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Examining the Interplay Among Implementer Competence, Institutional Support Structures and Learner Pathway Outcomes

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the instructional competence, support systems, learning pathway effectiveness, and impactful practices of Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in rural areas, specifically within ALS Cluster 2 of Surigao del Sur, covering the municipalities of Tago, San Miguel, Cagwait, Marihatag, and San Agustin. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study gathered quantitative data from ALS implementers and supervisors through a structured survey questionnaire. Data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation.

The findings revealed that ALS implementers possessed a high level of instructional competence, particularly in learner diversity, learning environment, and professional development, although content knowledge and pedagogy emerged as the lowest-rated domain. Support systems were perceived as very adequate, with strong administrative support, peer collaboration, and community engagement, but disparities in digital infrastructure and resource accessibility remained evident. Learning pathways were rated as highly effective, while impactful practices were highly practiced, particularly in psychosocial support, contextualization of learning materials, and personalized planning. Inferential analysis showed that educational attainment and participation in trainings and seminars significantly influenced instructional competence. Furthermore, impactful practices were found to have a significant positive relationship with the effectiveness of learning pathways.

The study concludes that effective ALS implementation is influenced by the interplay of instructional competence, institutional support, and learner-centered practices. To address identified gaps, the study developed the BRIDGE-ALS Framework (Building Resilient Instruction through Development, Guidance, and Engagement), a localized intervention model designed to strengthen competence, support systems, and learning outcomes among ALS implementers in rural contexts.

KEYWORDS: Alternative Learning System, instructional competence, support systems, learning pathways, impactful practices, rural education, descriptive-correlational research, BRIDGE-ALS Framework.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a critical driver of social inclusion, economic mobility, and sustainable development. In the Philippines, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) serves as the primary non-formal education program designed to provide learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults who are unable to access formal schooling. Through the implementation of ALS 2.0, the Department of Education (DepEd) seeks to strengthen inclusive, equitable, and quality education in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). However, the effectiveness of ALS largely depends on the competence of its implementers and the support systems available to facilitate quality learning delivery.

Evidence from international and local studies highlights persistent challenges affecting non-formal education programs. UNESCO (2021) reported that many facilitators in alternative learning settings continue to experience limited access to sustained professional development, inadequate instructional

resources, and weak digital infrastructure. Similar concerns have been documented in the Philippine ALS context, where only 37% of implementers reported adequate preparation for information and communication technology (ICT) integration, while more than half of rural learning centers experienced shortages in learning materials and logistical support (UNICEF, 2023). Moreover, Pascua (2023) found that although ALS teachers generally demonstrated acceptable digital competence, limited ICT facilities and insufficient training constrained effective technology integration in instruction.

Despite growing research on ALS, existing studies have largely examined isolated dimensions such as digital competence, professional development, or peer coaching. Limited empirical evidence exists on the interplay among instructional competence, support systems, learning pathway effectiveness, and impactful practices, particularly in rural contexts. Addressing this gap, the

present study investigates these variables among ALS implementers in ALS Cluster 2, Surigao del Sur. The findings provide evidence for strengthening professional development, institutional support, and program interventions, culminating in the development of the BRIDGE-ALS Framework to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of ALS implementation in rural communities.

II. THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDY

This part of the research examined the relationship between existing and relevant literature and studies deemed necessary to better understand the study. The review covered local and foreign works of literature and studies conducted in the country and abroad and present a synthesis of the topic to fully understand the research and better comprehend the study.

The Evolving Landscape of ALS Delivery in Rural Areas

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) serves as the primary non-formal education program of the Philippine government, designed to provide learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults. Recent reforms under the ALS 2.0 Strategic Roadmap have transformed the program from an equivalency-centered intervention into a competency-based and learner-centered educational system aligned with the K–12 curriculum (Department of Education [DepEd], 2020). The reform agenda emphasizes standards-based instruction, strengthened assessment mechanisms, community-based learning, and expanded digital integration. Complementing these reforms, the ALS Information and Communications Technology Strategic Plan highlights the importance of technology-enabled learning, digital resource provision, and capacity-building initiatives to support flexible learning delivery in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (DepEd, 2022). These developments reflect the country's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Despite these reforms, implementation challenges persist, particularly in rural communities. Empirical studies have documented disparities in resource availability, digital readiness, and instructional support across ALS learning centers. Libo-on (2024) found that while ALS implementers demonstrate strong commitment to program goals, logistical limitations and inadequate resources hinder effective implementation at the community level. Similarly, the DepEd ALS Monitoring and Evaluation Report (2023) identified significant variations in the adoption of blended learning modalities and digital technologies among rural divisions. These findings suggest that understanding the competence of ALS implementers and the support systems available to them remains critical for improving the quality and effectiveness of ALS delivery.

