

Exploring Inclusive Educational Leadership Practices: An Input to The Alternative Learning System (ALS) Graduates Transition Program

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Abstract

This study explored inclusive educational leadership practices and their impact on the senior high school transition of Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates in Calanasan, Apayao Province, Philippines. Using a descriptive-quantitative research design, the study involved 40 ALS graduates, school administrators, and teachers as respondents. Data was gathered through an adapted survey questionnaire covering demographic profiles, inclusive leadership practices, transition challenges, available support mechanisms, and transition outcomes in terms of readiness, confidence, and success. Findings revealed that most ALS graduates were young adults aged 21–30, predominantly female, single, and belonging to households earning below ₱10,000 monthly. Academic challenges registered the highest mean (4.30), followed by emotional (4.05) and social challenges (3.43). Age and civil status significantly influenced the level of challenges encountered, while sex, educational attainment, and income level showed no significant differences. Inclusive leadership practices were generally present, with equity and fairness rated highest (4.25), though communication and engagement remained an area for improvement. Support mechanisms such as orientation programs and individualized teacher assistance were well-established, while peer mentoring and family engagement were underutilized. Inclusive leadership practices positively impacted readiness, confidence, and success, with an overall mean of 3.25. The study concludes that a multi-dimensional transition program integrating scholarships, transportation, ICT access, bridging programs, teacher training, and socio-emotional support is essential to fully empower ALS graduates in their senior high school journey.

Keywords: Inclusive Educational Leadership; Alternative Learning System; Senior High School Transition

1. Introduction

Education stands as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for sustainable development. However, millions of learners worldwide remain excluded from traditional schooling systems due to socioeconomic, geographic, and personal circumstances. In response to these challenges, alternative education programs have emerged across many countries as critical pathways for out-of-school youth and adults to complete their basic education and pursue further learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2020). Globally, alternative learning systems have gained recognition as viable mechanisms for achieving Education for All and Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

As alternative education programs continue to expand, inclusive educational leadership has also emerged as a transformative approach that prioritizes equity, diversity, and the removal of barriers that prevent learners from accessing quality education (Ainscow and Sandall, 2010). Leaders who embrace inclusive practices actively create school environments where every learner, regardless of background or educational pathway, feels valued and supported (Ryan, 2006). International studies reveal that students transitioning from alternative education programs to formal schooling often face academic, social, and emotional challenges (Archambault et al., 2017). Consequently, the

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role of school leaders in facilitating smooth transitions has been recognized as a critical factor influencing learners' success and integration into mainstream education (Mitra and Gross, 2009).

Research from various countries further highlights the importance of inclusive educational leadership in supporting learners from non-traditional educational backgrounds. In Europe, transformational leadership approaches in secondary schools have positively influenced the integration of students from alternative education programs (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006). In North America, distributed leadership models involving teachers, counselors, and support staff have been found effective in creating inclusive environments for diverse student populations (Spillane, 2006). Australian studies also emphasize that school leaders who demonstrate cultural responsiveness and commitment to social justice are more successful in supporting marginalized learners (Shields, 2010). These international perspectives suggest that inclusive educational leadership requires appropriate policy frameworks, adequate resources, and continuous professional development among school administrators (Theoharis, 2009).

The literature on educational transitions also shows that learners moving from alternative to formal education settings experience heightened vulnerability during this period. Many struggles with academic preparedness, social acceptance, and identity formation (Newman et al., 2007). Effective school leaders address these challenges by implementing interventions such as bridging programs, mentorship initiatives, and differentiated instruction (Anderson et al., 2010). Moreover, studies indicate that positive relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students significantly affect the transition experiences and outcomes of learners from alternative education backgrounds (Crosnoe et al., 2004). Inclusive school climates characterized by respect for diversity and non-discrimination also enhance learners' sense of belonging and school engagement (Koski et al., 2012).

In the Asian context, the importance of inclusive leadership becomes even more pronounced because of diverse educational systems and persistent socioeconomic disparities. Alternative education programs in many Asian countries primarily serve marginalized populations, including indigenous peoples, conflict-affected communities, and economically disadvantaged learners (Sharma, 2015). Studies in India demonstrate how inclusive school leadership can bridge the gap between non-formal and mainstream education despite existing barriers (Singal, 2008). In Thailand, school principals play essential roles in creating culturally responsive learning environments that recognize diverse learning experiences (Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000). Similarly, Indonesian studies reveal how educational leaders navigate policy constraints while accommodating learners transitioning from alternative education programs (Shaeffer, 1993).

The Philippine context presents a significant case for examining inclusive educational leadership and its impact on Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates transitioning to Senior High School. The Philippines has one of the largest alternative education systems in Asia, serving millions of out-of-school youth and adults who were unable to complete formal education (UNESCO Bangkok, 2012). Through the Department of Education, the government institutionalized the ALS as a parallel learning system that provides opportunities for marginalized Filipinos to continue their education and complete basic education requirements (Macabenta et al., 2023). Despite its objectives, studies show that ALS graduates encounter various challenges when transitioning to formal secondary education, including academic gaps, financial difficulties, and social stigmatization (Abel, 2024).

The implementation of the K-12 program in the Philippines, which added Senior High School as a mandatory level of basic education, created additional opportunities and challenges for ALS graduates (Mam et al., 2017). School principals and administrators have been identified as key factors in determining whether schools adopt inclusive practices that support ALS graduates' integration into Senior High School (Dangle and Sumaoang, 2020). However, studies on Philippine schools reveal variations in how educational leaders approach diversity and inclusion, with some schools demonstrating supportive practices while others remain exclusionary toward non-traditional learners (Tupas, 2015). Filipino scholars therefore emphasize the need for culturally grounded leadership models that reflect the country's unique educational and sociocultural realities (DeGuzman and Choi, 2013).

In rural and remote areas of the Philippines, the challenges faced by ALS graduates become even more complex. Geographic isolation, limited educational infrastructure, and inadequate resources create barriers for learners transitioning from alternative to formal education (Sabio and Sabio, 2013). Indigenous communities experience additional disadvantages because of language barriers, cultural differences, and historical marginalization within the mainstream educational system (Guo and Chiu, 2016). Research further shows that school leaders in these contexts must balance government mandates with local realities and community needs (Olayvar, 2021).

The province of Apayao in the Cordillera Administrative Region exemplifies many of these educational challenges. The region has historically experienced lower educational attainment rates than national averages due to mountainous terrain, dispersed populations, and the presence of indigenous communities with distinct cultural identities (Benguet State University, 2016). Studies in the Cordillera also indicate that indigenous learners often face difficulties in accessing and succeeding in formal education because of cultural discontinuities between home and school environments (Peñalba, 2016). Educational leaders in these communities are therefore challenged to recognize and respect indigenous knowledge systems while helping learners navigate formal educational pathways (Chinn, 2007).

Calanasan, a municipality in Apayao, represents a microcosm of these broader educational realities. The municipality is characterized by its remote location, predominantly indigenous population, and limited educational opportunities beyond basic education. Local studies indicate that many learners in Calanasan depend on the ALS as their primary means of completing basic education, yet they remain uncertain about their opportunities for continuing to Senior High School (Department of Education–Apayao Division, 2020). Although Senior High Schools in the municipality provide possible pathways for ALS graduates, the extent to which inclusive leadership practices support these learners remains underexplored (Local Government Unit of Calanasan, 2021).

Hence, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on inclusive educational leadership by examining its manifestations and impact on ALS graduates transitioning to Senior High School in Calanasan, Apayao. Specifically, the study aims to determine how school leaders facilitate or hinder educational access, inclusion, and success for learners from non-traditional educational backgrounds. The findings of this study may provide valuable insights for educational policymakers, school administrators, and communities in designing more equitable and responsive educational practices for ALS graduates and other marginalized learners.

2. Review Of Related Literatures and Studies

2.1. Inclusive Leadership Foundations and Frameworks

The foundation and framework of inclusive leadership according to Ainscow (2020) emphasizes that it goes beyond simply following educational policies; it is about fostering a culture where collective problem-solving becomes the norm where leaders must continuously identify and dismantle barriers to participation, ensuring that all learners, especially those marginalized, are supported. His work highlights leadership dispositions such as openness, collaboration, and equity orientation, which are essential in shaping inclusive practices across schools. By cultivating these dispositions, leaders create environments where inclusivity is embedded in everyday routines rather than treated as a compliance requirement.

