

Extent of Educational Partnerships in the Implementation of Alternative Learning System in Northern Samar Division: Inputs for Enhancing Program Delivery

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Abstract—The study investigates the extent and effectiveness of educational partnerships in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in Northern Samar Division, Philippines. Framed by Republic Act No. 11510 and DepEd Order No. 024, s. 2022, the research examines how collaborative engagements among local government units (LGUs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private entities, and community stakeholders contribute to ALS program delivery. Employing a qualitative-descriptive research design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, small group discussions, and document analysis involving ALS implementers, learners, and partner representatives across selected island and mainland municipalities. Findings revealed that partnerships are instrumental in providing learning venues, instructional materials, livelihood and skills training, and psychosocial support—essential elements in ensuring accessible and inclusive ALS delivery. However, the study also identified challenges such as the lack of formalized agreements, sustainability issues, and inconsistent stakeholder engagement. The study concludes that while educational partnerships significantly enhance ALS implementation, strategic improvements in coordination, policy support, and capacity-building are crucial. Recommendations include institutionalizing partnership mechanisms, strengthening monitoring systems, and fostering inclusive stakeholder participation to ensure sustained and effective ALS delivery, particularly in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities.

Index Terms—Alternative Learning System, Educational Partnership, Inclusive Education, Out-of-School.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education remains a cornerstone of global efforts to ensure equitable access to quality learning opportunities, particularly for marginalized populations. In developing contexts like the Northern Samar Division of the Philippines, however, achieving this goal is hampered by structural inequalities, limited resources, and geographic isolation (Cayabas et al., 2023; Reyes-Carbaja, 2023). These barriers disproportionately affect out-of-school youth and adults, rendering traditional educational pathways inaccessible. The Philippine Alternative Learning System (ALS) thus emerges as

a critical mechanism designed to provide flexible, non-formal learning opportunities tailored to the unique needs of these underserved groups (RA 11510, 2020).

Recognizing the multifaceted challenges confronting ALS implementation—such as inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, and limited manpower—policy makers and researchers alike have underscored the pivotal role of educational partnerships in sustaining and enhancing ALS delivery (Salendab & Cogo, 2022; Alvarez, 2024). Republic Act No. 11510, or the ALS Act of 2020, institutionalizes ALS and mandates the Department of Education (DepEd) to forge partnerships with local government units (LGUs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and private sector actors to bolster ALS programs. Notably, Sections 5 and 9 of RA 11510 emphasize the co-establishment of learning centers, resource-sharing mechanisms, and accreditation of Learning Service Providers (LSPs) to ensure inclusive and sustainable educational services.

Empirical evidence further supports the value of such collaborations. For instance, the 2024 ALS Division Report in Northern Samar documents multi-sectoral contributions, including LGU-funded community learning center (CLC) repairs, NGO donations of digital resources, and skills training from agencies like TESDA and Plan Philippines. These public-private and community-based initiatives have addressed material shortages and facilitated outreach in geographically isolated areas (Cruzat, Cruzat, & Javillonar, 2022; Termes et al., 2020).

Scholars argue that these partnerships not only supplement resource constraints but also introduce pedagogical innovations and technological tools that enrich the ALS learning experience (Cowie et al., 2017; Alvarez, 2024). In rural settings, familial and communal participation plays an indispensable role in sustaining ALS by providing venues, manpower, and motivational support for learners (Delmo & Yazon, 2020; Wayas & Dinoro, 2023). However, despite extensive documentation of stakeholder involvement, much of the existing literature remains descriptive, with limited empirical

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inquiry into the structure, functionality, and measurable impact of these partnerships at the local level (Salendab & Cogo, 2022; Termes *et al.*, 2020).

This research identifies a critical gap in understanding how educational partnerships concretely influence ALS implementation in resource-constrained environments such as Northern Samar. Specifically, there is a need to examine the *extent*, *nature*, and *effectiveness* of collaborative efforts in shaping key dimensions of ALS delivery, including the provision of learning spaces, instructional support, program sustainability, and community engagement.

