioritize upgrading and dedicating learning spaces, ensuring the availability of SHS-specific textbooks, digital tools, and contextualized learning materials suited for incarcerated learners. Capacity-building programs must be instituted to equip ALS implementers with SHS curriculum expertise, differentiated instruction strategies, and adaptive pedagogies tailored to the unique learning needs and pace of PDLs. To address institutional constraints, DepEd, BJMP, TESDA, and LGUs should establish clear coordination protocols, predictable class schedules, and joint monitoring systems that minimize disruptions and ensure continuity of learning. Additionally, programs that foster learner engagement—such as mentoring, remedial sessions, peer support groups, and recognition incentives—should be developed to sustain motivation and reduce attrition. Finally, mechanisms for post-release support, including career counseling, skills certification, livelihood pathways, and community reintegration networks, should be institutionalized to maximize the long-term benefits of ALS SHS completion and help PDL graduates' transition successfully into society.

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