Instructional Competence: Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Content knowledge and pedagogy constitute the foundation of effective teaching and learning. Shulman's concept of pedagogical content knowledge emphasizes that teachers must not only possess mastery of subject matter but also the ability to transform content into meaningful learning experiences (Shulman, 1987). In non-formal education settings such as ALS, this competence becomes particularly important because implementers frequently teach learners with varying educational backgrounds, literacy levels, and learning needs. König et al. (2020) found that teachers with strong pedagogical content knowledge demonstrate greater instructional effectiveness and learner engagement.

Within the Philippine ALS context, implementers often perform generalist teaching roles, covering competencies across elementary and secondary learning strands. This requires substantial instructional flexibility and the ability to integrate content across multiple disciplines. Casingal (2025) reported that ALS teachers continue to face challenges in differentiated instruction, content delivery, and learner assessment due to the broad range of competencies they are expected to teach. Likewise, Francisco and Buri (2024) observed that participation in professional development activities contributes significantly to improved instructional practices and contextualized teaching. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening pedagogical competence among ALS implementers.

Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners

The learning environment significantly influences learner participation, motivation, and achievement. Research has consistently shown that safe, inclusive, and supportive learning spaces foster positive educational outcomes, particularly among marginalized learners (Schindler et al., 2021). In ALS settings, learning environments are often established in community centers, barangay halls, churches, or other non-traditional venues, requiring implementers to adapt instructional strategies to diverse contexts.

Learner diversity further adds complexity to ALS implementation. Learners differ in age, educational attainment, socio-economic status, cultural background, and learning needs. Gay (2020) emphasized that culturally responsive instruction enhances learner participation and promotes educational equity. Similarly, Mendenhall et al. (2022) found that inclusive practices and differentiated instruction improve participation and retention among vulnerable learner populations. In ALS programs, addressing learner diversity requires competence in instructional adaptation, learner assessment, and individualized support. Consequently, creating inclusive learning environments and responding effectively to learner diversity are critical components of instructional competence.

Examining the Interplay Among Implementer Competence, Institutional Support Structures and Learner Pathway Outcomes

Curriculum Planning, Assessment, and Professional Growth

Curriculum planning and assessment are integral to effective educational delivery. Brown and Harris (2021) emphasized that alignment among learning outcomes, instructional activities, and assessment strategies is essential for ensuring learner progression. Within ALS, curriculum implementation requires balancing national competency standards with local realities and learner circumstances. Implementers must adapt learning plans while maintaining fidelity to ALS learning competencies.

Assessment practices in ALS increasingly emphasize formative and performance-based approaches. Panadero et al. (2020) noted that formative assessment promotes learner self-regulation, motivation, and achievement. However, implementers frequently encounter challenges related to documentation, monitoring, and portfolio management. Professional growth is equally important in maintaining instructional quality. Opfer and Pedder (2020) found that sustained professional development enhances teaching effectiveness, instructional innovation, and teacher resilience. These findings suggest that curriculum implementation, assessment practices, and professional development are interconnected dimensions of ALS instructional competence.

Community Linkages, Professional Engagement, and Capacity Building

Community engagement is widely recognized as a critical factor in the success of alternative education programs. Partnerships with local government units, non-government organizations, and community stakeholders contribute to learner recruitment, retention, and program sustainability. Unterhalter et al. (2022) reported that community engagement strengthens educational relevance and improves learning outcomes, particularly in marginalized communities.

Professional engagement complements community participation by providing opportunities for collaboration, mentoring, and knowledge exchange. Prudente et al. (2024) found that professional learning opportunities improve instructional quality and teacher motivation. However, access to professional development remains uneven, especially in rural areas where geographical and financial constraints limit participation. Strengthening community linkages and professional engagement therefore remains essential for enhancing ALS implementation and sustaining educational outcomes.

Support Systems for ALS Implementers

Support systems play a crucial role in enabling effective instructional delivery. Administrative and supervisory support provide guidance, monitoring, and professional feedback that contribute to teacher effectiveness. Hallinger et al. (2021) found that supportive leadership enhances teacher motivation and instructional consistency. In ALS settings, supervisory support is particularly important due to the unique challenges associated with non-formal education delivery.

Material, logistical, and digital support systems also influence program effectiveness. Bond et al. (2021) emphasized that access to instructional resources and technological tools significantly enhances teaching quality and innovation. Nevertheless, UNICEF (2023) reported that many ALS learning centers continue to experience shortages in learning materials, digital infrastructure, and logistical support. These limitations underscore the importance of strengthening institutional support mechanisms to improve ALS implementation.