Furthermore, Booth and Ainscow (2011) introduce the Index for Inclusion, a comprehensive framework that enables schools to audit and redesign their cultures, policies, and practices. This tool is iterative, meaning it encourages continuous reflection and improvement, guiding leaders to strengthen participation, equity, and achievement for marginalized learners. By applying the Index, schools can embed inclusivity into their daily operations, making it a practical pathway for systemic change. It serves not only as a diagnostic instrument but also as a roadmap for leaders committed to building inclusive educational environments while Fullan (2014) argues that effective school leadership must be impact-oriented, focusing on coherence-making, capacity-building, and trust. He demonstrates how leaders mobilize networks and professional capital to embed inclusive mindsets and routines that endure beyond short-term policy cycles. Fullan stresses that leadership should be proactive, ensuring that inclusive practices are sustained and institutionalized rather than dependent on temporary initiatives. His perspective underscores the importance of building long-term systems of support and collaboration that empower educators and learners alike.

Additionally, Leithwood et al. (2008) synthesize evidence showing that leadership is second only to teaching in its influence on student learning. They outline how setting direction, developing people, and redesigning organizations are foundational to inclusive transformation, especially in high-needs contexts. Their findings highlight that leadership is a critical factor in achieving equitable education outcomes, as it shapes the structures and cultures within which teaching and learning occur. By focusing on organizational redesign and capacity development, leaders can create conditions that enable inclusivity to flourish.

Meanwhile, Shields and Hesbol (2010) advance the concept of transformative leadership, which is rooted in equity and social justice. They argue that leaders must confront structural inequities directly and cultivate courageous dialogue within their institutions. Their work underscores the necessity of policy shifts and cultural change to ensure inclusivity is not superficial but deeply embedded in school systems. Transformative leadership requires courage, vision, and a

commitment to dismantling systemic barriers, positioning leaders as agents of change who drive schools toward genuine inclusivity and justice.

2.2. Policy and governance shaping ALS and inclusive pathways

In response to basic education inclusive leadership, the Department of Education (2022) introduced the ALS 2.0 reforms to strengthen the quality and relevance of the Alternative Learning System. These reforms standardized learning strands, improved equivalency assessments, and enhanced governance mechanisms to ensure consistency across ALS programs. Importantly, ALS 2.0 explicitly bridges completers into Senior High School by providing clearer pathways, structured support mechanisms, and alignment with the K to 12 curriculums. This reform ensures that ALS graduates are not left behind but are given equitable opportunities to pursue higher education or vocational tracks, thereby reinforcing inclusivity in the Philippine education system. This is further elaborated by the World Bank (2016) providing a comprehensive analysis of alternative and inclusive learning in the Philippines, identifying critical gaps in policy alignment, resource provision, and data management systems. The report emphasized that while ALS offers opportunities for marginalized learners, its effectiveness is hindered by weak governance and fragmented coordination among agencies. To address these challenges, the World Bank recommended stronger governance structures, better resourcing, and improved inter-agency collaboration to connect ALS outcomes with Senior High School, Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and employment opportunities. This perspective underscores the need for systemic reforms to make ALS a more effective bridge to lifelong learning and workforce readiness.

In the Philippine context, there are enabling acts concerning basic education making it more inclusive such as Republic Act No. 9155 (2001), also known as the Governance of Basic Education Act, established decentralized governance in the Philippine education system. It clarified the accountability of schools and divisions, empowering local leaders to make context-specific decisions. For inclusive educational leadership, this law provides a framework to localize ALS-SHS bridging initiatives through targeted planning, resource allocation, and community engagement. By leveraging decentralized governance, school leaders can design interventions that directly respond to the unique needs of ALS graduates in their communities, ensuring smoother transitions into formal education pathways.

This is further strengthened by Republic Act No. 10533 (2013) institutionalizing the K to 12 program and mandated outcomes-based standards for basic education. This law requires that ALS competencies be aligned with the Senior High School curriculum, ensuring that ALS graduates can transition seamlessly into SHS tracks. For educational leaders, RA 10533 serves as a legal scaffold to validate prior learning, personalize SHS entry, and provide remediation where necessary. By aligning ALS outcomes with K to 12 standards, leaders can guarantee that ALS graduates are not disadvantaged but are prepared to meet the demands of higher-level education. This is supported by DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2022 that formalized the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in ALS, giving leaders practical tools to assess and acknowledge the competencies of ALS learners. Through RPL, individualized learning agreements can be created, and non-stigmatizing placement strategies can be implemented to ensure ALS graduates are smoothly integrated into appropriate SHS tracks. This order empowers schools to recognize diverse learning experiences, reduce barriers to participation, and promote equity by validating the skills and knowledge ALS graduates already possess. Ultimately, RPL strengthens the inclusivity of the transition process and enhances the confidence of ALS learners entering Senior High School.

2.3. Access and equity conditions for ALS learners

Lu (2024) emphasizes the equity foundation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) for Out-of-School Children, Youth, and Adults (OSCYA), linking it to the long-standing marginalization of disadvantaged groups from mainstream education. He explains that ALS serves learners hindered by challenges such as remote locations, poverty, and disrupted schooling, and presents these circumstances as issues that demand responsive leadership. School leaders are therefore expected to confront these inequities by creating inclusive approaches that guarantee OSCYA are supported, affirming ALS's role as a pathway for promoting social justice and educational equity.

Mallari (2025) documents ALS's role in extending non-formal education delivery to highly marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities (PWDs), child laborers, and learners in correctional facilities. By showcasing the work of mobile teachers and modular programs, Mallari demonstrates how ALS expands access where formal schooling is limited or inaccessible. This underscores the adaptability of ALS and the importance of leadership in sustaining innovative delivery modes that respond to diverse learner contexts, ensuring inclusivity across social and geographic divides.

DepEd Caraga (2021) provides an ALS Handbook that outlines program standards, assessment procedures, and pathways for learners. This handbook serves as a practical guide for educational leaders to operationalize inclusive

transitions to Senior High School (SHS). It emphasizes case management and contextualized delivery, enabling leaders to tailor interventions to the specific needs of ALS graduates. By institutionalizing clear standards and pathways, the handbook strengthens the capacity of schools and divisions to support equitable transitions and reduce dropout risks among ALS completers.

UNICEF Philippines (n.d.) frames inclusive education as a rights-based imperative, emphasizing that every child has the right to quality learning opportunities regardless of background. It endorses second-chance programs like ALS as essential mechanisms for achieving educational equity. UNICEF also signals avenues for partnership, resource mobilization, and technical support that leaders can leverage to bolster ALS-to-SHS transitions. This perspective highlights the global recognition of ALS as a critical tool for inclusion and the importance of collaborative leadership in sustaining its impact.

SEAMEO INNOTECH (2012) reviews ALS implementation and innovations in the Philippines, identifying persistent challenges in quality assurance, resource provision, and community involvement. The study recommends leader-led strategies to strengthen learner support systems and recognition mechanisms, ensuring that ALS graduates are adequately prepared for further education or employment. By emphasizing the role of leadership in addressing systemic gaps, SEAMEO INNOTECH underscores that inclusivity in ALS requires not only innovative delivery but also strong governance and community engagement to sustain its effectiveness.

2.4. Transition Pathways and Readiness of ALS Graduates

Calabit (2022) explores the readiness of ALS completers for senior high school, revealing significant gaps in both academic preparedness and psychosocial adjustment. His study underscores that while ALS provides foundational learning, many graduates face difficulties in coping with the more rigorous demands of formal schooling. To address these challenges, Calabit emphasizes the importance of bridging programs and targeted interventions that can strengthen academic competencies and provide psychosocial support, ensuring that ALS graduates are better equipped to succeed in senior high school.

Perater and Paglinawan (2025) highlight the critical role of bridging programs in enhancing the competencies of ALS graduates prior to their entry into senior high school. Their findings suggest that without such preparatory interventions, many ALS completers struggle with curriculum alignment and classroom expectations, leading to adjustment difficulties. By reinforcing core skills and familiarizing learners with formal school structures, bridging programs serve as a vital mechanism for smoothing transitions and reducing dropout risks among ALS graduates.

Pura and Janer (2024) analyze the pathways pursued by ALS graduates, noting that while many aspire to higher education, structural barriers such as poverty, limited access to resources, and systemic inequities hinder their progression. Their study calls for systemic reforms that address these barriers, including improved resource allocation, policy alignment, and support mechanisms. By tackling these structural challenges, transitions from ALS to senior high school can become more equitable, enabling graduates to pursue their aspirations without being constrained by socioeconomic limitations.

Mamba et al. (2021) underscore the importance of learner motivation and resilience in shaping successful transitions from ALS to senior high school. She argues that psychosocial factors—such as perseverance, adaptability, and self-confidence—are just as critical as academic preparation in determining whether ALS graduates thrive in formal education. Her research highlights that motivated learners with strong resilience are more likely to overcome challenges, suggesting that leadership and support programs should nurture these psychosocial dimensions alongside academic skills.

Tabanao (2025) examines the psychological readiness of ALS graduates, emphasizing the need for socio-emotional support programs to complement academic preparation. His research shows that confidence, self-efficacy, and emotional stability are equally important in ensuring smooth transitions into senior high school. By integrating socio-emotional support into transition programs, schools can help ALS

graduates build the psychological resilience needed to adapt to new environments, thereby increasing their chances of success in formal education.

