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Breaking Barriers: Experiences of Als Teachers in Providing Second-Chance Education to Marginalized Learners

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers in delivering second-chance education to marginalized learners and investigated how policy and institutional support influenced their capacity to provide inclusive and transformative learning experiences. Utilizing a phenomenological design, data were gathered through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, thematic analysis, and narrative inquiry to capture authentic teacher voices.

Highlighting the complex and nuanced realities of the participants, the findings reveal that ALS teachers confront persistent challenges in delivering second-chance education. Among these are irregular learner attendance, lack of adequate resources and ICT facilities, psychosocial barriers such as low self-esteem, and the complexity of teaching highly diverse and multi-level learners. They also face systemic limitations, including inadequate institutional support, constrained funding, and limited opportunities for professional development. Despite these constraints, ALS teachers demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and innovation. They employ differentiated instruction, contextualized and experiential learning strategies, and affective support to foster learner motivation and engagement.

The study concluded that ALS teachers not only serve as educators but also as mentors, counselors, and community advocates. Their work embodies the transformative essence of second-chance education, where both learners and teachers undergo personal and professional growth. Learners acquire literacy, life skills, and renewed self-worth, while teachers develop empathy, reflective practice, resilience, and a stronger sense of purpose.

The recommendations included strengthening the policy framework and improving institutional support through sustained funding, provision of updated learning resources, conducive learning spaces, and regular capacity-building activities for ALS teachers. To ensure successful engagement in the program, learners should be provided with opportunities to address economic challenges and developmental activities to mitigate psychosocial barriers. These measures are necessary to ensure inclusivity, sustainability, and meaningful impact in second-chance education.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Research Background

"*Second-chance education is not second-class*." This powerful assertion underscores the transformative potential of an alternative learning pathway, affirming its equal worth alongside formal schooling. The philosophy of alternative education is deeply anchored in the conviction that no learner shall be left behind.

Education is a fundamental right, and in the Philippine context, it is the cornerstone of the educational system's mandate to provide equitable, inclusive, accessible, and quality education for all. This principle recognizes that every Filipino, regardless of socioeconomic status, geographic location, disability, or life circumstance, deserves the opportunity to learn and succeed.

Despite sustained government efforts, millions of Filipinos remain excluded from formal schooling. Poverty, family dysfunction, displacement, teenage pregnancy, and other challenging life circumstances often place education beyond reach. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), through the Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (2023), revealed that while four out of five Filipinos aged 5–24 attend school, approximately 20% remain out of school. This exclusion perpetuates cycles of poverty, underdevelopment, and marginalization.

The EDCOM 2 (2025) report showed that 18 million junior and senior high school graduates lack functional literacy, which extends beyond basic reading and numeracy to include comprehension and critical life skills. These figures sadly show systemic inequities in education and highlight the urgency of accessible alternatives.

The establishment of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) to complement the formal school system is the government's direct response to the enduring challenge in education in the country. Republic Act (RA) 11510, or the ALS Act of 2020, defines ALS as a "parallel learning system that provides viable pathways for those unable to attend formal school." Anchored in the constitutional mandate (Article XIV, 1987 Constitution) to promote both formal and non-formal systems, ALS concretizes the vision of educational access and inclusivity. It is further strengthened by RA 9155 (2001), which institutionalizes ALS as a complementary approach to formal schooling and emphasizes inclusivity, local partnerships, and community participation. Through these legal frameworks, ALS embodies a human-rights-based approach to education, making learning opportunities available to marginalized populations such as out-of-school youth, adults, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, persons deprived of liberty, and other underserved groups.

Over the past two decades, ALS has demonstrated its far-reaching impact. In 2020, the Department of Education (DepEd) reported over 800,000 enrollees nationwide, reflecting the program's growing relevance. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has also highlighted the correlation between ALS participation and improved employability, noting that ALS graduates are better positioned to secure jobs or pursue higher education. Thus, ALS is not merely a remedial program but a lifeline that restores dignity, hope, and a liberating program for learners excluded from mainstream education.

In the Schools Division of Albay (SDO Albay), the ALS program has consistently reached thousands of learners, reflecting both the system's success and the persistent educational divide. According to the Learner Information System (2025), ALS enrollment in the division stood at 8,707 in SY 2022–2023, 9,632 in SY 2023–2024, and 8,970 in SY 2024–2025. These figures affirm ALS as a cornerstone of basic education delivery while simultaneously revealing the alarming number of Albayanos unable to complete compulsory basic education. Most of these learners belong to marginalized sectors, including those in poverty, teenage parents, young workers, children in conflict with the law, indigenous peoples, rebel returnees, and substance abuse survivors. They embody the last, the least, and the lost of society, individuals whose potential and human capacity would remain untapped without the liberating power of ALS.

At the heart of the alternative learning pathway are the ALS teachers, who serve as the frontline implementers of second-chance education. Unlike formal schoolteachers, ALS teachers offer community-based teaching, operate in highly diverse, often unpredictable, and challenging contexts. They travel across geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, traverse mountains and rough seas, and conduct sessions in any available structure in the community, homes, rehabilitation centers, and correctional facilities. They painstakingly manage multi-level learners with varied competencies, many of whom carry low self-esteem, reluctant engagement, and histories of marginalization.

Their teaching requires not only adaptive pedagogy but also patience, creativity, resourcefulness, and empathy. Research by Maligalig and Albert (2018) highlighted that ALS teachers are often compelled to act as counselors, change agents, and community mobilizers all at the same time, underscoring the multi-role nature of their work. This aligns with global findings on non-formal educators, who are frequently tasked with bridging not just literacy gaps but also psychosocial and socio-economic barriers to learning (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017).

