

# Effectiveness of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program on the Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL)

Melchor B. Brillantes<sup>1</sup>

College of Liberal Arts, Zamboanga State College of Marine Sciences and Technology, Zamboanga City, Philippines<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ORCID ID No.: 560-1020-560-1020

\*Corresponding Author: Melchor B. Brillantes<sup>1</sup>  
melch.brillantes21@zscmst.edu.ph

## HOW TO CITE:

Melchor B. Brillantes (2026).  
Effectiveness of Alternative  
Learning System (ALS) Program  
on the Knowledge, Skills, and  
Attitudes of Persons Deprived of  
Liberty (PDL).  
International Journal of Special  
Education, 41(14s), 560-567

## ABSTRACT:

While education is recognized as a fundamental human right and a key strategy for rehabilitation, most existing studies focus on ALS in formal community settings, with limited empirical evidence on its effectiveness within correctional facilities, particularly in the BARMM and Zamboanga Peninsula regions. There is also a scarcity of research that integrates both quantitative outcomes and lived experiences of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). This study determined the effectiveness of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of PDLs at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) – Ipil District Jail. Using a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, data were gathered from 69 PDLs selected through total enumeration. The survey instrument achieved Cronbach's Alpha = 0.92, confirming high reliability, and thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. Results revealed that programs implemented include Basic Literacy Program, Elementary, Junior High School, and the Mindanao Youth for Development (MyDev) program. The overall effectiveness was rated Very High (Grand Mean = 4.42), with attitudes scoring highest (M = 4.53), followed by skills (M = 4.39) and knowledge (M = 4.34). Significant differences were found in knowledge levels by program type and length of incarceration, while age and socioeconomic status showed no significant effect. A strong positive correlation ( $r_s = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was found between program implementation and learning outcomes. Qualitative findings revealed that ALS serves as a source of hope, restores dignity, and prepares PDLs for reintegration. This study fills the gap by providing context-specific evidence that ALS is an effective rehabilitation tool, offering recommendations to improve program delivery and policy alignment.

## COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.  
Open access publication under the  
terms and conditions  
of the Creative Commons Attribution  
(CC BY)  
license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: Alternative Learning System, Persons Deprived of Liberty, Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Rehabilitation, Mixed-methods, BJMP, Philippines

## Introduction

Globally and locally, inclusive and flexible education has become a central priority, aligned with international commitments such as Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education. In the Philippines, the Alternative Learning System (ALS), established under Republic Act 9155 (2001) and strengthened further by Republic Act 11510 (2020), serves as a formal parallel pathway to basic education. It is designed for those excluded from regular schools, including out-of-school youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). Advocacies like “*Inas Mangmang sa Rebas*” highlight the growing recognition that education is a fundamental right, even for those detained. Research by Cogo and Salendab (2022) confirms that ALS is implemented with clear goals and succeeds in delivering literacy and life skills, with most beneficiaries passing accreditation tests and earning diplomas. Similarly, Faa (2023) emphasizes that ALS provides second-chance schooling, shaping values, attitudes, and future aspirations, while helping learners realize their potential. Internationally, studies by Davies et al. (2022) and Hughes (2021) show that correctional and alternative education effectively builds knowledge, skills, and positive behavior, reducing recidivism rates and supporting reintegration into society.

## Research Gap and Significance

Despite these recognized benefits, there is limited research focusing specifically on how ALS operates within jail environments in the Philippines, particularly in the Zamboanga Peninsula. Most studies evaluate ALS in community or school settings, neglecting the unique constraints of correctional facilities such as limited space, restricted resources, and psychological challenges. Furthermore, existing literature often relies only on quantitative data without exploring the personal experiences and perspectives of PDLs. This study is unique because it combines both statistical measurement

and lived experiences to provide a holistic assessment. It addresses the gap by determining not just if the program works, but how it transforms lives and what barriers remain. The findings will serve as evidence for policy makers, educators, and BJMP administrators to improve rehabilitation strategies, ensuring that education inside jails is truly effective and aligned with national goals.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two major theories:

1. Andragogy Theory (Knowles, 2020): This framework asserts that adult learners are self-directed, bring life experiences to the learning process, and learn best when content is relevant to their immediate needs and future goals. This is critical for PDLs, who are mostly adults seeking education for practical purposes.
2. Reintegration Theory (Maruna & LeBel, 2022): This theory posits that successful re-entry into society requires the restoration of social bonds, acquisition of employable skills, and a change in self-identity. Education acts as the catalyst that rebuilds these elements, reducing the likelihood of reoffending.

## Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the level of effectiveness of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) in BJMP-Ipil District.

Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Identify the Alternative Learning System programs implemented in BJMP-Ipil District under the Accreditation and Equivalency Level.
2. Assess the level of effectiveness of the ALS program on PDLs in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
3. Determine if there is a significant difference in the effectiveness of the ALS program on PDLs' knowledge, skills, and attitudes when

analyzed by the specific ALS program undertaken.

4. Establish if there is a significant difference in the effectiveness of the ALS program on PDLs' knowledge, skills, and attitudes when respondents are grouped according to age, sex, and income.
5. Examine if there is a significant relationship between the implementation of the Alternative Learning System and its effectiveness on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of PDLs.
6. Explore the perspectives and experiences of PDLs regarding the ALS program, particularly in terms of addressing their needs, its importance in their personal lives, and the manner of its implementation.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study uses a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Creswell, 2024). The quantitative phase measured

effectiveness using surveys, while the qualitative phase followed up with interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explain *why* and *how* the program produced its results. This design allows for triangulation of data and deeper understanding of outcomes.

### Research Locale

The study was conducted at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) – Ipil District Jail, located in Sanito, Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay. This facility was selected because it has maintained a partnership with the ALS Division for over 12 years, making it a mature setting for evaluation.

### Population and Sampling Design

The total population of active ALS learners during School Year 2023–2024 was 78. Total enumeration was used, and 69 respondents were present and consented to participate, representing an 88.5% response rate. This method is appropriate given the small and accessible population.

**Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Variable             | Classification | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Age                  | 18–19          | 1         | 1.45%      |
|                      | 20–21          | 3         | 4.35%      |
|                      | 22–23          | 7         | 10.14%     |
|                      | 24–25          | 3         | 4.35%      |
|                      | 26 and above   | 55        | 79.71%     |
| Sex                  | Male           | 69        | 100.00%    |
|                      | Female         | 0         | 0.00%      |
| Socioeconomic Status | Poor           | 53        | 76.81%     |

| Variable                       | Classification      | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
|                                | Low Income          | 13        | 18.84%     |
|                                | Lower Middle Income | 3         | 4.35%      |
| <b>Length of Incarceration</b> | 1 month – 1 year    | 7         | 10.14%     |
|                                | 1–2 years           | 39        | 56.52%     |
|                                | 2–3 years           | 14        | 20.29%     |
|                                | 3–4 years           | 9         | 13.04%     |

### Research Instrument

The quantitative part utilized a structured questionnaire adapted from the DepEd ALS Program Standards and previous studies (Cogo & Salendab, 2022). It employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. For validation, the instrument was reviewed by three experts—an ALS supervisor, a guidance counselor, and a statistician—resulting in a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.93. Its reliability was established through a pilot test conducted with 15 Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), which yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency. Meanwhile, the qualitative component consisted of a semi-structured interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide that was validated by qualitative research experts. The questions were specifically focused on the participants' experiences, perceived benefits, and suggestions for improvement.

### Ethical Considerations

Prior to the conduct of the study, necessary approvals were secured from the BJMP

Regional Office, DepEd ALS Division, and the ZSCMST Research Ethics Committee. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, with clear assurance that their involvement was voluntary, all responses would remain confidential, and no personal identifiers would be included or published. Furthermore, the entire data collection process strictly followed BJMP security protocols and was conducted under the supervision of jail officials to ensure the safety and proper conduct of the activity.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Version 29. The analysis included descriptive statistics, the Kruskal-Wallis H test for non-parametric data, and Spearman's Rho correlation. Effect sizes were calculated using Eta-squared and interpreted in accordance with Cohen's guidelines. For the qualitative data, recorded interviews were transcribed, coded, and processed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2023). Triangulation was also applied to connect and validate the emerging themes with the findings from the quantitative results.

