

Challenges of Teachers and Learners in Alternative Learning System (ALS)

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Abstract

This study determined the challenges of the teachers and learners in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and served as a basis for developing instructional innovation in the Division of Camarines Sur for school year 2024-2025. This study assessed the socio-demographic profile of ALS teachers and learners; evaluated the challenges they encountered; assessed the significant association between the socio-demographic profile of ALS teachers and learners and the challenges they encountered; assessed the significant difference in the challenges encountered by ALS teachers and learners; and developed instructional innovation to address the challenges. A descriptive-associational-comparative research design was utilized. This study further utilized a total of 536 respondents. Total enumeration was used to consider all the ALS Teachers in the Division of Camarines Sur, while for ALS learners, purposive sampling was used. Major conclusions were: the socio-demographic profile of ALS teachers reveals a predominantly female, community-oriented workforce with diverse age groups and strong educational backgrounds. Most hold bachelor's degrees or master's units, and many are younger teachers; the socio-demographic profile of ALS learners reflects a diverse group in terms of age, gender, educational background, civil status, and income. Most learners are young adults with varying educational experiences, and their socio-economic conditions range widely; ALS teachers face multiple challenges, including managing diverse learners, limited resources, large class sizes, and balancing curriculum with individual needs; ALS learners face significant challenges in engaging with learning strands, portfolio presentations, and functional literacy assessments; the socio-demographic characteristics of ALS teachers significantly influence the challenges they encounter; the socio-demographic characteristics of ALS learners have a significant influence on the challenges they face; ALS learners experience varying challenges across functional literacy, learning strands, and portfolio assessment, with the greatest difficulty observed in the presentation of portfolio assessments.

Introduction

Education's essential role in global progress, human advancement, and social harmony is undeniable, with the Alternative Learning System (ALS) emerging as a critical component for marginalized populations. ALS provides flexible learning pathways for out-of-school youth, adults, and diverse communities, serving as a vital instrument for inclusive education and bridging the educational gap. In spite of its global recognition and the Philippines' commitment to educational equity through initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and legislative frameworks such as the ALS Act of 2020 (Republic Act

11510) and DepEd Orders, the program faces persistent challenges. These include resource scarcity, the need for continuous teacher professional development to integrate 21st-century skills, and addressing diverse learner needs.

Globally, significant challenges persist, with millions of adolescents denied education or having dropped out, underscoring the urgency of SDG 4's focus on inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning. In the Philippines, ALS has evolved significantly, with laws like Republic Act 9155 and Republic Act 10533 reinforcing its role. However, studies highlight issues such as limited learning materials, infrastructure constraints, and the critical need for ongoing teacher training. International research (Flores, 2022; Alenezia et al., 2023; Calabita et al., 2023, Miller, 2021) emphasizes the importance of teacher support, community engagement, and tailored pedagogical approaches for marginalized learners.

Within Camarines Sur, ALS teachers face compounded challenges, including resource scarcity and the need for region-specific professional development, as noted in local studies (Laquiores & Perez, 2021; Francisco, 2024, Clave, 2016, and Salcedo (2023)). Supplementary research by Ocampo (2022) indicates low functional literacy among ALS learners, influenced by socio-demographic factors. Recognizing a gap in literature that specifically addresses both teacher and learner challenges alongside instructional innovation, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding. It seeks to inform targeted support mechanisms and enhance practices, ultimately fostering a resilient learning environment. The researcher's motivation stems from a desire to develop instructional innovations that address these obstacles, paving the way for meaningful advancements in ALS. The study's objectives include describing socio-demographic profiles, evaluating challenges, analyzing associations, assessing differences, and developing an instructional innovation, all within the context of Camarines Sur. In the study including works by Nichols, (2017), Paez (2025), Uy et al. (2025), Formanes and Caliba (2024), Surwanti and Hikmah (2019), Becker's Human Capital Theory (Jarapa, 2023), Yeh & Tsai (2022), and Vygotsky's Scaffolding Theory (Nebres, 2023), collectively underscore the complex landscape of ALS and the imperative for targeted intervention.