Effectiveness of Learning Pathways

Learning pathways are designed to provide flexible, learner-centered educational opportunities that accommodate diverse learner circumstances. Bohlinger et al. (2020) found that personalized instruction and individualized learning pathways contribute significantly to learner retention and completion. In ALS settings, learning pathways are operationalized through flexible scheduling, contextualized instruction, and modular learning approaches.

Research further demonstrates that contextualization enhances learner engagement by connecting instruction to real-life experiences and community contexts (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2021). Learner-led sessions and participatory learning approaches have likewise been associated with increased learner ownership and motivation (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). These findings suggest that effective learning pathways depend on the ability of implementers to provide relevant, flexible, and meaningful learning experiences.

Impactful Practices in Challenging Contexts

Educational practices implemented in challenging contexts often determine the extent to which learning outcomes are achieved. Tikly et al. (2020) found that personalized planning, contextualized instruction, and adaptive teaching strategies mitigate the effects of poverty and resource constraints on learning outcomes. These practices are particularly relevant in rural ALS settings where learners face numerous social and economic challenges.

Psychosocial support has also emerged as an important component of effective educational practice. Jennings and Greenberg (2021) reported that emotional support and positive teacher–learner relationships improve learner persistence, motivation, and self-efficacy. Similarly, community bridging and stakeholder engagement strengthen program relevance and sustainability by connecting learners to community resources and opportunities (Unterhalter et al., 2022). These findings support the argument that impactful practices serve as critical mechanisms through which instructional competence and support systems influence learning pathway effectiveness.

Synthesis

The reviewed literature shows that ALS implementation in rural areas is shaped by a combination of teacher competence, environmental constraints, and the availability of support systems. Across studies, ALS implementers demonstrate adaptability in content delivery, contextualized pedagogy, and differentiated instruction, but their effectiveness is often limited by inadequate learning environments, high learner diversity, and inconsistent access to training. Research consistently highlights gaps in curriculum planning, assessment practices, and digital readiness, especially in communities with poor infrastructure. Findings also point to the crucial roles of community linkages, administrative support, logistical provisioning, and peer collaboration in enabling ALS programs to function despite resource scarcity. Overall, the literature portrays a system marked by strong teacher commitment but hindered by uneven resource distribution and structural barriers.

These insights directly reinforce the relevance of examining both professional competence and support systems in the present study. The documented gaps in pedagogy, assessment, digital integration, and learner accommodation align with the study's focus on measuring competence across key domains. Likewise, persistent issues with administrative backing, material resources, digital infrastructure, and mentoring validate the inclusion of support systems as a central variable. The reviewed studies confirm that competence cannot be fully understood without accounting for the support structures that enable or constrain it, particularly in rural contexts. By assessing these dimensions together, the present study addresses a critical gap in existing research and provides evidence needed to strengthen ALS implementation under the ongoing reforms of ALS.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the instructional competence, support systems, learning pathway effectiveness, and impactful practices among Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in ALS Cluster 2, Surigao del Sur. The descriptive aspect was utilized to determine the demographic and professional profile of the respondents and to assess the levels of instructional competence, support systems, learning pathway effectiveness, and impactful practices. This design enabled the study to provide a systematic description of the current conditions and experiences of ALS implementers in rural contexts.

The correlational aspect was used to determine the significant relationships among selected variables, particularly between respondents' demographic and professional characteristics and instructional competence, as well as between impactful practices and the effectiveness of learning pathways. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire and analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The findings served as the basis for the development of the BRIDGE-ALS Framework, a proposed intervention model aimed at strengthening instructional competence, support systems, and learning outcomes among ALS implementers in rural communities.

3.2 Research Participants

The primary respondents of the study were the ALS implementers assigned in ALS Cluster 2 of Surigao del Sur, covering the municipalities of Tago, Bayabas, San Miguel, Cagwait, Marihatag, and San Agustin. These implementers included Mobile Teachers, District ALS Coordinators, and Instructional Managers who were directly responsible for program delivery at the community level. They were selected because they performed core functions such as instructional planning, learner assessment, community coordination, and facilitation of learning sessions, making them the most appropriate sources of information on professional competence and available support systems. The complete enumeration sampling method was used to determine the respondents. This method ensured that all ALS implementers participated in the comprehensive conduct of study.