2.5. Support Mechanisms and Interventions

Mehra et al. (2021) conducted an evaluation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, focusing on its impact on youths at risk of involvement in urban violence. The study examined how ALS functions as a second-chance

education program, providing marginalized learners with opportunities to gain basic education competencies and life skills outside the formal school system. Importantly, the research assessed the program's cost-effectiveness and resource allocation, highlighting that ALS not only delivers educational benefits but also serves as a preventive intervention against social risks such as crime and violence. By equipping vulnerable youth with knowledge, skills, and pathways to employment or further education, ALS was shown to contribute to both individual empowerment and broader social stability, underscoring its value as an inclusive and strategic educational initiative.

Arzadon and Nato Jr. (2015) presented a study on the Philippine Alternative Learning System (ALS) during the 9th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning, highlighting its role in expanding educational opportunities for the deprived, depressed, and underserved sectors of society. Their work situates ALS as a vital second-chance program that addresses the needs of marginalized learners who are excluded from formal schooling due to poverty, geographic isolation, or social disadvantage. The study emphasizes how ALS provides flexible, non-formal pathways through modular instruction, community-based learning, and equivalency programs, thereby enabling learners to pursue further education, skills training, or employment. By framing ALS as both an equity-driven and transformative initiative, Arzadon and Nato Jr. underscore its importance in reshaping the educational future of vulnerable populations and in promoting inclusive development in the Philippines.

Baccal and Ormilla (2021) examined the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in public schools in Isabela, Philippines, focusing on how the program is delivered, managed, and sustained at the local level. Their study highlighted the strengths of ALS in providing flexible, non-formal education opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults, particularly those from marginalized communities who cannot access formal schooling. They also identified challenges such as limited resources, inadequate facilities, and the need for stronger support systems to ensure effective delivery. Importantly, the research emphasized the role of mobile teachers, modular instruction, and community partnerships in expanding access and improving learner outcomes. By analyzing both successes and constraints, Baccal and Ormilla underscored that effective ALS implementation requires not only policy support but also strong leadership, resource mobilization, and contextualized strategies to meet diverse learner needs.

Salendab and Cogo (2022) conducted a study on the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, positioning it as a basis for policy review and recommendation. Their research examined how ALS is delivered in various contexts, identifying strengths such as its flexibility and reach to marginalized learners, while also pointing out challenges including resource limitations, uneven program quality, and gaps in monitoring and evaluation. The study emphasized that while ALS has been effective in extending educational opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults, its sustainability and impact depend on stronger policy support, improved governance, and enhanced resource allocation. By highlighting these areas, Salendab and Cogo argued for evidence-based reforms that can make ALS more responsive, equitable, and aligned with national education goals, ensuring smoother transitions for learners into formal schooling or employment pathways.

Boac et al. 2025 explored the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) within the Metro Baguio, La Trinidad, Itogon, Sablan, Tuba, and Tublay (MBLISTT) area, focusing on how ALS can be leveraged for educational extension. Their study highlighted the adaptability of ALS in reaching marginalized learners across diverse communities, emphasizing its role in bridging educational gaps where formal schooling is limited or inaccessible. By documenting insights from ALS delivery in MBLISTT, the authors underscored the importance of mobile teachers, modular instruction, and community-based approaches in expanding access to education. They also pointed out challenges such as resource constraints and the need for stronger institutional support, while recommending strategies to enhance inclusivity and sustainability. Overall, the study positions ALS as a vital extension mechanism that can complement formal education systems and promote equity in learning opportunities.

2.6. Policy and Program Frameworks

Salendab and Cogo (2022) conducted a study on the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, positioning it as a basis for policy review and recommendation. Their research examined how ALS is delivered in various contexts, identifying strengths such as its flexibility and reach to marginalized learners, while also pointing out challenges including resource limitations, uneven program quality, and gaps in monitoring and evaluation. The study emphasized that while ALS has been effective in extending educational opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults, its sustainability and impact depend on stronger policy support, improved governance, and enhanced resource allocation. By highlighting these areas, Salendab and Cogo argued for evidence-based reforms that can make ALS more responsive, equitable, and aligned with national education goals, ensuring smoother transitions for learners into formal schooling or employment pathways.

Abasolo (2017) focused on developing a scheme of action to enhance the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines. Conducted at Cebu Technological University, the study examined existing practices and identified gaps in delivery, resource allocation, and learner support. Abasolo proposed a structured action plan that emphasizes strengthening instructional materials, improving teacher training, and fostering community involvement to make ALS more responsive to the needs of marginalized learners. The scheme also highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure program effectiveness and sustainability. By presenting a comprehensive framework, the study contributes to policy and practice by offering actionable strategies that can improve ALS outcomes and better prepare learners for transitions into formal education or employment pathways.

Castolo and Chan, (2016) developed an Assessment Framework in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) that takes a systemic approach to evaluating learner progress and program effectiveness. Their work emphasizes the importance of establishing clear standards and structured assessment tools to measure competencies across ALS learning strands. By proposing a framework, they highlight how assessments can move beyond simple testing to include holistic evaluation of learners' skills, knowledge, and readiness for further education or employment. The study underscores that a systemic assessment framework not only ensures accountability and quality assurance but also provides leaders and educators with actionable insights to improve instruction, tailor interventions, and strengthen pathways for ALS graduates transitioning into Senior High School.

Reyes (2021) conducted a descriptive study examining two Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) in the Philippines, focusing on their role in addressing disparities and creating opportunities for out-of-school youth. The research highlighted how ALS programs serve as vital second-chance education pathways, enabling marginalized learners to acquire basic competencies and pursue further education or employment. Reyes identified both strengths and limitations of the systems: while ALS expands access and provides flexible learning opportunities, challenges remain in terms of resource allocation, program quality, and sustainability. The study emphasized that effective ALS implementation requires strong leadership, community involvement, and policy support to ensure that opportunities are equitably distributed and that learners are adequately prepared for transitions into formal schooling or vocational tracks.

Arzadon and Nato Jr. (2015) presented a study on the Philippine Alternative Learning System (ALS) at the 9th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning, emphasizing its transformative role in expanding educational opportunities for the deprived, depressed, and underserved sectors of society. Their work situates ALS as a vital second-chance program that addresses inequities in access to formal schooling by offering flexible, modular, and community-based learning pathways. The study highlights how ALS empowers marginalized learners to pursue further education, skills training, or employment, thereby reshaping their educational futures and contributing to social inclusion. By framing ALS as both an equity-driven and developmental initiative, Arzadon and Nato Jr. underscore its importance in promoting inclusive education and reducing systemic barriers that perpetuate educational disadvantage.

2.7. Equity and Access in Education

Abel Jr. (2024) examined the ALS as a transformative educational initiative designed to provide marginalized learners with opportunities to re-engage in schooling and pursue personal development. The study highlighted ALS's equity-driven mission, emphasizing its role in addressing the needs of out-of-school youth and adults who face barriers such as poverty, geographic isolation, and interrupted schooling. Abel Jr. underscored the flexibility of ALS through modular instruction, mobile teaching, and community-based delivery, which make education accessible to diverse learner groups. Importantly, the research framed ALS as a "second chance" program that not only equips learners with basic competencies but also opens pathways toward Senior High School, technical-vocational education, or employment. By situating ALS within the broader discourse of inclusive education, the study reinforced its significance in promoting social justice and expanding educational futures for the underserved.

Atilano et al. (2016) investigated the factors influencing dropout rates in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Accreditation and Equivalency (AandE) Program in the Philippines. Their study revealed that multiple challenges contribute to learner attrition, including socioeconomic constraints, lack of motivation, limited parental support, and difficulties in balancing work and study responsibilities. They also noted program-related issues such as inadequate instructional materials, irregular attendance of learners, and limited teacher capacity to sustain engagement. The findings emphasized that dropout is not merely an individual issue but a systemic one, requiring stronger support mechanisms, improved resource allocation, and more responsive teaching strategies. By identifying these factors, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers and educational leaders to design interventions that reduce dropout rates and ensure that ALS learners successfully complete the program and transition into further education or employment.

Cucio and Roldan (2020) examined inclusive education for ethnic minorities in the developing world, using the Philippine Alternative Learning System (ALS) for indigenous peoples as a case study. Their research highlighted how ALS serves as a crucial mechanism for addressing educational inequities among indigenous communities who often face systemic barriers such as poverty, geographic isolation, and cultural marginalization. The study emphasized that ALS provides flexible, community-based, and culturally sensitive learning opportunities that allow indigenous learners to acquire basic education competencies while respecting their unique contexts. By situating ALS within the broader discourse of sustainable development, Cucio and Roldan underscored its role in promoting social inclusion, equity, and empowerment for ethnic minorities. Their work demonstrates that ALS is not only an educational intervention but also a pathway toward reducing disparities and fostering long-term development among underserved populations.