Research Objectives

This study investigated the challenges faced by teachers and learners within the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Division of Camarines Sur, aiming to inform the development of targeted instructional innovations. The research systematically described the socio-demographic profiles of both ALS teachers and learners, examining factors such as sex, age, civil status, highest educational attainment, and monthly income. It then evaluated the specific challenges encountered by ALS teachers in program implementation, literacy mapping, and teaching proficiency, alongside those faced by ALS learners in functional literacy tests, learning strands, and portfolio assessment presentation. Furthermore, the study analyzed the significant associations between the socio-demographic profiles of both teachers and learners and the challenges they experienced, as well as assessed significant differences in these challenges among teachers and learners. Finally, the research culminated in the development of an instructional innovation designed to address the identified challenges faced by both ALS teachers and learners in the Camarines Sur.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-associational-comparative research design to examine challenges faced by ALS teachers and learners. The descriptive method detailed socio-demographic profiles and challenges,

while associational methods explored relationships between these profiles and challenges. Comparative methods assessed differences in challenges among participants. Data were collected using a validated, researcher-made questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale, ensuring clarity and reliability through expert review and a dry run.

Scale	Range of Values	Interpretation
4	3.26 - 4.00	Very Highly Challenged (VHC)
3	2.51 - 3.25	Highly Challenged (HC)
2	1.76 - 2.50	Less Challenged (LC)
1	1.00 - 1.75	Least Challenged (LstC)

Ethical standards were upheld through informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation and the right to withdraw. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained via anonymization and secure data storage. The researcher adhered to ethical guidelines and IRB standards, reinforcing study integrity, and transparently disclosed AI tool usage, validating AI-assisted content for accuracy. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequency, percentage, Weighted Mean, Chi-Square, and ANOVA, with the ADDIE Model used for validating instructional materials.

Results and Discussion

The Socio- Demographic Profile of ALS Teachers. The socio-demographic profile of ALS teachers reveals a predominantly female (63.3%) and relatively young (46.7% aged 25-34) workforce, with the majority being married (62.7%) and holding at least a bachelor's degree (47.3%), pursuing further studies. Most teachers earn a moderate monthly income (63.3% between P20,000-P29,000). The ALS teaching force is predominantly young (25-34 years old), female, and married, with strong educational attainment (bachelor's degree or higher), aligning with socio-cultural trends noted by Tan (2019). While this profile suggests commitment and potential for professional growth, moderate incomes may impact financial stability. These demographic factors influence classroom dynamics and teaching styles, with younger teachers bringing innovation and older teachers experience, as supported by Becker's Human Capital Theory (Jarapa, 2023) regarding career prospects. Age influences preparedness (Martinez & Luzano, 2023), and teacher profiles correlate with challenges, indicating demographic characteristics impact support needs (Sollano et al., 2025).

Table 1
Socio-Demographic Profile of ALS Teachers

Profile	f	%
Sex:		
Male	55	36.70
Female	95	63.30
Total:	150	100.00
Age:		
20-24	2	1.30
25-29	36	24.00

30-34	34	22.70
35-39	15	10.00
40-44	17	11.30
45-49	9	6.00
50-54	17	11.30
55-59	14	9.30
60 and above	6	4.00
Total:	150	100.00
Civil Status:		
Single	50	33.30
Married	94	62.70
Widow	5	3.30
Live-in	1	0.70
Total:	150	100.00
Highest Educational Attainment:		
Bachelor's Degree	71	47.30
Masteral Units	67	44.70
Masteral Degree	10	6.70
Doctoral Units	1	0.70
Doctoral Degree	1	0.70
Total:	150	100.00
Monthly Income:		
P 20,000-29,000	95	63.30
P 30,000-39,000	35	23.30
P 40,000-49,000	11	7.30
P 50,000 and above	9	6.00
Total:	150	100.00

Note: The table demonstrate the socio demographic profile of teachers in percentage in indicator for sex it range of (36.70) for male and (63.30) for female, as for the Age 20-24 range (1.30), 25-25 –(24.00), 30-34- (22.70), 35-39- (10.00), 40-44- (11.30), 45-49- (6.00), 50-54- (11.30), 55-59- (9.30), 60 above (4.00). As for civil status Single obtained (33.30), married (62.70), widow (3.30) and live-in (0.70). As for the highest education bachelor's degree 47.30, Masteral Units 44.70, Masteral Degree 6.70, Doctoral Units 0.70 Doctoral degree 0.70. As for Monthly income Php. 20,000-29,000 63.30, Php. 30,000-39,000 23.30, Php 40,000-49,000 7.30 Php. 50,000 and above 6.00.

levels of education.

