

Role of ALS Implementers in the Learners' Preparedness for Formal Education

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ABSTRACT: Alternative Learning System (ALS) provides a second chance for out-of-school youth and adults to continue their education and prepare them for formal education. This study sought to ascertain the extent of the role of ALS implementers to learners' preparedness for formal education in terms of cognitive, interpersonal, and technology roles. It also aimed to evaluate the level of the ALS learners' preparedness for formal education and to find the significant relationship between the extent of the role of ALS Implementers to learners' preparedness for formal education. A descriptive correlational research design was utilized using a researcher-made questionnaire which passed the validity and reliability tests. This study was conducted to 105 ALS learners selected through purposive sampling. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were the statistical tools used in this study. Results revealed that the Community ALS implementers' (CAIs) roles for their learners in terms of Cognitive, Interpersonal and technology are highly implemented. ALS learners come out well prepared for formal education. There is a moderate positive correlation between the CAIs' role to their learners' preparedness for formal education. CAIs are able to bridge the gap between alternative and formal education. Thus, CAIs may continue to assist their learners in developing cognitive, interpersonal and technology necessary for transitioning to formal education.

KEYWORDS: ALS implementers, formal education, learners' preparedness

I. INTRODUCTION

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) is crucial in the Philippines for providing children and adults who are not enrolled in school with educational opportunities and a second chance at academic success. Giving students the information and abilities, they need to make a smooth transition into formal education, should they decide to pursue that road, is a key objective of the ALS program. A certain amount of readiness is needed for this shift, which includes social-emotional abilities, intellectual competence, and useful tactics for interacting with the official educational system. As the ones who facilitate this learning process, the ALS implementers have a role in determining how prepared students are for this important phase.

This study looked at how ALS implementers can improve students' readiness for formal schooling. It looked into the several ways that implementers help students improve their academic performance, social-emotional readiness, and practical abilities so they can thrive in a formal school environment. The study looked at the particular tactics and methods used by ALS implementers, the difficulties they have in getting students ready for formal schooling, and how their work affects students' results. By concentrating on the role of implementers, this study sought to offer important insights into how the ALS program might improve its assistance for students making the move to formal schooling, which eventually helps them succeed academically and grow personally in the long run. This study is especially pertinent at a time when given the diverse backgrounds and learning needs of ALS learners, as highlighted in the study of Delmo and Yazon (2020) which emphasized the importance of aligning implementer competencies with program requirements. Furthermore, the study contributed to the broader understanding of adult education and the crucial role of educators in facilitating successful transitions for non-traditional learners.

The Alternative Learning System, which offers out-of-school kids and adults a second opportunity to further their education, has been included into the Philippine Department of Education as a parallel program to formal basic education. However, a mismatch between the implementers' competencies and the particular requirements of the ALS program has made it difficult to implement ALS across regions (Caingcoy et al., 2021).

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines offers out-of-school children and adults who did not complete formal basic education a second opportunity at education. The A&E Test (Accreditation and Equivalency), a crucial part of ALS,

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acts as a certification mechanism that permits successful examinees to return to formal education or pursue employment. Moleño (2019) claimed that the A&E Test evaluates learners' competencies in five learning strands such as Communication Skills in English and Filipino, Critical Thinking and Scientific Literacy, Mathematical and Problem-solving abilities, Life and Career Skills, and Self-awareness and Social Awareness. His study revealed that factors such as facilitators' competencies and availability of learning modules significantly influence learners' test performance.

From a policy implementation perspective, Lingad (2019) examined how ALS A&E programs are executed in public schools in Pampanga, Philippines. The research highlighted challenges such as inadequate learning materials, insufficient training for implementers, and lack of community awareness, which hinder program effectiveness. The study proposed a strategic plan to strengthen delivery mechanisms.

The Department of Education (DepEd) officially launched the A&E Test through a series of policy issuances. DepEd Memorandum No. 204, s. 1998 laid the foundation for the A&E system, defining it as a means for nonformal learners to obtain certification equivalent to elementary or secondary education (Department of Education, 1998). More recently, DepEd Memorandum No. 974, s. 2024 emphasized the conduct of readiness tests and orientation sessions to enhance learners' preparedness and improve pass rates (Department of Education, 2024). Collectively, these studies and policy documents affirm that A&E Test's role in advancing inclusive education in the Philippines. They also underscore the need for continuous policy refinement, enhanced instructional delivery, and broader stakeholder engagement to ensure equitable access and improved learners' outcomes. In Northern Mindanao region, there is a lack of academic institutions that offer programs tailored to the needs of ALS implementers, which resulted to a need for further training to ensure that they are aligned and congruent with the services they are rendering (Caingcoy et al., 2021).