Thus, the present study aims to explore the dynamics of educational partnerships in the implementation of ALS within the Northern Samar Division. Grounded in the principle that ALS success depends not solely on DepEd but on a whole-of-society approach (RA 11510; Cayabas *et al.*, 2023), this study investigates the roles of government agencies, LGUs, NGOs, private entities, and communities in sustaining and improving ALS outcomes. By doing so, it seeks to generate evidence-based insights that inform policy, guide strategic partnership development, and ultimately enhance ALS program delivery.

In line with the national agenda of inclusive and lifelong learning for all, the findings of this research will provide practical recommendations for optimizing stakeholder collaboration. These insights aim to support the realization of ALS's transformative potential, particularly in areas marked by persistent educational inequity, such as Northern Samar.

2. Methods

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive design. It is particularly suited to exploring the nuances and complexities of educational partnerships in the context of the Alternative Learning System (ALS). This design allows researchers to gather in-depth, context-rich descriptions of how partnerships are formed, maintained, and utilized within the ALS framework. By employing methods such as interviews, small groups, and document analysis, researchers can capture the diverse perspectives of stakeholders—including educators, community leaders, and learners—regarding the effectiveness and challenges of these partnerships. This approach helps in understanding the underlying factors that influence the implementation and success of the ALS program in Northern Samar, providing a comprehensive view of the dynamics involved.

This study adhered to the triangulation requirements for qualitative descriptive studies. Triangulation is a research strategy that aims to improve the validity and dependability of findings by utilizing various methods or data sources. Research uses a variety of approaches for gathering triangulation data, including focus groups, surveys, observations, interviews, and document analysis.

B. Research Locale

This study was conducted in the three island municipalities of Northern Samar—Capul, San Antonio, and San Vicente—

along with the municipalities of Catarman, Lavezares, and San Isidro. The island municipalities are characterized by geographic isolation, posing distinct challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and its corresponding educational partnerships. In contrast, the municipalities of Catarman, Lavezares, and San Isidro, due to their more accessible locations, have historically benefited from a wider range of educational partnerships and support systems. This contrast in geographic conditions provides a valuable framework for examining the extent, effectiveness, and sustainability of ALS partnerships across diverse contexts.

The implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in geographically isolated and underserved communities necessitates strong educational partnerships to address accessibility challenges and resource limitations. Republic Act No. 11510 emphasizes the role of various stakeholders—including local government units, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and private institutions—in strengthening ALS delivery through partnerships. This study will examine the extent and effectiveness of such collaborations in six municipalities of Northern Samar: the island municipalities of Capul, San Antonio, and San Vicente, as well as the more accessible municipalities of Catarman, Lavezares, and San Isidro. The island municipalities present unique challenges due to their relative isolation, higher levels of poverty, and lower access to formal education, necessitating tailored educational interventions and strong community engagement. Additionally, cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping ALS implementation, as local traditions and leadership structures influence the success of educational programs. In contrast, Catarman, Lavezares, and San Isidro benefit from better infrastructure and more established educational partnerships, providing a comparative perspective on how ALS initiatives operate in different geographical and socio-economic contexts. By analyzing these varied settings, the study aims to generate insights into best practices, challenges, and strategies for enhancing ALS partnerships in both isolated and accessible municipalities, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on educational equity and inclusive learning in rural and underserved regions.

The inclusion of Catarman, Lavezares, and San Isidro in this study provides a valuable comparative framework for understanding ALS implementation in different geographic and socio-economic contexts. Unlike the island municipalities, these areas are more accessible and have historically received greater support from educational partners due to their infrastructural advantages. As major beneficiaries of ALS-related initiatives, these municipalities serve as important benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of educational partnerships in well-connected areas. Examining these municipalities will provide insights into how resource availability, government support, and stakeholder collaboration influence ALS outcomes. Furthermore, understanding how partnerships function in these relatively advantaged areas will help identify scalable models and strategies that could be

adapted to more remote, underserved communities, thereby strengthening the overall implementation of ALS across Northern Samar.

C. Respondents of the Study

The population for this study comprised individuals directly involved in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) across three (3) island municipalities in Northern Samar: Capul, San Antonio, and San Vicente. This includes ALS Coordinators, who oversee ALS programs in these areas, and ALS teachers, who are responsible for delivering the programs to learners. Community leaders, such as barangay officials, local government representatives, and other stakeholders, also play a crucial role in supporting ALS initiatives. Additionally, partner organization representatives from NGOs, religious groups, or other collaborating entities contribute to the success of the program. Finally, learners enrolled in ALS programs provide insights into how these partnerships influence their learning experiences.

