

EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM: BASIS FOR ENHANCED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Division of Batangas, focusing on systemic challenges. Utilizing a descriptive research design, data were gathered from 74 administrators and 83 implementers through a mixed-method approach involving questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Findings indicated that ALS delivery is moderately implemented, specifically regarding financial resources, linkages, and beneficiaries. However, a significant perceptual gap exists between administrators and implementers concerning the availability and utilization of resources. Despite this, both groups identified consistent barriers: low enrollment, insufficient funding, lack of contextualized materials, and minimal stakeholder engagement from local government and community organizations. To address these gaps, the study proposed output-based and outcomes-based management strategies. These focus on sustainable resource allocation, intensified stakeholder involvement, and innovative teaching methods tailored to diverse learner needs. These strategies aim to enhance program delivery, ensuring a more inclusive and accessible educational framework for ALS learners in the region.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System, teaching performance, physical facilities and equipment, financial resources and linkages, program beneficiaries.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for fostering global peace, stability, and prosperity. It serves as a powerful tool for promoting social equity, economic progress, and cultural development while creating a foundation for international collaboration based on mutual understanding and tolerance. Beyond individual empowerment, education is integral to eradicating poverty by equipping people with the skills and knowledge needed for self-reliance and meaningful participation in society.

Despite the universal right to free basic education enshrined in the Philippine Constitution, numerous Filipinos remain unable to access or complete formal education. Traditional schooling, conducted in classrooms with structured teacher-student interactions, is not always feasible for learners facing socio-economic, geographical, or personal challenges. Alternative approaches, designed to address such barriers, are often overlooked or undervalued despite their potential to bridge educational gaps.

Globally, illiteracy is a persistent challenge that impedes economic growth and social progress, particularly in Southeast Asian and African nations. In the Philippines, one of the countries in Southeast Asia with the highest poverty incidence rates, the effects of

illiteracy are deeply intertwined with economic hardship. Vulnerable groups such as Out-of-School Children (OSC), Out-of-School Youths (OSY), and Out-of-School Adults (OSA) are particularly affected, as poverty limits their access to quality education (Apao et al., 2014).

To address this, the Philippine government has implemented various policies and programs emphasizing non-formal and alternative education systems. Grounded in the 1987 Constitution, which mandates the establishment of a complete and inclusive educational system, the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) was created in 1987 under Executive Order No. 117 to expand access to learning opportunities for marginalized groups. In 2004, the bureau was renamed the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) through Executive Order No. 356, reaffirming its commitment to providing flexible and adaptive educational approaches to out-of-school learners.

Aligned with global initiatives such as the Education for All (EFA) 2015 goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Alternative Learning System (ALS) aims to reduce illiteracy, improve school participation, and promote lifelong learning. Designed as a parallel learning system, ALS provides a viable alternative to formal education by offering programs tailored to the diverse needs of learners, including the Basic Literacy Program (BLP), Elementary Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Program, and Secondary A&E Program. These initiatives equip learners with functional literacy, livelihood skills, and pathways to further education and employment.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Data from the Division Office of Batangas reveal a declining trend in ALS pass rates, from 76% in 2017 to 67% in 2018. Surveys and benchmarking efforts highlight critical issues such as inadequate instructional materials, financial constraints, lack of permanent learning centers, irregular attendance among learners, and insufficient training for ALS implementers and administrators. These factors hinder the program's ability to achieve its intended outcomes, raising concerns about its effectiveness and sustainability.

In the context of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Division of Batangas, it is essential to assess the extent to which various teaching modalities are utilized to provide quality and accessible education to learners outside the formal school system. This study focuses on three key modalities: flexible learning, self-directed learning, and small group teaching, each playing a vital role in addressing the diverse needs of ALS learners.

Flexible learning refers to the adaptability of ALS delivery methods to suit different learning styles, schedules, and circumstances. Given the varied backgrounds of ALS learners—many of whom are working students, parents, or individuals with limited access to traditional schooling—flexible learning ensures that education remains accessible through multiple formats. These may include modular instruction, blended learning, online platforms, and community-based sessions. Understanding the extent to which flexible learning is implemented can provide valuable insights into how ALS accommodates the needs of its learners and what improvements can be made to enhance its reach and effectiveness.

Self-directed learning, on the other hand, highlights the ability of ALS learners to take charge of their own educational journey. In an environment where teachers or facilitators may not always be physically present, learners must develop independence in studying learning modules, setting personal goals, and utilizing available resources to further their knowledge. Evaluating how well self-directed learning is incorporated into ALS programs will help determine whether learners are adequately supported in becoming autonomous and lifelong learners.

Additionally, small group teaching plays a crucial role in reinforcing learning through peer collaboration and instructor guidance. Unlike traditional classroom settings, ALS often operates in informal learning spaces where small group sessions facilitate better interaction, deeper discussions, and personalized instruction. By examining the frequency and effectiveness of small group teaching in ALS, this study aims to identify its impact on learner engagement, comprehension, and overall academic performance.

By analyzing these three modalities, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how flexible approaches in ALS are implemented in the Division of Batangas. The findings of this study will be instrumental in identifying best practices, addressing potential gaps, and recommending improvements to enhance the overall effectiveness of ALS delivery. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the continuous development of ALS, ensuring that it remains responsive to the evolving needs of learners and fulfills its mission of providing inclusive education for all.

Recognizing these gaps, the researcher was motivated to assess the flexible approaches in ALS delivery as a means to propose management strategies for enhancing program implementation. With a focus on addressing the challenges faced by learners and implementers, this study aims to provide actionable insights and recommendations that align with the Department of Education's efforts to upskill educators and empower administrators. By improving the quality and accessibility of ALS, the program can better serve its target populations, contributing to the broader goal of reducing illiteracy and fostering inclusive education for all Filipinos.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to assess the implementation of Alternative Learning System in the Province of Batangas in order to propose ALS management strategies.

Specifically, it endeavored the following objectives.

1. Determine the extent of ALS implementation as assessed by ALS administrators and ALS implementers in terms of the following components
 - 1.1 teaching performance;
 - 1.2 physical facilities and equipment;
 - 1.3 financial resources and linkages; and
 - 1.4 program beneficiaries.

2. Identify the challenges in the implementation of ALS.
3. Propose management strategies for the implementation of an Alternative Learning System.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on the implementation of the ALS program in the Division of Batangas. It dealt with the extent of its implementation relative to teaching performance, physical facilities and equipment, financial resources and linkages, and program beneficiaries. More so, challenges in the implementation of the program were also identified. All contributed to the proposed management strategies for effective implementation.

The participants of this study were 74 ALS administrators and 83 ALS implementers in the Division of Batangas for calendar year 2017-2019. This study did not include the participation of ALS Specialists since management strategies would be undertaken by the two groups of respondents.

The study was limited to the perspective of the respondents. It was further limited to the data gathered through the researcher-made questionnaire, interview, and focus group discussions conducted virtually in light of the travel and movement restrictions caused by the global pandemic.

Review of Related Literatures

Alternative learning system. Education worldwide has long been identified and recognized as a significant partner in pursuing holistic human development. It has been equated with educational reforms, which underscore the importance of academic competence for all and also play a dominant role as an instrument for largescale achievement and revolution in all spheres of human endeavor. It can be claimed similarly to be equally vital as any basic need of individuals in its broadest sense. In the Philippines, De Guzman (2015) and De la Rosa (2015) asserted that Filipino families recognize the importance of acquiring education for productive living. However, Greenbaum (2017) posited that poverty drove many children and young individuals to experience child labor, child prostitution, and human trafficking. Although basic education is free, many are still not in school because of the lack of other essential needs (Roggero, Mangiaterra, Bustreo & Rosati, 2007). Ehora and Guillo (2018) reported that out of 100 Grade-One pupils, only 66 finished Grade Six, only 58 of the 66 enrolled in Grade 7, and only 43 completed high school. The report added that of the 43 who finished high school, only 23 enrolled in college, and only 14 of the 23 graduated from college (Ehora et al., 2018). With this, the medium-term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) recommended the adoption of the expanded vision of Education for All (EFA) through the eradication of illiteracy and provision of basic education and life skills for out-of-school youths and adults (Tindowen, Bassig, & Cagurangan, 2017).

Moreover, it is identified as one of the strategies for poverty alleviation although the government's goal to educate the Filipinos has not been addressed alone by the formal systems of education. Thus, the Governance Act for Basic Education, otherwise known as the Republic Act 9155, establishes the Alternative Learning System (ALS), which aims to provide out-of-school children, youth, and adult populations with basic education. Furthermore, Executive Order No. 356 stipulates that ALS has a crucial role

in enabling school dropouts to develop human capital and improve long-term educational outcomes and employment prospects.