Yet, this missionary work is compounded by systemic barriers. Insufficient funding, outdated and limited resources, and inadequate professional development opportunities limit the sustainability and quality of ALS delivery. A study by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018) pointed out that ALS teachers often lack access to technology, instructional materials, and institutional recognition, which hinders their ability to effectively address the needs of learners in marginalized communities. Javier (2021) further emphasized that despite their central role in advancing educational equity, ALS teachers remain underrecognized compared to their counterparts in the formal school system, receiving fewer opportunities for career progression and training. These limitations echo international findings that second-chance education programs often struggle with legitimacy and resourcing, even as they play a crucial role in fulfilling the promise of education for all (Torres & Tinsley, 2019).

Currently, fewer than 10,000 ALS teachers carry out the program across the country, a small portion of almost 900,000 teachers in the DepEd workforce. Though numerically small, their role is disproportionately vital in shaping inclusive educational outcomes for the nation. The resilience and commitment of ALS teachers resonate with Dizon's (2019) account of educators who, despite limited resources, create learning spaces in unconventional settings such as public markets, sidewalks, and detention facilities. Their lived experiences reveal not only the challenges of navigating literal and systemic barriers, but also the transformative role of educators who embody the humanistic values of ALS. Strengthening institutional support for these teachers, through sustained funding, professional development, and recognition, is therefore not just a policy imperative but a moral one.

Against this backdrop, the present study sougt to examine the lived experiences of ALS teachers, focusing on how they perform their critical roles in transforming the lives of diverse marginalized learners. By unpacking their struggles, coping mechanisms, and insights, this research highlights the intersection between policy, practice, and human agency in the delivery of alternative education. Furthermore, it underscores the urgent need for stronger institutional support, sustainable policies, strengthened ties and collaboration with stakeholders, and responsive frameworks that recognize ALS not as a secondary option, but as an integral pillar of the country's educational system.

Problem Statement

Primarily, this research aimed to explore the lived experiences of ALS teachers in providing second-chance education to marginalized learners, particularly seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What challenges do ALS teachers encounter in delivering second-chance education to marginalized learners, and how do they navigate these challenges?
2. How do ALS teachers perceive the impact of the Alternative Learning System on the personal and professional growth of their learners?
3. What instructional strategies do ALS teachers employ in fostering engagement and retention among marginalized learners?
4. How do ALS teachers define success in second-chance education, and what factors contribute to positive learning outcomes?
5. In what ways do institutional support and policy frameworks influence ALS teachers' ability to provide inclusive and transformative learning experiences?

Research Objectives

This research undertaking aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the challenges encountered by ALS teachers in delivering second-chance education to marginalized learners and explore the adaptive strategies they employ in navigating these challenges.
2. To investigate how ALS teachers perceive the impact of the Alternative Learning System on the academic, personal, and professional growth of their learners.
3. To identify and analyze the instructional strategies and pedagogical approaches used by ALS teachers to enhance learner engagement, motivation, and retention, particularly among diverse and marginalized learners.
4. To explore how ALS teachers define and measure success in second-chance education and determine the factors that contribute to positive learning outcomes.
5. To assess the influence of institutional support, community participation, and policy frameworks on ALS teachers' capacity to provide inclusive, empowering, and transformative learning experiences in the context of a second-chance education.

Assumptions of the Study

The following are the assumptions of this research:

1. The challenges faced by ALS teachers are multidimensional, encompassing personal, institutional, socio-cultural, and systemic factors that require adaptive and innovative strategies to achieve educational goals.
2. ALS teachers recognize the program's significant contribution to learners' academic advancement, self-confidence, employability, and social mobility, viewing ALS as a transformative tool for personal and professional empowerment.
3. ALS teachers utilize flexible, learner-centered, and contextual instructional approaches tailored to learners' backgrounds and life situations to promote sustained engagement and attain expected learning outcomes.
4. Second-chance education extends beyond cognitive development, involving affective, psychosocial, and emotional dimensions such as empathy, resilience-building, and community empowerment.
5. The effectiveness of ALS implementation is influenced by broader macro-level conditions, including institutional policy and support, funding mechanisms, training systems, curriculum design, and socio-political support structures.

Scope and Delimitation

This research undertaking explored the experiences of ALS teachers in providing second-chance education to marginalized learners. It included 20 ALS teachers, with 10 females and 10 males, from the Schools

Division of Albay, coming from the 5 ALS Areas, to ensure a diverse representation of various geographical areas, socio-economic, and cultural contexts of the learners spanning the Schools Division of Albay. A total of four participants from each area were purposively selected with the following distributions: (Area 1) Libon East, Libon West, Polangui North, and Oas North; (Area 2) Oas South, Pioduran East, Pioduran West, and Guinobatan East; (Area 3) Camalig North, Jovellar, Daraga North, and Daraga South; (Area 4) Manito, Sto. Domingo, Bacacay East, and Bacacay South; (Area 5) Tiwi, Malinao, Malilipot, and Rapu-Rapu West. As such, the study encompassed the fifteen municipalities under SDO Albay, excluding the three cities. This limitation made the findings specific to the context of the division are not necessarily be generalizable to other divisions, regions, or educational settings.

The data-gathering was limited to ALS teachers only, excluding the Community ALS Implementors (CAIs), Education Program Specialists II for ALS, and Division ALS Focal Person. As stated in the ALS Law, they have different terms of reference when it comes to duties and functions. It focused on the participants' lived experiences and perspectives on implementing the ALS program as the direct service providers and implementers. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the participants were designed to ensure the study's focus, relevance, and quality.

