

# Challenges and Responses in the Alternative Learning System: Addressing Management Issues in the Non-Formal Education

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## ABSTRACT

Persistent management deficiencies continue to undermine the effective implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS), as issues such as inadequate resources, weak administrative coordination, and inefficient program management hinder the consistent delivery of non-formal education services. These challenges affect the capacity of ALS implementers to provide accessible and quality learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adult learners. This study examined the management challenges encountered in ALS implementation and the responses developed by administrators and implementers to sustain program delivery. Specifically, it examined the structural and administrative barriers that affect ALS operations and the coping mechanisms employed to maintain program continuity despite limited institutional support. This study utilized a qualitative single-case study design anchored in Systems Theory, which views ALS as an interconnected system where leadership, resources, community participation, and administrative processes interact to influence program outcomes. Conducted in Davao City using purposive sampling, the participants included one ALS coordinator, several ALS teachers, and one confirmer who was either an ALS graduate or a parent of an ALS completer. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and experiences among the participants. Findings revealed several persistent challenges, including the lack of appropriate learning spaces, delays in the provision of instructional materials, excessive administrative workload, and coordination gaps among stakeholders. Despite these constraints, ALS implementers demonstrated resilience by adopting flexible scheduling, strengthening community collaboration, and utilizing improvised teaching strategies to sustain learning delivery. The study concludes that stronger institutional support, improved resource allocation, and responsive policy reforms are necessary to enhance ALS management and ensure the sustainability of non-formal education programs.

**Keyword:** Alternative Learning System, System Theory, Qualitative Single-Case Design, Management Issues in the non-formal education, management deficiencies, administrative coordination

## INTRODUCTION

### The Problem and Its Scope

The management of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) continues to face persistent administrative disorganization and leadership inconsistency across various implementation levels (Delos Reyes, 2022). Program administration of ALS is marked by unclear operational structures and overlapping responsibilities among personnel (Ramos & Dela Cruz, 2021). Leadership roles within ALS are often undefined, leading to confusion in administrative coordination (Villanueva, 2023). Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are poorly executed due to insufficient managerial direction (Santos, 2024). Administrative inefficiency has therefore remained a constant challenge within the ALS framework (Lopez, 2022).

Similar management and leadership problems are present in alternative and non-formal education systems in countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Kenya, India, and Thailand (Rahman & Yusuf, 2022). In Indonesia, alternative education programs experience poor coordination between national and local offices (Putra, 2023). In Bangladesh, non-formal education management faces limited leadership training and fragmented policy

direction among community learning centers (Ahmed, 2021). In Kenya, adult and alternative learning programs encounter insufficient administrative monitoring and irregular budget allocation at the district level (Omondi, 2024). In India, non-formal education initiatives deal with overlapping governance roles and unclear accountability structures (Rao, 2023). In Thailand, lifelong learning centers experience bureaucratic inefficiency and inconsistent leadership transitions (Chanthra, 2025). Administrative weakness and leadership fragmentation continue to characterize the management of alternative learning programs across these countries (Rodriguez, 2025).

In the Philippine context, the ALS program continues to be affected by structural inefficiencies and limited administrative supervision (Garcia & Mendoza, 2023). Program management in several regions shows inconsistencies in planning and implementation due to weak coordination mechanisms (Padua, 2024). Documentation and reporting systems in ALS are often incomplete or delayed, reflecting organizational inadequacy (Lopez, 2022). Leadership transitions within local divisions also disrupt continuity in administrative operations (Delos Reyes, 2022). The persistence of managerial disorganization continues to hinder the consistency of ALS operations across the country (Santiago, 2021).

At the local level, particularly in Davao City, administrative challenges are evident in the management of ALS centers (Cabrera, 2025). Local education offices encounter recurring problems in scheduling, coordination, and documentation of ALS learning sessions (Lim & Torres, 2023). Leadership supervision within city-based ALS units remains limited due to inconsistent administrative communication (Castro, 2024). Logistical and management planning at the district level often lacks standardization, resulting in operational irregularities (Vergara, 2025).

While ALS is increasingly recognized as key to inclusive education in the Philippines, research rarely addresses its administrative strategies. Most studies emphasize teaching and learner engagement, overlooking areas like planning, resource management, and stakeholder coordination (Arenal & Dasig, 2025; Magatines & Flores, 2024). Overlooking administrative practices in ALS risks fragmented delivery, weak monitoring, and poor stakeholder coordination. Without strong frameworks, programs may fail marginalized learners, leading to low retention, limited scalability, and misaligned policies (Padua, 2025). Addressing this gap through empirical research is essential to developing context-sensitive, scalable models that ensure the long-term sustainability and equity of ALS initiatives.

