



The Alignment Matters Framework: Toward Coherence in Basic Education

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ABSTRACT

Basic education systems can exhibit substantial activity without equivalent coherence. Curriculum standards, lesson objectives, classroom tasks, assessment, feedback, professional learning, supervision, school programs, and policy may each be defensible in isolation while still pulling learning in different directions. This conceptual study develops the Alignment Matters Framework (AMF) as a multilevel synthesis for diagnosing and strengthening coherence in basic education. Using conceptual framework analysis and an integrative synthesis of foundational literature on constructive alignment, curriculum-instruction-assessment alignment, formative assessment, opportunity to learn, scaffolding and learning progressions, instructional program coherence, professional development, leadership, equity, and sustainable education, the analysis identifies six interdependent layers: Purpose Alignment, Learning Alignment, Evidence Alignment, Response Alignment, Professional Alignment, and System Alignment. Equity and Sustainability operate as cross-cutting principles, with the learner positioned at the center. The synthesis further distinguishes five recurring forms of misalignment—content, cognitive, opportunity, evidence, and system misalignment—and three levels of alignment quality: surface, functional, and systemic. The AMF proposes that educational quality depends not merely on the presence of desirable components but on the defensibility of their relationships in purpose, cognitive demand, opportunity, evidence, and response. The framework is presented as a conceptual proposition rather than a validated intervention, and its six-layer structure is positioned explicitly against existing coherence models rather than offered as a freestanding theory. Implications are discussed for teaching, assessment, instructional supervision, professional learning, school leadership, and policy, together with a research agenda for instrument development, reliability testing, implementation research, and examination of relationships with learner outcomes.

Keywords: instructional alignment; educational coherence; curriculum; assessment; instructional supervision; school improvement; basic education

1. Introduction

Education systems rarely lack worthwhile goals. Schools are expected to develop foundational knowledge, higher-order thinking, communication, creativity, values, digital competence, resilience, and citizenship while simultaneously responding to assessment requirements, professional standards, accountability systems, and local priorities. The central problem is not necessarily the quality of each goal in isolation. It is whether the parts of the system reinforce one another sufficiently for learners and teachers to act on a clear instructional purpose.

Alignment scholarship has established the importance of correspondence among intended outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment. Biggs (1996) described constructive alignment as the deliberate coordination of intended learning outcomes, learner activity, and assessment. Research on standards-based alignment likewise emphasizes the correspondence of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in content and cognitive demand (Martone & Sireci, 2009; Porter, 2002; Webb, 2002). These traditions provide a strong instructional foundation, but school practice extends beyond the lesson.



Formative assessment requires evidence to change subsequent action (Black & Wiliam, 2009); opportunity-to-learn research raises questions of fairness when learners are assessed on performances they had insufficient opportunity to develop (McDonnell, 1995); instructional program coherence concerns the fit among school-level programs and instructional priorities (Newmann et al., 2001); and research on professional development and leadership shows that teacher learning and organizational conditions influence whether curricular intentions can be enacted (Desimone, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008).

The need for coherence is especially visible in reform contexts. In the Philippines, the Enhanced Basic Education Act emphasizes a learner-centered, inclusive, contextualized, and pedagogically sound curriculum, while the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers establish expectations for continuing professional growth. The MATATAG Curriculum has further emphasized focused curricular design and implementation across basic education (Department of Education, 2017, 2024; Republic of the Philippines, 2013). These policy directions create strong potential for coherence, but coherence cannot be assumed simply because multiple policies share desirable language.

The Alignment Matters Framework (AMF) was developed to make these relationships visible. The underlying proposition is that learning is better supported when the major elements that shape it are coherent in purpose, cognitive demand, opportunity, evidence, and response. The framework treats alignment as relational rather than component-based: an objective, activity, assessment, training program, or policy cannot be described as aligned by itself; alignment concerns how one element fits with another in service of intended learning. The AMF also treats coherence as a sustainability issue: misalignment can generate avoidable remediation, duplicated work, contradictory signals, and administrative friction, consistent with sustainable-education perspectives that treat chronic overload and fragmented improvement effort as evidence of an unsustainable system rather than merely an inefficient one (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Sterling, 2001).

