

The Role of Community Partnerships in Enhancing ALS Program Effectiveness and Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of community partnerships in the perceived effectiveness and sustainability of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in three learning centers in the Schools Division of Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines. Using a descriptive-evaluative, mixed-methods approach, the study purposively involved 78 respondents comprising three ALS coordinators, 45 learners, and 30 community representatives. Structured four-point perception surveys, semi-structured interviews, and partnership-document review were used; frequencies, percentages, weighted means, and qualitative thematic interpretation informed the analysis. Community partners included local government units (36.67%), nongovernmental organizations (26.67%), the private sector (23.33%), and religious organizations (13.33%). Respondents rated community partnerships

highly effective for program delivery (overall weighted mean = 3.70), with access to learning materials and technology receiving the highest indicator mean (3.82). Their contribution to program sustainability was likewise assessed to a very great extent (overall mean = 3.70), with formal agreements receiving the highest rating (3.85). Among the 33 coordinators and community representatives represented in the challenge table, political seasonality (84.85%), limited budgets (75.76%), and short-lived support (66.67%) were the most frequently reported concerns. The findings informed a proposed Community-Integrated Sustainability Framework (CISF), emphasizing formal agreements, diversified support, stronger employment linkages, and continuity mechanisms. The study contributes a localized stakeholder-management approach for sustaining alternative basic education; findings represent respondent perceptions rather than causal estimates of learner outcomes.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System; community partnerships; collaborative governance; educational sustainability; stakeholder management; Tagbilaran City*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Alternative Learning System (ALS) provides a flexible route to basic education for out-of-school children in special cases and adults. Yet continuity and quality of provision depend not only on centrally determined policy but also on local teaching resources, learning spaces, technology, livelihood opportunities, and the participation of communities. Republic Act No. 11510 formalizes this public commitment and recognizes collaboration with the private sector as part of the national strategy for alternative education (Republic of the Philippines, 2020). The Education 2030 agenda similarly identify partnerships as central to inclusive lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2015; United Nations, 2015).

In Tagbilaran City, Bohol, ALS operates through different local arrangements, including the ALS Balik Paaralan Para sa Out-of-School Adults (BPOSA) Center, an ALS Community Learning Center (CLC), and Dr. Cecilio Putong National High School (DCPNHS)-ALS. These settings draw on different combinations of local-

government resources, nongovernmental assistance, school facilities, private-sector technical support, and community volunteerism. The dissertation recognized that the sustainability of these arrangements may be particularly exposed to personnel and leadership changes, limited funds, or arrangements based on informal promises rather than continuing institutional commitments.

Research on educational partnerships emphasizes relationships of trust and reciprocity as resources for learning, while collaborative governance scholarship distinguishes stakeholder co-management from one-time contributions (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Ansell & Gash, 2008). Philippine discussions of ALS delivery have also highlighted constraints affecting learners at the margins of formal schooling (Arzadon, 2018; Arzadon & Alidoro, 2017). However, the source dissertation identified a need for evidence comparing how stakeholders in distinct city-based ALS centers perceive the practical contributions, durability, and challenges of community partnerships. This local management perspective informs the present article.

The study therefore examined the profiles of ALS coordinators, learners, and community representatives; perceived contributions of partnerships to instructional access, quality, retention, and post-program pathways; the perceived extent of support for resource continuity, formal agreements, resilience, and ownership; and major challenges affecting partnership maintenance. It also developed the Community-Integrated Sustainability Framework (CISF) as a research-grounded governance proposal. As a descriptive-evaluative inquiry, it documents perceptions and reported arrangements rather than estimating causal impacts of partnerships on learning or employment.

Literature Review

Social Capital, Community Networks, and Alternative Education

Social Capital Theory proposes that trust, obligations, and access to information embedded in relationships can support human-capital development. Coleman (1988) described the value of social structures for educational participation, while Putnam (2000) emphasized civic networks and reciprocity. These concepts are relevant to ALS centers because relationships with local governments, charitable organizations, employers, and volunteers may connect learners to otherwise inaccessible services and opportunities. They also provide a way to understand partnerships as infrastructure rather than occasional donations.