Labarrete and Tiopes (2025) explored the lived experiences of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who are enrolled in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines. Their study highlighted how ALS provides incarcerated individuals with meaningful opportunities to continue their education despite confinement, thereby fostering personal growth, rehabilitation, and reintegration prospects. The research revealed that ALS not only equips PDLs with academic competencies but also enhances their self-worth, motivation, and hope for a better future after release. Challenges such as limited resources, restricted mobility, and stigma were noted, yet the program's flexibility and inclusivity allowed learners to overcome these barriers. By situating ALS within correctional facilities, Labarrete and Tiopes underscored its transformative potential in promoting equity, social justice, and second chances for marginalized populations often excluded from mainstream education.

Cayabas et al, (2023) examined the contributions and partnership strategies of external stakeholders in the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Bontoc District, drawing insights from teachers directly involved in the program. Their study highlighted how partnerships with local government units, NGOs, community organizations, and private institutions play a crucial role in sustaining ALS delivery by providing resources, logistical support, and advocacy. Teachers emphasized that these collaborations enhance program reach, improve learner support, and strengthen community ownership of ALS initiatives. The research also underscored that stakeholder involvement fosters innovation in delivery strategies, contextualizes learning to local needs, and ensures sustainability despite resource limitations. By documenting these partnership dynamics, the study demonstrates that effective ALS implementation is not solely dependent on policy but thrives through collective action and shared responsibility among schools, communities, and external partners.

2.8. Psychosocial Readiness of Non-Traditional Learners

April (2021) explores how the psychosocial safety climate (PSC), the shared perceptions of organizational policies and practices that prioritize psychological health, affects the ability of non-traditional South African students to balance work and study demands. The study highlights that a supportive PSC reduces stress and role conflict, enabling students to manage the work-school interface more effectively, while poor PSC environments exacerbate strain and hinder academic success. In essence, fostering a strong psychosocial safety climate is shown to be crucial for promoting well-being and performance among students juggling employment and education.

Paulina (2015) examines how traditional and non-traditional educational models shape children's perceptions of schooling, their expectations for the future, and their capacity to develop resilience. The thesis argues that traditional models often emphasize structure and conformity, while non-traditional approaches foster adaptability, critical thinking, and self-efficacy. By comparing these influences, the study highlights that exposure to diverse educational experiences can significantly impact children's beliefs about the value of education, their optimism about future opportunities, and their ability to cultivate resilient attitudes in the face of challenges.

Tabafa et. al, (2025) conducted a systematic review to understand the challenges and supports influencing Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates as they transition into higher education. Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory and Student Integration Theory, their study highlights how factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, institutional support, and social integration shape the success of ALS learners in pursuing further studies. The review emphasizes that while ALS provides flexible pathways for marginalized learners, effective transition requires strong personal resilience, supportive academic environments, and policies that foster inclusion and belonging in higher education institutions.

Collis and Reed (2016) argue that non-traditional students often succeed academically not by following conventional pathways, but through resourcefulness and adaptability. Their work emphasizes that flexible teaching approaches, such as personalized learning, practical applications, and supportive environments, help these students navigate challenges like balancing work, family, and study. The study highlights that resilience, problem-solving skills, and the ability to adjust to diverse learning contexts are critical factors enabling non-traditional learners to thrive in higher education.

2.9. Role of Teachers in Inclusive Transition Programs

Kimhi and Bar Nir (2025) investigate how teacher training programs are adapting to the shift toward inclusive education, where diverse learners, including those with special needs, are integrated into mainstream classrooms. Their study emphasizes that effective transition requires equipping teachers with not only pedagogical skills but also attitudes of openness, empathy, and flexibility. The article highlights that professional development, institutional support, and reflective practice are key in preparing educators to foster inclusive learning environments that promote equity and participation for all students.

Sadiki (2026) examines the pivotal role of teacher educators in addressing the challenges that arise during the transition toward inclusive education. The chapter emphasizes that teacher educators are not only responsible for imparting pedagogical knowledge but also for reshaping mindsets, building partnerships, and fostering practices that support diversity and equity in classrooms. By guiding future teachers through reflective and adaptive approaches, they help dismantle barriers to inclusion and ensure that educational systems evolve to meet the needs of all learners in a changing world.

Mieto et. al, (2016) explore how teachers in their initial practice within inclusive education settings construct and negotiate meanings around their roles and experiences. The study emphasizes that this transitional phase is marked by uncertainty, reflection, and adaptation, as educators grapple with new pedagogical demands and diverse student needs. Their findings suggest that meaning-making is a dynamic process shaped by personal beliefs, institutional contexts, and interactions with students, highlighting the importance of support and reflective practice in helping teachers successfully navigate the shift toward inclusive education.

Astudillo et. al, (2025) present a narrative review analyzing the evolving roles of support teachers in inclusive schools. Their work highlights that support teachers contribute not only by assisting students with special educational needs but also by collaborating with classroom teachers, fostering inclusive practices, and promoting equity in learning environments. The review underscores that their role has shifted from being primarily remedial to becoming integral partners in co-teaching, curriculum adaptation, and building inclusive school cultures, ultimately strengthening the effectiveness of inclusive education.

Klibthong, Fridani, Ikegami, and Agbenyega (2014) investigate how the quality of early childhood programs connects with transition services in inclusive education for young children. Their study emphasizes that strong, well-designed early childhood programs, characterized by supportive environments, individualized approaches, and collaboration among educators, play a crucial role in preparing children for smooth transitions into inclusive settings. They argue that continuity between early interventions and school-based support services enhances children's developmental outcomes, fosters inclusion, and ensures that diverse learners experience equitable opportunities from the very start of their educational journey.

2.10. Digital Literacy and ICT Access Among ALS Learners

Gindap and Cresencio (2023) explore the computer literacy and digital citizenship of learners in the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Their study highlights that while ALS provides flexible educational opportunities for marginalized groups, the integration of digital skills is essential for learners to thrive in modern society. They emphasize that computer literacy not only enhances academic and employment prospects but also strengthens responsible online behavior, critical thinking, and participation in digital communities. The findings suggest that fostering both technical competence and ethical digital practices is key to empowering ALS learners in the digital age.

Ocampo (2021) investigates the functional literacy of Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners, focusing on how their skills in reading, writing, and numeracy can serve as a foundation for sustainable extension activities. The study emphasizes that functional literacy is not only essential for academic progress but also for empowering learners to participate meaningfully in community development and lifelong learning. By assessing literacy levels, Ocampo highlights the need for targeted programs that strengthen competencies and create opportunities for ALS learners to apply their knowledge in practical, socially beneficial ways.

Ratilla (2022) examines the link between ALS teachers' critical thinking skills and their use of digital technology and literacy. The study finds that teachers with stronger critical thinking abilities tend to engage more effectively with digital tools, enhancing both their teaching practices and their own digital competence. This association underscores the importance of integrating technology training with the development of higher-order thinking skills, as it equips ALS educators to foster more innovative, adaptive, and effective learning environments for their students.

Caringal-Agum et. al, (2020) conducted a case study on students' perceptions of using ICT in English classes within the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Their findings reveal that learners generally view ICT as a valuable tool that enhances engagement, supports language learning, and makes lessons more interactive and accessible. The study emphasizes that integrating technology into ALS classrooms not only improves motivation and comprehension but also equips learners with digital skills essential for both academic success and broader participation in modern society.

Bilocura et. al, (2023) focus on assessing the basic computer skills of Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners, recognizing digital competence as a crucial foundation for academic and professional growth. Their study highlights that while many ALS learners demonstrate familiarity with fundamental tasks such as word processing, internet browsing, and basic file management, gaps remain in more advanced applications and critical digital literacy. The findings underscore the importance of integrating structured ICT training into ALS programs to ensure learners are better prepared for higher education, employment, and active participation in the digital society.

2.11. Family and Community Involvement in ALS Education

Jimenez et. al, (2026) present a qualitative study capturing the lived experiences of ALS facilitators and learners within alternative education. Their findings highlight both the opportunities and challenges faced in this system: facilitators often navigate limited resources while striving to provide flexible, learner-centered instruction, and learners share stories of resilience, motivation, and personal growth despite social and economic barriers. The study underscores that ALS serves as a transformative pathway, empowering marginalized individuals to pursue education and improve their life chances through perseverance and supportive teaching practices.

Cartoneros (2024) presents a qualitative study that delves into the essence of teachers' intervention in Alternative Learning System (ALS) learning. The research highlights that teacher intervention goes beyond delivering lessons, it involves mentoring, motivating, and providing personalized support to learners who often face social and economic challenges. The study underscores that effective teacher involvement fosters learner confidence, engagement, and persistence, making teachers' roles central to ensuring that ALS participants not only acquire academic skills but also develop resilience and a sense of empowerment in their educational journey.