This article has three aims: (1) to synthesize multidisciplinary scholarship relevant to educational alignment and coherence; (2) to articulate the six-layer Alignment Matters Framework for basic education; and (3) to derive testable propositions and a research agenda for empirical refinement. The article addresses the following questions: What conceptual dimensions are required to represent coherence from classroom instruction to system-level support? How are these dimensions related? What recurring forms of misalignment does the framework make visible? What empirical questions should follow from the framework, and how does it relate to coherence frameworks that already exist?

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study used conceptual framework analysis supported by an integrative synthesis of literature. Conceptual framework analysis is appropriate when a phenomenon draws from multiple bodies of knowledge and the purpose is to identify, connect, and organize concepts into a coherent explanatory structure rather than estimate an intervention effect (Jabareen, 2009). Integrative reviews likewise permit the critical synthesis of diverse literatures to generate new conceptual understanding (Torraco, 2005). The approach is consistent with guidance that literature review can function as a research methodology when the purpose, selection logic, and synthesis procedures are made explicit (Snyder, 2019).

The study was not designed as a systematic review or meta-analysis and does not claim exhaustive retrieval of all studies on alignment. Instead, the source base was purposively assembled around theoretical and empirical traditions necessary to explain coherence in basic education. This boundary is important because the purpose of the present article is framework construction and proposition development, not estimation of pooled effects or systematic evidence grading.

2.2 Conceptual Source Domains

The synthesis drew on ten overlapping source domains: (a) constructive alignment; (b) curriculum-instruction-assessment alignment and cognitive demand; (c) formative assessment and feedback; (d) opportunity to learn and assessment fairness; (e) learning science, scaffolding, and learning progressions; (f) instructional program coherence; (g) teacher professional development; (h) instructional leadership and policy implementation; (i) equity and contextual responsiveness; and (j) sustainable education and sustainable leadership. Foundational peer-reviewed works were supplemented by authoritative Philippine policy documents that establish curricular and professional expectations for basic education.

Sources were retained when they contributed a construct, relationship, empirical finding, or policy principle directly relevant to one or more of the following questions: What is intended? What learning opportunities are provided? What evidence is collected? How is evidence used? What professional capacity supports implementation? What organizational or policy conditions reinforce or obstruct the work? Sources that were narrowly content-specific without conceptual relevance to these relationships were not central to the synthesis.

To make this boundary transparent rather than assumed, Table 1 maps each source domain to representative works and the specific AMF concept it contributed. The mapping illustrates the synthesis logic and shows where the source base is thin—sustainable education and sustainable leadership rest on three works, for example—rather than implying an exhaustive or systematic retrieval.

Table 1

Conceptual Source Domains and Their Contribution to the Alignment Matters Framework

Source domain	Representative sources	Concept contributed to AMF
Constructive alignment	Biggs (1996)	Deliberate correspondence among intended outcomes, learner activity, and assessment—basis for Purpose and Evidence Alignment
Curriculum-instruction-assessment alignment and cognitive demand	Anderson & Krathwohl (2001); Martone & Sireci (2009); Porter (2002); Schmidt et al. (2005); Webb (2002)	Cognitive-demand correspondence and content coherence across documents—basis for the cognitive-demand check applied across Purpose, Learning, and Evidence Alignment
Formative assessment and feedback	Black & Wiliam (2009); Hattie & Timperley (2007)	Evidence that changes subsequent action—basis for Response Alignment
Opportunity to learn and assessment fairness	McDonnell (1995); American Educational Research Association et al. (2014)	Fairness of access to the assessed performance—basis for the cross-cutting Equity principle
Learning science, scaffolding, and learning progressions	Reiser (2004); Shepard (2018); van de Pol et al. (2010)	Intermediate performance that converges on a terminal competency—basis for Learning Alignment
Instructional program coherence	Newmann et al. (2001); Schmidt et al. (2005)	Fit among school-level programs and instructional priorities—basis for System Alignment
Teacher professional development	Desimone (2009)	Core features of effective teacher learning—basis for Professional Alignment
Instructional leadership and policy implementation	Cohen et al. (2007); Elmore (2000); Fullan & Quinn (2015); Honig & Hatch (2004); Robinson et al. (2008)	Organizational and leadership conditions that enable or obstruct enacted alignment—basis for Professional and System Alignment
Equity and contextual responsiveness	McDonnell (1995); American Educational Research Association et al. (2014)	Defensible access to intended learning across learner groups—basis for the cross-cutting Equity principle
Sustainable education and sustainable leadership	Hargreaves & Fink (2006); Sterling (2001); UNESCO (2020)	Coherence maintainable within finite time and capacity; avoidable duplication as “educational friction”—basis for the cross-cutting Sustainability principle