### **Significance of the study**

The findings and results of this study are invaluable for the Department of Education and other educational institutions implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS), as they provide insights into improving administrative management and leadership practices. ALS administrators and coordinators may use this research to strengthen their organizational structures, enhance coordination mechanisms, and promote consistency in program implementation. Teachers and learning facilitators may benefit by understanding leadership processes that support effective supervision and communication within learning centers. Policymakers may also find this study useful in developing responsive management frameworks and capacity-building programs for ALS implementers. Furthermore, this study contributes to addressing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, by highlighting the importance of strong leadership and effective management in sustaining non-formal education. It also supports SDG 10, which focuses on reducing inequalities, and SDG 17, which emphasizes partnerships for achieving educational reform and innovation.

### **Research Objectives**

This study aims to examine how the Alternative Learning System (ALS) is managed and administered across different levels of implementation in the Philippines. Recognizing the continuing issues of administrative disorganization, leadership inconsistency, and weak coordination, it seeks to understand the internal management processes and leadership dynamics shaping the operation of ALS programs. Specifically, it aims:

1. What structural and administrative challenges persist in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS)?
2. What coping strategies have ALS administrators and implementers adapted to manage leadership fragmentation and operational disorganization?
3. What insights have ALS administrators and implementers drawn from the coping mechanisms at the local level to inform scalable, context-sensitive reforms in ALS implementation?

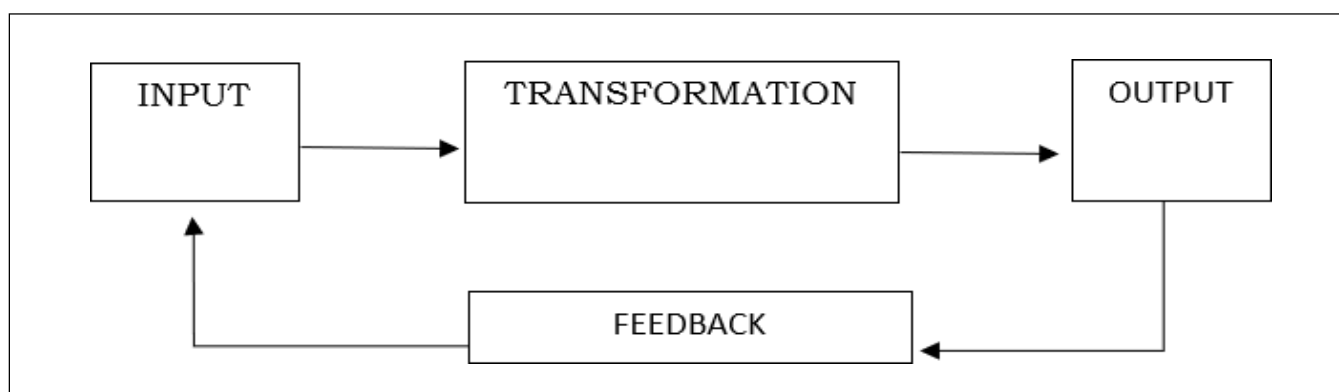
### Assumptions

This study focuses on the strategic management practices within the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, examining how administrative innovations shape program implementation at the local level. It is assumed that ALS administrators and program managers possess a comprehensive understanding of the policies, resources, and leadership structures that influence their strategic decisions. It is also assumed that these administrative inputs are systematically transformed into operational practices through planning, coordination, and supervision, resulting in innovative approaches that respond to local challenges and improve program delivery.

With regard to the participants, it is assumed that ALS administrators are willing and able to articulate their experiences and insights regarding the transformation of administrative inputs into strategic actions. It is further assumed that they actively engage with feedback mechanisms—such as monitoring reports and learner performance data—to refine their planning and decision-making processes. Finally, it is assumed that the findings from this study will reflect a genuine commitment among ALS leaders to enhance learner retention, expand program reach, and strengthen stakeholder engagement, thereby contributing to broader conversations on educational reform and inclusive learning systems.

### Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on Systems Theory, developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), provides a framework that views organizations, processes, and phenomena as interconnected systems in which each component interacts with others to maintain balance and achieve goals. It emphasizes *holism*, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and *interdependence*, where changes in one part affect the entire system. As open systems, organizations exchange *inputs and outputs* with their environment, while *feedback mechanisms* allow them to adapt and sustain equilibrium (von Bertalanffy, 1968). In the context of the Alternative Learning System (ALS), Systems Theory explains how policy, leadership, resources, and monitoring function cohesively; otherwise, structural inefficiencies and leadership gaps disrupt the balance of non-formal learning programs



**Figure 1.0: The Conceptual Paradigm**

The conceptual paradigm illustrates the dynamic and cyclical nature of administrative processes within the Alternative Learning System (ALS), guided by Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s General Systems Theory (1968). It presents the organization as a system operating within a broader environment, where inputs—such as strategic planning, leadership roles, and resource allocation—are processed through coordinated transformation

mechanisms including supervision, documentation, and decision-making. These processes yield outputs such as improved program delivery, administrative innovations, and learner outcomes. Crucially, the model integrates a feedback loop that channels insights and evaluations from the output stage back into the input and transformation processes, enabling continuous refinement and systemic responsiveness. This feedback integration ensures equilibrium and coherence across ALS operations, reinforcing the theory's emphasis on interdependence, adaptability, and organizational learning (Bush, 2003). The paradigm thus serves as a visual and conceptual guide for understanding how strategic management practices shape the effectiveness and sustainability of ALS implementation.

## **METHOD**

In this chapter, the research design, locale of the study, sample and sampling technique, research instruments, Data gathering procedure, and ethical considerations are presented.

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative single-case study design to explore strategic management innovations within the Alternative Learning System (ALS). It focuses on ALS administrative practices such as planning, resource allocation, and stakeholder coordination (Albert et al., 2024; Casingal, 2025). Anchored on Systems Theory, developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), the research views ALS as an interconnected system in which policy, leadership, resources, and monitoring interact to maintain balance and achieve program goals. Systems Theory emphasizes holism, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and interdependence, where changes in one component affect the entire system. As an open system, ALS exchanges inputs and outputs with its environment, while feedback mechanisms enable adaptation and sustain equilibrium. Within this framework, the case study design allows for an in-depth examination of how strategic management innovations either strengthen cohesion or expose structural inefficiencies and leadership gaps that disrupt the balance of non-formal learning programs.

### **Locale of the Study**

Davao City is the chosen locale for this study. It is a major urban center in Mindanao with a diverse educational landscape. The city hosts a wide network of ALS implementers and teachers. Its geographic accessibility and urban infrastructure support program delivery. These conditions make Davao City a strategic site for examining ALS management and leadership practices.

### **Sample and Sampling**

This study will employ purposive sampling to select participants in Davao City who can provide rich and relevant insights into the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS). The sample will include one ALS Coordinator with at least three years of experience in managing the ALS program and/or ALS Teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience in ALS. To validate and enrich the findings, one confirmer will also be included. A confirmer is defined as either an ALS graduate or a parent whose child has successfully completed the ALS program. Information obtained from the participants will be returned to them for self-verification to ensure accuracy and credibility of the data (Creswell, 2013).

### **Interview Guide Questions**

The researcher will utilize a researcher-made questionnaire specifically designed to gather qualitative insights on the administrative strategies and challenges encountered in the implementation of Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs. This instrument will be carefully constructed based on a review of relevant literature, policy documents, and previous studies on ALS governance, ensuring that the items reflect the core dimensions of program management, leadership coordination, planning mechanisms, monitoring practices, and organizational constraints. The questionnaire will include open-ended questions to allow participants—ALS implementers and teachers with at least five years of experience—to express their perspectives in detail, drawing from their professional experiences within the division. It will be validated through expert review to ensure

content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study’s objectives, and will be pilot-tested with a small group of non-participant ALS educators to refine its structure and wording. The responses collected through this instrument will serve as a primary data source for thematic analysis, enabling the researcher to identify recurring patterns, contextual nuances, and strategic gaps in ALS administration.

### Data Analysis

This study will utilize thematic analysis as the primary method for interpreting qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. Thematic analysis is a flexible and widely used approach in qualitative research that enables the identification, analysis, and reporting of recurring patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It allows the researcher to move beyond surface-level responses and uncover deeper insights into the administrative strategies and leadership challenges experienced by ALS implementers and teachers. By systematically coding and organizing the data, thematic analysis supports a rich, contextual understanding of how management practices shape the implementation of ALS programs in Davao Region.