3.3 Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect the data. The instrument underwent content validation and reliability testing by experts. The instrument consisted of sections related to respondents' profile, level of instructional competence of ALS implementers, level of support systems available to ALS implementers, and perceived effectiveness of learning pathways and the extent of impactful practices. A pilot test confirmed that the research instrument was reliable, dependable, and appropriate for data gathering and analysis.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

The Data Gathering procedure followed a structured Approach. Before conducting the study, the researcher first secured approval from the Dean of the Graduate School and the Schools Division Superintendent of Surigao del Sur Division. The collected data were carefully organized, checked, tallied, and tabulated for analysis. Appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to interpret the data. Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the data-gathering process. Confidentiality,

voluntary participation, and respect for the respondents' privacy were properly maintained to ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of the respondents in Table 1 indicates that ALS implementers are predominantly composed of individuals in their early to middle adulthood, suggesting a workforce that possesses both professional maturity and the adaptability needed to respond to the evolving demands of alternative education. This age composition reflects a balance between accumulated teaching experience and openness to new instructional approaches, which are essential in addressing the diverse learning needs of out-of-school youth and adult learners. Such a profile is particularly advantageous in rural ALS settings, where implementers are often required to perform multiple roles beyond classroom instruction, including community engagement, learner monitoring, and program coordination.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic variable	Category	N	Percent
Age	26 - 30 years old	1	3.6 %
	31 - 35 years old	11	39.3 %
	36 - 40 years old	7	25.0 %
	41 - 45 years old	3	10.7%
	Above 46 years old	6	21.4%
	Total	28	100.0%
Sex	Male	19	67.9%
	Female	9	32.1%
	Total	28	100.0%
Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Graduate	9	32.1%
	With MA Units	17	60.7%
	Master's Graduate	1	3.6%
	PhD/EdD Graduate	1	3.6%
	Total	28	100.0%
ears of Service In ALS	0-2 yrs	4	14.3%
	3-4 yrs	2	7.1%
	5-8 yrs	12	42.9%
	9 yrs and above	10	35.7%
	Total	28	100.0%
Seminars Attended	None	0	0%
	School Level	0	0%
	District Level	0	0%
	Division Level	5	17.9%
	Regional Level	18	64.3%
	National level	5	17.9%
	Total	28	100.0%
Trainings Attended	Low Training Attendance	12	42.9%
	rately Low Training Attendance	6	21.4%
	Moderate Training Attendance	9	32.1%
	High Training Attendance	1	3.6%
	Total	28	100.0%

The respondents were predominantly male, indicating greater male representation in ALS implementation within the study area. While gender does not necessarily determine instructional competence, this distribution may reflect existing staffing patterns and recruitment realities in rural educational contexts. The presence of both male and female implementers nevertheless contributes to a diverse professional environment capable of addressing varied learner perspectives and needs.

In terms of educational attainment, the findings reveal that most respondents had pursued graduate studies, particularly at the master's level, demonstrating a commitment to professional growth and lifelong learning. This suggests that ALS implementers recognize the importance of advanced education in enhancing instructional effectiveness and program delivery. However, the relatively limited number of respondents
who had completed graduate degrees highlights the need for continued academic advancement and support for higher-level professional qualifications.

The respondents also exhibited moderate to extensive experience in ALS implementation, indicating substantial exposure to the realities and challenges of non-formal education. Such experience contributes to a deeper understanding of learner diversity, contextualized instruction, and community-based educational delivery. Experienced implementers are generally better equipped to adapt to changing learner needs and sustain educational interventions in resource-constrained environments.

Despite these strengths, participation in professional development activities appears relatively limited. The predominance of low to moderate training attendance suggests that opportunities for capacity building may not be consistently accessible to all implementers. Continuous professional development is particularly important in ALS, where curriculum reforms, digitalization initiatives, and evolving learner needs require regular updating of knowledge and skills. Furthermore, training participation was concentrated primarily at the regional level, with fewer opportunities available at division and national levels and none at the school or district levels. According to the Department of Education (2020) and UNICEF (2023), ALS training programs are often centralized to ensure standardization and efficient resource utilization. While beneficial for maintaining program consistency, this approach may reduce accessibility for implementers in remote communities, underscoring the need for more localized and context-responsive professional development initiatives.

Table 2. Level of Professional Competence of ALS Implementers In Rural Areas

Indicator	Mean	SD	Adjectival Rating
Content Knowledge and Pedagogy	4.04	0.99	Moderately Competent
Learning Environment	4.46	0.96	Highly Competent
Diversity of Learners	4.58	1.03	Highly Competent
Curriculum and Planning	4.31	1.02	Highly Competent
Assessment and Reporting	4.24	0.67	Highly Competent
Community Linkages and Professional Engagement	4.39	0.74	Highly Competent
Personal Growth and Professional Development	4.55	0.93	Highly Competent
Overall Mean	**4.37**	**0.99**	**Highly Competent**

Table 2 presents the level of professional competence of Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers across key instructional and professional domains. The findings indicate a generally high level of competence, suggesting that implementers possess the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to effectively deliver ALS programs in rural communities. This reflects their ability to respond to the diverse and often complex educational needs of out-of-school youth and adult learners despite resource and contextual constraints. Nevertheless, variations in responses indicate that competence is not uniformly experienced among implementers, highlighting differences in preparation, experience, and access to professional development opportunities.