Field (2005) further linked social capital with lifelong learning, suggesting that relationships can both enable access and shape the experience of participation. Knowles (1980), in turn, located adult learning within the learner's need for relevance and self-direction. In ALS, this suggests that effective partnerships should extend beyond material donations to opportunities for practical skills, mentoring, and meaningful progression. The dissertation situated these concerns in the differing resource environments of BPOSA, community-based, and school-based learning centers.

The local ALS literature cited in the dissertation draws attention to resource and delivery constraints affecting disadvantaged populations (Arzadon, 2018; Arzadon & Alidoro, 2017). Although these studies provide context, the present inquiry contributes a distinct perspective by comparing the perceptions of those who administer the centers, those who learn in them, and those who provide support. This tripartite view allows the strengths and vulnerabilities of particular partnership mechanisms to be examined together.

Collaborative Governance and Institutionalized Partnerships

Ansell and Gash (2008) conceptualized collaborative governance as a process of joint engagement among public agencies and non-state actors, where dialogue, trust, and shared commitments influence durable collective action. Emerson et al. (2012) similarly described collaborative governance through interacting system conditions, institutional arrangements, and stakeholder dynamics. These approaches clarify why partnership management includes negotiation, accountability, shared objectives, and formal responsibilities, not solely solicitation of resources.

The Philippines' Governance of Basic Education Act provides a wider basis for shared responsibility in basic education (Republic of the Philippines, 2001). The Department of Education's guidelines on K to 12 partnerships set out practical steps, including partner identification, agreement development, management, and monitoring (Department of Education, 2015). The ALS Act explicitly locates support for alternative education within a collaboration between government and non-state actors (Republic of the Philippines, 2020). Taken together, these provisions justify examining how formal agreements can protect ALS partnerships from turnover in local leadership.

In the source dissertation, the difference between a verbal promise and a signed memorandum of agreement was particularly important. Formalization can specify obligations, the schedule of contributions, and the terms under which services continue, although written agreements alone cannot guarantee funding. Accordingly, the study assessed the perceived sustainability contribution of agreements while examining reported political, fiscal, and administrative obstacles.

Organizational Sustainability, Resources, and Adaptive Delivery

The Open Systems perspective views organizations as exchanging resources and information with their environment (Katz & Kahn, 1978). For ALS centers, instructional support, physical facilities, community networks, and technical assistance can be understood as inputs that sustain educational services. Fullan (2005) also described educational sustainability in relation to system-level capacity and leadership continuity. This perspective encourages attention to recurring processes and resources rather than short-term activity counts.

The dissertation distinguished program effectiveness from sustainability. Effectiveness concerned reported access to materials and technology, instructional quality, retention or completion support, and pathways to further education or employment. Sustainability concerned stable resource allocation, institutional agreements, resilience to political changes, and community ownership. These domains are analytically related but distinct: a well-received initiative may still be vulnerable when its continuation depends on a single administration, donor, or funding cycle.

A further consideration is how partnership resources match learner needs and center circumstances. Visible learning scholarship underscores the importance of the quality and relevance of instructional supports (Hattie & Yates, 2014). In the three study sites, this relationship was reflected in reported variation in psychosocial support, facilities, and technical-vocational assistance. Understanding these differences is necessary before proposing a single city-wide framework.

Inclusive Lifelong Learning and the Local Research Gap

Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities, and UNESCO (2015) advocates cooperation across education providers, communities, and other stakeholders. The Philippines' 1987 Constitution likewise recognizes non-formal and community-responsive learning systems, while Republic Act No. 11510 provides a specific legislative mandate for ALS (Republic of the Philippines, 1987, 2020). Within this policy environment, the question is not merely whether partners contribute, but how their participation can be organized for continuity.