The Alternative learning system was formally organized by the Department of Education on May 13, 1971, to deliver to the out-of-school youth and adults an education that will help improve their literacy level and reorient them towards the needed values in development. It is a parallel learning system in the Philippines providing a practical option to the existing formal instruction among those who do not have or cannot afford the formal education in schools and is a government's effort to provide every Filipino free basic education in such a way that it fits and addresses learner's distinct situations and needs. This ALS is based on the 1987 Philippine Constitution encouraging non-formal, informal, indigenous education programs, self-learning, independent, and out-of-school- youth study programs responsive to the needs of the community. Along with Republic Act 6655 or the Free Secondary Education Act, these laws reaffirm the policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of all Filipinos by providing free and compulsory education at the elementary and high school levels (Tangonan, 2012).

Further, ALS is intended for out-of-school children, youth, and adults who have the right to basic education and need basic and functional literacy skills, knowledge, and values. They are usually those living in far-flung communities without easy access or limited access to formal schools. Those who do not complete or finish basic education are the target groups of ALS. Most of the groups include street children, indigenous people, farmers, fisher folks, women, adolescents, solo parents, children in conflict areas not reached by the formal school system, rebel returnees, PWDs, PDLs, and others who wish to enroll in appropriate program (DepEd, 2019).

Moreover, Accreditation and Equivalency (A & E) programs are among the major programs offered by ALS. It aims to provide a system for assessing the level of literacy and other non-formal learning achievements to offer an alternative pathway to learning. It is formerly known as the non-formal education or NFE A & E test which offers the test takers certification of learning achievements both in elementary and secondary levels. It involves learning interventions and standardized paper and pencil tests usually in the forms of multiple-choice items and composition writing. These items are taken from the learning strands of the curriculum and were modified later. The test becomes solely multiple-choice items and with the coming of the new curriculum, 80% of multiple-choice items and 20% in portfolio assessments are now being proposed. After passing the test, learners may opt to enroll in college, TESDA, or technical – vocational skills or directly dive into the world of work (ALS Balanga City, 2019).

Based on the ALS Handbook (2019), Accreditation and Equivalency (A & E) Program is considered the most active and has numerous clienteles. Under this program, enrolled learners need to take a functional literacy test (FLT) before receiving learning interventions from ALS implementers. FLT assesses the preparedness for the learning strands of ALS. It includes measures of the ability to supply personal information and prior knowledge of the six (6) learning strands. These include communication skills both in Filipino and English focusing on the learner's skills in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Other learning strands (LS) are scientific literacy and critical thinking skills (LS 2), mathematical and problem-solving skills (LS 3), life and career skills (LS 4), understanding self and society (LS 5), and digital literacy (LS 6).

The written portion of the FLT can be administered to learners in small groups with a maximum of 30 learners. Each learner must answer the first part of FLT which is called the personal information sheet (PIS). At this part, the teacher can already

determine whether the learner has the basic schemata in reading and writing. The second part is the FLT proper wherein the core competencies from six learning strands are included as test items. This is in terms of multiple-choice items and writing items. The listening and the speaking portion of LS 1 are also included which must be administered in an individual mode. This is administered among applicants who finished or did not finish elementary levels or those who have already reached secondary level. The result of the test will become the basis for learners' readiness for various levels and placement of their learning level. This is expected to be administered before, during, and after the learning intervention for comparison of results and to track learning progress (Guidelines/Manual for the administration of ALS - FLT, 2019).

In the Philippines and some other countries, the children who face the most severe barriers to education, such as those associated with gender, poverty, displacement, nomadism, disability, and/or ethnicity, are still left behind. Many of these children do not get a chance to go to school because their families bank on them for labor, the distance, and the risk of going to school. Some cannot attend because the local schools lack water points, latrines, or accessible facilities for children with disabilities. The greatest challenges are met by children who encounter several of these barriers (Abasolo, 2017).

To alleviate the issue, Alternative Learning System (ALS) was established to provide all Filipinos the chance to have access to and complete their basic education in a way that fits their distinct situations and needs (DepEd, 2016). Through ALS, those who are "depressed, deprived, and underserved" as described by the law will now be offered education towards Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test that may be granted either elementary or high school diplomas (Arzadon and Nato, 2015). This test was developed by the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) and is administered yearly. It provides an alternative means of certification of learning for Filipinos aged 15 years old and above who are unable to avail or do not access the formal school system, or who have dropped out from formal elementary and secondary schools but are not illiterate. Passers of tests will get a chance to go back to the formal basic education system, higher education, or any technical-vocational school (Philippine Education for All 2015: Implementation and Challenges in the Philippines", 2015).

Recent trends in research stressed the need in evaluating the effectiveness of nonformal education programs (Walahoski & Suzanne, 2012), such as the ALS Program in the Philippines (Dela Rosa, 2015). The use of effective evaluation of such programs plays a critical role in revealing its outcomes, especially in terms of assessing if the objectives of the programs are met. As such, assessing students' outcomes is one of the best ways to measure the effectiveness of such a program (Tindowen et al., 2017).

The alternative learning programs are implemented by non-formal education mobile teachers, literacy facilitators, and instructional managers. They are preferably qualified teachers with adequate training in andragogy and special approaches for effectively facilitating learning and managing learners' development through alternative schemes. They are also regularly evaluated and upgraded to ensure quality teaching services. Alternative learning materials are produced in print and non-print in various formats. The selection, development, and use of materials are guided by the alternative learning curriculum that has been customized for the intended users. These are bilingual and trilingual (native or vernacular tongue, Filipino and English) and were developed by adequately trained writers using the active participatory methodology. These learning materials are self-paced, self-instructional, indigenous, and integrated modules. ALS programs are delivered in community learning centers using various

modes such as face-to-face, group learning, family or household approach, individual tutorial, and others. An ICT component is being tested using the radio-based approach where learning modules are aired in selected provinces. The programs are either implemented by staff through mobile teachers or contracted to private service providers.

Given the limited budget for ALS (less than 1 percent of the total budget), it would be impossible for DepEd to address the said problem alone. One of the key strategies being adopted is the use of alternative financing schemes like partnerships between local governments and the private sector to cover the cost of teacher programs, instructional materials, school buildings, and facilities. The government also engaged NGOs in the implementation of community-based literacy programs outside the formal school system (Philippine Education for All 2015).

Formal education, with its overarching goals to dispense knowledge and inculcate skills in the youth, is not without flaws in its system. This is true for almost every society like the Philippines, which had 4 million children and youth who were out of school in 2013 (PSA, 2015). To address the issue of the rising number of out-of-school youth, the Department of Education has been promoting the administration of an Alternative Learning System for affected and at-risk members of communities in different parts of the country. The programs seek to address problems such as illiteracy and high dropout rates, as well as lack of support for the education of indigenous people, Muslim migrants, the physically handicapped, and other disadvantaged children.

The Alternative Learning System subscribes to this pattern of learning, as it is a more practical option for out-of-school youth and other people who cannot cope with formal instruction. The ALS offers basic education in a way that fits their distinct needs and situations (Atilano et al., 2016).

In the context of ALS, currently, the alternative education system comprises a range of educational programs with a variety of purposes and outcomes. Some alternative programs operate within a traditional school, some operate as stand-alone schools, and others are contracted out to third-party providers such as community organizations. Some are meant to serve disruptive or incarcerated youth, while others educate a wider swath of struggling students. Some grant diplomas and others are temporary placements that intend to return students to a traditional diploma-granting high or elementary schools. Too often, alternative schools operate under the antiquated policy that treats them as second-rate settings for the non-college bound. This is the typical goal-directed mission for a public education institution to achieve how capable an organization depends on the evaluation of outcomes. National education systems in developing countries have provided primary education to the great majority of urban children and youth, but they have not been able to provide quality education to historically underserved populations and regions. In the least developed parts of the world, traditionally managed public education systems hold little promise for meeting EFA goals of providing access to quality; eliminating gender-based and other disparities; ensuring completion; and achieving relevant, measurable learning outcomes (Hartwell, DeStefano and Benbow, 2010).

Teaching Approaches in ALS. Teachers and administrators recognize professional development as a powerful tool to help educators meet the needs of their students' given high standards and even higher stakes accountability. Despite the emphasis now placed on professional development by state and local educational organizations, relatively little is known about how to design and implement professional development that consistently has a direct impact on teachers' professional

practices and subsequently student achievement (Manset-Williamson et al., 2015). Even less is known about how elementary principals are currently choosing the content and delivery of professional development for their staff members.

In addition to deepening understanding of children's place in the world, teachers must be willing to tap into a personal understanding of the world. Taking students' knowledge into consideration is important; however, teachers possess a greater knowledge of the world and should create classroom environments with ample opportunity to grow on this greater knowledge, thus expanding students' base knowledge. The process of learning is most enjoyable when people are engaged in the material they are presented with although as claimed enjoyment itself is not enough to make an experience educational. Activating children's schema is an essential component of an effective learning experience. A teacher should consider this when planning "fun" activities. The value of an experience is linked to the effect it has on an individual's present, future, and the extent to which it allows them to actively contribute to society (Pappas, 2013).