Among the assessed domains, competence in addressing learner diversity emerged as the strongest area, demonstrating implementers' capacity to accommodate varied learner backgrounds, abilities, and life circumstances through inclusive and flexible instructional approaches. Personal growth and professional development also received a highly competent rating, indicating a strong commitment to continuous learning and self-improvement. Similarly, learning environment, community linkages and professional engagement, curriculum and planning, and assessment and reporting were all assessed as highly competent, suggesting that implementers are generally effective in creating supportive learning spaces, establishing stakeholder partnerships, organizing instruction, and monitoring learner progress.

In contrast, content knowledge and pedagogy obtained the comparatively lowest rating, although still interpreted as competent. This finding may be attributed to the nature of ALS implementation, where facilitators are expected to teach competencies across multiple learning areas from elementary to secondary levels while addressing learners with diverse educational needs. Literature suggests that educators in non-formal and multi-grade settings often face challenges in maintaining depth of content mastery because of the breadth of competencies they are required to deliver (König et al., 2020; Akyeampong et al., 2021). This
challenge is further intensified by the ALS 2.0 framework, which requires integrated and competency-based instruction across learning strands (DepEd, 2020).

These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing that effective instruction in alternative education depends on learner-responsive teaching, continuous professional development, and strong community engagement (Gay, 2020; Opfer & Pedder, 2020; Unterhalter et al., 2022). Overall, the results suggest that while ALS implementers possess strong foundational competencies, strengthening pedagogical content knowledge remains necessary. The findings further reinforce the importance of sustained professional development and institutional support in ensuring consistent instructional quality and improving learning outcomes in rural ALS settings.

Table 3. Level of Support Systems available for ALS Implementers

Indicator	Mean	SD	Adjectival Rating
Administrative and Supervisory Support	4.46	0.58	Very Adequate
Materials and Logistical Support	4.44	0.79	Very Adequate
Peer Collaboration and Mentorship	4.43	0.65	Very Adequate
Community and Stakeholder Engagement	4.49	1.03	Very Adequate
Digital Support Infrastructure	4.47	1.18	Very Adequate
Overall Mean	**4.46**	**0.97**	**Very Adequate**

Table 3 presents the level of support systems available to Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in rural areas. The findings indicate that support systems are generally perceived as very adequate, suggesting that implementers benefit from favorable institutional, professional, and community conditions that facilitate program implementation. Community and stakeholder engagement emerged as the strongest area of support, reflecting the important role of local government units, community leaders, and partner organizations in sustaining ALS operations and encouraging learner participation. This finding underscores the collaborative nature of ALS, particularly in rural settings where community involvement often compensates for limited institutional resources.

Digital support infrastructure was likewise perceived as highly adequate, indicating that technological resources and digital platforms are increasingly available to support instruction and program management. However, the variability in responses suggests that access to digital tools and connectivity remains uneven across locations, reflecting persistent disparities in rural infrastructure. Administrative and supervisory support, together with material and logistical support, were also assessed as very adequate, suggesting that implementers generally receive the guidance, monitoring, and instructional resources necessary to perform their responsibilities. Peer collaboration and mentorship further emerged as a significant source of support, highlighting the value of professional networks in promoting knowledge sharing, problem-solving, and instructional improvement.

These findings are consistent with existing literature emphasizing that institutional support, access to resources, and professional collaboration are critical determinants of effective educational delivery, particularly in alternative and non-formal education settings (Bond et al., 2021; Vangrieken et al., 2020). Community partnerships have likewise been recognized as essential mechanisms for improving learner participation, program relevance, and sustainability (Unterhalter et al., 2022). Nevertheless, studies continue to identify disparities in digital infrastructure and resource allocation as significant barriers to equitable educational access, especially in geographically isolated communities (UNESCO, 2021; UNICEF, 2023).

The findings suggest that ALS implementers operate within generally supportive environments that enable them to fulfill their instructional roles effectively. However, the observed differences in access to digital and community-based support indicate that the quality of implementation may still vary depending on contextual conditions. These results reinforce the study's assumption that support systems are fundamental to effective ALS delivery and highlight the need for more equitable, localized, and responsive interventions to ensure consistent program quality across rural learning environments.

Table 4. Perceived Level of Effectiveness of Learning Pathways

Indicator	Mean	SD	Adjectival Rating
Individualized Learning Instruction	4.34	0.63	Highly Effective
Ability to Contextualize Learning Materials	4.34	0.72	Highly Effective
Mediating a Supportive Learning Environment	4.54	0.58	Highly Effective
Proactive Role in Connecting Learning to Opportunities	4.42	0.62	Highly Effective
Presence of Learner-Led Sessions	4.35	0.70	Highly Effective
Overall Mean	**4.40**	**0.65**	**Highly Effective**

Table 4 presents the perceived level of effectiveness of learning pathways among Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in rural areas. The findings indicate that learning pathways are generally perceived as highly effective, suggesting

that ALS implementers successfully facilitate meaningful, flexible, and learner-centered educational experiences. The consistently positive assessment reflects the ability of implementers to support learner progression while responding to the unique circumstances of out-of-school youth and adult learners. Among the indicators, mediating a supportive learning environment emerged as the strongest area, highlighting the capacity of implementers to create inclusive, encouraging, and responsive learning spaces that promote participation and persistence. This suggests that fostering a positive learning climate remains a defining strength of ALS implementation in rural contexts.

