

ALS Research Agenda: **Monitoring and Technical Assistance**

Understanding the Challenges of ALS Delivery: A Three-Domain Analysis of Teaching, Resources, and Learner Mindsets

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Abstract

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) serves as a critical second chance education pathway in the Philippines; however, its delivery is shaped by multiple instructional, institutional, and learner-related factors. This study examined the challenges affecting ALS delivery in DepEd Division of El Salvador City through a three-domain framework encompassing teaching practices, resource availability, and learner mindsets. Employing a quantitative descriptive design, the study involved two respondent groups: 28 ALS teachers and implementers selected through total enumeration and 173 ALS learners selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using adapted survey instruments and analyzed using weighted means to determine perceived levels of challenge across the three domains. Findings indicate strong convergence between teacher and learner perceptions, with most aspects of teaching quality and resource provision rated as “not a challenge,” suggesting high levels of instructional effectiveness and operational stability in the local ALS program. This pattern contrasts with challenges commonly reported in national-level studies. Nevertheless, two persistent constraints were identified: unreliable internet connectivity and insufficient external support, particularly limited family encouragement for learners. These external factors were consistently rated as challenges and emerged as key barriers to maximizing learner engagement and program impact. The study concludes that while ALS delivery in this division is effective in its core classroom functions, broader infrastructural and community-level conditions constrain its full potential. It recommends the establishment of ALS Wi-Fi Hubs and the development of a Family and Community Partnership Program to address digital access gaps and strengthen learner support systems.

Keywords: *teaching practices, resource availability, learner mindsets*



I. Introduction

Education is imperative in national development and a fundamental human right. In the Philippine context, the State clearly declares the protection and promotion of accessible quality basic education for all its citizens as mandated in the Constitution (Republic Act 9155, 2001). Furthermore, innovative programs were created to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) leads these programs, a parallel learning system established to provide second chances for out-of-school youth and adults (OSYA) who failed to complete or access formal basic education. Thus, institutionalizing the program through the enactment of Republic Act 11510, also known as the ALS Act of 2020, to solidify further its vital role in delivering the nation's "Education for all" targets by offering programs that are flexible, responsive, and learner-centered in attaining a basic education diploma.

The ALS program serves as the silver lining for millions; however, the outcomes of its effective delivery are fraught with complex and persistent challenges because of the unique nature of the ALS environment, characterized by diverse, multi-generational learners, limited resources, and unconventional learning spaces that put enormous pressure on its implementers. A report from the World Bank highlighted the importance of the ALS program in the Philippines as one of the largest second-chance education programs that benefits learners and brings out their full potential. It needs continuous support and improvement to prevent it from becoming "second class" (Igarashi, Acosta, & Tenazas, 2020).

Teaching presents intricate challenges of instructional delivery in a non-traditional setting. ALS teachers, often referred to as Mobile teachers or Community implementers, must cater to diverse learners and learning paces in a single class. A recent study on the instructional competencies of ALS teachers resulted in significant challenges in areas such as handling diverse learners and assessment practices (Salen & Porcincula, 2025). Resources remain a well-documented concern, as ALS operates with limited funds compared to formal schools, which directly affects the quality and availability of modules, technology equipment, and even dedicated learning locations.

Several studies have identified significant challenges for ALS teachers that include limited physical classrooms, insufficient internet access, and inadequate training (Magatines & Flores, 2024). Furthermore, the reliance on module production poses another challenge due to lack of funding in its production and delivery (Pe Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020). The learner's mindset is equally essential. Learners from the ALS program are from minimum family income and ceased to continue their education because of financial constraints, breadwinner, and family obligations, or worst, the lack of personal interest, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023). Lived experience from these circumstances impacted their perceived attitudes, confidence, motivation, and resilience, which constitute the learner's mindset in terms of learning. A recent study from Tuastumban and Naporta (2025) found that there were significant factors in terms of academic performance of the ALS learners and their academic motivation and stress.

Despite the recognition of these issues nationwide, there remains an urgent need for focused, quantitative data gathering to better comprehend the evidence and rigor within school divisions. This implies a deep and nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by ALS teachers or implementers from multiple perspectives.



II. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed quantitative descriptive research design. As defined by Calderón-Garcidueñas et al., (2018), the descriptive method aims to portray the characteristics of a situation as it naturally occurs at the time of investigation. This design was appropriate for the present study because it sought to systematically measure, describe, and analyze the prevailing challenges encountered in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), particularly those related to instructional practices, availability of resources, and learner mindsets. By using this approach, the study was able to generate an accurate and objective picture of the existing conditions within the ALS program.

Sampling Design

The study involved two distinct groups of respondents: each selected through appropriate sampling procedures. For the Teachers and Implementers, the total population consisted of forty (40) individuals. Following a pilot test conducted with twelve (12) respondents, the remaining twenty-eight (28) composed the final sample. Given the small number of participants, the census method was employed, allowing the inclusion of all twenty-eight individuals in the study.

For the learners, the total population comprised three hundred forty-one (341) learners. After administering a pilot test to thirty (30) participants, the remaining population of three hundred eleven (311) served as the sampling frame for the main study. Using Cochran's formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was determined to be 173 learners. These respondents were selected through stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation based on their enrolled program.

Data Gathering

The primary method for gathering data in this study was a survey questionnaire, which aligned with the quantitative orientation of the research. The research instrument consisted of two survey questionnaires developed by the researchers and adapted from themes identified in prior studies. To ensure its quality, the instrument underwent content validation by a panel of three experts and was pilot tested to establish reliability. The pilot test produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.87, indicating strong internal consistency.

The data collection procedure followed a well-structured sequence: (1) official permission was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent, (2) coordination with ALS officials was conducted, (3) informed consent was obtained from all participants, (4) the finalized questionnaires were administered using a mixed-mode approach in both paper-and-pen and Google Forms, and (5) the collected data were prepared for analysis. Throughout the entire process, all ethical considerations were strictly observed.

Data Analysis

The study utilized quantitative descriptive statistics to analyze the data collected. Responses were first tallied, organized, and encoded into a spreadsheet before being



processed using the open-source statistical software JASP. Weighted means was applied to determine the level of challenges related to teaching, resources, and learner mindsets.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers were committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards throughout the study. They obtained permission from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent before starting any research activities. Informed consent was essential, with separate consent forms for adult participants and a two-part process for minors involving parental consent and learner assent. All participants learned about their right to join voluntarily and to withdraw at any time. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the questionnaires did not collect any personally identifiable information. All data were analyzed and reported in aggregate form to protect the privacy of each respondent.

III. Results and Discussions

Teachers' Perception on Challenges in Teaching

The results in Table 1 indicate that teachers perceived teaching-related challenges to be minimal, as reflected in the overall mean of 1.36, interpreted as Not a Challenge. All indicators fall within the same descriptive level, suggesting consistent confidence across various aspects of instruction. The areas rated as slightly more challenging though still low were being fully equipped for high-quality instruction and managing class size (both M = 1.21). The low standard deviations (0.630–0.693) further suggest strong agreement among respondents regarding their generally positive teaching experiences.

Table 1

Teacher-Respondents' Perceptions on the Challenges in ALS Delivery

Challenges	Mean	SD
1. The ALS curriculum is structured in a way that effectively supports and enhances my lesson delivery.	1.54	0.693
2. I am confident and well-equipped to provide high-quality instruction that effectively engages and supports my learners.	1.21	0.630
3. I am able to manage my class size effectively to ensure that each learner receives the attention they need.	1.21	0.630
4. I can provide timely and personalized feedback that effectively supports the learning progress of each learner.	1.32	0.670
5. I am proficient in using technology and online methods to enhance my teaching and engage learners effectively.	1.54	0.693
Overall Mean	1.36	0.663

Legend: 1.00-1.75 =Not a Challenge (NC), 1.76-2.50= Sometimes Challenge (SC), 2.51-3.25= Often a Challenge (OC), 3.26-4.00=Always a Challenge (AC)

These findings highlight a high level of teacher self-efficacy and satisfaction with key aspects of instructional delivery. This is notable when contrasted with existing literature, such



as Denajeba and Ducot (2025), which frequently identifies instructional support as a major concern in many ALS contexts. Similarly, challenges related to technology integration and diverse classroom management, emphasized by Magatines and Flores (2024), did not emerge as significant issues in this division. This positive perception aligns with Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, which underscores the importance of perceived competence in shaping performance. Overall, the teachers’ responses suggest a well-supported and confident teaching workforce.

