

ALS Research Agenda: **Curriculum Design and Implementation**

Assessing Blended Learning Readiness among ALS Senior High School Learners: Evidence from Bukidnon Province

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Abstract

This qualitative research study examined the blended learning readiness of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Senior High School learners in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand at Impasugong National High School, Division of Bukidnon. As ALS SHS programs increasingly adopt flexible and technology-mediated learning modalities, understanding learners' preparedness for blended learning has become critical. The study explored readiness across four key domains: technological access, digital literacy, motivation and attitude, and learning environment. Focus group discussions, individual interviews, and document review was conducted to participants which included 84 ALS SHS learners. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in learners' experiences and perceived readiness. Findings reveal that while learners demonstrate strong motivation and positive attitudes toward technology-enhanced learning, their overall readiness is constrained by inconsistent internet connectivity, limited access to personal digital devices, insufficient digital skills, and uncondusive home learning environments. Socio-economic conditions and limited family support further affect learners' capacity to engage effectively in blended learning modalities. These results indicate that readiness for blended learning in ALS contexts is shaped not only by learner motivation but also by structural and environmental factors. The study recommends the institutionalization of localized digital literacy training, targeted infrastructure support, and strengthened community-based learning support systems to enhance blended learning readiness among ALS SHS learners.

Keywords: *blended learning, readiness, ALS senior high school*



I. Introduction

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) serves as a vital educational pathway for out-of-school youth and adults who have not completed formal basic education. Established as a parallel learning system, it provides flexible learning options suited to the needs, interests, and life circumstances of marginalized. In 2020, Republic Act No. 11510, also known as the Alternative Learning System Act, was enacted to institutionalize ALS as an integral part of the Philippine education system. This law ensures that ALS has equitable access to quality education, consistent with the country's goal of lifelong learning for all (Republic Act No. 11510, 2020).

The ALS Senior High School (ALS-SHS) Program extends this opportunity by offering specialized strands that prepare for higher education, technical-vocational engagement, or entrepreneurship. At Impasugong National High School in Bukidnon, the HUMSS strand caters to interested in social sciences, humanities, and communication. However, as education shifts toward technology-mediated modalities, the readiness of ALS to engage in blended learning has become a pressing concern.

Blended learning, as defined by the Department of Education (DepEd, 2022), is a delivery approach that combines face-to-face instruction with technology-based or modular learning. While this modality has shown promise in mainstream education, it poses unique challenges for ALS, many of whom come from rural areas where digital access and connectivity remain limited. According to the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2022), only 30% of ALS Community Learning Centers (CLCs) nationwide have reliable internet access, while 42% report intermittent or non-existent connectivity. These figures highlight significant barriers to equitable participation in digital education.

In Impasugong, a first-class municipality located in Bukidnon, ALS SHS learners rely primarily on mobile data connections, shared devices, and printed learning modules. Teachers often provide lessons through asynchronous methods such as learning activity sheets, printed packets, text messages, and occasional group tutorials. The socioeconomic realities of these learners, including limited household income, the need to work part-time, and responsibilities at home, further constrain their capacity to engage in digital or blended learning effectively. Despite these challenges, there is growing recognition that blended learning, when implemented with appropriate support, can expand opportunities for ALS learners. It can enhance flexibility, foster independent learning, and build digital competencies essential for 21st-century literacy (UNESCO, 2021). However, readiness must first be measured before any large-scale implementation can succeed. This research, therefore, focuses on assessing the blended learning readiness of ALS SHS learners at Impasugong National High School to provide data-driven recommendations for improving ALS delivery.

This study's significance lies in its contribution to the continuous improvement of ALS SHS programs, in alignment with Republic Act 11510's mandate to strengthen non-formal education through contextualized, evidence-based approaches. Understanding the readiness of ALS SHS learners in the HUMSS strand will help educators identify gaps in access, skills, and motivation, and design interventions tailored to their realities.



II. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive action research design to examine the blended learning readiness of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Senior High School (SHS) learners in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand of Impasugong National High School. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research is best suited for exploring phenomena in depth through participants lived experiences and contextual realities.