The findings further demonstrate the effectiveness of implementers in connecting learning to practical opportunities, such as employment, continuing education, and skills development. Likewise, learner-led sessions, individualized learning instruction, and the contextualization of learning materials were all perceived as highly effective, indicating that ALS implementers consistently adopt learner-centered approaches that accommodate diverse needs and experiences. These practices reinforce the flexibility of ALS by allowing learners to progress at their own pace while ensuring that learning remains relevant to their local realities and future aspirations.

The results are supported by literature emphasizing that supportive learning environments significantly improve learner motivation, engagement, and retention, particularly among marginalized populations (Schindler et al., 2021; Jennings & Greenberg, 2021). Similarly, studies have shown that contextualized instruction, individualized learning, and participatory approaches enhance learner ownership and educational outcomes by making learning more meaningful and relevant (Gay, 2020; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Research further suggests that linking learning to real-life opportunities strengthens the perceived value of education and encourages sustained participation in non-formal programs (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2021).

These findings imply that ALS learning pathways are effectively achieving their intended purpose of providing inclusive, relevant, and responsive educational opportunities. The strong performance across the indicators suggests that instructional competence is being translated into meaningful learner experiences and outcomes. However, variations in responses indicate that the effectiveness of these practices may still be influenced by contextual factors such as resource availability, learner characteristics, and institutional support. Consequently, sustaining and further strengthening learner-centered practices through enhanced support mechanisms remains essential for ensuring the quality and consistency of ALS implementation in rural communities.

Table 5 presents the perceived level of impactful practices employed by Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in challenging rural contexts. The findings indicate that these practices are generally highly practiced, suggesting that implementers consistently adopt learner-centered strategies to address the diverse academic, social, and emotional needs of ALS learners. Among the identified practices, extending psychological support emerged as the most prominent, reflecting the recognition that many ALS learners face socio-economic hardships, disrupted educational experiences, and personal challenges that may affect their learning. This finding highlights the important role of ALS implementers not only as facilitators of learning but also as sources of encouragement, guidance, and emotional support.

Table 5. Perceived Level of Impactful Practices in Challenging Context

Indicator	**Mean**	**SD**	**djectival Rating**
Personalized Planning	4.37	0.60	Highly Practiced
Contextualization of Learning Materials	4.44	0.64	Highly Practiced
Extending Psychological Support to ALS Learners	4.49	0.59	Highly Practiced
Community Bridging	4.10	0.79	Moderately Practiced
Fostering Learner Engagement	4.01	0.68	Moderately Practiced
Overall Mean	**4.28**	**0.69**	**Highly Practiced**

Contextualization of learning materials and personalized planning were likewise highly practiced, indicating that implementers actively adapt instruction to local realities and individual learner circumstances. These practices demonstrate the flexibility of ALS in responding to diverse learner needs and ensuring that educational experiences remain relevant, meaningful, and accessible. By connecting lessons to learners' lived experiences and tailoring learning activities to their capacities and goals, implementers strengthen learner participation and improve the overall learning experience.

However, community bridging and fostering learner engagement received comparatively lower assessments, suggesting areas that require further enhancement. While efforts to establish connections with community stakeholders and sustain learner participation are evident, these practices may be constrained by factors such as limited community resources, irregular attendance, competing livelihood demands, and geographical barriers commonly experienced in rural areas. These challenges may reduce opportunities for learners to engage consistently in educational activities and to benefit from community-based support mechanisms.

The findings are supported by literature emphasizing the importance of psychosocial support in improving learner motivation,

persistence, and self-efficacy, particularly among marginalized and adult learners (Jennings & Greenberg, 2021). Research also highlights that contextualized instruction and personalized learning approaches enhance educational relevance and learner engagement (Gay, 2020; Tikly et al., 2020). Furthermore, strong community partnerships have been identified as essential for sustaining alternative education programs and connecting learners to opportunities beyond the classroom (Unterhalter et al., 2022). Overall, the results suggest that ALS implementers possess a strong capacity to employ impactful practices in challenging contexts; however, strengthening community linkages and learner engagement strategies remains necessary to maximize program effectiveness and promote sustainable learning outcomes.