Socio-Demographic Profile of ALS Learners. The socio-demographic profile of ALS learners (n=386) reveals a balanced gender representation (50.8% male, 49.2% female), with a concentration among young adults aged 17-20 (23.1%). The majority are either married (43.5%) or single (38.3%), with varying educational attainment, peaking at Grade VII (33.4%) and Grade VIII (21.5%).

Table 2
Socio-Demographic Profile of ALS Learners

Profile	f	%
Sex:		
Male	196	50.80
Female	190	49.20
Total:	386	100.00
Age:		
13-16	23	6.00
17-20	89	23.10
21-24	68	17.60
25-28	47	12.20
29-32	38	9.80
33-36	32	8.30
37-40	29	7.50
41-44	21	5.40
45-49	29	7.50
50 and above	10	2.60
Total:	386	100.00
Civil Status:		
Single	148	38.30
Married	168	43.50
Widow	14	3.60
Separated	1	0.30
Live-in	55	14.20
Total:	386	100.00
Highest Educational Attainment:		
Grade III	8	2.10
Grade IV	27	7.00
Grade V	20	5.20
Grade VI	82	21.20
Grade VII	129	33.40
Grade VIII	83	21.50
Grade IX	37	9.60
Total:	386	100.00
Monthly Income:		
P 1,000-3,000	170	44.00
P 4,000-6,000	135	35.00
P 7,000-9,000	69	17.90
P 10,000 and above	12	3.10
Total:	386	100.00

Most ALS learners earn between P1,000-P3,000 monthly (44.0%), indicating inclusive access for economically disadvantaged individuals. A near-equal gender distribution suggests minimal gender barriers, while varied civil status necessitates flexible teaching. Low income implies financial assistance could improve participation. Ocampo (2021) underscores inclusive outreach, Vygotsky's Scaffolding Theory (Nebres, 2023) supports tailored support, Napara and Castañeda (2021) highlight targeted interventions, Zulueta et al. (2021) emphasize the impact of civil status, Taguba (2022) provides insight on educational attainment, and Becker's Human Capital Theory (Jarapa, 2023) emphasizes education's impact on economic outcomes, with Vismano et al. (2024) providing insight on the challenges faced by this group.

Challenges Encountered by ALS Teachers. These challenges encountered by ALS teachers reveals that the highest indicator was the Implementation of ALS Program, with a rating of 3.82, categorized as Very Highly Challenged, Teaching Proficiency rated 3.72, categorized as Very Highly Challenged. In contrast, the lowest indicator was Literacy Mapping, receiving a score of 3.72, also in the range.

Table 3
Summary of the Challenges Encountered by ALS Teachers

Aspects	AWM	Int.
Implementation of ALS Program	3.82	VHC
Teaching Proficiency	3.78	VHC
Literacy Mapping	3.72	VHC
Overall Average Weighted Mean	3.77	VHC

ALS teachers face significant challenges, particularly in implementing the ALS program (3.82) and teaching proficiency (3.72). While literacy mapping received a slightly lower score (3.72), the overall average of 3.77 indicates a generally positive assessment, but significant demands persist. This highlights the need for targeted support to enhance program effectiveness and continued professional growth for teachers. Allam and Martin (2021) also found a consensus on the effectiveness of the ALS program but identified specific areas for improvement, such as literacy mapping. Similarly, Al-Subaiei (2017) emphasized the need for targeted professional development and resource allocation to enhance teacher effectiveness. Miller's Holistic Learning Theory by (Abengoza, 2017) supports the integration of various learning aspects, aligning with the challenges faced by ALS teachers in implementing the program and emphasizing the importance of well-rounded experiences.

Challenges Encountered by ALS Learners. The highest indicators reported by ALS learners are Learning Strands and Presentation of Portfolio Assessment, both achieving a score of 3.47, indicating Very Highly Challenges with these aspects. The lowest indicator was Functional Literacy Test, with a mean of 3.41, reflecting Very Highly Challenged but slightly less than the top two indicators. The overall average weighted mean across all aspects was 3.45, which also falls under the category of Very Highly Challenged. ALS learners showed high satisfaction with Learning Strands and Portfolio Assessment, indicating effective engagement. However, the Functional Literacy Test received less enthusiasm, suggesting room for improvement. While learners appreciate the program overall, the testing component needs attention to enhance experiences.