This study utilized qualitative research methods that employed focus group discussion, interviews, and data and thematic analyses. Qualitative measures helped explore participants' personal stories, challenges, motivations, and strategies. It helped uncover meanings and insights that were valuable in coming up with the research findings. Ethical standards of informed consent and confidentiality were consistently observed, ensuring the protection of participants' identities and personal information throughout the research process. Due respect to the authorship of references used was observed. These were duly acknowledged by citing the authors in the list of references.

Conceptual Framework

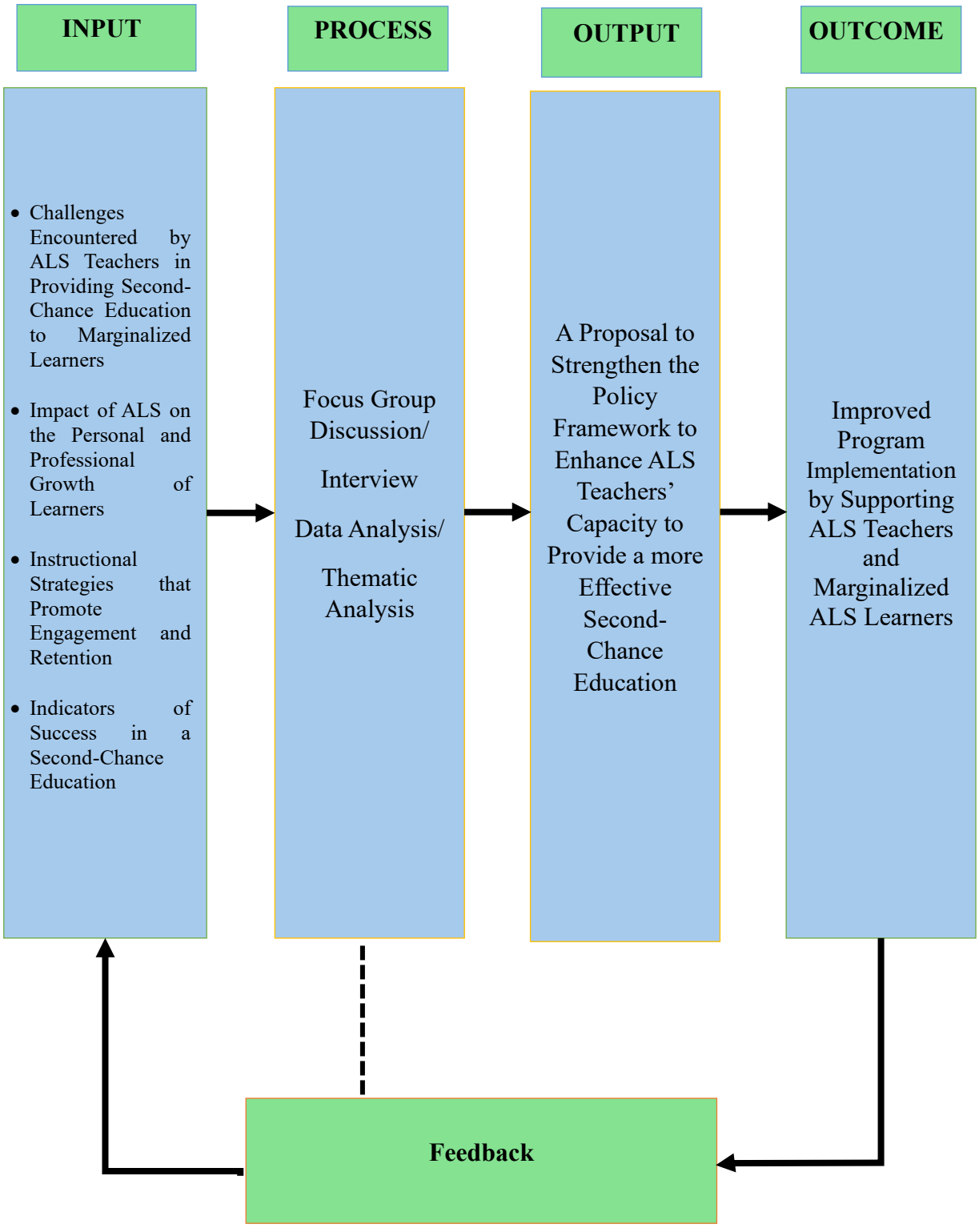
This study utilized the Input-Process-Output-Outcome Model. It is particularly appropriate for this research because it aligns with the intention to explore how the teachers and institutional factors interact to shape the delivery of second-chance education.

The input to thoroughly examine and understand the lived experiences of ALS teachers was focused on the following key areas: (1) the challenges encountered by ALS teachers in providing second-chance education to marginalized learners, (2) the impact of ALS on the personal and professional growth of learners, (3) the instructional strategies that promote engagement and retention, and (4) the indicators of success in a second-chance education, (5) the institutional support and existing policies that influence program implementation.

The process involved a multi-faceted approach for data gathering and analysis by maximizing the use of the following processes: (1) Focus Group Discussion for all participants that paved the way for an interactive and more dynamic exploration of commonalities and relevant themes, (2) Interview, and (3) Data and Thematic Analyses that systematically collated and analyzed the data by identifying key themes and recurring patterns and coming up with a reliable and insightful understanding and interpretation of the results.

The output of this study is a proposal to strengthen the policy framework, highlighting institutional support to enhance ALS teachers' capacity to provide a more effective second-chance education. The intended outcome is an improved program implementation by supporting the ALS teachers and marginalized learners.

Figure 1: Conceptual Paradigm



Significance of the Study

This study was undertaken to investigate the personal experiences of the ALS teachers and their perspectives on the implementation and overall impact of the program. The findings are deemed valuable and beneficial to the following:

Department of Education. This study provided insights into how the ALS program can be strengthened as a major component of the educational system. The findings can support policy strengthening and refinement.