Given the qualitative-descriptive nature of the study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants who are most knowledgeable and involved in ALS partnerships within the four island municipalities. Purposive sampling allows for the intentional selection of individuals who can provide rich, relevant, and diverse insights into the extent and nature of educational partnerships in the ALS.

The sample size for the study consists of 14 key informants. This number was guided by the principle of data saturation, wherein data collection was carried out until no new themes, patterns, or insights emerged from the interviews, indicating that further data would likely yield minimal additional value.

The selection of key informants from three island municipalities in the first district of Northern Samar ensures a comprehensive understanding of the extent of educational partnerships in varied geographic and socio-economic contexts within the region. By focusing on key stakeholders involved in ALS implementation, the study aims to gather in-depth data on the dynamics of partnerships, the challenges faced, and the impact of these collaborations on the effectiveness of ALS programs.

This targeted approach to sampling is essential for capturing the unique experiences and perspectives of those who are integral to ALS implementation in the selected municipalities, thereby providing a robust foundation for understanding the role and extent of educational partnerships in this context.

D. Instrumentation (Validation and Scoring of Instruments)

To offer a comprehensive understanding of the extent and impact of educational partnerships in the ALS implementation, and provide valuable inputs for enhancing program delivery, three (3) research instruments were utilized, namely: semi-structured interviews, Small Group Discussions (SGD), and document analysis.

Semi-structured interviews gathered in-depth information and insights from ALS teachers, stakeholders, and learners about their experiences, perceptions, and involvement in the implementation of ALS. Interview guides with open-ended

questions were tailored to each group of key informants. Questions were focused on the nature of partnerships, challenges faced, the impact of these partnerships on program delivery, and suggestions for improvement.

Small Group Discussions (SGD) facilitated group interaction and explored collective views and shared experiences among participants. SGD guides include questions that encourage discussion on how educational partnerships are formed, maintained, and their effectiveness in the ALS program. These SGDs can be conducted separately for key informants to ensure comfort and relevance.

Document analysis reviews existing records, reports, and documents related to the ALS program and educational partnerships in their respective municipality. This includes a checklist or guide for analyzing documents such as partnership agreements, progress reports, and program evaluations.

Further, an electronic recorder was used during the interviews to ensure that all responses were captured in detail for data analysis.

The validation process began with the development of the instruments, including the interview guides, small group discussion guides, document analysis checklists, observation guides, and any questionnaires that may be used. Each instrument was meticulously crafted to align with the study's objectives and research questions, ensuring that they capture the full scope of information needed to understand the extent of educational partnerships in the ALS program.

Once the instruments were developed, they underwent a rigorous validation process involving experts in the field of education, particularly those familiar with the Alternative Learning System and educational partnerships. These experts will review the instruments for content validity, assessing whether the questions and items are appropriate, comprehensive, and relevant to the research objectives. They provided feedback on the clarity of the questions, the relevance of the topics covered, and the overall structure of the instruments. This feedback was carefully considered, and necessary revisions were made to improve the quality and effectiveness of the instruments.

In addition to expert validation, a pilot testing phase was conducted to further refine the research instruments. The pilot test involved a small sample of respondents from the municipality of Laoang, comparable to the key informants who took part in the actual study. The purpose of the pilot test was to identify any potential issues with the instruments, such as ambiguous questions, difficulties in understanding the instructions, or any logistical challenges in administering the instruments. Data collected from the pilot test will be analyzed to assess the reliability of the instruments, and any patterns of inconsistency or confusion were addressed through revisions.

After incorporating the feedback from both the expert review and pilot testing, the research instruments were finalized. This validation process ensured that the instruments were not only valid and reliable but also practical and user-friendly for both the researchers and the participants. By thoroughly validating the research instruments, the study aimed to gather accurate and

meaningful data that would lead to a deeper understanding of the role and impact of educational partnerships in the implementation of the ALS program in Northern Samar.