According to Cagurangan (2017); Moralista and Delariarte (2014) ALS teachers should adopt localized instructional materials to suit the localized setting of learners. Meanwhile, most of the skills are low such as the creative skill and the innovation skill. One likely explanation for this is the diverse status and learning styles of the learners. They also stated that increasing learning competencies are among the major problems encountered by mobile teachers as advanced and slow learners are affecting now the interference of cognition abilities to task-related factors such as the complexity of a task or lesson.

Meanwhile, Corpuz and Salandanan (2012) stated the Guiding Principles in the Assessment of Learning which are assessment of learning is an integral part of the teaching-learning process; assessment tool should match with performance objective; the results of assessment must be fed back to the learners; in assessing learning, teachers must consider learners', learning style and multiple intelligences and so must come up with a variety of ways of assessing learning; assessment techniques should have positive feedback along with not so good ones; emphasize self-assessment; curve mentality must be abandoned; assessment of learning should never be used as punishment; assessment results must be communicated regularly and clearly to parents; emphasize on the real-world application; formative assessment must use, and lastly use multiple sources in assessment.

In recent years an enormous amount of public attention has been focused on teacher quality and teacher preparation. These initiatives have listed the effectiveness of teachers as a major factor in improving student achievement. Effective instruction meets the demands of the students concerning the academic disciplines of the teachers. The effectiveness of teachers and teaching is most significant in determining the learning of students. Teacher effectiveness is vital for improving student learning and achievement.

Moreover, researches support that the actions were taken by effective teachers in the classroom play a fundamental role in the effective and efficient learning of the students. Students' academic achievement and outcomes depend on the effectiveness of their teachers. Teachers' quality and effectiveness may depend on their content knowledge and pedagogical acumen. Some researchers also argued that teachers' quality and effectiveness should be assessed only by student outcomes, regardless of content knowledge or pedagogy. The effectiveness and quality of the teachers are

extremely complex and illustrate various characteristics like a wide range of knowledge, skills, aptitude, motivation, and personality characteristics (Dutta et al., 2017).

Teachers should have knowledge of what they are teaching and the ability to share that knowledge. The second part of that statement is the most important. Knowing is not the same as communicating knowledge effectively. Ability to gain student interest often hinges on the attitude of the teacher and their ability to communicate at a student's level. The teacher needs flexibility in teaching style and method. No two students are the same because not all students learn the same way or at the same pace. If a teacher doesn't develop a way to reach a single student, he is going to have difficulty teaching a group. There is no doubt each has a unique need in those situations yet if we let an important need slide, it will affect other aspects of their development. Balance is considered the key, and meeting individual needs in a group is possible. (Fralin, 2012).

A teacher should never personalize a student's inability to cope in a classroom setting. By personalizing the student's problems, he ends up resenting the student. Any teacher who resents a student has lost the priority; which is the student who may have learning disabilities or be extremely gifted. It is the teacher's responsibility to seek proper evaluation and guidance for teaching the student and/or helping the parents do so as well. Creativity is a must for teachers. Keeping a student's attention, especially in kindergarten or first grade is tough. Adapting classroom projects into fun ways of learning, or interesting challenges for students helps them "think outside the box" and develop their creative learning processes. This teacher is less likely to ask all students to fit into a narrow framework for learning. Without a sense of humor, the teacher is not likely to survive student antics (Fralin, 2012).

The ability to listen is not only important for teachers to evaluate student progress, but to help target potential problems. Understanding helped him to listen to his concerns more and offer some reassurance at school. Teachers need to be patient, but they also need to be firm. Most children are reassured and feel safer if they know their limits. If a teacher does not remain firm on some set boundaries in the classroom, children usually retaliate through behaviors. The firm does not mean screaming at a child, it means letting them know your limits and holding to them. Patience is a part of being firm. Children cannot learn a teacher's boundaries and rules within a day, and some will test even longer. The teacher often writes classroom rules on the board and/or may have a reward system to stimulate a desire for displaying good behavior. Patience comes in giving students time to absorb the reality of boundaries. Firmness is in correcting the student through reminders (Fralin, 2012).

A teacher needs to set a good example for his students. This takes a certain amount of good moral character. Teachers need to maintain respectability in their lifestyle beyond the school grounds. Whatever social structure and governing bodies we have, we need to have a certain amount of trust in them and those who teach our children. We are careful to know the doctor who holds the lives of our children in their hands at birth. Teachers should also be held to a high standard and scrutinized closely. All teachers and parents fit these character traits but few may cause damage to children and their development (Fralin, 2012).

ALS teachers should try their best to provide a meaningful learning experience to such a diverse group. Galima (2012) identified three teaching strategies which include the use of informal sharing of experiences at the beginning of the session which would inform the teacher about the condition of the learners, their current concerns, and interest wherein they carefully consider the learners' interests before starting to teach them the contents of the module. Another strategy is the use of various computer-based

technologies, especially video clips which are done to keep the learners, especially the younger ones, motivated and engaged. The third one is the use of group activities which are meant to create a closer relationship among the learners to eventually make the class a support group.

Every principal needs the skills necessary to read the test results and use those interpretations as tools to improve instruction. To obtain the information they need, educators must have a balanced assessment system, including both formative and summative assessments (Bailey, K. & Jakicic, C., 2012). The principal must be able to view the scoring report and identify specific objectives to focus on teaching and improve learning. Chappuis et al., (2010) and Stiggins (2001) noted two specific conditions that are needed for a principal to help with the assessment which are clear and appropriate achievement targets and an assessment-literate faculty. An assessment literate principal can differentiate between summative and formative assessment and can explain specific classroom assessments for learning practices. The principal can provide examples of what formative assessment looks like in the classroom, including how students might be involved.

As for accountability for student performance increases, the role of the instructional leader is perhaps the most crucial responsibility of today's principal (Lynch, 2012). First, beyond the classroom teacher, the principal exists as the most powerful factor affecting academic performance (Boscardin et al., 2015). Second, increased statewide emphasis on student performance, as measured by standardized assessments, has magnified the pressure for all students to obtain proficient levels of academic performance (Provost et al., 2010). Third, a school's quality of instruction directly reflects its principal's commitment to teachers. The principal must be assessment literate to be the instructional leader in the building.

As an instructional leader, the principal has the responsibility to be an informed user of assessment in the decision-making process. Research indicates that effective schools typically use data to develop and provide teachers with professional development (Protheroe, 2014). NCLB specifically mentions the term data-driven decision-making. The most influential role of the principal is to assume the role of questioner and to use data as a tool. Facilitative questioning drives school improvement (Irwin & White, 2014). In the hands of skilled principals and teachers, assessment data can provide important insights into student learning and guide instructional decision-making (Fox, 2013).

Moreover, schools today employ more technology than ever before. Teacher's use of these computers is overwhelmingly focused on administrative tasks and communication with colleagues and parents (Ertmer et al., 2012), while instructional use is centered around low-level tasks, including word processing, exploring websites, drill-and-practice activities, or facilitating the maintenance of a teacher-centered classroom by using projectors or interactive whiteboards to present information (An & Reigeluth, 2011; Ertmer et al., 2012). This issue is further complicated by the inclination of teachers to view any implementation of ICT in their classroom as student-centered, even though students and observers often note no change in the pedagogical orientation of the class from teacher to learner-centered (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2010; Rienties, Brouwer, & LygoBaker, 2013). Best practices for educational technology use promote student-centered learning environments supporting inquiry and collaboration (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2010).

Leadership is one of the interesting topics in the organization sciences, and employee engagement is one of the more recent. However, the relationship between

leadership and employee engagement has not been widely investigated. As many organizations invest significant resources in retaining, developing, and engaging employees, human resource development (HRD) professionals are tasked to develop and partner with leaders to deliver those strategies effectively. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the relationship and mechanism between leadership and engagement is essential to inform leaders on how best to cultivate positive results in followers (Carasco-Saul, 2014; Kim & Kim, 2014).

Leadership has increasingly been perceived as a critical factor in organizational as well as school effectiveness. The increased interest in instructional leadership is due to the trend of continuous reforms of education systems throughout the world. These changes have led to dramatic growth in the importance of the role assigned to school leaders, both individually and collectively (Hallinger & Huber, 2012). Work engagement is a matter of concern for leaders and managers in organizations across the globe; they recognize it as a vital element affecting organizational effectiveness (Welch, 2011).

The concept of engagement is gaining attention in academia (Shuck, 2011). It is an evolving concept typically associated with business, management, industrial and organizational psychology, and human resource development (HRD) (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck, 2011). Literature on employee engagement highlights the difference between employee engagement and job or employee satisfaction. Macey and Schneider's (2008) engagement framework denotes engagement as a feeling of being focused, enthusiastic, energetic, proactive, and persistent at completing tasks (LePine, & Crawford, 2010). Whereas job satisfaction implies contentment and satisfaction rather than the energy that is associated with engagement.