Table 4
Summary of the Challenges Encountered by ALS Learners

Aspects	AWM	Int.
Learning Strands	3.47	VHC
Presentation of Portfolio Assessment	3.47	VHC
Functional Literacy Test	3.41	VHC
Overall Average Weighted Mean:	3.45	VHC

ALS learners showed high satisfaction with Learning Strands and Portfolio Assessment, indicating effective engagement. However, the Functional Literacy Test received less enthusiasm, suggesting room for improvement. While learners appreciate the program overall, the testing component needs attention to enhance experiences.

The high scores for learning strands and portfolio assessments suggest their usefulness, encouraging their continuation. The lower score for the functional literacy test necessitates improvements to boost confidence in this crucial skill. According to the studies of Walag and Fajardo (2020) align with positive perceptions, emphasizing engagement. Wayas and Dinoro (2023) highlight the lower score for the Functional Literacy Test, indicating potential gaps. Castillo (2021) reinforces the importance of assessments but notes that the functional literacy component needs support. Vygotsky's Scaffolding Theory aligns with strong agreement on learning strands and portfolio assessment, highlighting the need for tailored scaffolding to support functional literacy skills.

Association Between the Socio-Demographic Profile of ALS Teachers and The Challenges They Encountered. Statistical analysis shows no association between teacher sex and ALS challenges.

Table 5
Association Between Socio-Demographic Profile and Challenges Encountered by ALS Teachers

Profile	Challenges	X ²	df	p-value	Int.
Sex	Implementation of ALS Programs	2.131	2	0.345	NS
	Literacy Mapping	0.158	2	0.924	NS
	Teaching Proficiency	1.589	2	0.452	NS
Age	Implementation of ALS Programs	129.262	16	0.000	S
	Literacy Mapping	124.957	16	0.000	S
	Teaching Proficiency	144.220	16	0.000	S
Civil Status	Implementation of ALS Programs	60.996	6	0.000	S
	Literacy Mapping	42.222	6	0.000	S
	Teaching Proficiency	52.324	6	0.000	S
Highest Educational Attainment	Implementation of ALS Programs	113.706	8	0.000	S
	Literacy Mapping	100.600	8	0.000	S
	Teaching Proficiency	104.351	8	0.000	S
Monthly Income	Implementation of ALS Programs	96.222	6	0.000	S
	Literacy Mapping	120.183	6	0.000	S
	Teaching Proficiency	94.106	6	0.000	S

Note: The table show Significant at the 0.05 level with the Interpretation for p-value $p \leq$ Significant (S); $p >$ Not Significant (NS); Int. – Interpretation.

However, age, civil status, education, and income significantly correlate with these challenges. This suggests targeted support should prioritize age, civil status, education, and income, rather than gender, to mitigate challenges. Olid and Motus (2023) support the lack of gender impact, while Keynesian Economics (Investopedia, 2024) underscores the role of socio-economic factors. Becker's Human Capital Theory (Jarapa, 2023) emphasizes how investments in education can enhance teacher productivity. Antepuesto et al. (2023) and Surwanti and Hiknah (2019) offer further context to these findings.

Association Between the Socio-Demographic Profile of ALS Learners and The Challenges They Encountered. Statistical analysis reveals significant associations ($p=0.000$) between ALS learners' socio-demographics (sex, age, civil status, education, income) and their learning challenges.