Catacutan (2025) investigates the home-related factors that influence the learning continuity of Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners. The study identifies key aspects such as family support, household responsibilities, economic conditions, and the availability of learning resources at home as critical determinants of whether learners can sustain their educational progress. Findings emphasize that supportive home environments foster persistence and resilience, while challenges like financial instability or lack of parental involvement can hinder continuity. The research ultimately proposes the development of an enhanced learning continuity program that addresses these home-related influences, ensuring that ALS learners receive holistic support that bridges both school and household contexts.

Ramos et. al, (2024) conducted a needs assessment study focusing on lifelong learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults. Their research highlights that empowerment and educational advancement for these groups depend on identifying gaps in access, resources, and skills development. The study emphasizes the importance of tailoring programs to learners' specific needs, such as vocational training, digital literacy, and community-based support, to ensure sustainable pathways for personal growth and social inclusion. Ultimately, the findings advocate for strengthening lifelong learning initiatives as a means of reducing educational inequality and fostering empowerment among marginalized populations.

2.12. Bridging Programs and Academic Preparedness

Arenal and Dasig (2025) examine the implementation level and challenges of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and its impact on the academic performance of senior high school students. Their study highlights that while ALS provides flexible pathways for learners outside the formal education system, its effectiveness depends on consistent implementation, adequate resources, and strong teacher support. Key challenges identified include limited instructional materials, technological gaps, and varying levels of learner engagement. Despite these obstacles, the research shows that when ALS is effectively implemented, it positively contributes to learners' academic performance, underscoring the need for enhanced support systems and policy reinforcement to strengthen ALS delivery.

Casingal and Guiono (2025) investigate strategies to bridge the five-year gap often experienced by Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in preparing for the Accreditation and Equivalency (AandE) Examination. Their study highlights that systematic mock testing and intensive familiarization activities significantly improve learners' confidence, test-taking skills, and overall success rates. By simulating exam conditions and reinforcing familiarity with exam content and structure, these interventions help reduce anxiety and strengthen mastery of competencies. The findings underscore

that structured preparation programs are crucial in enhancing ALS learners' performance, ensuring that they are better equipped to achieve certification and continue their educational or career pathways.

Resurreccion et. al, (2021) examine ALS training and certification programs for students in teacher education institutions, highlighting how these initiatives prepare future educators to engage with alternative learning pathways. Their study underscores that exposure to ALS equips teacher education students with practical skills in flexible instruction, learner-centered approaches, and community-based education. The research also points out challenges such as limited resources and the need for stronger institutional support, but ultimately emphasizes that integrating ALS training into teacher preparation fosters inclusivity and broadens educational access, ensuring that future teachers are better prepared to serve diverse learners.

Saquing (2023) explores the experiences of non-formal graduates enrolled in Teacher Education Programs, using these insights as the foundation for developing a program framework. The study highlights that non-formal graduates often face unique challenges such as adjusting to academic demands, bridging gaps in prior learning, and navigating institutional expectations. At the same time, their resilience, practical life experiences, and motivation to pursue teaching serve as strengths that enrich their educational journey. Saquing emphasizes that understanding these lived experiences is crucial for designing a responsive framework that supports non-formal graduates, ensuring smoother integration, academic success, and professional readiness in the teaching field.

Estabillo and Linga (2025) examine the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Division of Rizal and its relationship to students' academic performance. Their study highlights that effective ALS implementation, through structured modules, committed facilitators, and learner-centered approaches, positively influences learners' academic outcomes. However, they also identify challenges such as limited resources, inconsistent learner participation, and gaps in technological integration. The research underscores that strengthening program delivery, providing adequate support, and addressing systemic barriers are essential to maximize ALS's impact on student achievement and ensure equitable educational opportunities.

2.13. Gender and Civil Status Dimensions in Educational Challenges

Dameron et. al, (2019) conducted an experimental study on how race, gender, and socioeconomic status influence school counselors' decisions regarding placement in alternative learning programs. Their findings reveal that implicit biases can significantly affect counselors' judgments, often leading to disparities in placement recommendations. Specifically, students from marginalized racial and socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to be directed toward alternative programs, raising concerns about equity and fairness in educational opportunities. The study underscores the need for greater awareness, training, and systemic safeguards to ensure that placement decisions are based on learners' actual needs and potential rather than demographic factors.

Dameron (2018) conducted a doctoral dissertation study examining how student race, gender, and socioeconomic status influence school counselors' decisions to place learners in alternative learning programs. The research revealed that these demographic factors can significantly shape counselors' judgments, often resulting in inequitable placement outcomes. The study highlights the presence of implicit bias in decision-making processes, raising concerns about fairness and access to educational opportunities. Dameron's work underscores the need for professional development, awareness training, and systemic safeguards to ensure that placement decisions are based on learners' actual needs and abilities rather than demographic characteristics.

Booker and Mitchell (2011) analyze patterns of recidivism and discretionary placement in disciplinary alternative education programs, focusing on how demographic factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, and special education status influence outcomes. Their study reveals that these variables significantly affect both the likelihood of students being placed in alternative programs and their chances of returning after initial placement. For instance, minority students and those with special education status were disproportionately represented, raising concerns about equity and systemic bias. The research underscores the need for fairer placement practices and more supportive interventions to reduce recidivism and ensure that alternative education serves as a constructive pathway rather than a punitive cycle.

Catyongw t. al, (2023) explore the status, needs, and challenges of ALS students in a rural district, providing a grounded perspective on how context shapes learning experiences. Their study reveals that while ALS offers vital educational opportunities for marginalized learners, rural students often face barriers such as limited access to technology, inadequate learning facilities, and economic constraints that affect attendance and continuity. At the same time, learners express strong motivation and appreciation for the program's flexibility and relevance to their personal circumstances.

The research emphasizes the importance of tailoring ALS interventions to rural contexts, ensuring that resources, support systems, and instructional strategies address the unique challenges these learners encounter.

Perzigian et. al, (2017) conducted a cross-sectional analysis comparing students enrolled in traditional versus alternative high schools within one urban district. Their study found that students in alternative high schools often differ demographically and academically from those in traditional settings. Specifically, alternative school students were more likely to come from marginalized backgrounds, face higher rates of academic and behavioral challenges, and require additional support services. The research highlights that alternative schools serve as critical pathways for students at risk of dropping out, but also underscores the need for targeted interventions and resources to address disparities and promote equitable educational outcomes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to explore inclusive educational leadership practices and its impact on the senior high school transition of Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates in Calanasan.

3.2. Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in the municipality of Calanasan, Apayao Province, Philippines.

3.3. Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were composed of ALS graduates, school administrators, and teachers directly involved in the transition process to senior high school. The ALS graduates were the primary respondents since they provide firsthand experience-s of the challenges and opportunities encountered during their transition.

3.4. Research Instrument

The study employed an adapted survey questionnaire and an interview guide based on Fernandez (2025) to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on the transition experiences of ALS graduates to senior high school and the inclusive leadership practices of school heads and teachers. The survey, administered to ALS graduate-students, collected data on demographics, challenges, support mechanisms, leadership practices, and their perceived impact on readiness, confidence, and success, with emphasis on leadership support, inclusive policies, resources, and transition experiences. The interview guide, used with administrators and ALS teachers, provided deeper insights into leadership practices, challenges, strategies, and proposed interventions to strengthen support for ALS graduates. Together, these instruments ensured a comprehensive understanding of inclusive educational leadership's influence on the transition process, with an Ilocano version of the questionnaire prepared to accommodate respondents more comfortable in the local language.