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2012). Employee engagement concerns the degree to which individuals make full use of their cognitive, emotional, and physical resources to perform role-related work. Thus, employees who are engaged in their work have energetic, enjoyable, and effective connections with their work (Xu & Thomas, 2011). They state that leadership is a crucial antecedent to engagement. Leadership research shows that certain leadership behaviors have a clear association with engagement. Trust in the leader, support from the leader, and creating a blame-free environment are considered to be components of psychological safety, a condition proposed by Kahn, which leads to employee engagement.

When instructional leadership emerged as a new construct, some scholars questioned both its relevance and viability as a guiding metaphor for school leadership. After a series of analyses, instructional leadership and leadership for learning are widely accepted by policymakers and practitioners as essential elements of management practice in schools. Indeed, recent reviews of research largely confirm early assertions concerning the relationship between instructional leadership and student learning. Thus, instructional leadership has demonstrated impressive staying power as a core concept guiding both practices in the field of educational leadership and management (Hallinger, 2010).

The dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and lead one to understand that leadership and culture have two different meanings. School culture is used to describe the unique working conditions inside organizations and to distinguish one school from another. Organizational culture represents a broad umbrella, referring to the traditions, rituals, shared norms, and

assumptions of a school. These site-specific beliefs are adopted over time and provide a distinct character to the school. Educational theorists have reported that the principals' impact on learning is mediated through the culture of the school and is not a direct effect (Hallinger & Ruengtrakul, 2018).

Successful school principals comprehend the critical role that the organizational culture plays in developing a successful school (MacNeil et al., 2019). School cultures are categorized as either positive, toxic, or anywhere in between. Core values within the school often play an essential role in determining the type of culture one will find in a school. Positive school culture is the result of many influences. Schools should be focused on creating a learning community for all involved. All individuals should have a sense of caring and respect for each other. Staff and students need to be positive about their ability to set and achieve ambitious goals. Positive attitudes go a long way in developing and maintaining a positive culture. As instructional leaders, principals can create a positive and collaborative school culture. By helping teachers collaborate, instilling collective leadership, and communicating a shared vision, principals can contribute to developing a positive and collaborative school culture. Principals may consider providing teachers with frequent common planning and team time, and an atmosphere of lifelong learning and trusting relationships to establish a positive and collaborative school culture.

Employee empowerment has been recognized as an essential contributor to organizational success. Empowering employees is essential for organizations to react quickly to changes in the environment. Psychologically empowered employees positively influence individual and organizational outcomes. Psychological empowerment is positively associated with engagement and commitment. Jose and Mampilly (2014) showed that the variation in employee engagement is explained by the four dimensions of psychological empowerment together.

Psychological empowerment is defined as a motivational concept composed of four dimensions including meaning, choice, competence, and impact. Meaning corresponds to the value employees assign to their job according to their beliefs and standards. It is the fit between the requirements of a task or work goal and personal values or ideas. Meaning in work is seen as a method of fostering employees' motivation and attachment to work, thus resulting in engagement. Choice refers to the degree to which an individual perceives that he can initiate and regulate his actions. The core element of this concept is the feeling of self-determination. Workers feel responsible for their outcomes if they experience autonomy to make decisions regarding their tasks.

Competence is defined as the employees' beliefs in their capability to perform their tasks skillfully. It refers to the perception that one has the required abilities to cope with different work situations (Spreitzer, 2017). Competence derives from the concept of self-efficacy, which promotes initiative, persistence, and greater effort to deal with difficult situations. Finally, impact corresponds to the perception that employees' behaviors may influence results at work. It is the degree to which employees feel that they can make a difference through their behaviors to accomplish their task goals that contribute to employee engagement (Quiñones, et al., 2013).

School leaders may enable the empowerment of teachers and teams by frequently expressing their genuine belief that teachers care about the goals of the school, are competent to make good decisions in areas of major concern, and are presumptively honest in their intentions (Dee, 2013). Teacher empowerment is increasingly gaining attention among scholars and practitioners across educational

contexts due to its positive associations with several teachers' work-related outcomes. A basic assumption of teacher empowerment is that teachers are autonomous professionals who are willing to perform their best at work when they feel intrinsically motivated and satisfied. Accordingly, advocates see an imperative need for school leaders to adopt a more empowering management approach to facilitate teacher empowerment effectively.

Management and leadership play a significant role in employee engagement, but it is equally important for employees to have enthusiasm for the work that they do. Beyond mastering the job's tasks, employees need to feel pride in what is being accomplished and share in the excitement when goals are achieved. The more employees feel they are building their own skill sets and feel competent and in control of their work product, the more likely they are to demonstrate high levels of engagement (Wiley, 2010). When administrators trust faculty with decisions dealing with issues of teaching and learning, time, and teachers' voices will eventually be heard in the spheres of administrative decisions. Eventually, the principal's influence will expand too, into the spheres of teaching and learning. This form of work redesign will flatten the organizational hierarchy as both groups share their traditional spheres of work.

Challenges in the Implementation of Alternative Learning System.

Many challenges have emerged in the implementation of ALS since its inception. Lack of community-based instructional materials, delayed release of travel allowance, and absence of permanent room during the conduct of the learning sessions were reported by mobile teachers of the ALS (Pinca, 2015). Arpilleda (2018) added that stakeholders' inadequacy is evident, particularly those coming from the local government officials and the students' parents. Thus, despite the remarkable progress in expanding access to basic education, ALS instruction's support mechanisms such as instructional materials, facilities and equipment, financial resources, and cooperation from stakeholders remained elusive (Abasolo, 2017).

In the realm of teaching, given a performing teacher, learning can still be made to happen despite deficiencies in the curriculum, technologically deprived classrooms, the inadequacy of instructional materials, unmotivated learners, inadequate facilities and equipment, insufficient financial support, and lack of stakeholders' support as long as the teachers are committed in their job (Anwer, Tahir, & Batool, 2012). Accordingly, teachers only need to be equipped with a positive attitude, and best practices and be abreast of the global trend to stay ahead of their students because teachers' improved quality will inevitably redound to an enhanced quality of education. Gourneau (2005) supported that teachers' significant attitudes and practices can ultimately make a meaningful difference in their students' daily activities.

In a similar vein, Methner (2013) pointed out that administrative support improved teachers' attitudes by establishing schools as learning communities. Teachers of different stages in their careers may benefit as well from individualized and contextualized administrative support. In other words, teachers' attitudes could be manifested by sufficient human and financial support. Furthermore, Hoge (2016) asserted that instruction characteristics have a more significant effect on school development, particularly the students' academic progress. Nevertheless, researchers agree that there is no single, well-defined best way of teaching. The best practice is domain-specific, as well as goal-specific. It depends on the support mechanism for instruction that may influence the teachers' best practices. However, the link of support mechanism to ALS instruction and the teachers' attitude, as well as their best practices,

has not been assessed in depth. This study was set up to dig into the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program's implementation landscape through the lens of the support mechanism to ALS instruction, mobile teachers' attitude, and their best practices to commence in the Division of Dapitan City. The present effort attempted to establish a scientific basis to corroborate or refute the negative feedback regarding the program's implementation as viewed in the local setting. The researchers further looked into where the performance fantastically failed and identified the factors associated with the alleged poor implementation of ALS in the country. Most importantly, the study's upshots served as a basis for designing an enhanced development plan that will work best in the division under investigation and will also help as instrumental to other divisions in the country.

Specifically, the study by Mercado (2015) titled "Problems encountered in the ALS program in Tanauan City" disclosed that students suffered problems in instruction, assessment, and evaluation. He also found out that facilities like classrooms and instructional materials like textbooks, manuals, etc. are lacking. Moreover, mobile teachers revealed that they have meager salaries or honorariums and other allowances. Another significant study was that of Pinca (2015), titled "The Mobile Teachers' Profile, Competencies, Problems and in the Department of Education, Division of Northern Samar, Philippines." She found out that the major problems met by the mobile teachers in the Northern Samar Division were lack of community-based instructional materials, delayed release of travel allowance, and absence of permanent room during the conduct of the learning sessions.

Addressing the financial problems makes it possible to engage more learners who might get encouraged to stay with the program if they are assisted in acquiring food and other necessities that can help support their family's daily needs. These are vital concerns to address, especially for demotivated students who do not see the link between education and future employment and for students who are determined to finish their education but cannot pursue it due to low income (Egcas & Garganera, 2019.)

Each Filipino young or adult has the privilege to undergo formal schooling (Mendoza, 2015). However, most Filipinos were deprived of this right due to their destitute conditions and traditional cultures. Dela Rosa (2015) mentioned that in the Philippines, the trend for the past ten years shows that for every ten pupils who enroll in grade school, only seven graduate. The same ratio is experienced among high school students.

Preparation of management strategies. Preparation in the form of instructional planning is the basis for effective teaching and student learning (Reiser & Dick, 2016). Additionally, teacher planning improves the likelihood of a successful class session through the use of proactive strategies (Bond & Peterson, 2014), and instructional planning provides the teacher—with some control over what is going to happen as opposed to reacting only to what has happened. As such, an important goal of teacher preparation programs is to assist in developing a systematic process for instructional planning and to embrace the concept of writing instructional plans (Baylor & Kitsantas, 2015). Lending further support for the importance of instructional planning, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (2012) outlined a common core of knowledge and skills that should be acquired by all new teachers.