The action research framework followed the plan–act–observe–reflect cycle prescribed by the Department of Education (DepEd, 2019). During the planning phase, the researchers identified readiness for blended learning as a priority issue based on observed learning difficulties among ALS SHS learners during modular instruction. The action phase involved the design and use of a researcher-developed Blended Learning Readiness Assessment Tool (BLRAT). The observation phase entailed qualitative data collection through interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and classroom observation. Finally, the reflection phase focused on analyzing the findings, identifying key readiness gaps, and proposing actionable strategies for improvement.

This design was selected because it allowed the researchers to investigate a real instructional challenge within their teaching context and use the insights to refine learning delivery and institutional practices.

Sampling Design

The study was conducted at Impasugong National High School, located in Bukidnon Province, during the School Year 2025–2026. Through purposive sampling, 84 ALS Senior High School learners enrolled under the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand. Of these, 37 were from Grade 11 and 47 from Grade 12.

The participants' ages ranged from 16 to 45 years old, reflecting the multi-generational nature of ALS SHS programs. A small group (approximately 7%) were 16–18-year-old completers who transitioned to Senior High School through the ALS equivalency route. The majority (41.7%) were 19–24-year-old young adults, representing returning who had temporarily dropped out of formal education due to financial or family-related reasons. About 29.8% of participants were 25–30 years old, typically working balancing employment and study, while 21.4% were 31–45-year-old adults seeking personal development, better job qualifications, or the fulfillment of long-term educational goals.

This diversity created a dynamic learning community characterized by a wide range of digital familiarity and motivation levels. Younger tended to adapt faster to digital tools, while older showed stronger perseverance and life motivation but required additional support in developing digital skills. The flexible schedule and learner-centered structure of ALS SHS allowed participants to balance work, family, and academic commitments effectively.

Data Gathering

Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to ensure triangulation and credibility. The principal instrument was the Blended Learning Readiness Assessment Tool



(BLRAT), which provided a structured guide for gathering insights on four readiness domains: technological access, digital literacy, motivation and attitude, and learning environment.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step framework:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Interview and FGD transcripts were manually coded according to the four BLRAT domains. Themes were refined iteratively by identifying patterns and comparing findings across sources. To enhance credibility, the researchers used member checking, allowing participants to validate the accuracy of interpretations. Triangulation among FGDs, interviews, and observations ensured that findings reflected authentic learner experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed: pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, and no learner was required to disclose sensitive personal or financial information. Inclusion criteria were: (1) enrolled in the ALS SHS HUMSS strand, (2) participating in blended or modular learning modalities, and (3) willing to share personal learning experiences through interviews or FGDs.

III. Results and Discussion

This section presents the discussion of results derived from the thematic analysis of data gathered following Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step framework. Each theme reflects how ALS Senior High School learners of Impasugong National High School experienced and perceived their readiness for blended learning within their lived contexts.

Theme 1: Unequal Technological Access and Connectivity Barriers

From the coding process, recurring phrases such as "no signal," "borrowed phone," and "load ran out" emerged as dominant narratives, revealing a significant readiness gap in technological access. Learners primarily depended on shared mobile devices and prepaid data, leading to inconsistent engagement in blended learning activities. Despite these limitations, participants expressed creativity and persistence, often sharing devices, downloading modules during off-peak hours, or collaborating with peers to access materials. These adaptive strategies indicate an emergent form of "functional readiness," characterized by resourcefulness rather than resource sufficiency.

This finding aligns with the plan–act–observe–reflect cycle of action research. During observation, learners' difficulties prompted reflective actions by the researcher, such as



developing offline-ready modules and encouraging peer sharing. The reflection revealed that learners' readiness is not solely determined by access to technology, but also by their agency in coping with scarcity.

Theme 2: Gaps Between Everyday Digital Use and Academic Digital Literacy

Thematic coding showed frequent mentions of using Facebook, Messenger, and YouTube for communication and learning references, yet limited familiarity with academic tools such as Google Classroom, Word, or PowerPoint. Participants described challenges like "I don't know how to attach files" or "I'm afraid to click the wrong button." This theme highlights the difference between digital familiarity and digital literacy, a critical readiness dimension for ALS learners.