### Ethical Consideration

This study rigorously adhered to the ethical principles set by the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) of the Graduate School of Holy Cross of Davao College, particularly throughout the process of engaging with participants, to ensure the protection of their rights and well-being. These ethical standards served as a guiding framework to guarantee that the researcher followed universally accepted principles of responsible research conduct. Participation was entirely voluntary; the researcher did not compel any individual to take part in the study. Instead, participants were encouraged to contribute, both for their potential benefit and to uphold the credibility and validity of the research. By prioritizing ethical compliance, the researcher ensured that the study was conducted with integrity, transparency, and full respect for the dignity of all respondents involved.

## RESULT

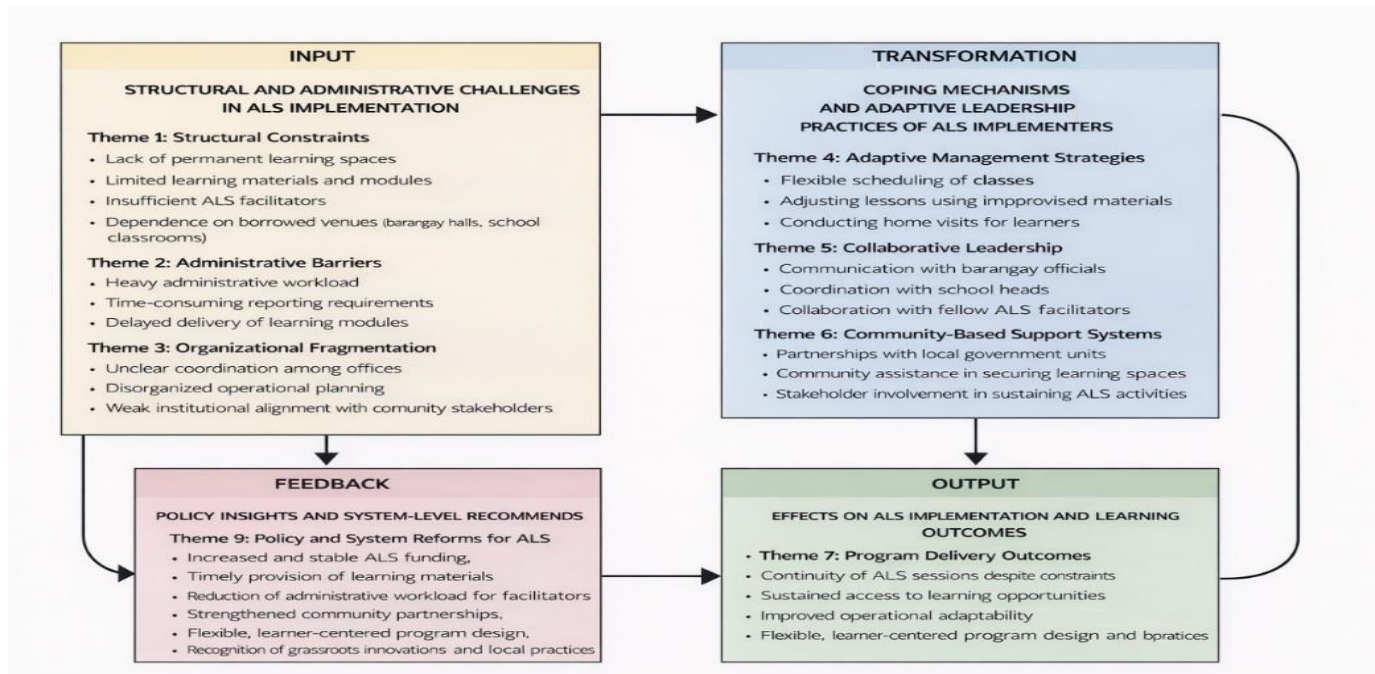


Figure 2.0 Modified paradigm

### Themes and Subthemes

In this study, I examined how ALS administrators and implementers experience, manage, and respond to structural and administrative challenges in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) within the broader context of non-formal education. The themes and subthemes that emerged from my analysis demonstrate that ALS implementation is not merely a matter of program delivery but a context-dependent and

socially constructed practice shaped by institutional structures, leadership coordination, resource availability, and community engagement. Anchored in Systems Theory, my findings show that ALS operates as an interconnected system in which structural conditions, leadership responses, and community partnerships influence the overall effectiveness of program implementation.