## Results and Discussion

### ALS Programs Implemented

**Table 2 Distribution of Learners by Program Level**

| Program / Level              | Frequency | Percentage  |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Basic Literacy Program (BLP) | 2         | 2.90%       |
| Elementary Level             | 19        | 27.54%      |
| Junior High School / MyDev   | 48        | 69.56%      |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>69</b> | <b>100%</b> |

### Discussion

The majority of learners are enrolled in Junior High School under the MyDev program, which combines academics with life and livelihood skills. This aligns with Republic Act 11510, which mandates a competency-based

curriculum. The low enrollment in Basic Literacy suggests that most PDLs already have foundational skills and seek higher education to improve their future prospects (Sagge et al., 2023).

### Level of Effectiveness

**Table 3 Level of Effectiveness**

| Indicator         | Mean        | SD          | Description           | Interpretation   |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Knowledge         | 4.34        | 0.48        | Strongly Agree        | Very High        |
| Skills            | 4.39        | 0.46        | Strongly Agree        | Very High        |
| Attitudes         | 4.53        | 0.42        | Strongly Agree        | Very High        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> | <b>4.42</b> | <b>0.45</b> | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Very High</b> |

### Discussion

The program achieved a Very High rating across all domains, with attitudes being the most positively affected. This supports the findings of Faa (2023), who noted that the greatest impact of education in detention is not

just intellectual but psychological—it restores self-worth and hope. The high score in skills confirms that the curriculum is practical and relevant, which is essential for future employment (Prajapati et al., 2024).

### Differences in Effectiveness

**Table 4 Kruskal-Wallis Test by Program Level**

| Domain    | Chi-Square | p-value | Eta <sup>2</sup> | Interpretation  |
|-----------|------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| Knowledge | 6.587      | 0.037*  | 0.10             | Significant     |
| Skills    | 3.994      | 0.136   | 0.06             | Not Significant |

| Domain    | Chi-Square | p-value | Eta <sup>2</sup> | Interpretation  |
|-----------|------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| Attitudes | 3.386      | 0.184   | 0.05             | Not Significant |

\*p < 0.05

| Variable                | Knowledge (p) | Skills (p) | Attitudes (p) |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| Age                     | 0.683         | 0.584      | 0.558         |
| Socioeconomic Status    | 0.447         | 0.932      | 0.152         |
| Length of Incarceration | 0.034*        | 0.522      | 0.174         |

## Discussion

Differences in knowledge are expected as higher levels cover more complex content. Importantly, age and income had no effect, proving that ALS is an equalizer—inside the jail, all learners have the same resources and opportunities, removing barriers present in the

outside world (Masereka et al., 2023). Longer incarceration correlated with higher knowledge gain, likely because learners have more time to focus and complete modules (Roth & Manger, 2024).

## Relationship Between Implementation and Effectiveness

Table 6 Correlation Analysis

| Variables                    | Spearman's $r_s$ | p-value | Interpretation  |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Implementation vs. Knowledge | 0.682            | < 0.001 | Strong Positive |
| Implementation vs. Skills    | 0.721            | < 0.001 | Strong Positive |
| Implementation vs. Attitudes | 0.655            | < 0.001 | Strong Positive |

## Discussion

The strong positive correlation confirms that better program delivery directly leads to better outcomes. This validates the partnership between DepEd and BJMP; when programs are well-supported, they succeed (Cogo & Salendab, 2022).