The researchers' observation and document review confirmed that learners who received direct guidance demonstrated improved confidence in using digital platforms. This reflects the act phase of the action research cycle, where the researcher implemented mini digital literacy sessions using the BLRAT as a guide. Consequently, the reflective phase emphasized that building academic digital literacy requires intentional scaffolding rather than if general technology use translates to learning competence.

Theme 3: Motivation Rooted in Aspiration but Challenged by Circumstances

The third emergent theme centers on motivation and attitude, where participants repeatedly mentioned goals such as "finishing school for my children" or "getting a better job." These statements revealed a strong intrinsic motivation among ALS SHS learners. However, sub-themes of fatigue, financial difficulty, and family responsibilities also surfaced as recurring barriers to sustained participation.

The observation and reflection phases showed that motivation fluctuated depending on external conditions, such as work schedules, connectivity, and family support. Nonetheless, the researchers noted that simple recognition mechanisms, like praising learner persistence or awarding certificates for task completion, positively influenced morale. Thus, motivation in the ALS blended learning context is dynamic and situational, requiring continuous socio-emotional and instructional support. The researchers reflected that readiness is not only a cognitive or technical capacity but also an emotional commitment that needs nurturing.

Theme 4: The Learning Environment as Both Constraint and Enabler

The final major theme concerns the learning environment, encompassing both physical and social dimensions. Codes such as "too noisy," "no light," "crowded house," and "no space to study" illustrate the difficulties learners face at home. Yet, the same learners shared accounts of resilience—studying late at night, seeking quiet spots in barangay halls, or asking family members for time to focus.

Through the observe and reflect stages, the researchers recognized that while the home environment is often un conducive, community spaces can become alternative learning venues. This realization informed the recommendation for establishing barangay-based



learning corners. The reflection emphasized that readiness is ecological, depending not just on the learner but also on the collective support of family and community.

The thematic analysis revealed that ALS SHS learners are mentally and motivationally ready for blended learning, yet structurally constrained by limited access, insufficient digital literacy, and environmental barriers. Readiness is therefore not a fixed trait but a contextual condition, shaped by the interaction between learner agency, teacher facilitation, and systemic support.

In the action research reflection, the use of the BLRAT facilitated a deeper, evidence-based understanding of learner realities. It allowed the researchers to identify actionable points for intervention, such as the need for offline modules, localized digital training, and community learning partnerships, thus completing the reflective cycle of inquiry leading to improved practice.

Coding Process and Theme Generation

To ensure rigor and transparency in qualitative analysis, all interview and focus group transcripts were coded manually following Braun and Clarke’s (2019) six-phase thematic analysis framework:

The Blended Learning Readiness Assessment Tool (BLRAT) guided the initial coding framework, organizing data into four major domains: Technological Access, Digital Literacy, Motivation and Attitude, and Learning Environment. Within each domain, open coding was used to identify key phrases, behaviors, and meanings. Similar codes were then clustered into sub-themes and refined into overarching themes.

Phase 1: Familiarization and Coding

Sample raw responses, initial codes, and domains are presented below:

Excerpt from Interview / FGD Transcript	Initial Code	Domain
I use my cousin’s cellphone when she is not using it because I do not have my own.	Shared device usage	Technological Access
Sometimes the signal is gone, so I just wait until midnight to download the lessons.	Poor connectivity coping strategy	Technological Access
I can use Facebook, but I do not know how to send a file in Google Classroom.	Social media fluency vs academic tech gap	Digital Literacy
I want to finish my studies for my family, even if I work during the day.	Intrinsic motivation; family-driven goals	Motivation and Attitude



Our house is small and noisy, Unconducive home Learning Environment
 so I study outside or in the environment; adaptive coping
 barangay hall.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Using inductive open coding, a total of 47 initial codes were identified across all transcripts. These codes were then grouped into categories under each domain.