E. Data Gathering Procedure

This study utilized qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, small group discussions (SGDs), and document analysis, to gain a deeper understanding of the educational partnerships involved in the Alternative Learning System (ALS). These methods facilitated a thorough exploration of stakeholder experiences, helped identify best practices, and evaluated the challenges faced in implementing ALS. By employing a triangulation approach, the study will enhance data credibility through the comparison of findings from various sources.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including ALS Coordinators, ALS Supervisors, Heads of Partner Agencies from both the government and private sectors, as well as representatives from NGOs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and faith-based groups. Purposeful sampling was used to select informants who were directly involved in ALS partnerships, while snowball sampling was employed to gather additional perspectives. The interview guide was crafted based on the research objectives, concentrating on the roles, contributions, and challenges of ALS partnerships throughout the pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation phases. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share their insights freely, leading to rich, descriptive responses. Each interview lasted around 45–60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or through virtual platforms when necessary. With the consent of participants, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns, variations, and insights from different stakeholders.

In addition to interviews, small group discussions (SGDs) were held with ALS educators (Instructional Managers, Mobile Teachers), community leaders (Barangay Officials, Local Government Representatives), and representatives from partner organizations. These SGDs provided a space for participants to share their collective experiences, fostering a lively exchange of ideas and perspectives on ALS partnerships. Each group includes 1-5 participants, and the discussions last between 60 and 90 minutes. A moderator steered the conversation using a structured discussion guide, making sure that everyone had a chance to contribute. The sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed, and a thematic analysis was carried out to compare insights from different groups.

To supplement the data gathered from interviews and SGDs, a document analysis was conducted to review existing records that provide evidence of ALS partnerships, their implementation, and their outcomes. The documents analyzed include Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to evaluate the scope and nature of partnerships, meeting minutes to gain insight into key decision-making processes, program reports to assess the effectiveness of partnerships based on documented outcomes, and ALS learning resource materials to examine the contributions of

partner organizations in developing instructional content. A document review matrix was used to systematically analyze the content based on key themes such as stakeholder roles, contributions, challenges, and best practices. Findings from the document review were cross-verified with data from interviews and SGDs to ensure consistency and enhance the reliability of the results.

F. Treatment of Data

Documents such as resolutions, committee reports, and other materials from educational partners were subjected to document analysis.

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data taken from interviews, written responses, and accessed documents. This process deduced the meaning behind the words the participants used. This was accomplished by discovering repeating themes in the text/interview transcriptions. The meaningful themes revealed key insights into the data. The outcome of thematic analysis was the categories that will arise from the codes identified during the coding of responses.

The transcripts of the interviews and written responses of the groups of key informants were treated individually following the coding and categorization of themes. This included the extent of educational partnerships of stakeholders, and the internal and external issues and challenges confronting its participation in ALS implementation.

The codes were named from the actual words of the informants/interviewees. Labeling and coding of items were done to identify the similarities and differences of data collected from the various informants.

Descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts, sums, and ranks, were used to present the responses of the key informants in tables.

All these augmented the interpretation of the extent of educational partnerships in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System.

G. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were rigorously upheld throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose of research, data confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. All data were anonymized to protect participant identities, and audio recordings, transcripts, and documents will be securely stored, accessible only to the research team in adherence to Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173).

3. Results

Figure 1 presents the roles and contributions of educational partners in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System in Northern Samar Division. These roles were identified as resource mobilization and provision; coordination and communication; skills and capacity building; advocacy and outreach; monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability; and psychosocial and motivational support.

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the data is the critical role of resource mobilization and provision in the

effective implementation of ALS. Stakeholders, particularly local government units (LGUs), barangay officials, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), were cited as crucial contributors of educational materials and logistical support. As one informant noted, "The Sangguniang Kabataan provided educational supplies for ALS learners and a printer." Another shared, "They helped a lot with learning materials. For example, in printing modules, they provided bond papers." These findings affirm the provisions of Republic Act No. 11510, which institutionalizes the ALS program and underscores the importance of partnerships for resource-sharing. The law highlights that partnerships should help address deficiencies in instructional materials and infrastructure—a sentiment echoed by informants who stated that despite the aid, "more learning materials... are needed." This aligns with the work of Termes *et al.* (2020), who underscore the role of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in providing supplementary resources such as digital tools, facilities, and school supplies that enhance ALS program delivery. Moreover, some respondents indicated the use of personal resources to fill these gaps. One ALS implementer said, "I often use personal resources to print the modules," reflecting the sustainability challenges of the program. This issue resonates with Salendab and Cogo (2022), who argue that while stakeholder engagement has improved ALS delivery, the program still heavily depends on grassroots and often informal support.