Bureau of Alternative Education. As the focal office in DepEd that oversees the implementation of the ALS program in the country, the findings provided evidence-based insights that may serve as a basis for conceptualizing more responsive programs, projects, and activities.

Schools Division Office. With the mandate to expand the reach of the program, this study shed light on how ALS can be effectively and efficiently carried out in the field.

Curriculum Implementation Division. As the unit in the division office that is responsible for ensuring quality curriculum delivery and instruction, the findings supported tailor-fit programs and projects appropriate to the identified gaps and needs.

Education Program Specialist for ALS. This study assessed the strengths and areas for growth of the program. It will guide them in providing relevant instructional supervision, technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluation.

Alternative Learning System (ALS) Teachers. As the direct program implementers in the field, the results shed light on how they can better perform their roles and produce positive learning outcomes among the learners.

Community ALS Implementors (CAIs). As volunteers who support the expansion of the program, the results helped them improve their engagement and provision of learning interventions to learners.

ALS Learners. The learners will ultimately benefit from the improvements to be made in the program implementation, anchored on the results of this study.

Stakeholders. The findings served as baseline data for program partners and stakeholders, which will intensify collaboration, resource complementation, and needed support.

Community. The community will benefit from the findings of this undertaking, as it will improve the learning outcomes for learners who will eventually become productive members of their communities.

Future Researchers. The results served as valuable sources of information for future research undertakings of similar or related topics.

Definition of Terms

To provide a clear understanding of the study, the following terms were operationally and conceptually defined:

Alternative Learning System (ALS). A parallel learning system designed to provide a viable alternative to the existing formal education instruction. It encompassed both the nonformal and informal sources of knowledge and skills. In this study, it referred to the program of DepEd that provides second-chance education to marginalized learners.

Marginalized Learners. This refers to the out-of-school children, youth, or adults who are underserved by the formal education system due to socio-economic, geographic, cultural, disability, or political barriers (e.g. poverty, remoteness, belonging to indigenous groups, or having disabilities), and who enroll in the Alternative Learning System to access basic, functional, or equivalency education opportunities that would otherwise be difficult for them to obtain. As operationally defined, these are the learners served by the participants in this study.

ALS Teachers. These are the permanent DepEd teachers who are hired to implement the ALS program. It referred to the participants of this study.

Stakeholders. These are the individuals, groups, or organizations that directly or indirectly influence, or are affected by, the operations, policies, and outcomes of an educational institution. In this specific study, it referred to the different partners and collaborators who support the program implementation.

Experiences. It pertains to the personal narratives, reflections, emotions, and insights about something. As used in this study, this is the direct, day-to-day interactions and experiences of the teacher-participants in performing their job and in teaching the ALS learners.

Second-Chance Education. An educational program aimed at individuals who, for various reasons, never attended school, left school before completing their education level, or wish to re-enter the educational system in order to gain qualifications or skills they were not able to obtain before. This referred to the ALS program implemented by the participants in this particular study.

Breaking Barriers. In the context of second-chance education, it refers to the deliberate efforts to identify, challenge, and overcome social, economic, cultural, institutional, or physical obstacles that prevent marginalized or underserved learners from accessing, participating in, or benefiting fully from educational opportunities outside the formal school system. As used in this study, this pertained to the strategies, efforts, and actions taken by the ALS teachers to address the challenges they encountered in delivering second-chance education.

Instructional Strategies. Planned teaching approaches and methods used by ALS teachers to effectively deliver non-formal education, ensuring flexibility, learner-centeredness, and responsiveness to the unique needs, pace, and contexts of the ALS learners. As operationally used in this study, these are the various teaching strategies employed by the teachers to promote engagement and retention among the learners.

Policy Framework. A structured set of principles, guidelines, and procedures that direct the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies within an organization or system. It serves as a roadmap to ensure consistency, alignment with goals, and effective implementation. In this study, this refers to the ALS policy that sets the direction on how the program should be carried out in the field.

Institutional Support. The resources, structures, and assistance provided by an organization or governing body enable individuals or programs to function effectively and achieve their goals. It includes administrative backing, professional development, funding, and access to materials or services that enhance performance and sustainability. As defined in this study, it referred to the support and assistance provided by DepEd to the teachers in implementing the ALS program.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provided the foundational lens through which this research was conceived, analyzed, and interpreted. Anchored on established theories, it shaped the formulation of research questions and guided the interpretation of findings by embedding them within a coherent academic discourse. In qualitative educational research, particularly studies involving deeply human and socially embedded experiences, theoretical grounding ensures that the inquiry remains intellectually sound, purposeful, and aligned with broader social and educational paradigms (Anfara & Mertz, 2014).

This study examined the lived realities of teachers in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, a context deeply intertwined with issues of equity, marginalization, and social transformation. Accordingly, the study was anchored on four interrelated theories: Critical Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, Resilience Theory, and Social Constructivism. Together, these theories offer a robust

framework to understand the multifaceted roles of ALS teachers, how they navigate institutional challenges, foster inclusive and meaningful learning, and contribute to the broader goal of social equity in education.

Critical Theory

Max Horkheimer's Critical Theory (1937), developed within the Frankfurt School, critiques social inequalities and dominant ideologies that perpetuate oppression. Horkheimer argued that education should serve as a means for emancipation, helping individuals become aware of and challenge structures that constrain their freedom and potential. Critical Theory promotes critical consciousness and social transformation through reflective and dialogical education.