The ALS program must be implemented in harmony with the existing formal education system, and its policy must be well-executed to achieve its intended purpose. ALS program implementers must ensure that the program is effectively and efficiently accomplished and implemented insisted Delmo and Yazon (2020). The ALS implementers serve as guides, mentors, and educators who are deeply involved in designing and delivering tailored educational programs that meet the specific needs of each learner. They employ flexible teaching methods, recognizing the diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and challenges faced by learners. These implementers assess learners' progress, offer individualized support, and motivate them to continue their educational journeys.

Furthermore, ALS implementers foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment where learners are empowered to overcome obstacles and build the foundational skills required for academic success, such as literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and social-emotional skills. The role of ALS implementers, therefore, is integral not only in enhancing learners' preparedness for formal education but also in promoting lifelong learning and societal integration.

Thus, it was in this context that the researcher was enthused to conduct a study on the role of Community ALS Implementers (CAI's) in enhancing learners' preparedness to formal education at Opol West for School Year 2024-2025.

This study manifested to be perceived that discovery and purpose of the significant factors of theories, concepts, and the framework that showed a practical alternative to the existing formal education system was the aim of the Alternative Learning System (ALS). ALS serves as an alternative or replacement for traditional classroom instruction. Which is not available to everyone. ALS encompasses both informal and non-formal knowledge and skill sources. Education in the Philippines poses new challenges in the academe for the improvement of literacy rate among Filipinos in response to one of the challenges of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization on Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which is to achieve universal primary education. For a variety of reasons, many Filipinos are unable to enroll in and complete formal basic education. While some people, some towns lack schools, and others discontinue their education. Since every Filipino has a right to free basic education, the government established ALS to provide all Filipinos with the chance to access and complete basic education in a manner that best meets their requirements district situations and needs (Art 14, Sec 1, Philippine Constitution).

According to Mezirow and Taylor (2019), Transformative Learning Theory emphasizes that learners' transformation happens when they critically reflect on their past educational experiences and future possibilities, especially when transitioning from non-formal to formal education. Laurillad (2020), digital pedagogy and learning framework discussed that technology can be integrated into teaching and learning to support diverse learners. It highlights how ALS implementers can leverage digital tools to enhance learners' readiness for formal education.

Deci and Ryan (2019), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed the relevant understanding motivation and learning with regards to the learners' psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness in educational settings to create an environment where learners feel motivated and prepared to the next stage of formal education.

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II. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive correlational research design. Descriptive research aims to describes a population, situation, or phenomenon accurately and systematically. It can answer what, where, when, and how questions, but now why questions. A descriptive research design can use several different research techniques to look into one or more factors (Mc Combes, 2019). Furthermore, descriptive design as an investigation employed a thorough examination of the issue with data collection techniques, such as but not restricted to the survey questionnaire and the like.

Similarly, a descriptive research design was utilized to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. This method measures variables using quantifiable or finite data and the analysis was based on generated information from statistical tools. This method was also used in an inquiry with a larger population. Descriptive data gathering procedures comprise different types of gathering information such as, but not limited to, the use of adapted survey questionnaires

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1. What is the extent of the role of ALS implementers in terms of:

- 1.1 cognitive role;
- 1.2 interpersonal role; and
- 1.3 technology driven role?

Table 1: Overall Role of ALS Implementers to Learners' Preparedness for Formal Education

Role	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Cognitive Role	3.69	0.99	Often	Highly Implemented
Interpersonal Role	4.07	0.86	Often	Highly Implemented
Technology Role	3.58	1.04	Often	Highly Implemented
Total	3.78	0.93	Often	Highly Implemented

Note: 4.20 – 5.00 Very Highly Implemented; 3.40 – 4.19 Highly Implemented ; 2.60 – 3.39 Implemented; 1.80 – 2.59 Less Implemented; 1.00 – 1.79 Least Implemented

Table 1 shows the overall extent of the role of ALS implementers to learners' preparedness for formal education. It reveals that it has an overall Mean of 3.78 with SD = 0.93, described as Often and interpreted as Highly Implemented. This means that implementers are actively engaging in various roles in cognitive, interpersonal, and technological that collectively contribute to learners' readiness to transition into the formal education system. ALS implementers play a significant and multifaceted role in ensuring learners are well-prepared for formal education. This implies that there is strong support for the effectiveness of ALS programs in addressing diverse learner needs. According to Arcios (2022) as well as Pamon and Oco (2022), utilizing improved instructional materials for a diverse group of students is essential to meeting the standards when stepping to another level.