2.3 Analytic Procedure

Concept extraction. Key concepts and relational claims were identified across the source domains, including intended outcomes, learner activity, cognitive demand, evidence, feedback, opportunity to learn, professional capacity, program coherence, leadership, policy fit, equity, and sustainability.

Relational mapping. Concepts were compared according to the educational relationship they primarily described: intended purpose, enacted learning, evidence of learning, response to evidence, professional support, or system conditions.

Concept consolidation. Overlapping constructs were merged when they served the same functional role. Distinctions were retained when they represented substantively different alignment failures, particularly differences among content, cognitive demand, opportunity, evidence quality, and system conditions. For example, feedback appears in the formative-assessment literature as the mechanism connecting evidence to action, in the professional-development literature as a form of coaching input to teachers, and in accountability literature as a reporting artifact. These uses were consolidated by the diagnostic question each primarily served: feedback that closes the loop between evidence and immediate instructional or learner action was retained within Response Alignment, and feedback that builds teacher capability over time was retained within Professional Alignment. The construct was not given a separate layer because doing so would have duplicated, rather than clarified, the relational question each existing layer already answers.

Cross-level analysis. The synthesis examined how classroom-level relationships are enabled or constrained by school and system structures. This step prevented the framework from treating teacher planning as the sole site of alignment.

Boundary analysis. Equity and sustainability were evaluated across all layers rather than assigned to a single layer because both function as tests of the quality and viability of coherence.

Proposition development. The final framework was translated into propositions that are conceptually defensible but empirically testable. No proposition is presented as established causal evidence.

2.4 Rigor and Limitations of the Conceptual Method

Conceptual rigor was strengthened by triangulating across literatures that operate at different educational levels and by retaining explicit distinctions among constructs that are often collapsed under the broad term alignment. The framework was also subjected to a coherence check: each proposed layer had to answer a distinct educational question while maintaining a defensible relationship with adjacent layers.

The analysis remains interpretive and primarily author-driven. It does not provide database-level reproducibility, inter-coder agreement, or formal risk-of-bias appraisal. These limitations are acceptable for initial conceptual development but should be addressed in subsequent scoping, systematic, instrument-development, and empirical studies.