Relating to the ALS teachers' lived experiences, Critical Theory provides a lens for understanding how they navigate and resist systemic inequities affecting marginalized learners, such as poverty, social stigma, and limited access to formal education. ALS teachers act as agents of emancipation, using education as a tool to empower learners to question social barriers and reclaim their right to learning and participation. The theory illuminates the transformative role of ALS as a socially responsive and justice-oriented educational framework, one that challenges the traditional hierarchies of schooling and advocates for inclusion, dignity, and equity.

Transformative Learning Theory

The Transformative Learning Theory of Jack Mezirow (1978) emphasizes that adult learning is a process of critical reflection through which individuals examine, question, and ultimately transform their deeply held assumptions and beliefs. This transformation occurs when learners encounter disorienting dilemmas that challenge their existing frames of reference, prompting reflective dialogue and perspective change. Learning, therefore, is not only cognitive but also emancipatory, leading to greater autonomy, empowerment, and social awareness.

In the context of a second-chance education of the ALS program, transformative learning manifests both in the teachers' and learners' experiences. ALS teachers often help marginalized learners reframe their perceptions of failure and marginalization into opportunities for growth and empowerment. Through reflective practice, teachers themselves transform, developing deeper empathy, adaptive teaching strategies, and renewed professional purpose. The theory underscores how ALS teachers serve as facilitators of transformative experiences, enabling learners to reconstruct their identities as capable and valued members of society.

Resilience Theory

Norman Garmezy pioneered *Resilience Theory* (1971) through his studies of children who thrived despite exposure to poverty, trauma, or high-risk conditions. He identified resilience as a dynamic process involving positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity. Resilience emerges not as a fixed trait but as the result of interactions between internal strengths, such as self-efficacy and motivation, and external protective factors, such as supportive relationships and community structures.

In this study, Resilience Theory frames the lived experiences of ALS teachers as they persist amid resource constraints, institutional challenges, and the complex realities of marginalized learners. Their ability to remain committed, innovative, and compassionate despite systemic barriers exemplifies professional resilience. Likewise, the teachers cultivate resilience among learners, empowering them to overcome personal hardships, re-engage with education, and pursue life goals. The theory thus captures the dual resilience process in ALS: teachers sustaining hope and adaptability, and learners developing persistence and agency through their educational journey.

Furthermore, Masten (2014) emphasized Resilience Theory as the capacity of individuals to adapt, thrive, and recover in the face of adversity. In the context of ALS, both teachers and learners operate under challenging conditions, limited resources, policy gaps, inadequate institutional support, and often, societal indifference. Hence, this theory provides a critical lens to understand the persistence and adaptability of ALS teachers.

Social Constructivism Theory

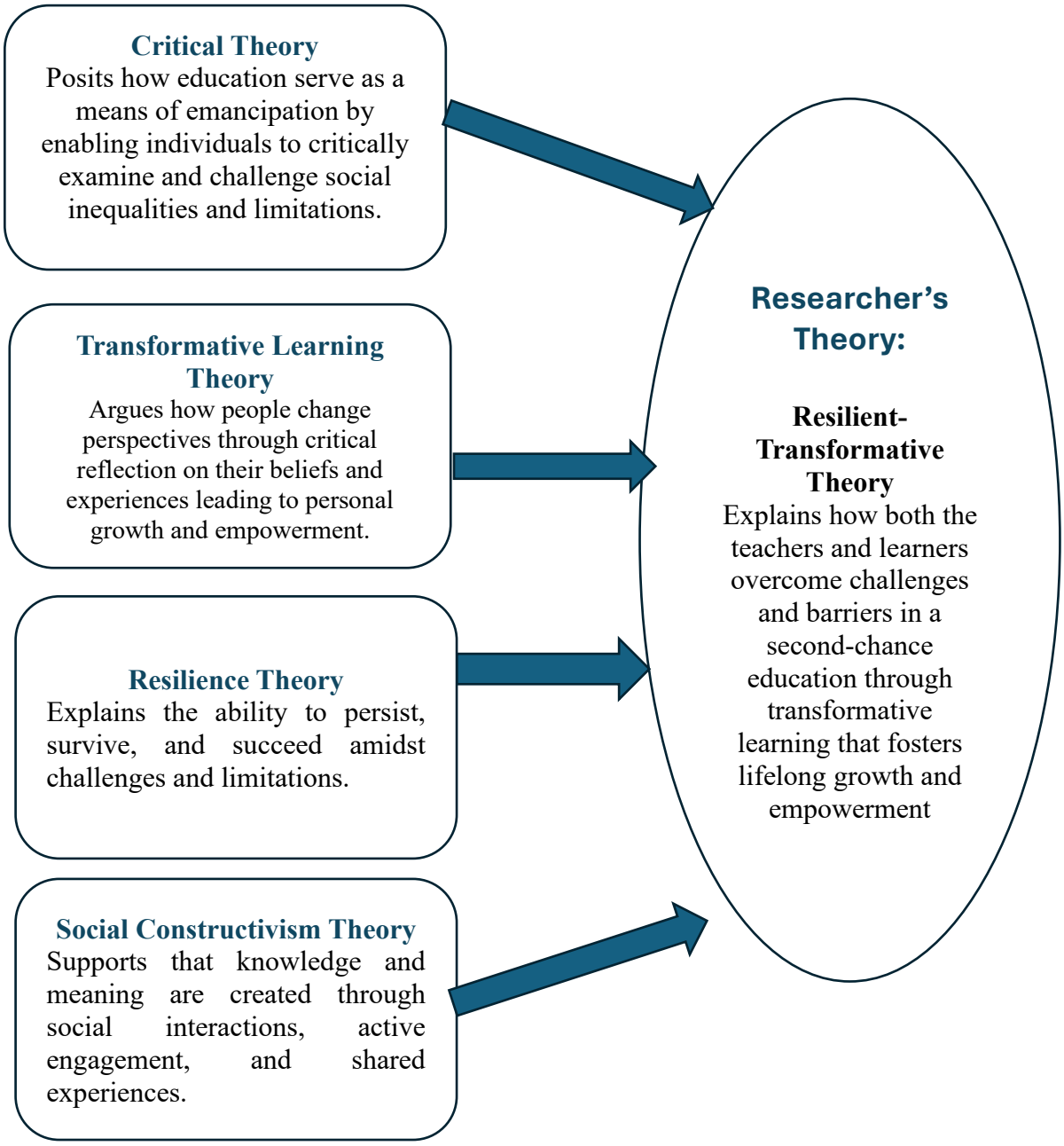
The Social Constructivism Theory**,** conceptualized by Lev Vygotsky in 1926, asserts that knowledge is actively constructed through social interaction, language, and cultural engagement, rather than passively absorbed. According to Vygotsky, learning is inherently a social process, where cognitive development is shaped by communication, collaboration, and shared experiences. A central concept of this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**,** which identifies the range of tasks a learner can perform with the guidance and support of more knowledgeable others, such as teachers, peers, or community members. Learning within the ZPD fosters not only mastery of academic skills but also critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-regulation, as learners internalize knowledge through socially mediated experiences.