In addition to physical materials, stakeholders contribute significantly to program and funding support. Barangay LGUs, for example, were reported to provide annual financial allocations specifically for ALS. One respondent explained, "All barangays in the municipality provide the same amount yearly for our ALS program and projects." The use of the Special Education Fund (SEF) to support operational needs—including transportation and training expenses—was a recurring strategy across several communities. These local funding efforts confirm the findings of the ALS Division Office in Northern Samar (2024), which noted the vital role of LGUs in maintaining continuity and quality in ALS implementation. Alvarez (2024) further supports this, asserting that these collaborations are key in broadening ALS reach and ensuring equitable delivery. However, some concerns were raised regarding insufficiencies, as one informant noted, "Although it is insufficient, it is still a big help." This observation aligns with Wayas and Dinoro's (2023) findings that resource limitations, especially in rural areas, often necessitate more robust financial backing and diversified partnerships. Additionally, these resource mobilization efforts are often formalized through legislative mechanisms such as Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) and barangay ordinances. As described by a key informant, "We also channel ALS funding through barangay ordinances and resolutions." Such practices reflect the guidance of RA 11510, particularly Section 9, which mandates formal accreditation and agreements for Learning Service Providers (LSPs) to ensure program accountability and sustainability.

However, not all partnerships are structured. Informants acknowledged that in many cases, support remains informal and relationship-based, with one noting, "Partnerships are based

only on personal relationships—not formalized." This lack of formal mechanisms can hinder long-term planning and systematic evaluation, echoing concerns raised by Reyes-Carbaja (2023) regarding the over-reliance on goodwill and *bayanihan* in community-based education programs.

The data highlight a clear correlation between multi-stakeholder partnerships and improved ALS service delivery. As Cowie *et al.* (2017) point out, educational collaborations can lead to innovative practices and adaptive responses that cater to learners' diverse backgrounds and needs. The respondents' insights confirm this view, while also suggesting the need for more structured and sustainable mechanisms to ensure that these partnerships are not only effective but also enduring.

Another major theme that emerged from the data is stakeholders' contribution to skills development and capacity building for both learners and ALS implementers. This aspect of the ALS program not only addresses academic gaps but also equips learners with practical, life-ready skills. Several informants acknowledged the role of stakeholders such as TESDA, barangay units, and NGOs in organizing technical and livelihood training. One stated, "TESDA offers NC II and other short-term skills training and starter toolkits through scholarship programs like STEP or TWSP." This aligns with Republic Act No. 11510, which encourages stakeholders to assist in learner assessment and skills enhancement through community-based training. According to Alvarez (2024), such partnerships help bridge the gap between basic education and employment, preparing ALS graduates for real-world challenges. Likewise, Wayas and Dinoro (2023) emphasize the significance of livelihood and job-readiness training in rural areas where economic opportunities are limited.

Key informants also reported that learners consistently express the need for more of these opportunities. One learner advocate remarked, "They want to have more job-related trainings," while another emphasized, "More real-life skills training and linkages to job opportunities." This points to a strong learner demand for programs that are both practical and employment-oriented, a view supported by Termes *et al.* (2020), who argue that public-private partnerships (PPPs) can introduce industry-aligned curricula and real employment pathways.

Importantly, the focus on skills extends beyond learners to ALS partners and educators. Informants mentioned that capacity-building initiatives for stakeholders help create a unified and effective ALS ecosystem. One local implementer stressed, "It is good to have capacity building for ALS partners so that program implementation becomes unified and seamless." Another remarked, "Continuous capacity building for both teachers and partners is important," indicating that knowledge sharing and training are vital not only for program delivery but also for strengthening collaborative relationships. These reflections reinforce the findings of Salendab and Cogo (2022), who noted that continuous policy review and stakeholder education are essential for ALS to remain responsive to evolving learner needs. Further, Cruzat, Cruzat, and Javillonar (2022) emphasize that capacity building among stakeholders fosters program alignment and enhances the

quality of educational service delivery. One practical suggestion mentioned was, "Provide orientation to partners about ALS," a sentiment echoed in RA 11510's push for structured training and monitoring mechanisms for accredited learning service providers. Moreover, capacity-building efforts have psychosocial benefits. One respondent noted, "ALS implementers need more support in partnership-building. Training or orientation on this area could help a lot," demonstrating that equipping ALS educators with the necessary tools not only enhances their technical ability but also boosts their morale, ultimately benefiting learner outcomes.