The cited national literature and the dissertation's local context point to persistent operational questions about resources, implementation, and support for marginalized learners (Arzadon & Alidoro, 2017; Arzadon, 2018). The study therefore focused on three delivery arrangements within the same city. It evaluated sectoral representation and common indicators of effectiveness and sustainability while recording reported partnership obstacles. A context-specific management framework was then formulated as a proposed output; the source did not report an independent trial demonstrating its effectiveness.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-evaluative mixed-methods design. Quantitative stakeholder ratings described perceived partnership effectiveness, sustainability, and obstacles, while the source methodology also specified semi-structured interviews and document-checklist review for supplementary qualitative context. The design did not constitute a randomized intervention or a longitudinal impact evaluation. Its purpose was to assess conditions in three ALS centers and develop a proposed sustainability framework.

Research Locale

Research was conducted during school year 2025–2026 in the Schools Division of Tagbilaran City, Bohol, at the Tagbilaran City ALS BPOSA Center, the ALS Community Learning Center (CLC), and Dr. Cecilio Putong National High School–ALS. These sites were selected to represent different administrative and community support arrangements, including adult-focused, grassroots community-based, and institutionally hosted ALS delivery.

Participants and Sampling Technique

A total of 78 respondents were purposively selected: one ALS coordinator per center ($n = 3$), 15 ALS learners per center ($n = 45$), and 10 community representatives per center ($n = 30$). Selection intentionally reflected the perspectives of administrators, participants in the program, and partner organizations. The sample was local and purposive; it was not presented as statistically representative of all ALS settings in the Philippines.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument was an adapted Stakeholder Perception Survey with versions for coordinators, learners, and community representatives. It recorded respondent profiles and assessed program effectiveness and sustainability on four-point rating scales. The study also described a semi-structured interview guide exploring partnership experiences and a checklist for agreements, donation records, and other partnership documents. The source manuscript did not report an instrument reliability coefficient or sufficiently detailed validation statistics, and no such estimates were added.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent and coordinated with ALS focal personnel and the three center coordinators. Respondents were oriented regarding study purposes, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Surveys and interviews were administered, completed instruments were reviewed for missing or ambiguous entries, and responses were encoded for analysis. The methodology also described transcription and coordinator member checking for qualitative material; the findings presented in the source remained primarily descriptive.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage distributions summarized group characteristics, organizational categories, and reported challenges. Weighted means summarized the four-point perceptions of effectiveness and sustainability. The methodology mentioned thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006), and also referred to analysis of variance (ANOVA); however, the presented results did not contain the corresponding inferential-test statistics or a separate auditable qualitative coding matrix. Consequently, the article reports the available descriptive findings without inventing significance tests or thematic frequencies.

Ethical Consideration

Study permission, orientation regarding voluntary participation, confidentiality, and private handling of responses were described in the dissertation. An informed-consent form for ALS learners appeared among the appendices. The provided document did not establish an identifiable institutional ethics-board approval or specify procedures for parental permission and assent where learners were minors; such approvals or procedures should be confirmed by the author rather than assumed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Composition and Partnership Sectors

The study included 78 participants distributed equally across the three centers in terms of respondent role. Each center contributed one coordinator, 15 learners, and 10 community representatives. The learner profiles included varied age groups, employment situations, and lengths of program participation. As the research addressed stakeholder management, these differing perspectives were relevant to interpreting resource access, instructional support, and the perceived durability of agreements.

Table 1. *Distribution of study respondents by center and respondent group*

Group	BPOSA	CLC	DCPNHS–ALS	Total
ALS coordinators	1	1	1	3
ALS learners	15	15	15	45
Community representatives	10	10	10	30
TOTAL	26	26	26	78

Among the 30 community representatives, the Local Government Unit (LGU) was the largest sector at 36.67% (11 of 30), followed by NGOs at 26.67% (8), the private sector at 23.33% (7), and religious organizations at 13.33% (4). This distribution indicates that the stakeholder network extended beyond public-sector actors while still relying substantially on local-government participation. Consistent with Social Capital Theory, the diversity of these links provides potential access to different forms of community resources (Coleman, 1988; Field, 2005).