At the input level, I found that ALS implementation is significantly affected by structural and administrative challenges. Many ALS implementers experience limitations in terms of permanent learning spaces, availability of learning materials and modules, and the number of facilitators assigned to the program. In many cases, ALS classes rely on borrowed venues such as barangay halls or public school classrooms, which are not always consistently available. I also observed that administrative barriers, including heavy reporting requirements and time-consuming documentation, create additional workload for ALS implementers. Organizational fragmentation further complicates program implementation, as coordination among different offices and stakeholders is sometimes unclear, resulting in disorganized operational planning and limited institutional alignment.

In response to these challenges, my analysis shows that ALS administrators and implementers actively develop coping mechanisms and adaptive leadership practices, which represent the transformation stage of the system. I found that ALS implementers demonstrate strong adaptive management strategies, such as adjusting schedules, improvising learning materials when modules are delayed, and conducting home visits to ensure that learners continue their studies. Collaborative leadership also emerges as a key response, as facilitators frequently coordinate with barangay officials, school heads, and fellow ALS implementers to address operational issues. In addition, community-based support systems play a crucial role in sustaining ALS activities, as partnerships with local government units and community stakeholders help secure learning spaces and support program continuity.

At the output level, I observed that these adaptive responses influence both program delivery and learner outcomes. Despite structural and administrative limitations, ALS implementers are often able to sustain the continuity of learning sessions and maintain access to educational opportunities for out-of-school youth and adult learners. However, the challenges also affect learners in several ways. Irregular schedules caused by venue limitations or delayed materials may lead to attendance issues, inconsistent participation, and decreased motivation, which can ultimately influence completion rates and learning outcomes.

Finally, the feedback component of the framework highlights the policy insights and system-level recommendations that emerge from the experiences of ALS implementers at the grassroots level. Based on these insights, I found that improving ALS implementation requires more stable funding, timely provision of learning materials, reduced administrative workload for facilitators, and stronger collaboration with community stakeholders. The findings also suggest that ALS programs thrive when they remain flexible, learner-centered, and responsive to local realities, rather than strictly relying on centralized planning. These grassroots experiences provide valuable lessons for national and regional policymakers in designing reforms that strengthen the sustainability and effectiveness of ALS programs.

Overall, my findings illustrate that addressing management issues in non-formal education requires understanding the dynamic interaction between challenges, responses, outcomes, and policy improvements. Through this systems-oriented perspective, I demonstrate that ALS implementation is shaped not only by institutional structures but also by the adaptive practices and resilience of ALS implementers, who continuously adjust their strategies to meet the diverse needs of their learners and communities.

### **Viewpoint and Standpoint of the Study**

This study is anchored in Systems Theory, developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), which posits that organizations operate as interconnected systems composed of multiple components that interact with one another to achieve common goals. From this perspective, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) is viewed as a dynamic educational system in which structural conditions, administrative processes, leadership practices, and community partnerships interact to influence program implementation and learning outcomes. Systems Theory emphasizes that changes or disruptions in one component of the system inevitably affect other parts of the system. Thus, the structural and administrative challenges encountered in ALS implementation—such as limited resources,

fragmented leadership coordination, and administrative workload—should not be viewed in isolation but rather as elements within a broader system that shapes the functioning of non-formal education.

From this viewpoint, the challenges experienced by ALS implementers represent input conditions within the system, while the coping mechanisms and adaptive leadership practices demonstrated by administrators and facilitators function as transformational processes that enable the system to continue operating despite constraints. Systems Theory suggests that effective educational systems maintain equilibrium through adaptive responses and continuous feedback. In the context of ALS, these adaptive responses include flexible scheduling, collaboration with community stakeholders, improvisation of learning materials, and strategic coordination with local institutions to secure learning spaces. These practices illustrate how ALS implementers actively respond to systemic limitations in order to sustain the delivery of educational services to out-of-school youth and adult learners.

The framework also highlights how these systemic interactions produce outputs in the form of program continuity, learner participation, and operational adaptability. However, the presence of structural and administrative constraints may also influence learner engagement, attendance patterns, and completion outcomes. Systems Theory underscores that the effectiveness of program outcomes depends on how well the system manages the relationships between its components. Therefore, strengthening ALS implementation requires improving the alignment among resources, leadership coordination, administrative systems, and community partnerships.