Moreover, *Interpersonal Role*, has the highest Mean of 4.07 with SD = 0.86, described as Often and interpreted as Highly Implemented. This indicates that learners are good communicators, appreciate relationships, and are perceptive of the dynamics and needs of other learners in the classroom. The learners show strong skills in interacting and working with others compared to other roles or areas being measured. The data imply that they prefer group activities over individual tasks. According to Larkin (2020), effective communication, the ability to collaborate, and the capability to work in teams are skills that are increasingly valued in formal educational settings.

On the other hand, *Technology Role*, got the lowest Mean of 3.58 with SD = 1.04, described as Often and interpreted as Implemented. This indicates that they have a harder time to adjust to tech-based learning settings. They require more assistance or training in digital literacy, particularly if the learning environment is highly tech-dependent. This implies that their access to technology is limited. Effective technology integration may be hampered by things like a lack of resources, assistance, or training. The ability to engage with technology effectively allows these learners to participate in classroom discussions, complete assignments with greater ease, and explore supplementary learning resources, ultimately leading to better academic outcomes (Araneta & Soriano, 2021).

Problem 2. What is the level of ALS learners' preparedness for formal education?

Table 2 shows the level of ALS learners' preparedness for formal education. It reveals that it has an overall Mean of 4.03 with SD = 0.87, described as Agree and interpreted as Well Prepared. This means that the learners have developed sufficient

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academic, social, and technological competencies through the ALS program, equipping them to successfully transition into the formal education system. This implies that the program effectively meets its objective on transitioning to formal education.

This result validates the relevance and impact of ALS sessions in developing learners' readiness for formal schooling. It also emphasizes the need for sustained program support, including continuous training for implementers and resource provision, to maintain and enhance learner preparedness across all regions. According to Ramos and Gonzales (2020), community support is essential to fostering a learning environment and guaranteeing that ALS students have access to resources including educational materials, facilities, and financial aid. Working together, community members—including educators and local leaders—improve the educational process by establishing a network of support that fosters learning and active engagement.

Moreover, the indicator 14, *Through the CAIs I am prepared to collaborate with my classmates and teachers using digital tools (e.g., Google Docs, Zoom)*, has the highest Mean of 4.38 with SD = 0.87, described as Strongly Agree and interpreted as Very Well Prepared. This suggests that in addition to making up intellectually, ALS students are also gaining the skills necessary to compete and connect in the modern digital environment. This indicates that individuals possess the abilities and frame of mind necessary to collaborate digitally, which is crucial in learning environments. Strong technological abilities enable ALS students to interact with digital resources that are frequently used in formal education, including learning management systems (LMS), online research, and digital textbooks (Salazar & Fajardo, 2020).

Table 2: Learners' Preparedness for Formal Education

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
<i>Through the CAIs I am prepared...</i>	4.25	0.84	Strongly Agree	Very Well Prepared
1. to follow classroom rules and schedules.				
2. to transition from ALS for formal education.	4.07	0.83	Agree	Well Prepared
3. to read and write in a formal education system.	3.93	0.83	Agree	Well Prepared
4. to handle challenges and difficulties in learning.	4.01	0.82	Agree	Well Prepared
5. to balance my schoolwork with other life responsibilities.	3.84	0.79	Agree	Well Prepared
6. to embrace changes when I transition to formal education.	4.06	0.91	Agree	Well Prepared
7. to navigate the technology and digital tools used in formal education.	3.76	0.89	Agree	Well Prepared
8. to apply what I learned in ALS to real-life situations/academic contexts.	3.95	0.90	Agree	Well Prepared
9. to handle the social interactions and peer relationships in a formal setting.	3.89	0.92	Agree	Well Prepared
10. to be confident that formal education will help me achieve my future career goals.	4.04	0.91	Agree	Well Prepared
11. to use strategies/techniques to improve my cognitive skills necessary in formal setting.	3.85	0.92	Agree	Well Prepared
12. to embrace the subject taught in formal education, such as Math, Science, and English.	4.06	0.86	Agree	Well Prepared
13. to understand and complete academic task (e.g., assignments, tests) in a formal setting.	4.13	0.84	Agree	Well Prepared
14. to collaborate with my classmates and teachers using digital tools (e.g., Google Docs, Zoom)	4.38	0.87	Strongly Agree	Very Well Prepared
15. to maintain positive and respectful relationship with my classmates and teachers in a formal setting.	4.20	0.90	Strongly Agree	Very Well Prepared
Overall	4.03	0.87	Agree	Well Prepared
Note:	1.00 – 1.79 Least Prepared; 1.80 – 2.59 Less Prepared; 2.60 – 3.39 Prepared; 3.40 – 4.19 Well Prepared 4.20 – 5.00 Very Well Prepared			