Principle seven states that the teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of the subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals. The INTASC principles were drafted by teachers, teacher educators, and state agency officials, and

represent a shared view of the important skills that should be integrated into the teacher preparation curriculum. Consistent with INTASC, Ball and Knobloch (2015) identified the importance of developing instructional plans as a curricular activity of teacher preparation programs in agricultural education. Instructional planning is a process that accounts for a significant portion of a teacher's time. Torres and Ulmer (2017) found that planning and preparing to teach teachers' time. Interestingly, teachers spend more of this time thinking about planning rather than writing formal instructional plans (Ball, Knobloch, & Hoop, 2017).

Research has found that student learning increased when teachers plan carefully intending to achieve objectives based on the content and students' needs (Schmidt, 2015). However, this objectives-first approach to instructional planning advocated by Tyler (2010) is foreign to many teachers. It is common for teachers to begin instructional planning by first considering the content to be taught, and they rarely consider learning objectives (Ball et al., 2017). After making decisions regarding content to be taught, teachers' next step in preparing to teach was focused on planning activities in the form of student learning experiences. Teachers' perceptions of their student's needs, interests, and abilities were also found to be significant factors in teacher planning (Shavelson & Stern, 2011). Much of what a teacher does during early planning decision points is mental and very little is written down.

Planning can be defined as what teachers do when they are planning. Psychologically, planning is a process in which teachers visualize and create a framework to guide their actions. When teachers have planned, it means that they have plans for what to do in the classroom. Meanwhile, planning, according to Scrivener, is imagining the lesson before it happens. It includes prediction, anticipation, sequencing, organizing, and simplifying. There are two styles of planning which are incremental planning and comprehensive planning. Incremental planning is the one for a small portion of time, teachers try out the plan and make modifications as necessary.

Marshall (2018) reported that designing an instructional plan is done after the formulation of instructional objectives. It is necessary to design the instructional materials due to their central role to facilitate the achievement of the instructional objectives. The design of instructional materials concerns the ability to know the role of the instructional materials in the instructional process, the types of instructional materials, and the preparation of the instructional materials. Instructional materials contain the content that a student will use to achieve the objectives. The term instructional plan is used interchangeably by teachers, educators, and institutions with learning material in the instructional process. However, educational technology experts use the term instructional materials to indicate the use of any selected topics, information, and resources that are purposively and scientifically designed and prepared to facilitate the achievement of the instructional objectives. The instructional materials are supposed to be interesting, contextual, attractive, and motivated so that learners are willing to use them both during the face-to-face teaching-learning process in the classroom and independent or autonomous learning out of the classroom (Marshall-Stuart 2018).

It is believed that good instructional plans are designed and developed based on the previously formulated instructional objectives since the use of the instructional plans is to facilitate the attainment of the instructional objectives. The instructional materials used in the instructional process are various based on the choice of teachers or instructors. These can be varied from the textbook, institutionally prepared materials, or teachers or instructors' materials. However, whatever instructional materials are

chosen by the teachers or instructors to facilitate the instructional process, the instructional materials must be based on the level of proficiency of the learners.

The instructional plans can also be seen from the technique of choosing the topics to be presented in the classroom. Manurung (2015) argued the role of the instructional materials based on the choice of the topic affects the learners' achievement in speaking skills. The study intended to overcome students' problems in speaking class such as difficulty to begin monologue and dialogue, difficulty to maintain a conversation or dialogue, difficulty to sum up and conclude monologue and dialogue, hesitation to be active in the speaking class, and reluctance to ask questions during the discussion session. To overcome these problems the students were instructed to choose a topic in which they are interested, a topic that is contextual and based on their interest. He reported that the instruction or technique was the potential to create efficient and joyful learning to overcome the problems of the students in speaking and improve their speaking skills.

It implies that face-to-face teaching in the classroom will be better if it is underpinned by autonomous or independent learning based on the students learning phase and time availability. Instructional materials play important role in the teaching-learning process in any education system. It contributes to the success of learners to achieve the formulated goals in the curriculum. Due to the central role of the instructional materials, it is necessary to take into account the preparation and design procedures.

The preparation and designing procedures have been introduced by some experts in educational technology. The preparation and design are usually called Instructional Design (ID). The ID is a term that has been used in the educational system to describe what has been done by an expert in preparing, designing, developing, and implementing each instructional step from the pre-teaching activity, before the real teaching in the classroom, during the real teaching in the classroom, and after the classroom teaching which is known as assessment and evaluation. Most experts in educational technology called the process and technique an Instructional Design (ID) consisting of some steps.

This ID is needed to effectively achieve the developed goals of the education and training program. Different experts introduced and viewed ID from different perspectives nevertheless they were complementary to each other. Reigeluth (2013) viewed ID based on its role and argued that the ID is the implementation of teaching and learning theories that are used to facilitate someone's learning. Rothwel and Kazanas, (2012) viewed ID from the perspective of working improvement and argued that the formulation of the ID is highly related to the improvement of working quality and organization. Reiser (2012) supported Dick, Carey, and Carey's (2011) idea that viewed the ID as systemic series of procedures that is used to develop consistent education and training programs. There have been some ID models used by experts in educational technology and the education system.

The most commonly used are ADDIE Model, these models have been widely used in designing instructional materials in an educational institution and have been successfully implemented. One of the ID models in the development of instructional materials is known as ADDIE. ADDIE is known as—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (Reiser, 2012). Prammanee (2016) has noted that there are five phases in the ADDIE model. The phases are analysis; this phase identifies problems as the main factor to formulate the instructional goals and objectives; design; this phase is related to some components that are systematically done so that the first

component supports the next one to create an effective output; development; this phase is related to the role of the designer and developer to create, assemble, review, and revise the content; implementation; this phase includes the development of training procedures for both facilitator and learners, includes the course curriculum, learning outcomes, method of delivery, and testing procedures and for the learners, the development of the procedures includes training on teaching aids and registration; and evaluation; this phase consists of formative and summative. Dick and Carey's model is well known as a systematic approach due to the close relationship of each component in the design of instructional materials.

They also proposed nine steps in their systematic approach to the design and development of instructional materials. The steps are; identifying instructional goals; conducting instructional analysis; writing performance objectives; developing assessment instruments; developing instructional strategy; developing and selecting instruction; designing and conducting formative evaluation; revising instruction; and designing and conducting the summative evaluation. This model was proposed based on the continuous cycle of the use of each ID element from planning, design, and development to assessment that ensures the creation of effective instruction.

The review of literature provided the researcher with vast information on different topics closely related to the present study. In addition, it greatly enhanced the researcher's ideas about giving varied learning experiences to ensure the continuous development of management strategies. The concepts served as a scaffold for ALS implementers and administrators to fully understand the need to adapt to heighten the implementation of the program using management strategies. In the same way, it also dealt with the continuous provision of relevant strategies to improve its implementation.

Theoretical Framework

The program resonates with Humanistic Learning Theory of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers and James F. Bugental, which prioritizes the holistic development of the learner. ALS caters to out-of-school youth and marginalized individuals, aiming to empower them not only academically but also emotionally and socially. By fostering a nurturing and supportive learning environment, ALS ensures that learners feel valued and motivated to achieve their full potential, addressing their personal growth alongside their educational goals.

This theory emphasizes the holistic development of learners, focusing not only on their cognitive growth but also on their emotional, social, and psychological well-being. The integration of Humanistic Learning Theory into ALS highlights the program's commitment to creating an inclusive and transformative educational experience for marginalized and out-of-school learners.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs serves as a cornerstone of this theoretical perspective. Maslow proposed that individuals must satisfy a series of hierarchical needs—starting with physiological and safety needs, and progressing through belongingness and esteem, ultimately leading to self-actualization. For many ALS learners, these fundamental needs are often unmet due to socio-economic challenges. By providing accessible, flexible, and supportive educational opportunities, ALS addresses the learners' need for belonging and esteem, enabling them to build confidence and aspire to self-fulfillment. Maslow's focus on motivation is also reflected in the ALS approach, which acknowledges the learners' intrinsic desire for education

and personal growth. The program helps them achieve academic milestones and practical skills, laying the foundation for their journey toward self-actualization.

Carl Rogers' concept of Person-Centered Learning further enriches the theoretical framework of ALS. Rogers emphasized the importance of empathy, understanding, and a supportive environment in the learning process. He argued that education is most effective when learners feel valued and autonomous, with the teacher acting as a facilitator rather than an authority figure. These principles are evident in the ALS model, where mobile teachers build rapport with learners, demonstrate empathy, and tailor their instruction to individual needs. The program's flexibility, including its modular and self-paced learning options, reflects Rogers' belief in the importance of learner autonomy. By creating a safe and nurturing environment, ALS fosters engagement, self-confidence, and a sense of ownership among learners.