A central theme in the successful implementation of the Alternative Learning System is the presence of strong and consistent coordination and communication mechanisms among stakeholders. According to the data, effective engagement among DepEd, LGUs, barangay leaders, and other partner organizations often begins and is sustained through regular meetings, consultations, and open channels of communication. One informant emphasized, "Through meetings and the implementation of PPAs for ALS," indicating that program planning and implementation are frequently collaborative.

Regular engagement was also highlighted as essential for trust-building. One respondent shared, "Regular communication through meetings and updates is key to building trust." This finding is supported by Salendab and Cogo (2022), who assert that ongoing stakeholder collaboration fosters policy enhancements and a more adaptive program environment. It also aligns with Cowie *et al.* (2017), who found that consistent communication can lead to innovations in pedagogy and resource delivery, particularly when informed by stakeholder feedback.

However, while some communities benefit from structured coordination, others face challenges due to inconsistent or informal communication practices. One informant admitted, "In our case, they are not formally formed. There's no structured approach." Another reflected, "Engagement is irregular... We would prefer regular coordination meetings or shared planning sessions with ALS focal persons and teachers." These statements underscore the variability in coordination practices across regions, and the pressing need to institutionalize communication protocols.

RA 11510 mandates the establishment of clear governance mechanisms, including monitoring and evaluation systems, which depend heavily on robust inter-agency coordination. Yet, gaps remain. While some barangays host quarterly or monthly stakeholder meetings—"Monthly Meet & Greet with the Barangay Officials (ALS Kumustahan)"—others report engaging only "once a year." This inconsistency threatens program sustainability and highlights the need for systematic coordination platforms, as advocated by Alvarez (2024).

Regular communication also plays a vital role in ensuring that partners remain informed and motivated. As one ALS teacher observed, "Continuous visits and cooperation with them..." which enhances accountability and strengthens implementation. These interactions often occur through both formal meetings and informal channels, such as messaging apps

or community visits. One respondent noted, "Communication is mostly informal but consistent, often through messaging apps, regular meetings, or field visits." The data also suggest that shared goals and vision alignment are essential elements of effective communication. One key informant remarked, "Ensure everyone is aligned with the program's goals," while another explained that aligning visions and missions is an important consideration in forming partnerships. Cayabas *et al.* (2023) and Reyes-Carbaja (2023) support this view, asserting that alignment of values and objectives is critical for achieving long-term collaboration and educational success, particularly in community-based learning contexts.

Despite these promising practices, informants also reported barriers such as limited partner responsiveness and misaligned expectations. For example, one stated, "They ignore ALS issues because they believe DepEd is solely responsible." Another respondent reflected on delayed actions due to bureaucracy and resource constraints: "Some partners take time to act due to limited resources or bureaucracy." These findings echo the concerns of Termes *et al.* (2020), who caution that while PPPs can be effective, their success depends on clarity of roles, consistent communication, and shared responsibility—not just reliance on DepEd.

Ultimately, the voices of ALS implementers and partners suggest that regular, transparent, and inclusive communication is indispensable. It enables collaborative planning, ensures all actors are aligned with program objectives, and provides a feedback loop to adjust strategies as needed. As Cruzat, Cruzat, and Javillonar (2022) conclude, communication is a cornerstone of effective educational partnerships—one that ensures both academic progress and community trust.

The data reveal that beyond material and technical support, stakeholders significantly contribute to the psychosocial well-being and motivational needs of ALS learners. This dimension, though often overlooked in formal policy discourse, emerged strongly in the narratives of key informants who emphasized how emotional and social support sustains learner engagement, especially among vulnerable populations. One informant observed that ALS learners have counseling needs because many come from broken families, were previously out of school, are unemployed, have children, or lack family support for their schooling. These conditions highlight the complex realities ALS learners face—realities that cannot be addressed by education alone. The findings are consistent with Reyes-Carbaja (2023), who underscores the importance of communal unity in mitigating socio-cultural barriers to learning. In many communities, the support and encouragement of barangay leaders, families, and even ALS alumni have become lifelines for learners navigating both academic and personal struggles.

