

# Foreword

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When Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones directed that the Alternative Learning System be enhanced and intensified, the Office of the Secretary sought inputs from a broad range of ALS practitioners within and outside of the Department of Education. We have received overwhelming support from many quarters—the Regional Directors, Division Superintendents, Regional and Division focal persons for ALS, principals of tech-voc high schools that pre-dated Senior High Schools, and non-DepEd organizations delivering non-formal education programs. The OSEC reciprocated with strong engagement on ALS-EST policy and program development. We have kept them updated on and involved in program progress through meetings and workshops, and endeavored to reflect their inputs and insights in program refinements.

The consensus in the field has been clear from the beginning: OSEC's idea to programmatically integrate skills training to the traditional ALS interventions (Basic Literacy and Accreditation and Equivalency) was timely and necessary. ALS Mobile Teachers, through partnerships or referral, tried to provide short skills training (what the ALS program refers to as informal education or "Infed") to their learners because it increased the relevance of their program. It mitigated the opportunity costs of learners for participating and sustaining attendance in ALS—through the economic returns they anticipated from obtaining skills, in addition to getting the academic equivalence. Unfortunately, there was limited institutional support for Infed, and Mobile Teachers were left to their own initiative and resourcefulness to provide such service.

In initiating ALS-EST, we took a pilot and developmental approach. We did not attempt policy perfection (which is, more often than not, an impossibility) as a prerequisite to start the Program.

This Handbook is proof of the efficacy of such approach.

ALS-EST has come a long way since the issuance of Department Order No. 46, s. 2017 (Framework for the Pilot Implementation of the Alternative Learning System – Education and Skills Training). From parallel delivery of the basic education and skills training components, we now talk about curriculum and instruction integration. From an OSEC-centered governance, we now have a vertically integrated Project Management Team. We are confident that we can pilot a Senior High School equivalent ALS-EST, simultaneous with, if not ahead of, the regular ALS program.

We made many friends and built a committed constituency along the way. More importantly, we have evolved an expanding ALS-EST community of practitioners, experts and advocates, bound together by a dedicated pursuit of innovation in policy and implementation.

We gained valuable insights from our partners, reinforcing our initial ideas, which we are now ready to advocate for the entire ALS program.

First, we are no longer content with ALS under the mango tree, or ALS in *Kariton*. We built an ALS-EST Learning Center in a secondary school in Eastern Samar, designed to meet the specific requirements and circumstances of ALS-EST Learners. We emphasize the need for a suitable learning environment to deliver an effective ALS-EST program.

Second, our positive partnership experience with public secondary schools in the delivery of ALS-EST supports our push to bring ALS operations back to the schools level. By not stopping at the Division level, and reintegrating ALS to schools operation, we should be able to mobilize our school resources to reach out to all potential learners in their immediate community, through formal education complemented by non-formal education as needed.

Third, we envision ALS-EST to go beyond academic and skills instruction, and utilize Arts and Sports as important learning vehicles. Secretary Briones has been emphasizing this from the beginning. We heard this reiterated as well, and saw this in action, when we visited *Tuloy sa Don Bosco*.

Fourth, we will develop for ALS-EST a strong performance-based and portfolio assessment to complement the usual paper and pencil test for ALS Accreditation and Equivalency.

We expect to contribute lessons and insights relevant not only to ALS but also to formal education.

In addition to the ALS-EST implemented by DepEd schools, we also have a project with the Development Academy of the Philippines, which explores various partnership modalities with non-DepEd entities in the implementation of ALS-EST. While it benefitted from inputs from the partners, this Handbook does not cover the DepEd-DAP project.

## **How to use this Handbook**

This Handbook is a guide to help implementers navigate the program, progress intuitively, and help each learner have a satisfying experience. It seeks to inspire stakeholders to work together, and make this new Program more concrete, brick by brick.

I emphasize that this is not a rule book. Rules are contained in DepEd issuances such as DepEd Orders, Memorandums, and Guidelines. Instead, this Handbook is a practical, convenient reference for ALS-EST implementers, and an introduction to the Program for interested readers. There will be many generalizations, and it will not answer every question.

- For the Basic Education component, the Handbook refers to guidelines, processes, and forms developed for ALS.
- For the Skills Training component, it makes various references to materials from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.
- Some terms are used interchangeably:
  - ✓ Implementing schools, implementers, volunteer schools, schools
  - ✓ Learning Facilitators, teachers, instructors
  - ✓ Skills Trainers, Skills Teachers, Tech-Voc Teachers
  - ✓ Students, learners, completers (in certain context)
- Capitalization:
  - ✓ Terms are capitalized when preceded by ALS or ALS-EST: Learner, Mobile Teacher, Skills Trainer/Teacher, Tech-Voc Teacher. In some instances, terms are capitalized even if not preceded by ALS/ALS-EST, as they are used in context as proper nouns.
  - ✓ 'Learning Facilitator' is treated as a proper noun and always capitalized.
  - ✓ When texts are directly lifted they appear as they were in the original.
  - ✓ Teacher, instructor, trainer are used as common nouns and are not capitalized.

## **Institutionalization of ALS-EST**

ALS-EST is a work-in-progress that will be enriched with feedback and experience from the field. As the Program evolves, it will adopt methods and systems that work best for most stakeholders.

Beyond knowledge and skills, ALS-EST seeks to articulate attitudes and values that implementers and learners, working together as a community, will nurture as part of identity building. ***Maaasahan, Mapagkakatiwalaan at Mapagmahal sa Bayan*** will define this community.

We have another year to refine ALS-EST, and we intend to institutionalize and scale-up the Program by 2021. Our ALS-EST community within and outside DepEd, under the leadership of Secretary Briones, will make this happen.