James F. Bugental's focus on Authenticity and Self-Realization further complements the humanistic perspective of ALS. Bugental argued that education should empower individuals to discover their true selves and lead meaningful, authentic lives. This aligns with ALS's mission to support learners in overcoming societal and personal barriers. Many ALS participants face challenges such as social stigmatization, family responsibilities, and economic hardships. Through its personalized and goal-oriented approach, ALS helps learners recognize their potential, build resilience, and pursue their aspirations. Bugental's emphasis on personal meaning in education is particularly relevant in the ALS context, where learning materials and activities are designed to be practical and relevant to the learners' real-world experiences.

The integration of Humanistic Learning Theory into ALS underscores several key principles that guide its implementation. First, ALS adopts a holistic approach, addressing not only cognitive skills but also the emotional and social needs of learners. Second, it emphasizes a learner-centered model, allowing flexibility in instruction and curriculum to cater to the diverse backgrounds and circumstances of its participants. Third, the program fosters a supportive and empathetic environment, where learners feel valued and encouraged to grow. Finally, ALS promotes personal growth and self-actualization, equipping learners with the skills and confidence to achieve their goals and contribute meaningfully to society.

In essence, the principles of Humanistic Learning Theory, as articulated by Maslow, Rogers, and Bugental, are deeply embedded in the philosophy and implementation of ALS. By prioritizing inclusivity, empathy, and the holistic development of learners, ALS not only addresses the immediate educational needs of marginalized individuals but also empowers them to transform their lives and realize their full potential.

Given that ALS serves a wide age range, including adults, Andragogy plays a crucial role in shaping its framework. This theory highlights that adult learners are self-directed, bring prior experiences to their learning, and are motivated by the practical application of knowledge. For ALS, this translates into providing relevant, problem-solving-oriented education that prepares learners for real-life challenges, such as employment and life skills development.

Task-oriented relationships are also important in blue-collar jobs. This is because such workers normally require direction and job specificity. Therefore, this leadership approach would be most appropriate. On the other hand, such scenarios may

still be characterized by strong leader-member relationships. The latter situation can be affected when leaders reward workers well for their efforts.

Relationship-oriented leadership styles may be more favorable in situations where the organizational environment is highly predictable. Some of the most appropriate environments include research institutes. In such circumstances, subordinates would not like it if their leaders interfered with the nature of their task. Here, it would be more appropriate to work on building relationships with subordinates. Knowles contrasted andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” with pedagogy, the art, and the science of helping children learn.

The second edition of his book, however, marked a rethinking in Knowles original conception of andragogy as characterizing only adult learners—as indicated in the change in subtitles from *Andragogy Versus Pedagogy* to from *Pedagogy to Andragogy*. His most recent conclusion was that the use of andragogical and pedagogical principles is to be determined by the situation and not by the age of the learner.

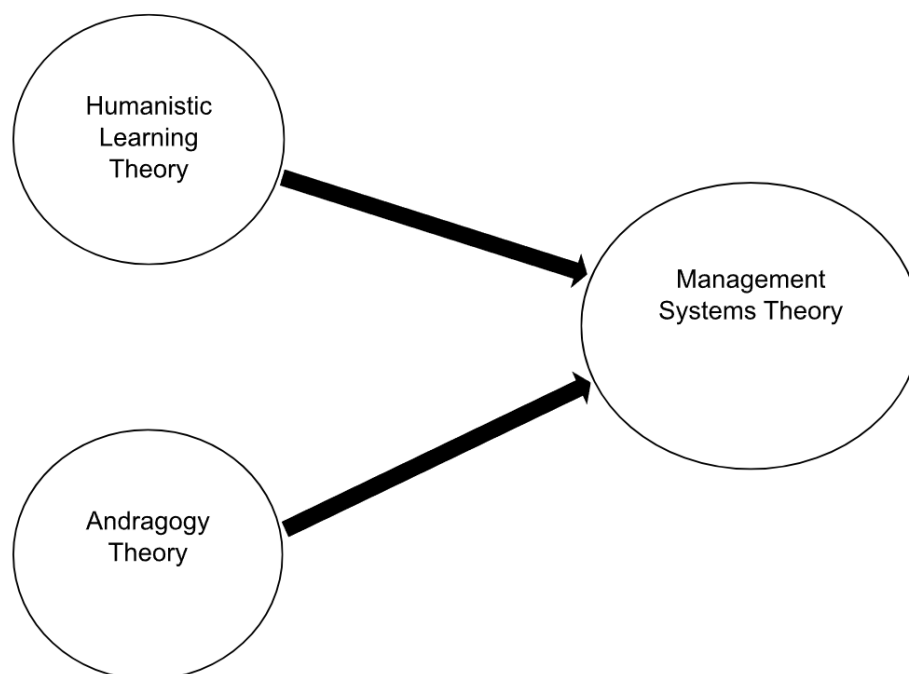
Andragogy is essentially a “model of assumptions” (Knowles, 2000) about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from the traditional pedagogical assumptions about child learners rather than an actual theory of adult learning. Based on humanistic psychology, Knowles’ concept of andragogy presents the individual learner as one who is autonomous, free, and growth-oriented. The two dimensions of andragogy as elaborated by Knowles are its assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners and the process elements of adult education that stem from these characteristics. He initially related four basic assumptions and added a fifth and sixth in later publications. According to him, as people mature, they move from being a dependent personality toward being more self-directed. He also claimed that they amass a growing set of experiences that provide a fertile resource for learning. Moreover, as people mature, they are more interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their jobs or personal lives. Lastly, their time perspective changes from gathering knowledge for future use to the immediate application of knowledge. As such, adult learners become more problem-centered rather than subject-centered (Knowles, 2000) Motivation to learn: As people mature, they become more motivated by various internal incentives, such as the need for self-esteem, curiosity, desire to achieve, and satisfaction of accomplishment; and Relevance: As people mature, they need to know why they need to learn something (Knowles, 2004). Furthermore, because adults manage other aspects of their lives, they are capable of directing or, at least, assisting in the planning and implementation of their learning.

About the same time that Knowles introduced andragogy, self-directed learning appeared as another model to help distinguish adult learners from children. Not only did Knowles indicate that self-directed learning is one of the key assumptions of adult learning, but he also contributed to the literature with his book entitled *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers* (2005). His book explains the concept and outlines how to implement it through learning contracts. According to Knowles (2005), in its broadest sense, self-directed learning describes a process “... in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing, and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. Being self-directed signifies that adult learners can and should be allowed to participate in evaluating their learning needs, planning and implementing the learning activities, and evaluating those experiences. Knowles further

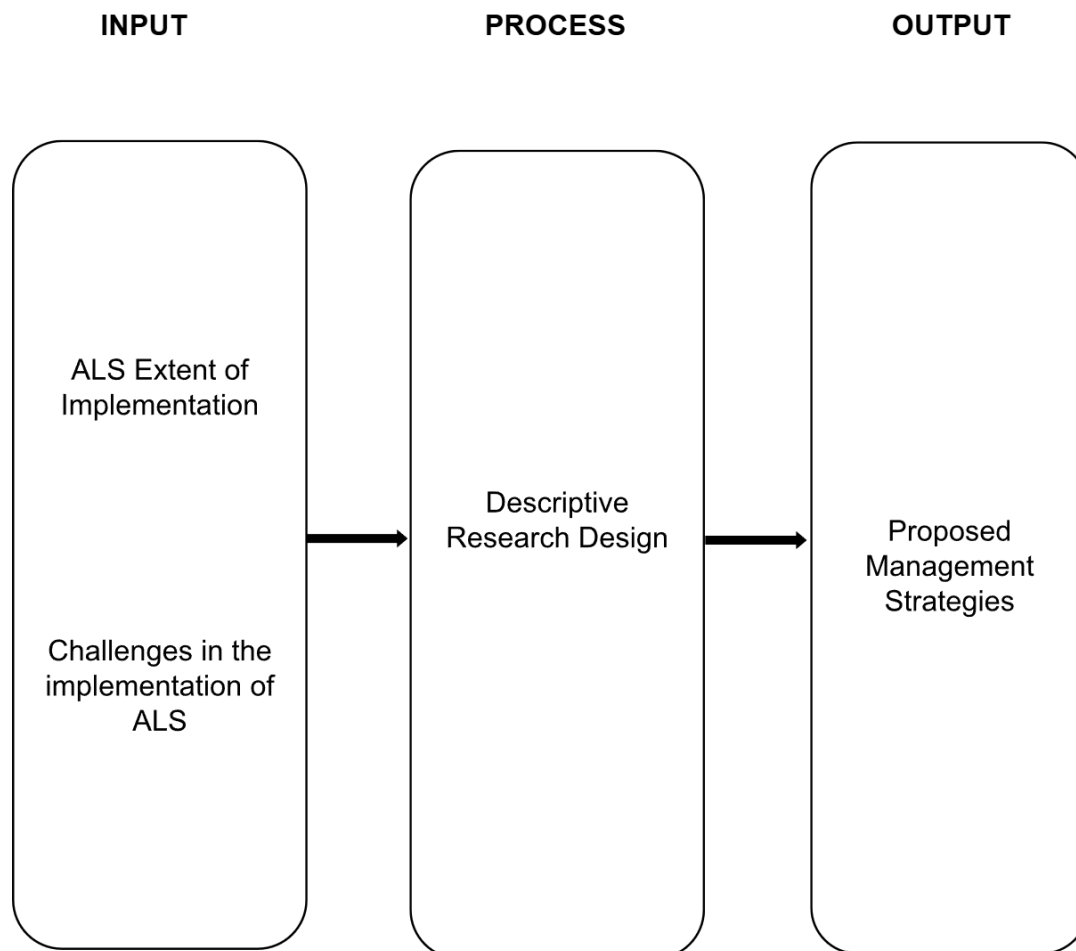
stated that individuals can be assisted in becoming more self-directed when given appropriate learning tools, resources, experiences, and encouragement. For example, educators might assist individuals or groups of learners in locating resources or mastering alternative learning strategies. The learners would then seek out this assistance through technology or learning centers.