This emotional backing not only helps learners stay in the program but also boosts their self-confidence. One respondent stated, "Educational partners help increase learner motivation to continue," while another reflected that ALS learners do not only receive academic instruction but also emotional support. These testimonies affirm that educational partnerships must be holistic, addressing not only cognitive needs but also the learners' emotional resilience. This holistic approach is aligned

with the work of Delmo and Yazon (2020), who assert that family encouragement and community involvement enhance retention and learner engagement. Indeed, respondents described how even small acts—like providing snacks, recognizing learner achievements, or simply being present—can have a large motivational impact, as evidenced by learners expressing gratitude and increased confidence.

The role of stakeholders in bridging learners to broader community services was also cited. For instance, one informant stated, "We coordinate and link learners to other services such as health, livelihood, or psychosocial support." This integrative approach reflects Salendab and Cogo's (2022) observation that partnerships allow ALS to evolve beyond formal instruction into a more comprehensive social support system. The transformative impact of these partnerships is especially significant for marginalized learners, with one informant highlighting, "The ALS program is viewed positively for its ability to provide a second chance at education and improve learners' lives, giving hope to deprived, depressed, and underserved individuals." This aligns with Alvarez (2024), who asserts that ALS, through collaborative efforts, becomes a vehicle for inclusion, empowerment, and long-term social mobility.

However, challenges persist. One ALS teacher noted that learners feel embarrassed because of the poor learning conditions, suggesting that psychosocial support must be coupled with improvements in learning environments to fully foster learner dignity and engagement. Another concern was the lack of consistent training opportunities, which led to demotivation among learners: "They often express disappointment when there are no trainings offered in their area." These issues indicate that while psychosocial support is valued, it must be systematically integrated and not treated as incidental.

The voices of ALS implementers and learners make it clear that educational partnerships must address the whole learner—mind, heart, and circumstances. As Cowie *et al.* (2017) assert, innovative partnerships bring more than pedagogy; they bring empathy, responsiveness, and sustainability. Therefore, strengthening these psychosocial components is not merely supplementary—it is essential for the program's transformative potential to be fully realized.

The sustainability of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) depends not only on its initial implementation but also on consistent and collaborative monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Informants underscored the importance of tracking learner progress, reviewing accomplishments, and assessing the quality of partnerships to inform future strategies. As one participant shared, "Through ALS teacher accomplishments, they use this as a basis to assess whether their partnership with ALS is effective." Similarly, another added, "They also track enrollment and completion rates to measure success." These practices reflect Section 9 of Republic Act No. 11510, which mandates the institutionalization of joint monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms among DepEd and its partners. Alvarez (2024) affirms that such collaborative accountability ensures that ALS programs remain relevant,

equitable, and outcomes-based. In line with this, Termes *et al.* (2020) stress the role of result-oriented evaluations in enhancing ALS delivery through shared responsibilities and data-driven decision-making.

A particularly promising practice cited by multiple informants is the use of feedback sessions and success stories to understand program effectiveness. One respondent noted, "Through feedback sessions, interviews with our learners, and sharing stories of success or struggles..." This reflects a participatory evaluation culture that values both qualitative and quantitative evidence, promoting transparency and trust among stakeholders, as suggested by Salendab and Cogo (2022).

Despite these successes, the data also reveal substantial gaps in structured monitoring systems. One informant admitted, "Only the LGU participates by attending the ALS graduation. There is no formal assessment." Another confirmed, "There is no formal structure for partnership building or evaluation," signaling that in some areas, monitoring remains largely symbolic or reactive rather than strategic. These inconsistencies highlight the need for more institutionalized tools and guidelines, such as the "Monitoring & Evaluation Tool for ALS Service Providers," which can standardize assessments across various contexts.