This theory clearly provides a robust framework for understanding how ALS learners, many of whom face prior educational disruptions, social marginalization, and low self-confidence, acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies through collaborative, interactive, and learner-centered approaches. ALS teachers function as mediators and facilitators, scaffolding learning by offering tailored guidance, fostering dialogue, and creating opportunities for learners to co-construct understanding. This scaffolded support enables learners to overcome previous setbacks, engage deeply and meaningfully in their learning journey. Furthermore, the theory emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge**,** highlighting that learning is reciprocal: teachers shape and are shaped by the learning interactions with learners. This perspective aligns closely with the study's focus, illustrating how ALS teachers actively empower marginalized learners to succeed academically, build self-efficacy, and achieve social inclusion through a second-chance education.

By weaving together these four theories, the study provided a multi-dimensional framework to explore the complex, dynamic, and deep human experiences of ALS teachers. Critical Theory situates the educators' work within broader social injustices; Transformative Learning Theory explains their internal growth and learner impact; Resilience Theory captures their adaptive strength; and Social Constructivism informs their pedagogical strategies. Logically, these frameworks offered a comprehensive understanding of how ALS teachers navigate and address systemic barriers, foster meaningful, learner-centered education for marginalized learners, cultivate personal and professional transformation, and serve as pillars of an effective second-chance education in the country.

Reckoning from these theories, the researcher has come up with a Resilient-Transformative Theory, which elucidates how ALS learners and teachers transcend barriers within the context of second-chance education. For learners, it underscores the cultivation of resilience to overcome poverty, stigma, psychosocial challenges, and past educational setbacks, while engaging in a transformative learning process that restores self-worth and fosters lifelong growth. For teachers, it highlights their role as adaptive and reflective practitioners who persist amid resource limitations and systemic constraints, employing innovative and responsive strategies to empower learners. Through this framework, both teachers and learners emerge as co-agents of change, resilient in adversity and transformative in purpose, collectively creating an empowering educational environment where learning becomes a pathway to renewed hope, improved life opportunities, and meaningful social inclusion.

Figure 2: Theoretical Paradigm



Relevant Concepts

As explicitly stipulated in RA 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act (2013), basic education should include the Alternative Learning System for out-of-school learners and those with special needs alongside kindergarten, elementary, and secondary education. It complements the offering in the formal school by providing an alternative learning pathway for individuals who cannot possibly cope with the demands of the formal school. This inclusion elevates ALS from a peripheral program to a core component of the country's basic education system. Moreover, the same law mandates that ALS teachers and implementers should be given regular capacity-building activities to strengthen the quality of ALS delivery.

A provision in the Basic Education Development Plan 2030 stipulated in DepEd Order No. 24 (2022) is the access to quality basic education for all. Sub-Intermediate Outcome 1.4 highlights that all out-of-school children and youth participate in formal or non-formal basic education learning opportunities. To strategically achieve this, purposive efforts will be undertaken to bring them back to school or through the ALS, as addressing the unique needs and challenges of OSCs, OSYs, and OSAs requires deliberate programming. Some concrete actions are the deployment of more ALS teachers in high-demand areas, intensifying the conduct of literacy mapping activities to locate these target learners, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the situations of learners after completing the ALS program.

DepEd Order No. 13 (2019) aims to enhance the implementation of the ALS program in the country as it responds to the growing number of out-of-school youth and adults. This signals the carrying out of the Enhanced ALS K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, which is carefully designed to fit its target clients. It encompasses improvement and expansion in different aspects of operation, learning resources, assessment, learning delivery, learning environment, monitoring and evaluation, governance, and teachers' training and continuous professional development. It also outlines the new features of the enhanced curriculum applicable to ALS learners.

In a report by DepEd (2022), it celebrated the notable achievements in strengthening the ALS program in partnership with UNICEF. It highlighted joint projects that benefited the program, such as ICT4ALS, the feasibility of Micro-Certification for learners, and the Stem Up to Step UP Projects that integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in enhancing the 21st-century skills of ALS learners. The report underscored the continued partnership between DepEd and UNICEF, focusing on ALS 2.0 ICT Strategic Planning and ALS Research Agenda.

World Bank's analysis (2018), titled; A Second Chance to Develop the Human Capital of Out-of-School Youth and Adults: The Philippines Alternative Learning System, confirms that the program has great potential to develop the human capital for long-term educational outcomes and employment prospects. However, numerous factors hinder its growth and success. Some barriers include the following: shortage of learning materials, outdated modules, limited use of modern technology in teaching and learning, and the need to improve the learning facilities. These are institutional issues that call for responsive policies and actions.