Table 2. *Nature of organizations represented among community partners (n = 30)*

Organization sector	Frequency	Percentage
Local Government Unit (LGU)	11	36.67%
Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)	8	26.67%
Private sector	7	23.33%
Religious organizations	4	13.33%
TOTAL	30	100.00%

The dissertation further described center-specific patterns of assistance. The BPOSA setting emphasized psychosocial and values-oriented support, the CLC placed greater reliance on facilities and community-provided learning spaces, and DCPNHS–ALS reported technical skills and ICT assistance. These descriptions demonstrate why a unified partnership strategy should still permit needs-based contributions, rather than presuming that every learning site requires identical resources.

Perceived Program Effectiveness

Partnerships were evaluated as Highly Effective overall (weighted mean = 3.70). Access to learning materials and technology was rated highest (3.82), followed by post-program employability or transition to formal schooling (3.74), instructional and training quality (3.65), and learner retention and completion (3.58). All four ratings fell within the study's stated Highly Effective interval of 3.51–4.00. The results represent perceptions of contribution, not independently tracked changes in examination pass rates, retention, or graduate employment.

Table 3. *Perceived effectiveness of ALS community partnerships*

Indicator	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Access to learning materials and technology	3.82	Highly Effective
Quality of instruction and skills training	3.65	Highly Effective
Learner retention and completion rates	3.58	Highly Effective

Post-program employment or transition to formal schooling	3.74	Highly Effective
OVERALL WEIGHTED MEAN	3.70	Highly Effective

Rating scale: 3.51–4.00 = Highly Effective; 2.51–3.50 = Effective; 1.51–2.50 = Moderately Effective; 1.00–1.50 = Not Effective.

The relatively higher rating for materials and technology highlights a practical benefit of cross-sector resource mobilization. The importance of instructional quality and post-program pathways is also consistent with the study’s framing of ALS as functional and lifelong learning rather than a credential-only intervention (Knowles, 1980; UNESCO, 2015). The comparatively lower, although still high, retention rating underscores the possibility that economic and social circumstances continue to shape attendance and completion beyond the availability of program supports.

Perceived Contribution to Program Sustainability

The overall sustainability contribution received a weighted mean of 3.70, interpreted in the thesis as Very Great Extent. Formalized support through MOAs/MOUs received the highest mean (3.85), followed by community ownership and volunteerism (3.74), consistency of resource allocation (3.68), and resilience during changes in local political leadership (3.52). All indicators fell in the source’s 3.51–4.00 interval for Very Great Extent.

Table 4. *Perceived contribution of partnerships to ALS program sustainability*

Indicator	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Consistency of funding and facilities	3.68	Very Great Extent
Formal support through MOAs/MOUs	3.85	Very Great Extent
Resilience to changes in local political leadership	3.52	Very Great Extent
Community ownership and volunteerism	3.74	Very Great Extent
OVERALL WEIGHTED MEAN	3.70	Very Great Extent

Rating scale: 3.51–4.00 = Very Great Extent; 2.51–3.50 = Great Extent; 1.51–2.50 = Moderate Extent; 1.00–1.50 = Low Extent.

The prominence of formal agreements supports the collaborative-governance argument that expectations and obligations require institutional arrangements, not simply interpersonal goodwill (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). Resilience to political change had the lowest relative mean despite retaining a favorable classification. The contrast between confidence in partnership formalization and vulnerability to leadership transitions is central to the proposed CISF: continuity should be built into documented responsibilities and diversified support commitments rather than linked solely to current officeholders.

Reported Obstacles to Establishing and Maintaining Partnerships

The most frequently cited obstacle was political seasonality (28 respondents; 84.85%), followed by limited partner budgets (25; 75.76%), one-time or non-continuing support (22; 66.67%), and complicated MOA/MOU procedures (19; 57.58%). Lower-ranked concerns involved private-sector awareness, communication difficulties, and social stigma. Crucially, the denominator implied by the tabulated percentages was 33, corresponding to the three coordinators and 30 community representatives, not the full study population of 78.