3. Results

3.1 Core Definition of Alignment

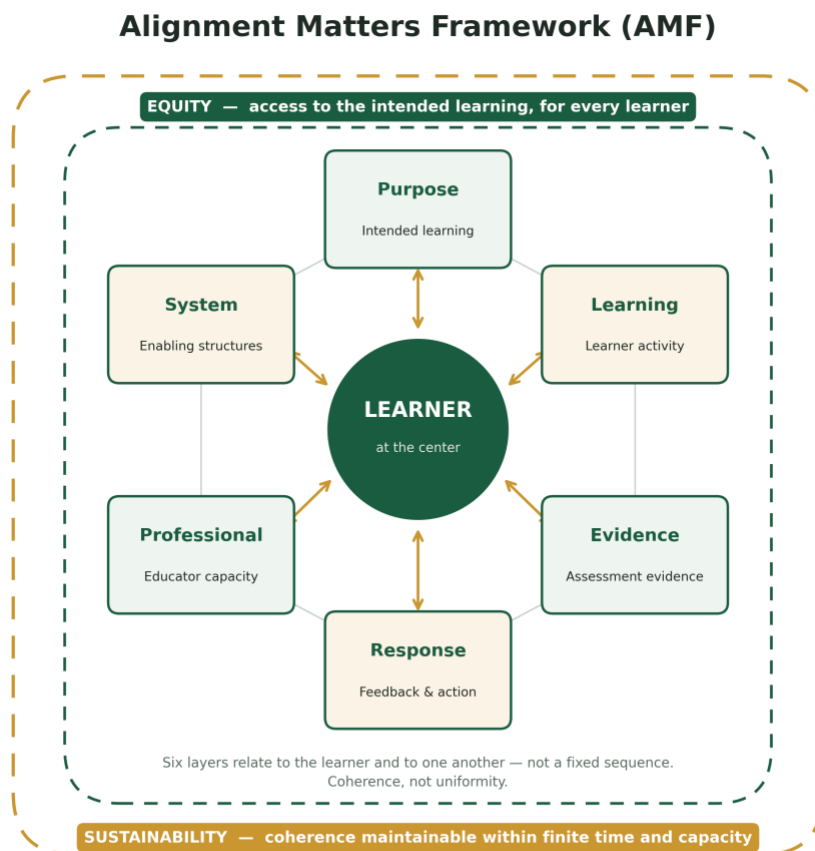
The synthesis supports a definition of alignment as coherence of purpose rather than sameness of method. Alignment exists when educational elements form a defensible relationship to intended learning while still permitting contextualized routes, professional judgment, and differentiated support. This definition rejects two reductions: first, that alignment is merely the repetition of the same wording across documents; and second, that alignment requires standardized teaching.

Five relational dimensions emerged as essential for judging coherence: purpose, cognitive demand, opportunity, evidence, and response. Purpose asks whether the intended learning is clear. Cognitive demand asks whether learners are required to think and perform at a level consistent with the intended competency. Opportunity asks whether instruction provides a reasonable pathway to develop the required performance. Evidence asks whether assessment supports the inference being made about learning. Response asks whether evidence changes subsequent teaching, learning, support, or system action.

3.2 The Six Layers of the Alignment Matters Framework

Figure 1

Alignment Matters Framework (AMF)



Note. The learner sits at the center; the six layers relate bidirectionally to the learner and to one another rather than proceeding in a fixed 1-to-6 sequence. Equity and Sustainability wrap the full model as cross-cutting principles rather than appearing as a final checklist step.

Table 2

Six Layers of the Alignment Matters Framework

Layer	Function	Diagnostic question
Purpose Alignment	Clarifies the intended learning and its content, cognitive demand, quality criteria, progression, and contextual meaning.	What should learners become able to know, understand, do, or value?
Learning Alignment	Examines whether learner activity, scaffolding, practice, and task conditions actually develop the intended performance.	Are learners doing what will develop the intended learning?
Evidence Alignment	Examines whether assessment elicits sufficiently valid and interpretable evidence of intended learning.	Are we collecting the right evidence?
Response Alignment	Connects formative evidence, feedback, remediation, enrichment, and instructional adjustment.	Are we acting on the evidence?
Professional Alignment	Examines whether supervision, coaching, professional development, collaboration, and teacher learning build the capabilities required by curricular and assessment expectations.	Are educators supported to improve the required practice?
System Alignment	Examines whether schedules, programs, technology, resources, accountability, leadership, and policy send compatible signals and enable the work.	Do structures reinforce rather than obstruct the work?

Note. Purpose, Learning, Evidence, and Response Alignment are dimensional layers: each evaluates one relational dimension directly. Professional and System Alignment are enabling layers: they determine whether dimensional alignment can be enacted with fidelity and sustained across classrooms rather than adding a new dimension of their own (see Reconciling the Five Dimensions and the Six Layers, below).

3.2.1 Purpose Alignment

Purpose Alignment is the starting point because activity cannot be judged as aligned without a defensible learning destination. It includes standards and competencies, essential content, cognitive demand, developmental progression, criteria for quality, and contextual interpretation. Bloom-type taxonomies and depth-of-knowledge frameworks can inform analysis, but the actual performance and knowledge relationship should take precedence over verb matching (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Webb, 2002).