Teachers’ Perception on Challenges in Resources

Table 2 shows that resource-related challenges are assessed at a moderate level, with an overall mean of 1.89, interpreted as Sometimes a Challenge. The most pressing concerns involve internet connectivity and funding availability, both receiving the highest mean ratings ($M = 2.18$). The uniformity of responses is reinforced by the low standard deviation for these items ($SD = 0.476$). Conversely, the availability of learning modules was rated lowest ($M = 1.39$), suggesting that teachers generally do not perceive shortages in instructional materials as a problem.

Table 2
Teachers’ Perception on Challenges in ALS Resources

Challenges	Mean	SD
1. I have sufficient learning modules and materials of high quality to effectively support each learner in my class.	1.39	0.685
2. I have access to updated and well-maintained materials that effectively support my teaching and learner engagement.	1.79	0.630
3. I have a reliable internet connection that allows me to effectively access and utilize supplementary digital resources to enhance my teaching.	2.18	0.476
4. I have a dedicated classroom space that effectively supports the management and security of our learning resources.	1.93	0.539
5. I have adequate funding to access the necessary resources that support high-quality instruction and effective learner outcomes.	2.18	0.476
Overall Mean	1.89	0.561

Legend: 1.00-1.75 =Not a Challenge (NC), 1.76-2.50= Sometimes Challenge (SC), 2.51-3.25= Often a Challenge (OC), 3.26-4.00=Always a Challenge (AC)

The finding that module sufficiency is not a challenge stands out as a significant local achievement, diverging from national-level reports by Pe Dangle and Sumaoang (2020) and Alfanta and Abarquez (2023), which highlight widespread shortages of ALS learning materials. Despite this positive outcome, teachers still experience difficulties with internet access and funding issues widely documented in international analyses (Barron Rodriguez et al., 2020). This suggests that while some local conditions have improved, broader systemic constraints remain influential.



Teachers’ Perception of Challenges in Learner Mindsets

Regarding learner-related factors in Table 3, teachers generally perceive challenges in learner mindsets as low, with an overall mean of 1.68, interpreted as Not a Challenge. However, lack of family support (M = 2.07) and the absence of adequate guidance and counseling services (M = 1.96) were identified as the most notable concerns. The relatively low standard deviation for family support (SD = 0.604) indicates strong consensus among teachers regarding its impact on learner motivation and success.

Table 3
Teachers’ Perception on Challenges in ALS Resources

Challenges	Mean	SD
1. I am able to consistently engage learners during lessons, fostering a positive and productive learning environment.	1.39	0.685
2. I observe that my learners receive strong family support, which contributes positively to their motivation and success.	2.07	0.604
3. I have access to effective guidance and counseling services that support learners in overcoming personal challenges and maintaining progress.	1.96	0.576
4. I am able to provide personalized feedback that effectively enhances my learners' confidence and academic performance.	1.57	0.690
5. I am able to build strong, positive relationships with each learner, fostering a supportive and effective learning environment.	1.43	0.690
Overall Mean	1.68	0.649

Legend: 1.00-1.75 =Not a Challenge (NC), 1.76-2.50= Sometimes Challenge (SC), 2.51-3.25= Often a Challenge (OC), 3.26-4.00=Always a Challenge (AC)

These findings suggest that teachers feel confident in engaging learners during instruction and maintaining a productive learning environment. However, the higher challenge ratings related to family involvement reflect external factors beyond teachers’ direct control an issue echoed in the work of Ucab and Lozano (2023). This pattern aligns with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory, which emphasizes the powerful influence of the learner’s immediate environment, particularly the family, on educational outcomes. The results therefore underscore the need for stronger community and family engagement initiatives to complement classroom efforts.

Learners’ Perception on Challenges in ALS

Table 4 indicates that learners view teaching quality as Not a Challenge (Overall Mean = 1.57). The consistently low mean scores across all five indicators, paired with small standard deviations (0.67–0.82), show strong agreement that instruction is clear, supportive, and effective. These results align closely with teachers’ earlier reports of high self-efficacy (Overall M = 1.36), highlighting a clear link between teacher confidence and learner experience, and reinforcing the strength of instructional delivery within the division.