Section 14 of Republic Act No. 9155, otherwise known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, states that the Department of Education shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality basic education and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. And shall maintain and support a complete adequate, and integrated system of basic education relevant to the needs of the people and society. It shall establish and maintain a system of free and compulsory public education at the elementary level and free education at the high school level.

In summary, with the insights and knowledge gained from the different theories, the researcher contextualized the need for proposing management strategies for ALS administrators and ALS implementers. The interrelationship of these theories, as shown in Figure 1, served as strong bases in the preparation of the output of this study. Moreover, these theories were considered in the conceptualization of activities and strategies included in the output.



Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to assess the implementation of Alternative Learning System in the Division of Batangas.

Research Design

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire as the primary data gathering instrument, complemented by interviews and focus group discussions.

Questionnaire. The main instrument used in gathering data was the researcher-made questionnaire, which consisted of two parts.

Part I dealt with the respondents' extent of ALS program implementation while Part II dealt with the extent of ALS utilization.

Construction. The instrument used was developed based on the objectives, interviews, and readings from related literature covering the alternative learning system.

The first draft was presented to the adviser for comments and suggestions which were then incorporated into the second draft. After several refinements of the questionnaire

items and upon approval of the adviser, several copies of the questionnaire were prepared for the members of the panel for validation.

Validation. The researcher was advised to present the draft of the questionnaire to the experts in the field for validation. A dry run to test the validity of the instrument was likewise conducted. Reliability testing was done using Cronbach alpha Test. The result revealed that the questionnaire contained a high internal consistency level of 0.871 which was higher than the minimum constant value of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was reliable and the options in the questionnaire were appropriate for utilization.

Administration. The researcher asked permission from the office of the Schools Division Superintendent for the distribution of the questionnaire. After the permission letter was granted, the researcher personally approached the district supervisors and school principals to seek permission to administer the questionnaire and finally the distribution to the basic education teachers followed. Distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire were completed after forty-five days. Moreover, the basic education teachers to whom the questionnaires were administered for validation were also interviewed for further verification of the suitability of the items in the questionnaire presented. Finally, the completed questionnaires were retrieved and tabulated.

Scoring of Responses. The score of each item was given a corresponding weight value with 1 as the lowest and 4 as the highest score. Descriptive equivalents or verbal descriptions were provided for the interpretation of numerical results.

Options	Scale Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.50-4.00	Highly Implemented/Utilized
3	2.50-3.49	Moderately Implemented/Utilized
2	1.50-2.49	Slightly Implemented/Utilized
1	1.00-1.49	Least Implemented/Utilized

Interview. To ensure that appropriate and accurate information was gathered, the researcher set an interview schedule with the selected 12 school heads to supplement and enrich the gathered data. Responses and reactions were summed up and properly documented to substantiate information obtained from the questionnaire.

Focus Group Discussion. To gather additional insights, a focus group discussion was conducted with ALS implementers and administrators shared their experiences and forwarded their insights on ALS. Focus group discussion was prepared in advance and distributed to the participants to facilitate the flow of the group discussion. Accordingly, the discussion helped uncover the views of ALS implementers and administrators on ALS, including the issues and challenges faced in the implementation of ALS in their district. The FGD helped the researcher to substantiate the quantitative results and the output of the study.

Data Gathering Procedures

To collect data, a formal request letter was written and addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent, seeking permission to conduct the study in various schools within the Division of Batangas Province. The letter was personally delivered to provide further clarification regarding the purpose of the study. Upon receiving approval from the Schools Division Superintendent, arrangements were

made with the district supervisor of the concerned district for the distribution of the questionnaire. Once the respondents had completed the questionnaires, the researcher promptly retrieved the forms. The responses were then tallied, tabulated for statistical analysis, and interpreted based on the items outlined in the questionnaire. The researcher also conducted the informal interview and focus group discussion to gathered qualitative support and for the confirmation of the quantitative data.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study was limited to ALS implementers and administrators only and focused on the aforementioned research variables, as well as the responses of the participants to the prepared and administered questionnaire. Participants were fully informed of what will be asked of them, how the data will be used, and what are the consequences there could be. They were provided with clear, active, signed consent to participate in the research, which included an understanding of their rights to access their information and the option to withdraw at any time. They were also informed that their individual questionnaire responses would remain private and would solely be used for research purposes. All of their information was kept confidential throughout the entire research process. All of their information were kept confidential throughout the entire research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. Determine the extent of ALS implementation as assessed by ALS administrators and ALS implementers in terms of teaching performance; physical facilities and equipment; financial resources and linkages; and program beneficiaries.

1. **Teaching Performance.** The administrators, and implementers manifest teaching performance to a high implementation. The computed composite mean expresses that both respondents' manifest indicators relative to teaching performance. It somehow suggests that there is no need to propose management strategies instead maintain its practices.

Table 1
Extent of ALS Implementation in terms of Teaching Performance

Indicators	Administrators			Implementers		
	W.M.	S.D.	V.I.	W.M.	S.D.	V.I.
1. Utilize the Individual Learning Agreement (ILA)	3.61	0.49	HI	3.67	0.50	HI
2. Utilize Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the preparation of the lesson	3.75	0.44	HI	3.73	0.45	HI
3. Use appropriate and applicable learning materials in teaching	3.75	0.44	HI	3.74	0.47	HI
4. Plan instructions carefully	3.69	0.47	HI	3.75	0.43	HI
5. Implement the learning sessions as scheduled based on a weekly schedule	3.75	0.44	HI	3.66	0.48	HI
6. Motivate ALS learners to enroll and finish the program	3.92	0.28	HI	3.97	0.16	HI

7. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the ALS curriculum and pedagogies	3.69	0.47	HI	3.78	0.42	HI
8. Set achievable and deliverable performance following the needs and abilities of learners	3.78	0.42	HI	3.78	0.45	HI
9. Maximize time-on-task to achieve learning goals	3.75	0.44	HI	3.70	0.46	HI
10. Integrate lessons within and across the learning strands	3.81	0.40	HI	3.67	0.53	HI
11. Display proficient use of Mother Tongue, Filipino, and English to facilitate teaching and learning	3.94	0.24	HI	3.77	0.46	HI
12. Plan and use relevant and evaluative learning activities	3.75	0.44	HI	3.77	0.43	HI
13. Apply a range of teaching strategies to develop critical and creative thinking, as well as other higher-order thinking skills applicable to learners	3.69	0.47	HI	3.71	0.46	HI
14. Adopt and use culturally appropriate teaching strategies to address the needs of learners from indigenous groups	3.61	0.49	HI	3.51	0.78	HI
15. Provide specific and constructive feedback on learners' performances as well as their behavior through applying positive and non-violent discipline	3.83	0.38	HI	3.67	0.47	HI
16. Maintain rapport with parents and community members	3.89	0.32	HI	3.79	0.44	HI
17. Establish and maintain a good working relationship with administrators and other personnel	3.83	0.38	HI	3.89	0.31	HI
18. Set preferred development goals based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST)	3.81	0.40	HI	3.73	0.45	HI
19. Take active participation in different professional development activities	3.86	0.35	HI	3.81	0.40	HI
20. Support and implement DepEd/school regulations, policies, procedures, and accepted practices	3.89	0.32	HI	3.89	0.36	HI
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.78	0.28	HI	3.75	0.29	HI

Legend: HI (Highly Implemented)

2. **Physical Facilities and Equipment.** Composite mean from the assessments of administrators and implementers revealed ALS high implementation.