3.2.2 Learning Alignment

Learning Alignment concerns the opportunity to develop the intended performance. Learner engagement is educationally relevant only insofar as the activity helps build the knowledge, reasoning, practice, independence, or integration required by the competency. Scaffolding and learning-progression scholarship supports temporary structuring and intermediate pathways while retaining the intended destination (Reiser, 2004; Shepard, 2018; van de Pol et al., 2010). The AMF therefore allows lower-demand intermediate work when it is necessary and visibly converges on the terminal competency.

3.2.3 Evidence Alignment

Evidence Alignment concerns the validity of the inference made from assessment. An assessment can cover the correct topic yet fail to represent the intended cognitive demand, range, independence, or quality. Alignment studies and the assessment-triangle tradition emphasize that evidence depends on the relationship among cognition, observation, and interpretation (Martone & Sireci, 2009; National Research Council, 2001).

3.2.4 Response Alignment

Response Alignment makes the framework dynamic. Formative assessment becomes consequential when evidence changes what teachers or learners do next (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Feedback should therefore be judged not simply by its presence but by whether it provides usable information about the gap between current and intended performance and supports subsequent action (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

3.2.5 Professional Alignment

Professional Alignment recognizes that sophisticated curriculum and assessment expectations depend on teacher knowledge and organizational learning. Professional development is stronger when it is content-focused, coherent with current work, sustained, and connected to active learning and collective participation (Desimone, 2009). Instructional supervision should similarly examine relationships among learner work, intended learning, and evidence rather than merely verify document completion.

3.2.6 System Alignment

System Alignment extends coherence to the conditions surrounding classroom practice. Programs, schedules, reporting systems, technology, resources, accountability, leadership, and policy can reinforce or contradict instructional priorities. Research on instructional program coherence and policy implementation suggests that improvement depends partly on how schools craft fit among external demands, local goals, and implementation capacity (Cohen et al., 2007; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Newmann et al., 2001; Schmidt et al., 2005).

3.3 Reconciling the Five Dimensions and the Six Layers

The five relational dimensions and the six layers answer different questions, and the relationship between them needs to be stated explicitly rather than left for the reader to infer. The five dimensions—purpose, cognitive demand, opportunity, evidence, and response—describe the qualities that must hold for any relationship between two elements to count as aligned. The six layers describe where in the system those qualities must be examined.

Four layers are dimensional: each evaluates one relational dimension directly. Purpose Alignment evaluates purpose. Learning Alignment evaluates opportunity. Evidence Alignment evaluates evidence. Response Alignment evaluates response. Cognitive demand is not a fifth dimensional layer because it is not a site where alignment is produced; it is a consistency check that must be applied across Purpose, Learning, and Evidence Alignment simultaneously. A competency, a learning task, and an assessment can each appear to address the same content while requiring different levels of thinking, so the AMF treats that comparison as a cross-layer test rather than a separate layer.

Two layers are enabling rather than dimensional. Professional Alignment and System Alignment do not introduce new relational dimensions of their own. Instead, they determine whether Purpose, Learning, Evidence, and Response Alignment can be enacted with fidelity in a given classroom and sustained across classrooms over time. A school can therefore show strong dimensional alignment in an individual, well-prepared teacher's classroom while showing weak enabling alignment at the professional or system level. This is precisely the condition that the three levels of alignment quality—surface, functional, and systemic, presented below—are designed to distinguish.

3.4 Cross-Cutting Principles: Equity and Sustainability

Equity is treated as a cross-cutting principle because alignment is ethically incomplete when some learners have less meaningful access to the intended learning or when assessment claims exceed the opportunities learners received. Opportunity-to-learn scholarship and assessment standards make this relationship central to fairness (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014; McDonnell, 1995). Equity does not imply lowering standards; it requires examining whether support, resources, language, context, and task conditions provide defensible access to the intended performance.