Another key aspect of sustainability is the formalization of partnerships through policy mechanisms, such as Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) and local ordinances. One informant explained, "We also channel ALS funding through barangay ordinances and resolutions," suggesting that legislative backing can institutionalize support and secure long-term resources. This strategy is echoed by Cruzat, Cruzat, and Javillonar (2022), who argue that policies and ordinances can anchor partnerships beyond individual personalities or political terms.

The importance of early-stage collaboration also surfaced as an essential strategy for long-term sustainability. Informants emphasized that partnerships formed at the beginning of program implementation often laid the foundation for deeper engagement and shared ownership. One informant noted, "Early-stage collaborations are effective because this is where partner support begins." These reflections confirm Cayabas *et al.* (2023), who found that early coordination with LGUs and NGOs is instrumental in ensuring long-term program viability. Finally, sustainability also depends on community integration and local participation. Informants highlighted the establishment of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) as a concrete example of how collaboration can lead to lasting infrastructure. These centers, created and built through collaboration between DepEd, LGUs, and other stakeholders, demonstrate the physical embodiment of sustainable partnerships. They are vital, especially in geographically isolated or disadvantaged areas where learners often lack access to formal school settings.

The data affirm that monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability are deeply interconnected processes in the ALS ecosystem. Effective monitoring not only measures success but also strengthens accountability and drives program improvements. However, to fully realize these benefits, there must be consistent structures, policy support, and stakeholder

ownership. As Wayas and Dinoro (2023) aptly put it, where institutional support is limited, it is the strength and continuity of local partnerships that sustain ALS programs. In this regard, the ALS model offers a powerful example of how community-driven education, when systematically supported and evaluated, can thrive even under challenging circumstances.

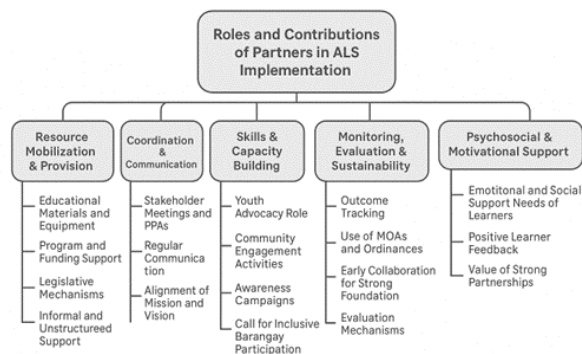


Fig. 1. Roles and contributions of partners in ALS implementation

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, educational partners in Northern Samar contribute significantly to ALS implementation through multifaceted roles such as resource mobilization, technical training, advocacy, and psychosocial support. These efforts reflect the collaborative intent of Republic Act No. 11510 and demonstrate a working whole-of-society approach. This implies that sustaining and scaling ALS requires institutionalized mechanisms to formalize and coordinate multi-sectoral involvement, ensuring long-term partner engagement and shared responsibility across stakeholders.

Educational partnerships have notably improved ALS program accessibility, relevance, and quality by providing teaching materials, logistical support, and learning spaces, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Contextualized interventions like transportation and livelihood assistance further strengthened program impact. This implies that ALS policies should prioritize partner-supported, community-based interventions to address equity gaps and reinforce localized delivery strategies tailored to the needs of marginalized learners.

Best practices such as early coordination, shared ownership, transparent communication, and context-specific resource sharing enhance ALS relevance and sustainability. However, inconsistent partner participation, lack of structured mechanisms, limited implementer initiative, and chronic funding issues continue to hamper these practices. This implies that institutionalizing these best practices through formal agreements, dedicated coordination roles, and streamlined funding processes is essential to overcome fragmentation and promote consistent, high-quality program delivery.

Stakeholders widely recognize the transformative role of ALS in providing second-chance education but also highlight weaknesses such as irregular support, insufficient funding, and limited policy integration. Local leadership and inter-agency collaboration emerged as key determinants of program success.

This implies that ALS success depends not only on grassroots innovation but also on top-down policy reforms, increased investment in teacher support and infrastructure, and stronger inclusion of ALS within mainstream education systems.

Recommended interventions—including formalized MOUs, district-level partnership coordinators, stakeholder orientation, integration with TESDA, and strengthened teacher support—address the core structural and capacity gaps in ALS. This implies that a strategic, systems-level response is needed to translate these recommendations into practice, ensuring that ALS remains an inclusive, adaptive, and community-rooted platform for lifelong learning.

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