Notably, learners’ positive perceptions differ from concerns raised in existing research. For example, Salen and Porcincula (2025) reported substantial instructional competency issues among ALS teachers particularly in addressing learner diversity and conducting assessments while Magatines and Flores (2024) pointed to difficulties with technology integration and classroom management.

In contrast, the present findings suggest that teachers in the El Salvador City Division have effectively overcome these commonly cited challenges. This may be due to their strong academic qualifications and active participation in professional development. The low standard deviations further indicate that the high teaching quality is consistent across ALS learning centers, rather than limited to a few exceptional sites.

Table 4

Learner-Respondents' Perceptions on the Challenges in ALS Delivery

Challenges	Mean	SD
1. The lessons in my ALS class are designed to be easy to understand and guide me well.	1.65	0.76
2. My ALS teacher is very skilled at explaining the lessons and is always ready to help me understand.	1.41	0.71
3. I always receive enough personal help and attention from my teacher.	1.75	0.67
4. My teacher always gives feedback that helps me improve in my work.	1.56	0.82
5. My teacher uses a variety of teaching methods to ensure that everyone in the class understands the lesson.	1.48	0.75
Overall Mean	1.57	0.74

Legend: 1.00-1.75 =Not a Challenge (NC), 1.76-2.50= Sometimes Challenge (SC), 2.51-3.25= Often a Challenge (OC), 3.26-4.00=Always a Challenge (AC)

Learners’ Perception on Challenges in Resources

As presented in Table 2, learners generally found resources to be Not a Challenge (Overall Mean = 1.61). However, the data clearly pinpoints that difficulty accessing the internet (M=1.86) was the highest-rated challenge, interpreted as Sometimes a Challenge. All other indicators related to physical resources including personal modules, module condition, relevance of topics, and additional materials were rated as "Not a Challenge."

The finding that internet access is the primary resource challenge for learners aligns perfectly with the teachers' data (M=2.18). This dual-perspective confirmation provides strong evidence that the digital divide is the most significant and shared resource-related barrier in the division, creating a consistent narrative about connectivity as the primary resource-related challenge (Agum et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the sufficiency of physical learning materials represents a notable programmatic strength.



Table 5
 Learner-Respondents' Perceptions on the Challenges in ALS Resources

Challenges	Mean	SD
1. I always receive my own module to use during class and at home, which helps me a lot in my studies.	1.54	0.79
2. The modules we use are in good condition, which makes them easy to read and use in our studies.	1.45	0.70
3. The topics in our modules are interesting and connected to my life, which makes my learning more meaningful.	1.68	0.65
4. It is easy for me to access the internet so that I can complete my schoolwork.	1.86	0.98
5. Our school provides additional materials and equipment that help us in our studies, such as books and others.	1.54	0.77
Overall Mean	1.61	0.78

Legend: 1.00-1.75 =Not a Challenge (NC), 1.76-2.50= Sometimes Challenge (SC), 2.51-3.25= Often a Challenge (OC), 3.26-4.00=Always a Challenge (AC)

Learners' Perception of Challenges in their Mindsets

The data in Table 2 shows that learners do not see their mindset as a major issue (Overall Mean = 1.56). The very low mean scores for concerns about completing the program (M=1.34) and feelings of confidence (M=1.37) stand out. The highest-rated item, feeling uneasy about discussing personal problems with a teacher (M=1.84), was viewed as "Sometimes a Challenge."

Table 6
 Learners' Perception of Challenges in their Mindsets

Challenges	Mean	SD
1. I always feel motivated and positive about learning in my ALS class, which enhances my enthusiasm for learning.)	1.51	0.759
2. I am always encouraged by my family and friends to finish my studies in the ALS program, which gives me more strength to continue.	1.75	0.843
3. If I have a personal problem, I feel comfortable talking to my ALS teacher, which gives me an opportunity to resolve it.	1.84	0.907
4. Personal feedback from my teacher enhances my self-confidence, which makes me more ready to face challenges.	1.37	0.692
5. I am determined to finish the ALS program and pass the A&E test, so that I can achieve my dreams in life.	1.34	0.758
Overall Mean	1.56	0.791