Sustainability is also cross-cutting because educational coherence must be maintainable within finite human and institutional resources. Sustainable leadership and sustainable education perspectives warn against improvement models that depend on chronic overload or isolated additions (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Sterling, 2001; UNESCO, 2020). The AMF describes avoidable work generated by poor fit among components as educational friction. Examples include remediation necessitated by earlier instructional misalignment, duplicate reporting, professional development disconnected from current instructional needs, or technology that adds a new workflow without replacing an older one.

3.5 Five Forms of Misalignment

Table 3

Diagnostic Forms of Misalignment

Form	Diagnostic meaning
Content misalignment	The lesson or assessment emphasizes peripheral content while neglecting content central to the intended competency.
Cognitive misalignment	The content appears to match, but the required thinking or complexity differs across competency, instruction, and assessment.
Opportunity misalignment	The intended learning and assessment may match, but learners had insufficient opportunity to develop the required performance.
Evidence misalignment	The assessment does not provide sufficiently defensible evidence for the inference being made about learning.
System misalignment	Classroom work may be internally coherent while school or policy structures create contradictory incentives, demands, or constraints.

The taxonomy is useful because different misalignments require different responses. A content mismatch may require reprioritization; a cognitive mismatch may require redesign of learner tasks or assessment; an opportunity mismatch may require additional practice or access; an evidence mismatch may require a different assessment design; and a system mismatch may require leadership or policy action rather than further demands on individual teachers.

3.6 Three Levels of Alignment Quality

Table 4*Proposed Levels of Alignment Quality*

Level	Description
Surface Alignment	The same topics, verbs, or template components appear across documents, but the actual relationships in cognitive demand, opportunity, and evidence remain uncertain.
Functional Alignment	Objectives, learning experiences, assessment, and feedback substantially correspond in content and cognitive demand and guide meaningful next steps.
Systemic Alignment	Functional alignment is reinforced by supervision, professional learning, schedules, programs, technology, resources, leadership, and policy.

The levels distinguish symbolic compliance from operational coherence. Surface alignment may be administratively visible because terminology matches and templates are complete. Functional alignment requires correspondence in actual learner performance and evidence. Systemic alignment asks whether the surrounding organization makes functional alignment sustainable across classrooms rather than dependent on individual effort.

3.7 Propositions Derived From the Framework

P1. Greater correspondence among intended competency, learner activity, and assessment evidence will be positively associated with terminal learner performance, controlling for relevant contextual factors.

P2. Alignment in cognitive demand will explain variance in learner performance beyond surface topic correspondence alone.

P3. Opportunity to learn will moderate the relationship between assessment demand and learner performance; aligned assessments will be less interpretable when learners have insufficient opportunity to develop the assessed performance.

P4. Use of formative evidence for instructional response will strengthen the relationship between initial instructional alignment and subsequent learner progress.

P5. Professional alignment will mediate the enactment of curricular and assessment expectations by strengthening teacher capability and shared instructional interpretation.

P6. System alignment will be positively associated with the consistency and sustainability of functional alignment across classrooms.

P7. Higher alignment will be associated with lower avoidable educational friction, including redundant work, misdirected remediation, and contradictory reporting or program demands.

P8. The benefits of alignment will depend on equity of opportunity; apparently coherent systems that systematically restrict access to intended learning for particular learners will show weaker or less defensible outcomes.

4. Discussion

The Alignment Matters Framework contributes to educational alignment literature by treating coherence as a connected chain and an enabling system rather than as a single curriculum-assessment correspondence problem. Its six layers integrate classroom, professional, organizational, and policy relationships while preserving the learner as the central referent. The framework does not replace constructive alignment, standards-alignment models, formative assessment, opportunity-to-learn theory, or instructional coherence research. Instead, it organizes these traditions around a practical question: Do the different parts of education reinforce the learning that the system claims to value?