Table 6. Fishers Exact Test of Relationship between Demographic Variables and Level of Instructional competence of ALS implementers

Demographic Variable	F	p-value	Interpretation
Age	7.79	0.726	Not Significant
Sex	2.02	0.469	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	8.81	0.041	Significant
Years of Experience in ALS	6.03	0.555	Not Significant
Trainings and Seminars	11.73	0.032	Significant

Table 6 presents the results of Fisher's Exact Test examining the relationship between selected demographic variables and the instructional competence of Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in rural areas. The findings reveal that educational attainment and participation in trainings and seminars have significant relationships with instructional competence, whereas age, sex, and years of experience do not demonstrate statistically significant associations. These results suggest that competence is influenced more by opportunities for learning and professional growth than by personal or demographic characteristics.

Educational attainment emerged as a significant factor influencing instructional competence, indicating that implementers with higher academic qualifications tend to demonstrate stronger instructional capabilities. Advanced educational preparation provides educators with broader theoretical knowledge, deeper content mastery, and greater exposure to pedagogical approaches that can enhance teaching effectiveness. Similarly, participation in trainings and seminars was found to significantly influence competence, emphasizing the value of continuous professional development in strengthening instructional practices. Through professional learning activities, implementers acquire updated knowledge, innovative teaching strategies, and enhanced facilitation skills that enable them to respond more effectively to the diverse needs of ALS learners.

In contrast, age and sex were not significantly associated with instructional competence, suggesting that effective ALS implementation is not determined by demographic characteristics. This finding implies that both younger and older implementers, as well as male and female educators, are capable of demonstrating comparable levels of competence when provided with appropriate educational and professional development opportunities. Likewise, years of experience did not significantly influence competence, indicating that length of service alone does not automatically translate into improved instructional effectiveness. Rather, experience becomes meaningful when accompanied by continuous learning, reflection, and skills enhancement.

These findings are supported by literature emphasizing that teacher competence is strengthened through formal education and sustained professional development rather than demographic characteristics alone. Studies have shown that participation in professional learning activities contributes significantly to instructional improvement, pedagogical adaptability, and teaching effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Opfer & Pedder, 2020). Similarly, Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework underscores the importance of developing both content mastery and pedagogical expertise through continuous learning opportunities (Shulman, 1987). Overall, the results suggest that investments in graduate education, training programs, and capacity-building initiatives are critical for enhancing instructional competence and ensuring the effective delivery of ALS programs in rural communities.

Table 7. Fishers Test of Relationship between Demographic Variables and Level of Support systems available to ALS Implementers

Demographic Variable	F	p-value	Interpretation
Age	5.71	0.874	Not Significant
Sex	1.01	0.712	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	5.11	0.897	Not Significant
Years of Experience in ALS	4.28	0.784	Not Significant
Trainings and Seminars	2.68	0.697	Not Significant

Table 7 presents the results of Fisher's Exact Test examining the relationship between selected demographic variables and the level of support systems available to Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in rural areas. The findings reveal that none of the demographic variables examined have a statistically significant relationship with the perceived level of support systems. This indicates that access to and perceptions of administrative, logistical, professional, and institutional support are generally consistent across respondents regardless of their personal and professional characteristics. The results suggest that support mechanisms within the ALS program are distributed in a relatively uniform manner and are not influenced by differences in age, sex, educational attainment, years of experience, or participation in training activities.

The absence of significant relationships across all demographic variables implies that support systems are accessible to ALS implementers regardless of their background. Younger and older implementers, male and female educators, those with varying educational qualifications, and both novice and experienced practitioners appear to receive comparable levels of support. Likewise, participation in trainings and seminars does not significantly influence how implementers perceive the adequacy of the support available to them. This finding reflects a degree of institutional consistency in the provision of support services and suggests that support mechanisms are implemented based on program requirements rather than individual characteristics.

The findings are consistent with literature emphasizing the importance of equitable access to support systems in promoting organizational effectiveness and educational quality. Hallinger et al. (2021) argued that effective educational support structures should be available to all personnel regardless of demographic differences to ensure consistent program implementation. Similarly, Prudente et al. (2024) noted that standardized support mechanisms contribute to fairness and inclusivity within educational systems. However, scholars also caution that equitable distribution does not automatically guarantee adequacy or effectiveness. Uniform support structures may fail to address the unique challenges encountered by implementers in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities, thereby limiting their responsiveness to local needs.

These findings imply that the ALS program has established relatively equitable support mechanisms that provide comparable assistance to implementers across different demographic groups. Nevertheless, maintaining equity should be complemented by efforts to enhance the quality, flexibility, and contextual responsiveness of support systems. Strengthening localized interventions, improving resource allocation, and addressing context-specific challenges may further enhance the effectiveness of ALS implementation and ensure that support systems remain responsive to the diverse realities of rural learning environments.