Legend: 1.00-1.75 =Not a Challenge (NC), 1.76-2.50= Sometimes Challenge (SC), 2.51-3.25= Often a Challenge (OC), 3.26-4.00=Always a Challenge (AC)



The learners' low challenge scores in this area clearly show their "grit" and strong internal motivation, a concept backed by the study from Magatines & Flores (2024). The fact that they do not worry about finishing the program ($M=1.34$) indicates their determination and persistence. The one area of relative challenge is discomfort in seeking personal guidance from a teacher ($M=1.84$). This matches the teachers' view that formal guidance services are lacking, highlighting a shared area for potential improvement in the program's support mechanisms.

This study's dual-perspective approach shows significant agreement between teachers and learners in the Division of El Salvador City. Overall, both groups rated most items as "Not a Challenge," which indicates a high level of satisfaction with the local ALS program. A key finding is the strong agreement on Teaching: teachers feel their teaching is "Not a Challenge" (Overall $M=1.36$), and learners also report this as "Not a Challenge" (Overall $M=1.57$). Likewise, both groups agree that physical resources like modules are sufficient, marking a significant local success.

However, a clear shared challenge emerged: both teachers ($M=2.18$) and learners ($M=1.86$) rated internet access as "Sometimes a Challenge," highlighting the ongoing digital divide that affects the entire ALS community.

Perhaps the most revealing finding comes from Learner Mindsets. While learners reported very high internal motivation (rating it as "Not a Challenge," Overall $M=1.56$), teachers noted a lack of family support as "Sometimes a Challenge" ($M=2.07$). Learners did not share this view as strongly ($M=1.75$, Not a Challenge). This slight difference suggests teachers may be more aware of the external obstacles learners face than the learners themselves realize, possibly reflecting different perspectives on what constitutes adequate support.

All in all, these data shows that the ALS program in this division is performing well in its core functions. The primary challenges identified are not related to the classroom but are external and systemic: the digital divide and the need for stronger community and family support structures. These findings suggest that future interventions should focus on improving connectivity and building support networks beyond the immediate teaching-learning environment.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

Teachers in the division exhibit high self-efficacy and confidence in their instructional abilities, viewing teaching quality and available resources as manageable; however, they consider external factors such as limited internet connectivity, insufficient funding, and inadequate family and guidance support as moderate challenges requiring attention beyond the classroom.

Learners perceive teaching quality and physical resources as adequate, aligning with teachers' views, but they also identify internet connectivity as a significant barrier, highlighting the need for improved digital access and enhanced community and family support to optimize their learning experience.

Based on the conclusions above, the following recommendations are suggested to address the challenges and build on the program's strengths:



1. For the DepEd Division Office of El Salvador City:

Strengthen Digital Infrastructure: To tackle the most pressing shared challenge, it is highly recommended that the Division Office start a project to set up "ALS Wi-Fi Hubs" at major Community Learning Centers (CLCs). This could be done through a formal partnership with the Local Government Unit (LGU) of El Salvador City to use a portion of the Special Education Fund (SEF) for providing free internet access for ALS activities.

Develop a Family and Community Engagement Program: To fill the gap in external support systems, it is recommended that the Division ALS Office create and execute a "Family and Community Partnership Program." One way to do this is by holding quarterly, informal orientations for the parents, guardians, and families of ALS learners. This program should aim to help them understand the ALS program and the important role they play in motivating learners, thereby strengthening their support network.

2. For ALS Coordinators and Teachers:

Leverage High Learner Motivation: Given the learners' strong internal determination, teachers should continue to encourage this by including more goal-oriented and project-based learning activities that help learners see the practical applications of their education.

Focus Professional Development on Digital Pedagogy: While teachers reported high confidence, their lowest scores were in technology. Future professional development sessions should concentrate less on basic tech skills and more on strategies for effectively using digital tools in a low-bandwidth environment.

3. For Future Researchers:

Conduct a Qualitative Follow-Up Study: A qualitative study using interviews and focus group discussions is recommended to explore the reasons behind the positive findings in this division. Understanding why this division is succeeding can provide a model for other areas.

Expand the Scope: A similar quantitative study could be done in other, more rural divisions in the region to compare findings and determine if the challenges are consistent.

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