Domain	Code Categories	Illustrative Codes
Technological Access	Device limitation, Internet instability, Resource-sharing, Offline adaptation	shared phone, borrowed gadget, no signal, offline module download
Digital Literacy	Functional vs academic use, Need for guidance, Fear of errors, Peer learning	knows Facebook, cannot attach files, needs tech help, learned from classmate
Motivation and Attitude	Goal orientation, Time management struggle, Persistence, Fatigue	finish for family, too tired after work, still try, self-motivation
Learning Environment	Distraction, Limited space, Alternative study areas, Family encouragement	noisy home, study at night, barangay hall, parents support

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

After coding, the researcher examined relationships among the categories to construct broader meanings or latent themes that answer the research questions.

Categories	Emergent Sub-Themes	Final Themes
Limited device ownership + poor connectivity + shared gadget coping	Technological inequality and resource improvisation	Unequal Technological Access and Connectivity Barriers
Social media fluency + academic skill gap + peer assistance	Gap between personal digital use and academic application	Gaps Between Everyday Digital Use and Academic Digital Literacy
Persistence despite hardship + fatigue + family-driven goals	Resilience amid external pressures	Motivation Rooted in Aspiration but Challenged by Circumstances
Noisy homes + lack of study space + community coping	Adaptive use of social and physical environments	The Learning Environment as Both Constraint and Enabler

Phase 4: Reviewing and Refining Themes

Each preliminary theme was reviewed for coherence and validity. Data extracts were revisited to ensure consistency across participants. Peer debriefing with two ALS co-teachers and



member checking with four learners confirmed that the themes accurately represented participant experiences.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

The final four themes were defined and refined as follows:

1. Unequal Technological Access and Connectivity Barriers – captures struggles with limited device ownership and connectivity but highlights coping creativity.
2. Gaps Between Everyday Digital Use and Academic Digital Literacy – describes the distinction between social media fluency and academic technology use.
3. Motivation Rooted in Aspiration but Challenged by Circumstances – illustrates intrinsic motivation constrained by financial and familial pressures.
4. The Learning Environment as Both Constraint and Enabler – portrays how home and community settings can both hinder and support learning.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final themes were integrated into the Discussion of Results using the plan–act–observe–reflect action research cycle. These themes informed practical interventions such as offline module creation, digital literacy workshops, and community-based study areas. The process ensured the findings were action-oriented and aligned with the reflective nature of qualitative action research.

Coding to Themes

Domain (from BLRAT)	Sample Codes	Theme Generated
Technological Access	shared phone, no signal, download at night	Unequal Technological Access and Connectivity Barriers
Digital Literacy	knows Facebook but not Word, afraid to click, learned from peer	Gaps Between Everyday Digital Use and Academic Digital Literacy
Motivation and Attitude	studying for my kids, tired but continue, no time to study	Motivation Rooted in Aspiration but Challenged by Circumstances
Learning Environment	crowded home, study in barangay hall, no electricity	The Learning Environment as Both Constraint and Enabler

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings and reflections of this qualitative action research, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the blended learning readiness of ALS Senior High School learners in the HUMSS strand at Impasugong National High School. These recommendations address the four key domains identified in the Blended Learning Readiness Assessment Tool (BLRAT): technological access, digital literacy, motivation and attitude, and learning environment. Each recommendation is anchored in the provisions of Republic Act 11510 and DepEd’s commitment to inclusive, learner-centered education.



The first recommendation concerns the enhancement of technological access and infrastructure. The study found that most ALS relied on shared or low-end smartphones and prepaid mobile data to access learning materials. This limits their ability to engage meaningfully in blended learning. The school administration, together with the ALS program, is encouraged to establish partnerships with local government units (LGUs), private sector organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide affordable or donated learning devices such as tablets or refurbished laptops. A formal device-lending program would help ensure equitable access among students who lack personal gadgets. In addition, DepEd and LGU should collaborate to improve internet connectivity in ALS learning centers by installing Wi-Fi hubs or community broadband networks. Such an initiative aligns with the national “Konektadong Pinoy” program, which promotes digital inclusion across underserved areas. Given the unreliable nature of connectivity in rural settings, it is also recommended that ALS teachers continue developing offline-ready learning materials—such as USB-based lessons, pre-downloaded videos, and printed digital modules—to sustain learning continuity even during power or signal interruptions. These measures directly support the intent of Republic Act 11510, which mandates sufficient logistical and material support for ALS implementation nationwide.