Table 2
Extent of ALS Implementation in terms of Physical Facilities and Equipment

Indicators	Administrators			Implementers		
	W.M.	S.D.	V.I.	W.M.	S.D.	V.I.
1. Ensure facilities and equipment readily available for learning sessions	3.67	0.48	HI	3.60	0.49	HI
2. Design and prepare learning facilities to suit the needs of the learners	3.67	0.48	HI	3.64	0.48	HI
3. Provide enough materials and learning equipment	3.61	0.49	HI	3.56	0.50	HI
4. Ensure the provision of relevant and appropriate devices and equipment	3.64	0.49	HI	3.52	0.50	HI
5. Improvise learning equipment needed to achieve learning objectives	3.58	0.55	HI	3.63	0.49	HI
6. Address issues on safety and protection of the learning center and other physical facilities	3.81	0.40	HI	3.70	0.46	HI
7. Provide a learning environment suited to the needs of varied learners	3.69	0.47	HI	3.71	0.49	HI

8. Ensure relevant and appropriate instructional facilities to achieve learners' learning goals	3.64	0.49	HI	3.60	0.49	HI
9. Ensure accessibility and safety of learning at the learning center	3.75	0.44	HI	3.75	0.49	HI
10. Utilize learning equipment designed for laboratory activities	3.47	0.51	MI	3.16	0.82	MI
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.65	0.34	HI	3.59	0.36	HI

Legend: HI (Highly Implemented) MI (Moderately Implemented)

3. **Financial Resources and Linkages.** The composite mean from the same assessments of administrators and implementers revealed ALS to a moderately implementation. This finding reinforces the idea to create management strategies to bridge the identified gaps in financial resources and linkages.

Table 3

Extent of ALS Implementation in terms of Financial Resources and Linkages

Indicators	Administrators			Implementers		
	W.M.	S.D.	V.I.	W.M.	S.D.	V.I.
1. Generate funds for the implementation of the programs and projects	3.56	0.56	HI	3.19	0.81	MI
2. Request assistance from local government units to sustain the activities to be conducted	3.78	0.42	HI	3.56	0.67	HI
3. Demonstrate awareness of the budgeting process and distribution of funds for the Alternative Learning System	3.69	0.52	HI	3.48	0.65	MI
4. Promote transparency in the utilization of funds for its programs and projects	3.72	0.45	HI	3.63	0.61	HI
5. Empower teachers in establishing strong linkages with potential partners and stakeholders to support the program implementation	3.78	0.42	HI	3.60	0.64	HI
6. Tap the support of private individuals to alleviate financial and operational bottlenecks in implementation	3.50	0.56	HI	3.30	0.72	MI
7. Look for non-government organizations that provide financial support to families to offset direct and opportunity costs in accessing education	3.47	0.56	MI	3.29	0.70	MI
8. Seek the assistance of possible giver of soft loans with the lowest interest to finance the needs of learners	3.00	0.99	MI	2.66	1.11	MI
9. Advertise the need to have providers of uniforms and meals for all learners	3.06	0.89	MI	2.74	1.04	MI

10. Look for organizations that give scholarships to deserving students	3.28	0.88	MI	3.16	0.78	MI
11. Encourage community involvement in projects organized and conducted by learners and passers	3.61	0.60	HI	3.47	0.69	MI
12. Search for possible companies and institutions for job vacancies for passers	3.46	0.66	MI	3.38	0.62	MI
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.49	0.41	MI	3.29	0.53	MI

Legend: HI (Highly Implemented) MI (Moderately Implemented)

4. **Program Beneficiaries.** The composite mean from the same assessments of administrators and implementers revealed ALS moderate implementation. This finding suggests that there is a need to create management strategies to augment and improve the implementation of ALS relative to program beneficiaries.

Table 4
Extent of ALS Implementation in terms of Program Beneficiaries

Indicators	Administrators			Implementers		
	W.M.	S.D.	V.I.	W.M.	S.D.	V.I.
1. Deliver basic education to street children to give them new hope and inspiration	3.36	0.93	MI	3.48	0.75	MI
2. Reach out to indigenous people to improve their life status	3.28	0.97	MI	3.11	1.05	MI
3. Extend support to farmers by providing them with skills training	2.86	1.10	MI	2.85	0.92	MI
4. Demonstrate the effective methods of fish preservation to enhance the economic status of fisherman	2.72	1.11	MI	2.59	1.05	MI
5. Inculcate to women clientele their rights and duties in society	3.56	0.73	HI	3.53	0.60	HI
6. Provide solo parent clientele with livelihood programs like puto-pao making, doormat making, and others	3.19	0.89	MI	3.16	0.75	MI
7. Reach out to children in areas not enjoying the benefits of formal school	3.86	0.35	HI	3.73	0.48	HI
8. Provide the rebel returnees with skills development to be prepared and more productive in facing the new life	2.69	1.19	MI	2.58	1.18	MI
9. Promoting sports and physical fitness and development among OSY and OSA	3.50	0.56	HI	3.59	0.57	HI

10. Providing already trained persons with further training in special fields through varied schemes	3.44	0.65	MI	3.29	0.70	MI
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.25	0.60	MI	3.19	0.57	MI

Legend: HI (Highly Implemented) MI (Moderately Implemented)

SOP 2. Identify the challenges in the implementation of ALS.

The implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) continues to face significant challenges despite measures to ensure its success. Administrators and implementers have shared similar assessments regarding these obstacles, which affect enrollment, funding, learning materials, and stakeholder participation. These issues collectively hinder the program's effectiveness, particularly in regions where resources are scarce.

Enrollment remains a pressing concern. Many learners who initially join ALS eventually drop out due to various personal and social challenges. Family problems, early pregnancy, and peer pressure are among the most commonly cited reasons. During interviews, administrators noted that learners often express a desire to attain better opportunities and secure stable employment in the future. However, these aspirations are overshadowed by the realities of their circumstances, making it difficult for them to remain committed to the program.

Funding limitations further complicate the situation. While some local government units (LGUs) actively support ALS initiatives by providing financial assistance and other resources, this support is inconsistent across districts. Many areas lack essential equipment, learning facilities, and training resources, which are crucial for delivering quality education and life skills training. Without sufficient funds, administrators struggle to meet the program's objectives, and learners are deprived of the tools they need to succeed.

The appropriateness of learning materials also poses a significant challenge. Many districts rely on standardized modules provided by the Department of Education, which do not always align with the unique needs and cognitive levels of ALS learners. This disconnect makes it difficult to achieve meaningful learning outcomes. Administrators and implementers have emphasized the importance of reviewing these materials to ensure they are relevant and tailored to the learners' goals, particularly for those who aim to improve their employability and life skills.

Stakeholder participation is another area where disparities exist. While some districts benefit from strong partnerships with parents, community leaders, and private organizations, others face a lack of engagement from these critical groups. This uneven involvement limits the program's reach and effectiveness, leaving many learners without the support they need to thrive.

The challenges faced by ALS have far-reaching implications. High dropout rates undermine the program's mission to provide education for out-of-school youth and equip them with skills for a better future. The lack of appropriate resources and materials compromises the quality of education, while inconsistent funding and support

create unequal opportunities for learners across different districts. Despite these difficulties, some districts have found ways to overcome obstacles, often through the consistent support of LGUs and local stakeholders. These success stories highlight the potential for improvement if systemic issues are addressed and support is strengthened across the board.

To improve the implementation of ALS, a coordinated effort is needed. Enhanced collaboration with stakeholders, including LGUs and private organizations, could provide the necessary resources to sustain the program. Tailoring learning materials to the diverse needs of learners, increasing funding for essential facilities, and offering targeted interventions to address personal challenges are critical steps toward success. Additionally, training ALS implementers to engage effectively with learners can help create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Addressing these challenges with a unified approach can transform ALS into a more effective program, fulfilling its promise to provide inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

SUMMARY

This study aimed to propose management strategies for Alternative Learning System in the Division of Batangas Province. This descriptive study assessed the Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementation and teaching modalities using feedback from 74 administrators and 83 implementers. Findings revealed a high level of implementation in teaching performance, and physical facilities. While most assessments showed no significant difference between the two groups, a significant discrepancy was noted regarding financial resources and linkages, which only received a moderate implementation rating. To address identified challenges such as funding, enrollment, and stakeholder participation, the study proposed targeted management strategies to optimize financial sustainability and program reach within the division.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that while the Alternative Learning System in the Division of Batangas Province is highly successful in teaching performance, and physical facilities. Improvements are still needed in financial resources and program reach, which are currently only moderately implemented. A significant divergence in perspectives exists between administrators and implementers regarding financial linkages, highlighting a gap in how resource management is perceived. Furthermore, the program faces persistent hurdles related to learner enrollment, funding, material appropriateness, and stakeholder engagement. To resolve these issues, the study provides output- and outcomes-based management strategies designed to bridge these gaps and elevate the overall efficacy of ALS delivery in the division.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the Alternative Learning System in the region, it is recommended that the proposed management strategies undergo a thorough review and enrichment process prior to official adoption and implementation. Addressing the identified implementation challenges will require the active participation and collaborative involvement of key stakeholders to ensure sustainable improvements. Furthermore, conducting similar studies in other divisions is encouraged to establish a broader framework for the effective and efficient implementation of ALS programs across various contexts.

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