4.1 Positioning AMF Relative to Existing Coherence Frameworks

The claim that this framework contributes something more than a relabeling of existing constructs is fair to demand of any new theoretical framework, and it should be tested against the closest existing coherence models rather than left implicit. Fullan and Quinn's (2015) Coherence framework organizes system improvement around four leadership drivers—focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability—and has become a standard reference for coherence at the district and system level. Elmore's (2000) instructional core names teacher, student, and content as the interacting elements that must change together for instruction to improve. Honig and Hatch (2004), already central to the System Alignment layer above, describe coherence as something schools actively craft while managing competing external demands.

These frameworks and the AMF share the premise that coherence is relational rather than a matter of accumulating good components. They differ in what they make operational. Fullan and Quinn's drivers describe leadership behavior that produces coherence but do not specify how a supervisor or teacher would diagnose a specific instance of misalignment in a lesson, a task, or an assessment; Elmore's instructional core names the interacting elements without extending the analysis to evidence quality, professional development, or policy. The AMF's distinct contribution, relative to these traditions, is not the six-layer structure by itself, which is a reasonably direct synthesis of well-established literatures. It is the pairing of a classroom-level diagnostic—the five relational dimensions and the taxonomy of five misalignment types—with the system-level architecture that Fullan and Quinn, Honig and Hatch, and Newmann and colleagues (2001) have already established. Where existing coherence frameworks tell leaders what to do to produce coherence, the AMF is offered as a complementary diagnostic for identifying which layer and which type of misalignment is responsible when coherence is absent, and at what quality level—surface, functional, or systemic—it currently operates. This is a narrower and more falsifiable claim than announcing a new theory of coherence, and it is the claim the empirical agenda below is designed to test.

A central implication is that completeness should not be confused with coherence. Lesson plans, assessment blueprints, professional development calendars, observation tools, and school programs can all be complete and still be misaligned. Surface alignment is especially vulnerable to what may be called verb matching: the appearance of alignment because the same taxonomy term appears in a competency, objective, and assessment. Yet the actual task may require different knowledge, decisions, complexity, independence, or evidence. This is why alignment judgments must examine performance rather than terminology alone.

The framework also clarifies why lower-demand intermediate learning is not automatically a defect. Learning often requires prerequisite knowledge, guided practice, reduced complexity, and progressive independence. The issue is whether the sequence converges on the terminal competency. This distinction creates space for scaffolding without allowing scaffolding to become permanent dilution of intended learning. A fuller treatment of how intermediate, lower-demand tasks should be sequenced so that they visibly converge on the terminal competency falls outside the scope of this article. Such a treatment—provisionally organized around what might be termed scaffolding objectives operating under a dual-alignment principle, in which local coherence at an intermediate stage and terminal coherence across the full instructional sequence are evaluated separately—is proposed here as a direction for subsequent conceptual and empirical development rather than as an established construct.

For assessment, the AMF shifts attention from item difficulty to evidentiary sufficiency. A difficult assessment can be misaligned, and an easy assessment can be appropriate, depending on the intended construct and stage of learning. Summative judgments require evidence that reasonably represents the terminal competency, whereas formative checks may target intermediate capabilities when those capabilities are instructionally necessary. This distinction is consistent with formative assessment theory and the broader

requirement that assessment evidence support defensible interpretations (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014; Black & Wiliam, 2009).

For instructional supervision, the framework suggests a shift from presence checking to relationship checking. Rather than asking only whether a lesson plan includes objectives, activities, and assessment, supervisors can examine whether learners are doing what the competency requires, whether assessment can support the intended claim, and whether evidence changes subsequent action. At school level, supervision data can then inform professional learning rather than exist as a parallel compliance process.

For leadership and policy, the framework places limits on teacher-centered explanations of implementation failure. When teachers receive incompatible signals from curriculum, assessment, reporting, schedules, professional development, technology, and accountability systems, additional individual effort may not produce coherence. System alignment therefore asks leaders to identify the earliest serious break in the chain and redesign structures that generate contradiction or duplication. This view is compatible with scholarship describing coherence as something schools actively craft while managing multiple external demands and with Elmore's (2000) argument that improving the instructional core requires aligned investment rather than exhortation directed at individual teachers (Honig & Hatch, 2004).