The second recommendation focuses on the strengthening of digital literacy training for both learners and teachers. While most learners are adept at using mobile phones and social media, many lack academic digital skills, such as managing files, writing documents, or using online platforms for learning. Therefore, ALS SHS teachers are encouraged to integrate structured digital literacy sessions into the regular curriculum. These sessions may build upon existing modules like “Empowerment Technologies,” but they should be adapted to the specific needs and resources of ALS learners. Teachers may organize hands-on workshops using essential tools such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Word, or DepEd Commons. It is also recommended to implement a peer mentoring system, such as a “Tech Buddy” program, where more digitally skilled learners assist their classmates. This approach not only enhances learners’ confidence in using technology but also fosters collaboration and peer accountability. Continuous teacher training on ICT integration and the use of the Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) will further equip ALS facilitators to deliver technology-mediated lessons effectively.

The third area of improvement pertains to motivation and attitude toward blended learning. The study revealed that while most ALS learners are highly motivated to finish their education and improve their employment opportunities, they often face external challenges such as financial pressure, family responsibilities, and fatigue from work. To address these, it is recommended that ALS teachers integrate guidance counseling and life skills development into regular classes. Facilitators should provide structured opportunities for learners to reflect on their goals, manage stress, and build self-efficacy. Recognition of small achievements, such as certificates for module completion or “Learner of the Month” awards, can help sustain motivation and reinforce persistence. Lessons should also be contextualized to real-life situations that resonate with learners’ experiences—such as community issues, local livelihood projects, or family responsibilities—so that education remains relevant and meaningful. Moreover, flexible learning schedules should be adopted to accommodate



working learners and parents, ensuring that academic deadlines are attainable without compromising the quality of learning.

The fourth recommendation involves improving the learning environment. A conducive environment is essential for the success of blended learning. Many ALS learners in this study reported that their home settings are noisy, crowded, or lack electricity, which hinders concentration. To mitigate these, teachers should collaborate with barangay officials and community organizations to establish designated study areas or learning corners equipped with basic amenities and internet access. These can serve as satellite study spaces for learners who cannot regularly attend the main ALS SHS classroom. Family involvement must also be strengthened through orientation programs that educate parents and guardians on how to support learning at home. Families play a crucial role in encouraging persistence and ensuring that learners allocate time for study. Additionally, logistical challenges such as frequent power outages and long distances to learning centers must be addressed through practical solutions like providing solar chargers, portable learning kits, and printed backup modules. The ALS learning center at Impasugong National High School should also be gradually upgraded with better lighting, ventilation, and stable internet access to create a more supportive learning atmosphere, especially for older students attending evening classes.

Finally, several institutional and policy-level recommendations are proposed. It is recommended that the Blended Learning Readiness Assessment Tool (BLRAT) be institutionalized as a regular diagnostic instrument for assessing ALS learners' readiness each semester or school year. This would enable teachers and administrators to monitor progress and make data-driven adjustments to instructional strategies. DepEd and local government units should also allocate a dedicated ICT fund for ALS programs to support device acquisition, connectivity improvements, and teacher professional development. Consistent with the fiscal provisions of RA 11510, the Special Education Fund (SEF) may be partially utilized to finance these initiatives. Furthermore, capacity-building programs for ALS teachers should be expanded to include blended learning pedagogy, ICT integration, and learner support strategies in multi-age, multi-level settings. Finally, ALS implementers are encouraged to continue conducting collaborative action research to identify effective practices, document challenges, and share best practices through division or regional research.

In reflection, the readiness of ALS SHS learners for blended learning is not merely a question of technological capacity but also of systemic support, community involvement, and personal empowerment. The findings of this study affirm that ALS SHS learners are willing and capable of adapting to modern learning modalities, provided they receive the necessary tools, training, and encouragement. By implementing these recommendations, the ALS SHS program at Impasugong National High School, and by extension, the broader ALS system, can move toward a more inclusive, flexible, and technology-enabled model of education that truly fulfills the spirit of Republic Act 11510: accessible, quality education for all Filipinos, regardless of age, status, or circumstance.

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