From the standpoint of this research, the experiences of ALS administrators and implementers demonstrate that the management of non-formal education programs is not purely a procedural or administrative task but a dynamic and context-driven process shaped by interactions between institutional structures and human agency. ALS implementers operate within complex environments where they must continuously adapt to resource limitations, organizational fragmentation, and changing community needs. Their coping strategies and collaborative practices reveal how the ALS system is sustained through local innovation, flexibility, and strong community engagement.

By examining these experiences, this study highlights that ALS implementation should be understood as an evolving system that relies on both institutional support and grassroots adaptability. The findings emphasize the importance of strengthening systemic support mechanisms—such as stable funding, timely provision of learning materials, reduced administrative burdens, and stronger partnerships with local stakeholders—to enhance the overall effectiveness of ALS programs. Ultimately, this study argues that addressing management issues in non-formal education requires recognizing ALS as a living educational system, where policy structures, leadership practices, and community participation interact to sustain learning opportunities for marginalized and out-of-school populations.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the structural, administrative, and organizational dynamics shaping ALS implementation, as well as the adaptive responses of implementers and their implications for policy reform. Rather than treating challenges as isolated issues, the findings position ALS as a dynamic system in which constraints, responses, and feedback loops interact to influence program outcomes.

### **Structural and Administrative Constraints: Between Deficit Narratives and Functional Effectiveness**

The findings confirm that resource limitations—particularly in infrastructure, learning materials, and personnel—remain persistent barriers in ALS implementation. This is consistent with studies emphasizing shortages in facilities and instructional resources as key constraints in non-formal education systems (Orbeta et al., 2021; UNICEF Philippines, 2022; Santiago & Magno, 2023).

However, a critical comparison of recent literature reveals a tension between deficit-oriented and performance-oriented perspectives. On one hand, policy and qualitative studies consistently frame ALS as under-resourced and structurally constrained, highlighting issues such as delayed materials, unstable learning environments, and

inequitable access (UNICEF Philippines, 2022; Cabardo, 2023). On the other hand, emerging empirical studies suggest that ALS can still demonstrate moderate to high levels of effectiveness, particularly in developing functional literacy and 21st-century skills when instructional support systems are present (Ramos & Baldespiñosa, 2022; Padua, 2024).

This divergence indicates that resource scarcity does not automatically lead to poor outcomes. Instead, effectiveness depends on how local systems respond to constraints. The present findings support this view, suggesting a conditional effectiveness model, where outcomes are shaped by the interaction between structural limitations and adaptive practices.

### **Administrative Burden and Organizational Fragmentation: Control vs. Flexibility**

The study also highlights administrative workload and fragmented coordination as key barriers. These findings align with research showing that bureaucratic demands in decentralized education systems can reduce instructional efficiency and create operational bottlenecks (Kim & Male, 2020; Tayag, 2024).

However, the literature presents contrasting interpretations of administrative systems. Some scholars argue that accountability mechanisms—such as monitoring and reporting—are essential for ensuring program quality and transparency (UNESCO, 2022; Luo, 2023). In contrast, other studies suggest that excessive administrative requirements may undermine teaching effectiveness and reduce learner engagement, particularly in alternative education contexts (Santos, 2021; Laguador, 2021).

The present findings align more closely with the latter perspective. Participants' experiences show that administrative processes, while necessary, often function as constraints rather than supports, limiting the time available for instruction. This supports the argument that standardized governance models may not fully align with the flexible and community-based nature of ALS (Rahman & Panda, 2022; Tayag, 2024).

Furthermore, organizational fragmentation—manifested through weak coordination and unclear communication—reflects broader challenges in decentralized systems. Existing studies note that misalignment among stakeholders can disrupt planning and resource allocation (UNESCO, 2022; Luo, 2023). This study extends these findings by demonstrating that fragmentation creates system-level instability, affecting scheduling, participation, and continuity of learning.

### **Adaptive Leadership and Local Agency: Beyond Structural Determinism**

Despite these constraints, the findings demonstrate that ALS implementation is not solely determined by structural conditions. Instead, implementers actively sustain the system through adaptive management strategies, collaborative leadership, and community engagement.