The Philippine basic education context provides a consequential setting for this research agenda. National policy already emphasizes learner-centered curriculum, teacher professional standards, and curricular reform. The empirical question is whether these intentions are translated into coherent classroom, supervisory, assessment, and organizational practices. The AMF offers one possible architecture for studying that translation without assuming that policy intent automatically produces implementation coherence.

5. Conclusion

The Alignment Matters Framework proposes that educational quality depends not only on the strength of individual components but on the coherence of their relationships. It organizes alignment into six connected layers—Purpose, Learning, Evidence, Response, Professional, and System Alignment—surrounded by the cross-cutting principles of Equity and Sustainability. The framework further distinguishes content, cognitive, opportunity, evidence, and system misalignment and differentiates surface, functional, and systemic alignment.

The AMF should be understood as a testable conceptual framework, positioned explicitly alongside existing coherence models rather than as a validated theory or universal prescription. Its value will ultimately depend on whether it can improve educational diagnosis, professional judgment, and empirical explanation without becoming another layer of compliance. The central research task is therefore to operationalize, test, challenge, and refine the framework across classrooms and systems. The practical question remains simple: Do the different parts of education point toward the learning we say matters?

6. Implications for Research

The immediate priority is operationalization. A validated AMF rubric would require clear indicators for each layer, content-validity review, cognitive interviewing with users, inter-rater reliability testing, and examination of whether scores distinguish surface, functional, and systemic alignment. Because the framework is relational, scoring should avoid simply counting the presence of components.

A second priority is criterion-related evidence. Studies can examine whether AMF scores predict or correlate with learner outcomes, assessment quality, teacher planning quality, classroom observation evidence, or improvement over time. Such studies should control for prior achievement and contextual variables and should avoid attributing complex learner outcomes to alignment alone.

A third priority is intervention research. Quasi-experimental, experimental, mixed-methods, and design-based studies can test whether AMF-informed coaching improves planning, assessment, feedback, or

school-level coherence. Implementation studies should examine feasibility, teacher workload, interpretability, subject-specific differences, and unintended consequences. Digital tools built around alignment should be evaluated partly by whether they reduce net friction rather than simply add another reporting layer.

Finally, equity and sustainability should be treated as empirical rather than rhetorical dimensions. Researchers should examine whether alignment judgments vary across learner groups and school contexts, whether support is proportionate to expected performance, and whether alignment-oriented reforms reduce or increase workload, duplication, and opportunity costs.

7. Limitations

The AMF is a conceptual synthesis and has not yet been independently validated. Its six-layer structure reflects an interpretive integration of established literatures rather than a statistically derived latent structure. The framework may require modification across disciplines, grade levels, cultures, and policy contexts. Some constructs overlap by design; for example, feedback can be considered part of evidence use, professional practice, and system routines depending on the level of analysis.

The source selection in this study was purposive rather than systematic. Consequently, the article should not be interpreted as an exhaustive review of educational alignment scholarship. A future scoping or systematic review can test whether important constructs or competing models were omitted—including a fuller comparison with established coherence frameworks such as Fullan and Quinn's (2015) four coherence drivers—and can map how alignment has been defined and measured across basic education research.

8. Declarations

Ethics Statement

This conceptual study involved no human participants, identifiable private data, or experimental intervention; institutional ethics review was therefore not applicable.

Funding

The author received no specific funding for this work.

Conflict of Interest

Fernando B. Enad is the founder of Alignment Matters PH, the advocacy initiative under which the Alignment Matters Framework is disseminated. This is a non-commercial, unpaid advocacy role; the author received no funding, royalties, or other financial benefit connected to the framework's development or promotion. The author declares no other financial, professional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article, and offers the framework here as a proposition for independent testing, critique, and revision rather than as a validated or adopted product.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, analysis, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing: Fernando B. Enad.

Data Availability

No primary dataset was generated. The study is based on published scholarly and policy sources.



Use of Artificial Intelligence

Generative AI tools were used to assist with language editing and formatting; all intellectual content, analysis, and conclusions are the author's own.

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