3.5. Data Analysis

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses to examine the transition experiences of ALS graduates and the role of inclusive educational leadership. Frequency and percentage were used to describe respondents' demographic profiles, while weighted mean measured common challenges, support mechanisms, leadership practices, and their impact on readiness, confidence, and success. Independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA determined significant differences in challenges based on sex, civil status, educational attainment, and age, with no test applied to parents' income due to uniformity. Thematic analysis was conducted on interview responses from school heads and ALS teachers, coding and organizing them into themes on inclusive leadership and support strategies. Findings from these analyses informed the development of a proposed transition program to better support ALS graduates entering senior high school.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 Common Challenges Encountered by ALS Graduates During Their Transition to Senior High School in Terms of Academic, Social and Emotional Aspects

Statement	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Academic challenges		
I find it difficult to keep up with the academic requirements in senior high school.	4.38	Agree
The teaching methods in senior high school are different from what I experienced in ALS.	4.75	Strongly Agree
I struggle with the use of technology and digital learning platforms.	4.13	Agree
I have difficulty understanding some subjects due to learning gaps from my previous education.	4.25	Agree
The workload and assignments in senior high school are overwhelming for me.	4.00	Agree
Category Mean	4.30	Agree
SOCIAL CHALLENGES		
I find it hard to make friends and build relationships with my classmates.	3.50	Agree
I feel different or isolated because of my ALS background.	2.50	Disagree
I experience judgment or discrimination from other students.	3.63	Agree
I have difficulty participating in group activities and collaborative work.	4.00	Agree
I feel uncomfortable interacting with teachers and school staff.	3.50	Agree
Category Mean	3.43	Agree
EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES		
I feel anxious about my ability to succeed in senior high school.	3.63	Agree
I experience stress and pressure from academic demands.	4.11	Agree
I lack confidence in my academic abilities compared to regular students.	4.38	Strongly Agree
I feel discouraged when facing difficulties in my studies.	3.88	Agree
I worry about my future and whether I can complete senior high school	4.25	Strongly Agree
Category Mean	4.05	Agree
OVERALL MEAN	3.93	AGREE

Table 1 presents the common challenges encountered by ALS graduates during their transition to senior high school in Calianas, Apayao Province, Philippines, with an overall mean of 3.93 interpreted as "Agree." The participants of the study included ALS graduates, school administrators, and teachers directly involved in the transition process, with the graduates serving as the primary respondents. Academic challenges ranked the highest (4.30), showing that learners struggle most with adjusting to new teaching methods, bridging learning gaps, and coping with heavy workloads. Emotional challenges followed (4.05), reflecting anxiety, stress, lack of confidence, and worry about the future, which highlight the psychological strain of transition. Social challenges had the lowest mean (3.43), yet still indicate difficulties in building relationships, facing discrimination, and participating in group activities. These findings imply that inclusive educational leadership in Calianas must prioritize academic scaffolding, socio-emotional support, and programs that foster peer integration to ensure ALS graduates are not only academically prepared but also socially and emotionally resilient in senior high school.

The findings support the study of Calabit (2022), who revealed that ALS graduates often face challenges in academic readiness when transitioning to higher levels of education, particularly due to gaps in prior learning and differences in instructional approaches. Likewise, Mamba et al. (2021) emphasized that ALS learners encounter difficulties in study orientation and college readiness, which align with the present results showing struggles in academic, social, and emotional aspects. Together, these studies affirm that ALS graduates require targeted interventions and inclusive leadership practices that address academic scaffolding, socio-emotional support, and peer integration to ensure smoother transitions and greater success in senior high school.

Table 2 Significant Differences in the Challenges Encountered by ALS Graduates When Grouped According to Age Group

Age Group	Mean	SD	F-value	p-value	Decision at $\alpha = 0.05$	Interpretation
15–20 years old	3.85	0.42	4.25	0.014	Reject Ho	Significant
21–30 years old	4.20	0.38				
31–40 years old	4.35	0.36				
15–20 years old	4.13	0.39				

Table 2 shows that age significantly influences the challenges faced by ALS graduates, with older learners (31–40 years old, mean = 4.35) reporting greater difficulties compared to younger groups. The F-value of 4.25 and p-value of 0.014 confirm that differences are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that transition support in Calanasan must be age-sensitive, offering tailored interventions for younger learners needing academic scaffolding and older learners requiring stronger social and emotional support. These findings support the study of Abel Jr. (2024), who noted that older ALS learners often struggle more with reintegration due to social and emotional pressures, and Atilano et al. (2016), who found that age-related factors contribute to dropout risks in ALS programs.

Table 3 Significant Differences in the Challenges Encountered by ALS Graduates When Grouped According to Sex Group

Sex Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision at $\alpha = 0.05$	Interpretation
Male	3.95	0.41	1.127	0.275	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Female	3.91	0.39				

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in the challenges encountered by ALS graduates when grouped according to sex, with males (mean = 3.95) and females (mean = 3.91) reporting almost the same level of academic, social, and emotional difficulties. The t-value of 1.127 and p-value of 0.275 confirm that sex is not a determining factor at the 0.05 level. This implies that interventions for ALS graduates should focus on common academic and emotional needs rather than sex-based differences. This finding supports the study of Anderson et al. (2004), who emphasized that student engagement is more influenced by relationships and support systems than gender, and Crosnoe et al. (2004), who highlighted that contextual factors such as teacher-student interactions play a greater role in learner adjustment.

Table 4 Significant Differences in the Challenges Encountered by ALS Graduates When Grouped According to Civil Status Group

Civil Status Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision at $\alpha = 0.05$	Interpretation
Single	3.85	0.49	2.45	0.008	Reject Ho	Significant
Married	4.25	0.34				

Table 4 shows that civil status significantly influences the challenges encountered by ALS graduates, with married respondents (mean = 4.25) reporting greater difficulties compared to single respondents (mean = 3.85). The t-value of 2.45 and p-value of 0.008 confirm that the difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that transition programs must provide flexible, family-sensitive interventions to help married ALS graduates manage both academic requirements and household responsibilities, ensuring equitable opportunities for success in senior high school. This finding supports the study of Crossan et al. (2003), who noted that adult learners with family responsibilities often face heavier burdens in balancing education with personal obligations, and Kasworm (2010), who

emphasized that older and married students experience heightened stress and emotional strain when pursuing further studies.

Table 5 Significant Differences in the Challenges Encountered by ALS Graduates When Grouped According to Educational Attainment Group

Educational Attainment Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision at $\alpha = 0.05$	Interpretation
Elementary Graduate	3.90	0.44	1.38	0.192	Accept Ho	Not Significant
High School Level	3.96	0.41				

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the challenges encountered by ALS graduates when grouped according to educational attainment, with elementary graduates (mean = 3.90) and high school level learners (mean = 3.96) reporting nearly the same level of academic, social, and emotional difficulties. The t-value of 1.38 and p-value of 0.192 confirm that educational attainment is not a determining factor at the 0.05 level. This implies that interventions for ALS graduates should focus on universal strategies that strengthen academic and emotional support rather than tailoring programs strictly by educational attainment. This finding supports the study of Knowles (1980), who argued that adult learners share common challenges regardless of prior schooling, and Merriam and Baumgartner (2020), who emphasized that contextual factors such as support systems and learning environments play a greater role than educational background.

Table 6 Significant Differences in the Challenges Encountered by ALS Graduates When Grouped According to Parents Monthly Income Group

Parents Monthly Income Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision at $\alpha = 0.05$	Interpretation
Below 10,000	3.93	0.32	-	-	-	-
-	-	-				

Table 6 shows that there are no significant differences in the challenges encountered by ALS graduates when grouped according to parents' monthly income, since all respondents fall under the same category of earning below ₱10,000. With only one income group represented, statistical comparison is not possible, and thus no variation in challenges can be attributed to income levels. This outcome aligns with the study of Tan (2018), who noted that socio-economic homogeneity among learners limits the ability to detect income-based differences in educational challenges, and echoes the findings of Bautista (2020), who emphasized that in low-income communities, academic and emotional struggles are shared across learners regardless of slight income variations. The implication is that interventions should focus on addressing the common needs of economically disadvantaged ALS graduates rather than differentiating support by income level.

Table 7 Inclusive Leadership Practices Implemented by School Heads and ALS Teachers to Support ALS Graduates in Their Transition to Senior High School

Statement	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
WELCOMING AND ACCEPTANCE		
School leaders make me feel welcome as an ALS graduate in senior high school.	4.02	Agree
Teachers show understanding of my unique background as an ALS graduate.	4.05	Agree
School administrators create an inclusive environment where all students are valued equally.	4.13	Agree
I feel accepted by the school community despite coming from ALS.	4.20	Agree
Category Mean	4.10	Agree
ACADEMIC SUPPORT		

School leaders ensure that ALS graduates receive appropriate academic support during transition.	3.95	Agree
Teachers provide additional assistance to help me cope with senior high school requirements.	4.23	Agree
Administrators facilitate programs that address the learning gaps of ALS graduates.	4.05	Agree
The school offers remedial classes or tutorials specifically designed for ALS graduates.	3.73	Agree
Category Mean	3.99	Agree
COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT		
School leaders regularly communicate with ALS graduates about available resources and support.	4.13	Agree
Teachers actively engaged me in classroom discussions and activities.	3.95	Agree
Administrators listen to concerns and suggestions from ALS graduates.	3.80	Agree
The school provides clear information about policies, requirements, and expectations.	3.53	Agree
Category Mean	3.85	Agree
D. EQUITY AND FAIRNESS		
School leaders ensure that ALS graduates have equal access to school facilities and resources.	4.00	Agree
Teachers treat ALS graduates fairly without discrimination or bias.	3.80	Agree
Administrators implement policies that promote equal opportunities for all students.	4.25	Strongly Agree
The school provides financial assistance or scholarship opportunities for ALS graduates in need.	3.73	Agree
Category Mean	3.95	Agree
OVERALL MEAN	3.97	AGREE

Table 7 indicates that ALS graduates in the municipality of Calanasan, Apayao Province, Philippines generally agree that inclusive leadership practices are implemented by school heads and ALS teachers to support their transition to senior high school, with an overall mean of 3.97. The respondents, composed of ALS graduates, school administrators, and teachers directly involved in the transition process, rated equity and fairness highest (mean = 4.25, strongly agree), particularly in terms of administrators ensuring equal opportunities. Meanwhile, communication and engagement received the lowest category mean (3.85), with clear information about policies and expectations rated lowest at 3.53. This suggests that while learners feel welcomed, supported academically, and treated fairly, communication strategies need further strengthening to ensure clarity and consistency. Overall, the results highlight that inclusive leadership practices are present and effective, but continuous improvement in communication and engagement is necessary to fully meet the needs of ALS graduates in this locale.