In the global context, second-chance education is firmly rooted in international human rights and development, which recognize education as a lifelong and inclusive right. This is clearly stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which asserts that everyone has the right to education directed toward the full development of human personality. This is a strong foundation upon which the ALS program is anchored.

UNESCO (2015) provides a comprehensive policy framework that promotes literacy, continuing education, and community-based learning for marginalized populations. It emphasizes flexible and learner-centered delivery modes. Under this, Sustainable Development Goals 4 of the United Nations (2015) aim to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. This goal supports the reduction of disparities and inequities in education, both in terms of access and quality. It recognizes the need to provide quality education for all, and most especially vulnerable populations, including poor children, children living in rural areas, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, and refugee children. The ALS program is consistently aligned to these principles.

The Education 2030 Framework for Action of UNESCO (2015) advocates for the recognition of non-formal education, prior learning, and alternative pathways, such as second-chance programs. The Belem Framework for Action of UNESCO (2009) further underscores the need for adequate funding, professional development for educators, and policy integration to ensure the sustainability of adult education systems. Additionally, the Global Alliance for Literacy (2016) focuses on strengthening literacy in countries with the highest needs, highlighting the importance of national commitment to addressing education gaps among out-of-school youth and adults. Clearly, these international instruments are a legal and policy foundation for the implementation and advancement of programs like the Alternative Learning System in the country.

Despite these international policies that relentlessly support second-chance education, ALS is still regarded as a second-class learning pathway, making it less popular. Many people perceive the ALS graduates as inferior and not comparable to those who completed the formal school system. This misconception leads to deprived opportunities for higher levels of education and employment prospects. It is also affecting teachers' performance and motivation. This scenario is a national concern that calls for vibrant policies and collective action to continually advocate for inclusive education and recognition of ALS teachers' efforts to support educational goals.

Promulgated in March 2022, RA 11650 (2022) is the law that establishes a policy of inclusion and services for learners with disabilities, supporting inclusive education across all levels. It mandates that all learners, regardless of disability or background, must have access to quality and equitable education, including through the Alternative Learning System. It highlights the need to empower and train all teachers, including ALS educators, to detect, refer, and support learners with diverse needs. It calls for continuous professional development, equipping ALS teachers with skills to address barriers faced by learners with disabilities, in particular.

Mena and Waitoller (2025) deliberated in an article on how teachers' efforts to include marginalized learners are sometimes limited by entrenched segregationist practices and a lack of systemic support. Teachers face challenges in balancing inclusive educational goals with existing school cultures and limited resources. It demonstrates the structural and cultural barriers ALS teachers may face in implementing inclusive, second-chance education. Hence, this calls for empowering both teachers and students to foster genuine inclusion.

Gravani and Ioannidou (2014) extensively discussed in their book the overview of the adult education framework in Cyprus, examining its political, legal, and institutional frameworks. It highlights the country's efforts to implement a lifelong learning strategy aimed at restructuring education systems. On the other hand, it also stressed the fragmented legal regulations governing adult education and underscores the need for a coherent national framework to monitor adult learning activities. This work is a critical resource for understanding the provision, participation, and policy environment of adult education in Cyprus, offering insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers interested in lifelong learning development.

A thoughtful analysis in an article by Rueckert (2019) discussed the ten barriers that must be addressed to achieve Global Goal 4: Quality Education by 2030. These obstacles include the following: Lack of funding for education, having no teachers or untrained teachers, no classroom, lack of learning materials, being the 'wrong' gender, living in a country in conflict or at risk of conflict, distance from home to school, hunger and poor nutrition, and expenses of education. Accordingly, these are the common issues in education in developing countries.

Reyes (2021) claimed that the Alternative Learning System offers opportunities and platforms for the marginalized sector; however, the experiences of the youth while in the program were not all positive. Despite opening up opportunities for out-of-school youth, the ALS program has structures that reinforce social inequalities. Seemingly, there is a need for reforms and to intensify advocacy to develop a high regard for the importance of the program.

Arzadon and Nato (2015) affirmed that the Alternative Learning System provides a second chance schooling to marginalized learners for them to be qualified in finding better jobs and pursue higher levels of education. The program requires highly dedicated and multi-skilled teachers who can deal with diverse types of learners.

Francisco and Buri (2023) explored the challenges that ALS teachers face in English literacy instruction and the coping strategies they employ to overcome these hurdles. It appeared that teaching Learning Strand 1 - Communication Skills in English includes high demands on teachers' resilience, diversity of students, limited instructional materials, limited instructional time, and negative public perception of teachers' roles and the program. Despite these challenges, ALS teachers develop coping strategies, including cultivating resilience to manage the demands of teaching the strand and maintaining a positive outlook. Teaching complicated learning areas is also one of the challenges of ALS teachers, especially among marginalized learners. Because of this, ALS teachers' pedagogical approaches and instructional competence need to be enhanced. More than the teachers in the regular classrooms, ALS teachers should be given need-based professional development training because they are handling diverse learners.

Tachado and Tumarong (2024) determined the levels of teachers' self-efficacy, practices, and difficulties in the Alternative Learning System. It underscored that ALS teachers have a high level of self-efficacy, a high level of practice, and a moderate level of difficulties in ALS. The findings suggest that efforts in Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) should focus on sustaining the already high levels of self-efficacy and practices in ALS while addressing identified moderate levels of difficulties to further optimize the ALS learning experience. From this journal, it can be surmised that ALS teachers display high resiliency and a deep sense of purpose in their job.