On the other hand, the indicator 7, *Through the CAIs I am prepared to navigate the technology and digital tools used in formal education*, got the lowest Mean of 3.76 with SD = 0.89, described as Agree and Well Prepared. This means learners may

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lack basic digital skills and experiencing the deeper issues of digital divide such as limited access to devices, stable internet or technical support at home. This implies the importance of integrating digital literacy as one of the core components of education to ensure that learners are equipped to thrive in modern, technology-driven environments. This means that CAIs are successful in assisting students in acquiring the interpersonal and digital skills necessary for productive teamwork. This implies that they are more equipped for blended or online learning settings, where digital communication with peers and teachers is crucial. The growing integration of technology into educational practices demands that learners are not only able to use digital tools but also understand how to leverage technology for purposes. For ALS learners, technology skills serve as a bridge, helping them transition from non-formal to formal education environments. According to Tan and Castillo (2021).

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of the role of ALS implementers to learners' preparedness for formal education?

Table 3: Test of Correlation Between the Role of ALS Implementers and Learners' Preparedness for Formal Education

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r-Value	p-Value	Description	Interpretation
Cognitive Role	ALS Preparedness for	0.613	0.000	MPC	Significant
Interpersonal Role	Formal Education	0.638	0.031	MPC	Significant
Technology Role		0.57	0.000	MPC	Significant

Note: MPC = Moderate Positive Correlation Significant Level at 0.05

Table 3 shows the analysis at the independent variable level by looking at the correlation test while holding the dependent variable constant at a time. As can be seen from the same table, cognitive, interpersonal, technology role vs learners' preparedness for formal education are significant at 0.05. In summary, taking it at the coefficient level, those roles are correlated to learners' preparedness for formal education, with a p value less than 0.05. Thus, the correlation analysis yielded that the null hypothesis test (Ho1) was rejected. With the following findings, moderate positive correlation.

The cognitive role serves as the intellectual foundation that prepares ALS learners to navigate, engage with, and succeed in formal educational environments. This indicates that learners have the ability to comprehend complex instructions and academic content, apply logical reasoning and critical thinking in problem solving, and organize information and manage task. This means that learners are capable for independent learning, self-directed study in formal education system as cited by Taha and Ahamad (2021) emphasize that cognitive skills, especially problem-solving and critical thinking, are essential for ALS learners as they help them approach new concepts with greater efficacy. They argue that enhancing these skills in ALS can improve learners' performance and their ability to transition smoothly into formal education.

In relation, interpersonal role is significant to learners' preparedness for formal education as it requires strong social interaction, collaboration and communication skill. This implies that learners are equipped with interpersonal competencies that is reliably associated with higher readiness level in the classroom settings. This means that they can cooperate with others, respect differing opinions and contribute to shared tasks and group projects.

According to Larkin (2020), effective communication, the ability to collaborate, and the capability to work in teams are skills that are increasingly valued in formal educational settings. In ALS programs, these skills are typically fostered through group activities, discussions, and collaborative projects. The development of these skills helps learners become more adaptable and socially competent, which is essential for navigating the social dynamics of formal schooling.

Henceforth, digital skills have become essential for learning in today's educational environments. This indicates that the technology role can bridge learning gaps and provide equal access to information and resources. This means that learners are equipped with the digital literacy needed to access educational tools, engage in independent learning, and communicate effectively in technology-rich learning environments. According to Tan and Castillo (2021), ALS learners who are proficient in technology are better equipped to navigate the technical demands of formal schooling, such as submitting online assignments, collaborating in virtual environments, and accessing multimedia educational resources. These skills improve learner engagement and academic performance, thereby enhancing overall preparedness for formal education.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Below are the conclusions obtained from the findings.

1. CAIs roles have effectively addressed the learners' cognitive, interpersonal and technology needs.
2. ALS learners have developed competencies necessary for their preparation for formal education.

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3. CAIs are able to bridge the gap between alternative and formal education.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings and conclusions, this study came out with recommendations to likely enhance the role of ALS implementers in the learners' preparation for formal Education.

1. CAI's are encouraged to continue to strengthen the implementation of their roles specifically their cognitive, interpersonal and technological roles.
2. ALS learners may continue to sustain their interest in their preparation to formal education.
3. CAIs may continue to assist their learners in developing knowledge necessary for transitioning to formal education.

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