This supports studies highlighting flexibility and inclusivity as strengths of ALS (Orbeta et al., 2021; Cabardo, 2023). However, a more critical reading suggests that these adaptive practices function as compensatory mechanisms for systemic gaps. For example, flexible scheduling, improvised materials, and home visits reflect strong professional commitment, but they also indicate that system functionality depends heavily on individual initiative rather than institutional capacity.

This aligns with recent critiques in education literature arguing that teacher adaptability, while valuable, may mask deeper structural deficiencies and shift responsibility from institutions to frontline educators (Tayag, 2024; Padua, 2024).

At the same time, collaborative leadership and stakeholder engagement emerge as essential mechanisms for sustaining ALS. Studies emphasize that partnerships with local government units and community stakeholders enhance program implementation and resource mobilization (Rahman & Panda, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). This study refines that perspective by showing that collaboration is not merely beneficial but structurally necessary for maintaining program continuity in resource-constrained settings.

## Feedback and Policy Reform: From Centralized Models to Context-Sensitive Systems

The findings on policy insights reinforce an ongoing debate in ALS literature regarding the balance between centralized standardization and localized flexibility.

Policy frameworks often prioritize uniform implementation, standardized materials, and accountability systems (DepEd, 2022). However, both this study and recent research indicate that local adaptations—such as flexible scheduling, contextualized instruction, and community partnerships—are critical to program effectiveness (UNICEF Philippines, 2022; Ramos & Baldespiñosa, 2022).

This creates a fundamental tension:

- Centralized systems emphasize consistency and quality assurance
- Local practices emphasize responsiveness and contextual relevance

The present findings suggest that effective ALS reform requires integrating these perspectives. Rather than enforcing rigid standardization, policies should support guided flexibility, allowing local implementers to adapt while maintaining quality standards.

Furthermore, the findings support literature emphasizing that community-based and learner-centered approaches improve participation and sustainability in non-formal education (Rahman & Panda, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). However, this study adds that such approaches must be institutionalized, rather than remaining informal practices dependent on individual facilitators.

### Implications for Theory and Research

Using Systems Theory as an analytical lens, the study demonstrates that ALS operates through:

- Input constraints (structural and administrative challenges)
- Transformative processes (adaptive leadership and collaboration)
- Feedback mechanisms (policy insights from local experiences)

These components interact dynamically, showing that ALS is not a linear system but a continuously adapting structure shaped by both institutional conditions and human agency (Bertalanffy, 1968; Tayag, 2024).

To strengthen future research, three directions are recommended:

1. Expanding sample size and study sites to improve generalizability
2. Integrating richer participant quotations to deepen qualitative insight
3. Critically engaging with literature by comparing competing perspectives rather than summarizing them

Overall, this study moves beyond descriptive accounts of ALS challenges by offering a critical, systems-oriented analysis. While structural and administrative constraints persist, ALS implementation is sustained through adaptive practices and community collaboration. However, the reliance on these mechanisms also reveals systemic gaps, underscoring the need for policy reforms that balance standardization with contextual flexibility.

### Implications

The findings of this study highlight that the dynamic interaction of structural constraints, administrative demands, and local adaptive practices shapes ALS implementation. These results imply that ALS should not be understood solely through a deficit perspective but as a context-dependent system where effectiveness

depends on how implementers respond to existing limitations. Persistent gaps in infrastructure, instructional resources, and administrative workload indicate the need for stronger institutional support mechanisms.

At the same time, the study underscores the critical role of adaptive leadership, collaboration, and community engagement in sustaining ALS programs. These practices demonstrate that implementers function as key agents of system stability. However, the reliance on individual adaptability also suggests that systemic inefficiencies are often compensated for at the local level rather than addressed structurally.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the need to balance standardization and flexibility in ALS implementation. While centralized policies promote accountability and consistency, localized practices enhance responsiveness to learners' needs and community contexts. This underscores the importance of integrating grassroots insights into policy development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research should expand the scope of ALS studies by including multiple sites across diverse geographical contexts, such as rural, urban, and geographically isolated communities, in order to enhance the generalizability and contextual relevance of findings. Longitudinal research designs are also recommended to better understand how ALS implementation, leadership practices, and coping strategies evolve over time in response to policy and institutional changes. In addition, future studies should incorporate the perspectives of multiple stakeholders—including learners, school administrators, local government officials, and policymakers—to provide a more comprehensive understanding of ALS implementation and collaborative dynamics.