Table 6

Association Between Socio-Demographic Profile and Challenges Encountered by ALS Learners

Profile	Challenges	X ²	df	p-value	Int.
Sex	Functional Literacy Test	286.452	3	0.000	S
	Learning Strands	251.076	3	0.000	S
	Presentation of Portfolio Assessment	274.299	3	0.000	S
Age	Functional Literacy Test	561.861	27	0.000	S
	Learning Strands	528.949	27	0.000	S
	Presentation of Portfolio Assessment	555.009	27	0.000	S
Civil Status	Functional Literacy Test	354.816	12	0.000	S
	Learning Strands	267.194	12	0.000	S
	Presentation of Portfolio Assessment	326.615	12	0.000	S
Highest Educational Attainment	Functional Literacy Test	452.496	18	0.000	S
	Learning Strands	337.500	18	0.000	S
	Presentation of Portfolio Assessment	364.919	18	0.000	S
Monthly Income	Functional Literacy Test	470.116	9	0.000	S
	Learning Strands	411.585	9	0.000	S
	Presentation of Portfolio Assessment	527.244	9	0.000	S

Note: The table show Significant at the 0.05 level with the Interpretation for p-value $p \leq$ Significant (S); $p >$ Not Significant (NS); Int. – Interpretation.

Learners' backgrounds significantly influence their experiences, requiring tailored strategies to meet diverse needs. Effective programs must include sex-sensitive approaches, age-specific considerations, support systems, differentiated instruction, and financial assistance. Ocampo (2021) supports inclusive outreach, while Vygotsky's Scaffolding Theory (Nebres, 2023) highlights tailored support. Musico (2024) emphasizes demographic-specific strategies, and Batuampar and Basmayor (2023) reinforce the impact of socio-demographics. Keynesian Economics supports government intervention for economic challenges.

Differences in the Challenges Encountered Among ALS Teachers. ALS teachers face diverse challenges in curriculum adaptation and learner support. This study explores challenges in ALS program implementation, literacy mapping, and teaching proficiency. Results show no significant differences in challenges across these aspects ($p > 0.05$), indicating uniform, systemic issues.

Table 7
Differences in the Challenges Encountered Among ALS Teachers

Aspects	df	F	p-value	Int.
Implementation of ALS Program	4	0.430	0.787	NS
Literacy Mapping	4	1.162	0.330	NS
Teaching Proficiency	4	1.662	0.162	NS

Note: The table show Significant at the 0.05 level with the Interpretation for p-value $p \leq$ Significant (S); $p >$ Not Significant (NS); Int. – Interpretation.

This suggests a need for broad interventions to address underlying issues, enhancing resource allocation and professional development. The findings align with Formanes and Caliba (2024), confirming comparable barriers systemically. Keynesian Economics suggests resources and support are not effectively allocated, requiring attention to enhance the ALS program.

Differences in the Challenges Encountered Among ALS Learners. ALS teachers face unique challenges due to diverse learners and varying education levels, requiring curriculum adaptation and support for learners balancing education with responsibilities. The study explores challenges in ALS program implementation, literacy mapping, and teaching proficiency.

Data reveals no significant differences in challenges across these areas ($p > 0.05$), suggesting teachers face a uniform set of systemic challenges irrespective of specific tasks. This homogeneity points to underlying issues requiring a broad, rather than narrowly focused, approach.

Table 8
Differences in the Challenges Encountered Among ALS Learners

Aspects	df	F	p-value	Int.
Functional Literacy Test	4	2.824	0.025	S
Learning Strands	4	3.024	0.018	S
Presentation of Portfolio Assessment	4	4.566	0.001	S

Note: The table show Significant at the 0.05 level with the Interpretation for p- value $p \leq$ Significant (S); $p >$ Not Significant (NS); Int. – Interpretation.

Policymakers should adopt a holistic approach, addressing common underlying factors by enhancing resource allocation, providing comprehensive professional development, and streamlining program implementation. The findings align with Olitan (2024), Tong (2023), confirming educators experience comparable barriers, indicating systemic challenges. Keynesian Economic Theory suggests that the lack of significant differences implies that resources and support are not being effectively allocated and that similar attention and support should be directed toward the ALS program to enhance its effectiveness and address the challenges that educators face.

Instructional Innovation to Address the Challenges Encountered By ALS Teachers And Learners (See Appendix I for DLP Learning Activity Sheets (LAS)). The ALS faces challenges like limited resources and diverse learners. Interventions can help, but implementation issues persist (Nichols et al., 2017; Bonheur, 2024; Neekalantan et al., 2024). To address this, Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) were developed using the ADD Model: Analysis, Design, and Development. Analysis assesses learning needs. Design aligns objectives, content, activities, and assessments for clarity. Development finalizes materials with interactive activities and aligned assessments. This iterative process aims to achieve learning objectives effectively.

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