## Qualitative Perspectives and Experiences

### Themes and Representative Quotations:

#### 1. Restoration of Hope and Dignity

*"Before, I thought my life was over. ALS gave me a reason to wake up every day. It makes me feel like I am still a human being capable of learning and improving."*

*"This is not just schooling; it is a second chance. When I get out, I will have a diploma to help me find work."*

#### 2. Behavioral and Attitudinal Change

*"I used to be angry and impatient. The lessons taught me values, respect, and how to control my emotions. I listen better now."*

*"It changed my mindset. I realized that education is the key to a better future, not just for me but for my family."*

#### 3. Challenges and Suggestions

*"We want more sessions per week. Sometimes classes are limited because of security protocols and lack of materials."*



*"We hope to have computer literacy classes and access to higher education courses once we finish JHS."*

## Discussion

These narratives explain the high quantitative scores. The program addresses psychological needs as much as educational ones. However, the desire for more resources and sessions highlights the need for increased support from the government and stakeholders (Patlunag, 2023).

## Conclusions

The ALS program at BJMP-Ipil District Jail is highly effective in improving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of PDLs. It serves as a powerful tool for rehabilitation, equalizing opportunities regardless of background and restoring hope for reintegration. The program is well-implemented but faces limitations in frequency and resources.

## Study Limitations

This research has several limitations. First, it is conducted at a single site, so findings are specific to Ipil District and may not represent all jails. Second, it uses a cross-sectional design, which measures effectiveness at one point in time and does not track long-term outcomes after release. Lastly, it relies on self-reported data, which means responses may be influenced by social desirability bias.

## Policy and Practical Implications

For DepEd & BJMP, there is a need to allocate more budget for learning materials, facilities, and additional ALS teachers to increase contact hours. For curriculum planners, it is recommended to integrate more digital literacy and livelihood skills to enhance employability.

## References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Cogo, R., & Salendab, F. (2022). Effectiveness of alternative learning system in delivering literacy and life skills. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 41(3), 289–305.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2024). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

For legislators, efforts should be made to strengthen the linkage between education and incentives such as Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA) to further motivate participation.

## Recommendations

To improve the program and future research, the following are recommended: introduce Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education pathways for graduates; increase funding for books, modules, and teaching aids; conduct longitudinal studies to track employment status and recidivism rates of ALS graduates after release; and replicate this research across other jails in the region to establish broader trends.

## Acknowledgements

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the Zamboanga State College of Marine Sciences and Technology for providing the academic resources and supportive environment that made this research possible. Deep appreciation is extended to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology – Ipil District leadership and staff, whose cooperation, trust, and assistance during data gathering were invaluable to the success of the study. Special thanks go to the Persons Deprived of Liberty who willingly participated and shared their experiences, serving as the heart of this work. The researcher also acknowledges the ALS Division of Zamboanga Sibugay for their collaboration and insights regarding program implementation. Finally, profound thanks are given to all mentors, colleagues, and family members who offered encouragement, guidance, and understanding throughout the entire process of completing this paper.

- 
- Davies, A., et al. (2022). Correctional education and recidivism: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 73(1), 3–18.
- Department of Education. (2020). *Alternative Learning System Act Implementing Rules and Regulations*. DepEd Order No. 012, s. 2020.
- Faa, L. (2023). Alternative learning system as a tool for rehabilitation and reintegration. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 32(1), 56–73.
- Hughes, B. (2021). *Learning behind bars: Education and human rights in correctional settings*. Routledge.
- Knowles, M. S. (2020). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Maruna, S., & LeBel, T. P. (2022). *Reintegration and desistance from crime*. Oxford University Press.
- Masereka, S., et al. (2023). Socioeconomic factors and learning outcomes in non-formal education. *Journal of Educational Research*, 116(2), 210–225.
- Patlunag, J. (2023). Resource constraints and program quality in correctional education. *Philippine Journal of Educational Management*, 21(1), 45–62.
- Prajapati, R., et al. (2024). Life skills and employability: The role of education in detention. *International Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*, 16(2), 34–46.
- Republic Act No. 9155. (2001). *Governance of Basic Education Act*. Official Gazette of the Philippines.
- Republic Act No. 11510. (2020). *Alternative Learning System Act*. Official Gazette of the Philippines.
- Roth, W. M., & Manger, T. (2024). Motivation and learning in restricted environments. *Educational Psychology Review*, 36, 457–478.
- Sagge, R., et al. (2023). Holistic education in correctional settings: Balancing academics and life skills. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 43(2), 189–204.