These findings were consistent with recent studies emphasizing the multifaceted nature of inclusive leadership. Macintosh (2024) highlighted that effective school leadership is critical in guiding systematic changes and fostering environments where all students, including those transitioning from alternative programs, feel supported. Similarly, Pov et al (2025) noted that while leadership prioritizes fairness and equity, challenges often remain in ensuring clear and consistent communication, particularly in diverse educational settings. Shields (2010) further argued that socially just leadership is essential in creating supportive environments for marginalized learners, while Ryan (2006) highlighted that inclusive leadership requires both equitable practices and strong communication to ensure learners feel valued and supported. Together, these studies affirm that inclusive leadership is multidimensional, requiring fairness, academic support, and clear communication to sustain ALS graduates' successful transition to senior high school.

4.1. Qualitative Findings on Inclusive Leadership Practices Implemented by School Heads and ALS Teachers

To deepen the quantitative results, the interview responses of school heads and ALS teachers were analyzed thematically. Four themes emerged: welcoming and acceptance, academic support and bridging assistance, communication and guidance, and equity, fairness, and non-discrimination.

4.1.1. Theme 1. Welcoming and Acceptance

The first theme that emerged was welcoming and acceptance. School heads and ALS teachers described inclusive leadership as making ALS graduates feel that they were part of the senior high school community despite coming from a different learning pathway.

One school head shared, "We do not separate ALS graduates from the other learners. Once they enter senior high school, we welcome them as regular students who deserve respect, guidance, and support." An ALS teacher also stated, "I always tell them that coming from ALS should not make them feel inferior. They are here because they want to continue, and that effort should be appreciated."

The qualitative responses reveal that school heads and ALS teachers understood inclusive leadership as the practice of giving ALS graduates equal treatment, equal opportunities, and access to the same school services enjoyed by other senior high school learners. Their statements show that fairness was expressed not only through policies but also through everyday classroom and school practices, such as allowing ALS graduates to participate in activities, use school facilities, receive teacher assistance, and be treated without labels or bias. This suggests that equity and fairness were practiced through direct learner support and non-discriminatory treatment.

It implies that schools should sustain and strengthen visible practices of fairness for ALS graduates. Since ALS graduates may enter senior high school with hesitation, self-doubt, or fear of being judged because of their educational background, fair treatment can help them develop confidence and a stronger sense of belonging. School heads and ALS teachers should therefore continue promoting equal access to resources, inclusive classroom participation, and learner-centered support so that ALS graduates can fully adjust to the senior high school environment.

The finding is supported by Neves et al. (2023), who found that headteachers shape inclusion through school culture, administrative guidance, and leadership practices. Vlachou and Tsirantonaki (2023) also found that principals' values, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes influence their inclusive practices. However, Massiah et al. (2025) offered a neutral/contrasting view by showing that while many educational leaders support inclusion, some still view it as difficult to implement because of workload, resource limitations, and inadequate training.

4.1.2. Theme 2. Academic Support and Bridging Assistance

The second theme was academic support and bridging assistance. Participants explained that ALS graduates needed additional academic guidance because some learners had difficulty adjusting to senior high school lessons, classroom routines, and written requirements.

One ALS teacher explained, "Some ALS graduates need more time to understand the lessons, so I give additional examples and follow-up activities when needed." Another participant stated, "We guide them step by step, especially when they are not yet familiar with the usual requirements in senior high school."

The qualitative responses show that teachers recognized the possible learning gaps of ALS graduates and responded through additional explanation, follow-up assistance, academic monitoring, and encouragement. This supports the quantitative finding that academic support was generally evident. However, the responses also suggest that academic support was sometimes provided informally by individual teachers rather than through a structured school-wide bridging program.

It implies that schools should institutionalize academic bridging programs for ALS graduates. Remedial classes, tutorials, subject-based assistance, and regular monitoring may help ALS graduates adjust better to senior high school requirements and reduce the risk of academic difficulty during transition.

The finding is supported by Cagang (2024), whose study on ALS and senior high school life skills in Region XII emphasized learning assessment, learning environment, flexible learning programs, learning facilities, learning resources, and stakeholder partnerships as important areas of ALS implementation. Carrington et al. (2024) also found that professional learning, collaboration, and relatedness among school personnel support inclusive practice. However,

Mahinay and Manla (2025) provided a neutral/contrasting point by noting that although ALS is valued for flexibility and inclusivity, challenges remain in policy implementation, resources, and equal access to technology.

4.1.3. Theme 3. Communication and Guidance

The third theme was communication and guidance. Participants described that ALS graduates were oriented on school rules, classroom expectations, available support services, and academic requirements. However, their responses also suggested the need for more regular follow-up and clearer communication.

One school head stated, "We orient them about school rules and the support they can ask from teachers, but we also see the need to improve our follow-up." One ALS teacher added, "Some learners are shy to ask questions, so we need to check on them more often and explain the requirements clearly."

The qualitative responses explain why communication and engagement obtained the lowest category mean in the quantitative result. Although school heads and teachers provided orientation and guidance, the responses suggest that communication may not have been sustained or systematic throughout the transition period. This means that communication was present, but regular follow-up and clearer information dissemination still needed improvement.

It implies that schools should create a more organized communication system for ALS graduates. This may include written orientation guides, regular adviser-led monitoring, scheduled consultations, follow-up meetings, and clear explanations of policies, requirements, and available support services.

The finding is supported by Polat and Turhaner (2024), who found a strong positive relationship between inclusive leadership and teachers' organizational trust, showing that inclusive leadership is linked with openness and institutional confidence. Massiah et al. (2025) also emphasized the importance of leadership, collaboration, and support in making schools places of belonging. However, their study also serves as neutral/contrasting evidence because it found that some educators considered inclusion difficult in actual practice due to lack of resources, infrastructure, administrative support, and professional learning.

4.1.4. Theme 4. Equity, Fairness, and Non-Discrimination

The fourth theme was equity, fairness, and non-discrimination. Participants emphasized that ALS graduates were given equal opportunities to participate in class, use school facilities, join activities, and access available support services.

One school head said, "We make sure that ALS graduates are given the same opportunities as other students. They can join activities, use school facilities, and receive support when needed." Another ALS teacher shared, "I do not label them as different. In the classroom, I treat them fairly and encourage them to participate like everyone else."

The qualitative responses reveal that school heads and ALS teachers understood inclusive leadership as the practice of giving ALS graduates equal treatment, equal opportunities, and access to the same school services enjoyed by other senior high school learners. Their statements show that fairness was expressed not only through policies but also through everyday classroom and school practices, such as allowing ALS graduates to participate in activities, use school facilities, receive teacher assistance, and be treated without labels or bias.

It implies that schools should sustain and strengthen visible practices of fairness for ALS graduates. Since ALS graduates may enter senior high school with hesitation, self-doubt, or fear of being judged because of their educational background, fair treatment can help them develop confidence and a stronger sense of belonging. School heads and ALS teachers should therefore continue promoting equal access to resources, inclusive classroom participation, and learner-centered support so that ALS graduates can fully adjust to the senior high school environment.

The finding is supported by Vlachou and Tsirantonaki (2023), who found that school principals' values and knowledge shape inclusive attitudes and practices. Mahinay and Manla (2025) also emphasized that ALS is valued for flexibility and inclusivity in addressing the needs of out-of-school youth and adults. However, Neves et al. (2023) offered a neutral point by noting that although headteachers may hold broad views of inclusion, actual implementation may still become limited to normative or compliance-based practices focused on policies, targets, and outcomes.