Table 5. *Reported partnership challenges (coordinators and community representatives, n = 33)*

Challenge	f	%	Rank
Political seasonality	28	84.85	1
Limited budgets/resources from partners	25	75.76	2
One-time support/sustainability issues	22	66.67	3
Complicated MOA/MOU processes	19	57.58	4
Low private-sector awareness of ALS needs	15	45.45	5
Poor coordination or communication	12	36.36	6
Cultural/social stigma against ALS learners	8	24.24	7

These findings show that respondents recognized meaningful benefits but also identified institutional risks. Political turnover and non-recurring resources can undermine continuity even when current support is perceived as strong. The source's emphasis on a policy-driven framework is consistent with organizational sustainability perspectives that distinguish systemic arrangements from temporary leadership preferences (Fullan, 2005; Katz & Kahn, 1978). The low relative frequency for stigma should not be interpreted as the absence of stigma in all ALS communities; it reflects the distribution of responses in this local sample.

Proposed Community-Integrated Sustainability Framework (CISF)

The dissertation proposed the CISF as an implementation-oriented response to these observations, with a ten-point matrix covering institutional policy, partnership agreements, ICT assistance, psychosocial support, skills and employability, facilities, diversified funding, advocacy, monitoring, and volunteerism. The framework does not constitute an intervention that was independently tested in the presented dataset. Its practical contribution lies in translating reported partnership strengths and vulnerabilities into responsibilities that can be discussed by DepEd, local government, employers, civic organizations, and ALS center leaders.

Table 6. *Consolidated priorities from the proposed CISF implementation matrix*

Priority area	Proposed institutional action	Corresponding issue
Governance continuity	Pursue local policy provisions and regular ALS support allocations	Political seasonality
Formal partnership management	Develop consistent MOA/MOU procedures and accountability schedules	Bureaucracy and non-continuing support
Facilities, ICT, and skills	Match partner resources with learning centers; support digital access and livelihood pathways	Resource and program needs
Diversification and learner support	Broaden partner sectors and psychosocial/volunteer assistance	Funding dependence and retention pressures
Monitoring and communication	Conduct stakeholder reviews and maintain partnership-impact records	Coordination and accountability

The emphasis on formalization and shared monitoring reflects the collaborative governance principles identified in the literature (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). At the same time, a needs-responsive implementation approach is consistent with the varying center profiles, from community learning spaces to institutionally hosted services. Future evaluation should establish whether implementation improves verified indicators such as attendance, completion, educational transition, access to training, and the longevity of partner commitments.

CONCLUSION

The study documented a diverse local partnership network supporting three ALS centers in Tagbilaran City. Across the presented perception measures, respondents rated partnerships highly effective for program delivery and contributing to sustainability to a very great extent, with both overall weighted means at 3.70. Access to learning resources and technology and institutionalization through formal agreements emerged as particularly strong dimensions. Nevertheless, political seasonality, constrained budgets, and temporary donations were widely cited as threats to continuity among coordinators and community representatives. These findings justify the study's proposed Community-Integrated Sustainability Framework as a practical governance response that combines stable agreements, diversified resources, center-specific assistance, and ongoing monitoring. Because the design was descriptive and evaluative, the results do not establish that partnerships caused better learner achievement or retention, nor do they establish the effectiveness of the proposed framework.

Recommendation

The Schools Division of Tagbilaran City and the relevant local-government offices should consider recurring support mechanisms for ALS, including formal coordination and budget planning that remain operational during changes of administration. ALS coordinators should maintain updated partnership records, review agreement implementation, and match specific forms of partner assistance to the needs of BPOSA, the CLC, and DCPNHS–ALS. Community organizations and private-sector partners should be invited to make realistic multi-period commitments to technical training, ICT access, learner welfare, facilities, and pathways to further education or employment. Monitoring should focus on documented inputs and outcomes, not only favorable perceptions. Future researchers should evaluate the CISF after implementation with longitudinal program data, independent measures of learner outcomes, and a more clearly documented qualitative and inferential analysis.

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