Policymakers and educational institutions are encouraged to strengthen capacity-building initiatives by providing continuous professional development, mentoring programs, and opportunities for collaboration among ALS implementers. There is also a need to enhance the integration of technology in ALS programs by exploring digital tools and blended learning approaches that can improve access and instructional delivery for diverse learners. Moreover, education authorities should promote context-sensitive policies that allow flexibility in implementation while maintaining quality standards, ensuring that local adaptations are recognized and supported within the broader system.

Future research may also benefit from the use of complementary theoretical frameworks, such as Organizational Resilience or Resource Dependency Theory, to deepen the analysis of how ALS programs respond to resource limitations and changing environments. Finally, greater attention should be given to the human and leadership dimensions of ALS implementation, particularly in supporting the well-being, motivation, and leadership development of facilitators, as these factors are critical to sustaining program effectiveness.

## Challenges

In reflecting on the findings of this study, I recognize that the challenges identified are not merely operational difficulties but are deeply rooted in the lived experiences of ALS administrators and/or implementers as they manage the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) within community-based learning environments. These challenges emerged from the participants' narratives and illustrate the everyday realities faced by facilitators who must sustain non-formal education programs despite structural limitations, administrative demands, and coordination issues. Understanding these challenges allows me to situate the findings within the broader educational and institutional contexts that shape the implementation of ALS programs.

One of the most significant challenges highlighted in this study is the limited availability of learning infrastructure and instructional resources. The findings reveal that ALS classes are often conducted in borrowed venues such as barangay halls or public school classrooms, which are not always consistently available. This lack of permanent learning spaces makes it difficult to maintain stable schedules and learning environments for ALS learners. In addition, limited learning materials and delays in the delivery of instructional modules create further challenges for facilitators who must adjust lesson plans or improvise teaching strategies. These

structural constraints demonstrate how the implementation of ALS is often influenced by the availability of resources and logistical support within the community. Another major challenge identified in the study is the administrative workload and documentation requirements placed on ALS implementers. Participants indicated that reporting requirements, documentation tasks, and administrative responsibilities consume a considerable amount of time, which may limit the time facilitators can devote to teaching and learner engagement. The need to comply with various reporting procedures and program documentation reflects the accountability structures governing ALS programs. However, the extensive administrative responsibilities can also contribute to increased workload and operational pressure for facilitators who already manage multiple roles within the program.

The findings also highlight the challenge of operational disruptions and logistical uncertainties in the implementation of ALS. Because many ALS programs rely on shared community spaces, learning sessions may occasionally be cancelled, relocated, or rescheduled when venues are needed for other activities. Such disruptions can affect the continuity of learning sessions and may lead to irregular learning schedules for participants. These logistical challenges emphasize the importance of stable infrastructure and effective coordination in sustaining community-based education programs.

Another important challenge emerging from the study is organizational fragmentation and coordination difficulties among stakeholders involved in ALS implementation. Participants noted that coordination among different offices, community partners, and educational institutions is sometimes unclear, which can create confusion in planning and implementing program activities. Because ALS programs depend on collaboration among schools, local government units, and community stakeholders, weak coordination mechanisms may affect the efficiency of program delivery and resource allocation. The findings also point to the challenge of maintaining learner participation and motivation in the face of structural and operational limitations. Irregular schedules caused by venue availability or delayed learning materials may influence learners' attendance and engagement in the program. Some learners may miss sessions or lose motivation when learning activities are inconsistent. This situation highlights the vulnerability of non-formal education programs, where learners often face additional socio-economic barriers that affect their ability to participate consistently in educational activities. Finally, the study reveals the challenge of balancing program management responsibilities with the goal of delivering meaningful and learner-centered education. ALS facilitators must continuously negotiate between fulfilling administrative requirements, coordinating with stakeholders, and addressing the diverse needs of their learners. This balancing act demonstrates that ALS implementation is not simply a technical process but a complex educational practice that involves leadership, adaptability, and ethical decision-making in response to community realities. Overall, the challenges identified in this study reflect structural, institutional, and contextual conditions that shape the implementation of the Alternative Learning System. These challenges are not the result of individual shortcomings but are influenced by broader systemic factors such as resource limitations, administrative demands, coordination structures, and community contexts. Recognizing these challenges is essential for informing more responsive policies, improved resource allocation, and stronger institutional support systems that can enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of ALS programs.

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## Conflict of Interest

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