Table 8. Fisher's Exact Test of Relationship Between the Perceived Level of Effectiveness of the Learning Pathways Carried out by the ALS Implementers and the Perceived Level of Impactful practices

F	p-value	Interpretation
10.20	0.002	Significant

Table 8 presents the results of Fisher's Exact Test examining the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of learning pathways and the perceived level of impactful practices carried out by Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in rural areas. The findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between the two variables, indicating that the effectiveness of learning pathways is closely associated with the extent to which impactful practices are implemented. This suggests that meaningful learning outcomes are not achieved solely through curriculum delivery but are strongly influenced by the quality of instructional and support practices employed by ALS implementers.

The results indicate that implementers who consistently apply learner-centered and context-responsive practices are more likely to facilitate effective learning pathways. Practices such as personalized planning, contextualization of learning materials, psychosocial support, and learner-focused interventions contribute to creating learning experiences that are relevant, engaging, and responsive to individual learner needs. These strategies enable implementers to address barriers commonly encountered by ALS learners, including socio-economic challenges, interrupted schooling, and limited educational opportunities. Consequently, the successful implementation of these practices strengthens learner participation, persistence, and progression within the program.

The findings are supported by existing literature emphasizing the critical role of impactful educational practices in improving learning outcomes. Jennings and Greenberg (2021) highlighted that socio-emotional support enhances learner motivation, self-efficacy, and persistence, particularly among vulnerable learners. Similarly, Tikly et al. (2020) and Gay (2020) found that contextualized and learner-centered instructional approaches increase educational relevance, engagement, and knowledge retention. Strong community linkages and responsive support systems have likewise been associated with improved participation and achievement in alternative and non-formal education settings (Unterhalter et al., 2022). These studies collectively suggest that effective learning pathways emerge when instructional practices are intentionally designed to address learners' academic, social, and contextual needs.

The findings carry important implications for ALS implementation. The significant relationship between impactful practices and learning pathway effectiveness highlights the need to strengthen interventions that promote learner engagement, contextualized

instruction, psychosocial support, and community integration. It further underscores the importance of continuous professional development and institutional support in equipping implementers with the competencies necessary to apply these practices consistently and effectively. Ultimately, enhancing impactful practices can contribute to more meaningful learning experiences, improved learner outcomes, and the long-term sustainability of ALS programs in rural communities.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study demonstrate that Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementers in ALS Cluster 2, Surigao del Sur possess a generally high level of instructional competence, particularly in addressing learner diversity, creating supportive learning environments, engaging with communities, and pursuing professional growth. These competencies indicate that implementers are capable of responding to the complex and diverse needs of out-of-school youth and adult learners in rural settings. However, the

relatively lower assessment of content knowledge and pedagogy suggests the need for continued enhancement of pedagogical content expertise, particularly in managing multi-level and multidisciplinary learning competencies required in ALS implementation.

The study further concludes that ALS implementers benefit from generally adequate support systems characterized by strong administrative supervision, peer collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and access to instructional resources. While support mechanisms appear to be equitably distributed across demographic groups, variations in digital infrastructure and localized resource availability indicate that contextual disparities continue to exist. Thus, equitable provision of support does not necessarily guarantee responsiveness to the unique challenges encountered in rural learning environments.

The findings also establish that ALS learning pathways are highly effective in promoting learner engagement, participation, and progression. The effectiveness of these pathways is largely attributed to learner-centered practices such as individualized instruction, contextualization of learning materials, supportive learning environments, and the meaningful connection of learning experiences to real-life opportunities. These practices reflect the core principles of ALS and contribute significantly to creating relevant and inclusive educational experiences.

Moreover, the study confirms that educational attainment and participation in trainings and seminars significantly influence instructional competence, emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development. Most importantly, impactful practices were found to have a significant relationship with the effectiveness of learning pathways, demonstrating that responsive, contextualized, and psychosocially supportive approaches directly contribute to positive learning outcomes. Overall, the study concludes that strengthening instructional competence, enhancing support systems, and institutionalizing impactful practices are essential for sustaining effective ALS implementation and improving educational opportunities for marginalized learners in rural communities.

VI. CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS

The authors of this research collaborated to review and approved the final version of the study. This insures the study completeness and integrity. Author Dr. Irene Grumez played an integral part in the editing, writing, supervision, data analysis and encoding. Author Marvin John U. Uriarte concentrated on the fieldwork, distribution, and retrieval of survey instruments, doing comprehensive data analysis, and adhering to ethical guidelines throughout the study. These complementary contribution underscores the collaborative endeavours and mutual obligations as adviser and mentee, and both are authors to generate a thorough and ethically robust research output. There were no additional contributors to this study.

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VIII. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Authors Declared no potential conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, and/ or publication of this article.

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