Table 8 Support Mechanisms Available to ALS Graduates in Calanasan for Their Transition to Senior High School

Statement	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
The school provides orientation programs for ALS graduates entering senior high school.	4.30	Strongly Agree
Peer mentoring or buddy systems are available to help ALS graduates adjust.	2.95	Neutral
Guidance counsellors are accessible for academic and personal concerns.	3.93	Agree
The school offers bridging programs to address learning gaps.	3.85	Agree
Financial assistance or scholarship programs are available for ALS graduates.	3.23	Agree
Teachers provide individualized support and attention to ALS graduates.	3.90	Agree
The school has partnerships with community organizations to support ALS graduates.	3.23	Agree
Parent or family engagement programs are conducted to support student transition.	2.95	Neutral
Category Mean	3.67	Agree

Table 8 shows that ALS graduates in Calanasan, Apayao Province, Philippines generally agree that support mechanisms are available to assist them in their transition to senior high school, with a category mean of 3.67. The highest-rated support mechanism was orientation programs (mean = 4.30, strongly agree), indicating that schools prioritize preparing ALS graduates for the new academic environment. Guidance counsellors (mean = 3.93), individualized teacher support (mean = 3.90), and bridging programs (mean = 3.85) also received favorable ratings, reflecting the presence of academic and personal support structures. However, peer mentoring (mean = 2.95) and family engagement programs (mean = 2.95) were rated neutral, suggesting that these areas are less developed and require further strengthening. Financial assistance and community partnerships were rated moderately (means = 3.23), showing that while some institutional and external supports exist, they may not be consistently accessible to all ALS graduates. Overall, the findings highlight that while schools in Calanasan provide strong orientation and academic support, greater emphasis should be placed on peer, family, and community involvement to ensure a holistic support system.

Recent studies affirm these findings. Umbao and Ventura-Escote (2023) highlighted that ALS graduates often face financial constraints and limited exposure to technology, underscoring the importance of scholarships and bridging programs. Albert et al. (2024, Philippine Institute for Development Studies) noted that while orientation and academic support are effective, community partnerships and family engagement remain inconsistently implemented in ALS programs. Similarly, “Kakayanin Kahit Mahirap” (2024), a multiple case study, emphasized that peer mentoring and family involvement significantly influence the success of ALS learners in senior high school, yet these mechanisms are often underutilized.

Table 9 Impact of Inclusive Educational Leadership Practices on ALS Graduates in Senior High School in Terms of Readiness, Confidence, and Success

Statement	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
READINESS		
The inclusive leadership practices in my senior high school helped me feel academically prepared for the transition from ALS to formal senior high school education.	3.23	Agree
School leaders provided adequate orientation and support programs that prepared me to adapt to the senior high school learning environment.	3.00	Neutral
The inclusive policies implemented by school administrators ensured that I had access to necessary learning resources and materials during my transition.	3.13	Neutral

School leaders created bridging programs that effectively addressed the gaps between ALS curriculum and senior high school requirements.	3.23	Agree
The leadership's commitment to inclusion made me feel emotionally and socially ready to engage with my peers in senior high school.	3.23	Agree
Category Mean	3.16	Neutral
CONFIDENCE		
The inclusive leadership approach in my senior high school boosted my confidence to participate actively in class discussions and activities.	3.23	Agree
School leaders' recognition and validation of my ALS background increased my self-confidence as a learner in senior high school.	2.93	Neutral
The supportive and non-discriminatory environment fostered by school administrators helped me believe in my ability to succeed alongside regular students.	3.00	Neutral
Inclusive leadership practices reduced my anxiety and fear about being judged or treated differently because of my ALS background.	3.23	Agree
School leaders provided encouragement and mentoring that strengthened my confidence to pursue my academic and career goals.	3.80	Agree
Category Mean	3.24	
SUCCESS		
The inclusive educational leadership in my senior high school positively contributed to my academic performance and achievement.	3.10	Neutral
School leaders' inclusive practices helped me successfully complete my senior high school requirements and stay enrolled.	3.75	Agree
The leadership's commitment to equity and inclusion enabled me to develop meaningful relationships with teachers and classmates.	3.13	Neutral
Inclusive leadership practices provided me with equal opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and leadership roles.	3.23	Agree
Overall, the inclusive educational leadership in my senior high school has been instrumental in my successful transition and integration as an ALS graduate.	3.53	Agree
Category Mean	3.35	Agree
OVERALL MEAN	3.25	AGREE

Table 9 shows that ALS graduates in Calanasan, Apayao Province, Philippines generally agree that inclusive educational leadership practices have a positive impact on their readiness, confidence, and success in senior high school, with an overall mean of 3.25 (Agree). Academic challenges received the lowest category mean (3.16, Neutral), indicating that while inclusive practices provided some preparation, orientation and access to resources were not consistently strong. Social challenges (3.24, Agree) highlight that encouragement and mentoring were particularly effective in boosting confidence, though recognition of ALS backgrounds and belief in ability were rated lower. Emotional challenges (3.35, Agree) suggest that inclusive leadership contributed to retention and overall success, but building relationships and consistent academic performance remain areas for improvement. Overall, the findings emphasize that inclusive leadership practices are beneficial, but schools must strengthen academic readiness and recognition of ALS graduates' unique backgrounds to ensure holistic success.

Recent studies support these findings. Dela Cruz and Santos (2023) found that inclusive leadership practices in Philippine schools enhance learner confidence and reduce anxiety, particularly for non-traditional students such as ALS graduates. Garcia et al. (2024) highlighted that bridging programs and access to resources are critical in improving academic readiness, yet implementation remains uneven across local contexts. Meanwhile, Lopez (2024) emphasized that mentoring and emotional support provided by teachers and administrators significantly contribute to student retention and overall success in senior high school. Collectively, these latest studies confirm that inclusive leadership

positively impacts ALS graduates, but greater emphasis on academic preparation, resource provision, and relationship-building is needed to fully support their transition and long-term success.

4.2. Proposed Transition Programs for ALS Graduates to Ensure Readiness for Senior High School

The findings revealed that ALS graduates identified several support programs that may help strengthen their readiness for senior high school. The most frequently mentioned were free internet and ICT equipment, school bus or transportation support, and scholarships or financial assistance. Other proposed supports included lessons suited to ALS learners, flexible schedules and learner support, enhanced teacher training, livelihood skills integration, and gadget or ICT provision. These findings show that the readiness of ALS graduates is not limited to academic preparation alone, but also includes technological access, transportation, financial support, teacher assistance, flexible learning arrangements, and practical skills development.

The proposed transition program, titled Project TRANSIT-ALS: Transition Readiness and Support Program for ALS Graduates, was therefore developed to address the identified needs of ALS graduates. It focuses on academic bridging, ICT access, transportation assistance, scholarship and financial support, contextualized instruction, flexible learning support, teacher capacity-building, socio-emotional guidance, livelihood skills integration, and parent-community engagement. These components were drawn from the actual needs and suggestions reflected in the results of the study.

The result implies that ALS graduates need a comprehensive and learner-centered transition program before and during their entry to senior high school. Since the study showed that academic challenges were the most pressing concern and that readiness obtained the lowest mean among the transition outcomes, the proposed program should prioritize academic bridging, tutorial support, and study skills development. At the same time, the identified need for ICT equipment, transportation, scholarships, and flexible schedules indicates that schools must address external barriers that may affect attendance, participation, and persistence.

The proposed program also implies the need for stronger coordination among school heads, ALS teachers, senior high school teachers, guidance personnel, parents, local government units, and community stakeholders. ALS graduates may require support that goes beyond the classroom; therefore, readiness programs should include both school-based and community-based assistance. Through this, ALS graduates may be better prepared academically, emotionally, socially, and practically for the demands of senior high school.

Overall, the proposed transition program serves as an output of the study and as a practical response to the findings. It may guide schools in developing structured support services for ALS graduates, particularly in addressing learning gaps, financial limitations, transportation concerns, limited ICT access, socio-emotional adjustment, and the need for inclusive and flexible learning support.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that ALS graduates in Calanasan, Apayao generally require academic, financial, and emotional support as they transition to senior high school. They experience the greatest difficulty in academic adjustment, followed by emotional and social challenges. Age and civil status affect the level of challenges experienced, with older and married learners needing more targeted support. Inclusive educational leadership is already practiced in schools, but communication and engagement still need improvement. While support mechanisms are available, peer mentoring and family involvement remain weak. Overall, inclusive leadership has a positive effect on the readiness, confidence, and success of ALS graduates, but readiness remains the most critical area for improvement. Therefore, a structured transition program is needed to better support ALS graduates in their adjustment to senior high school.

Compliance with ethical standards

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I acknowledge that I have not used ChatGPT or Copilot for refining some of the sections in the document.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Statement of ethical approval

The study strictly followed ethical standards to protect participants' rights, dignity, and well-being while ensuring research integrity. Guided by principles of respect, beneficence, and confidentiality, the researcher obtained informed consent, explained the study's purpose and procedures, and emphasized voluntary participation with the right to withdraw anytime. Confidentiality and anonymity were safeguarded through secure data handling and restricted access. Conducted with college approval, the study upheld honesty and academic integrity by presenting findings accurately, acknowledging limitations, and securing permission from school authorities. Overall, the research-maintained transparency, credibility, and adherence to ethical guidelines throughout its process.

Statement of informed consent

I affirm that the respondents voluntarily agreed to participate after being fully informed about the purpose, nature, and potential implications of the study. Their responses have been collected with utmost respect for their privacy and confidentiality, in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

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