Lu (2024) noted the impact of ALS in the country. Since its groundbreaking in 2004, it has been instrumental in reaching out to Filipinos who cannot access basic education. Over the years, ALS has evolved and expanded, responding to the diverse needs of its learners. It incorporated modules tailored to various age groups and learning levels, including indigenous peoples, ensuring inclusivity and relevance. By providing equivalency programs that allowed learners to obtain elementary and secondary-level certifications, ALS became a viable alternative for many who had abandoned hope of ever completing their education. It also emphasized practical skills development, enabling its graduates to transition to technical-vocational training or employment. Aside from the academic aspect of mastering the competencies in the curriculum, providing learners with employable skills is a more tangible response to their economic condition.

A comprehensive report of the Global Partnership for Education (2024) underpinned the barriers to education faced by marginalized learners worldwide, including gender, disability, refugee status, and poverty. It highlights that teachers often hold unconscious biases and discriminatory attitudes, which, combined with limited training on inclusion, hamper effective support for marginalized learners. Resource constraints, lack of specialized training in inclusive pedagogy, and insufficient multisectoral collaboration further challenge teachers. The report stresses the importance of gender-responsive and disability-

inclusive training for teachers, community engagement, and supportive policies to improve educational access and completion.

A report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2024) discussed how social and economic inequalities affect educational outcomes. It highlighted that teachers working with marginalized learners face challenges related to fragmented communities, socio-economic disparities, and mental health issues among learners. Therefore, teachers must navigate polarized social contexts and foster inclusive environments despite these pressures. The report advocates for education policies that support teachers in mitigating inequalities through socio-emotional learning and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Igarashi et.al (2020) claimed that the Philippines has the world's largest second-chance education programs. The ALS has provided an alternative pathway of learning to 5.5. millions of young and adult learners, 15 years old and older, in the last ten years. It is a viable second-chance program that benefits the learners but needs to continuously improve and evolve to help learners achieve their maximum potential. They emphasized key challenges that hinder the growth of ALS, including a shortage of fundamental inputs such as learning materials, inadequate operational funds, and non-conducive learning spaces. The teaching force is short, both in quantity and quality. As the backbone of the program, teachers need better, continuous professional development.

Despite the realities of their professional life in DepEd, ALS teachers find a sense of fulfillment in what they are doing since they are deeply immersed in the lives of their learners. They genuinely resonate with their dreams and aspirations. They witness how these learners struggle in their daily lives, and breaking the barriers in education will alleviate them from poverty and other distressing situations. They emphasize how learners rise above their powerless situation to a milestone of personal growth and independence. The ALS teachers find strength and motivation in their desire to make a difference in the lives of their learners. More than teaching, being an ALS teacher is a personal mission they willingly own.

This principle is deeply aligned with the book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, by Paulo Freire (1970), which introduced a liberating approach in teaching. It emphasized that education should be a powerful tool to empower people; thus, learners must not be regarded as passive receivers of knowledge and information. Instead, they should actively participate, think critically, and discover their own learning. ALS teachers capitalize on this concept by helping learners regain hope, develop essential life skills, and make meaningful applications of these learning in overcoming challenges. Education should conscientize learners to critically analyze issues confronting their society and thereby take relevant actions.

The book of Nagata (2004) provided a comprehensive examination of alternative education through an international comparative lens. It explored the definitions, practices, and teacher experiences in six countries: Bolivia, Thailand, Australia, the United States, the Netherlands, and Denmark. The work analyzed how alternative education operates within different social, cultural, and legal contexts, highlighting the diversity of alternative schooling. It also discusses the realities and challenges faced by alternative education providers, including issues of educational quality, social inclusion, and the balance between alternative and mainstream schools. The book offers valuable comparative insights relevant to second-chance education, showing how alternative education systems worldwide strive to provide marginalized or non-traditional learners with flexible, inclusive, socially just education opportunities.

Tierney (2018) cited that alternative education worldwide encompasses diverse models aimed at providing socially just and inclusive learning opportunities for marginalized populations. Similar to the global contexts described in this literature, ALS teachers in the Philippines face systemic challenges but play a crucial role in delivering second-chance education tailored to learners' needs. The lived experiences of

these teachers reflect broader international themes of educational equity and innovation. The book also foregrounds the critical role of teachers and school leaders in navigating the dilemmas and challenges of alternative education.

Previous Research Findings

Albert et.al. (2024) conducted a process evaluation of the Philippine Alternative Learning System and came up with substantial findings. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of administrative data with key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and an online survey of 4,933 past and current ALS learners. This multifaceted methodology provided broad insights into system-wide patterns and a granular understanding of implementation challenges.

It highlighted the institutional strength, the ALS teachers because of their dedication and program adaptability. However, severe resource constraints hinder program effectiveness. Key findings demonstrate that ALS faces substantial operational challenges. Most notably, despite serving only 0.8 percent of basic education learners, ALS receives merely 0.1 percent of the Department of Education's budget. This resource disparity manifests in concerning ways: a pupil-teacher ratio of 75:1 (compared to an ideal of 25:1), inadequate facilities, with 61 percent of community learning centers below standard size requirements, and limited learning materials.

Based on the findings, recommendations emphasized the need for increased funding, improved resource allocation, enhanced teacher training, stronger coordination among stakeholders, and innovative approaches to curriculum design and delivery. Additionally, the study calls for better alignment between ALS and other social protection programs, clearer metrics for measuring program effectiveness, and more targeted support for working learners and female participants. These valuable findings are expected to inform evidence-based policymaking and catalyze strategic reforms to enhance the accessibility, quality, and relevance of alternative education in the Philippines.

Victoria (2024) evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) implementation in Region 3 from 2020 to 2023. Using descriptive, comparative, and correlational research methods, the study found that ALS implementation in the region is generally well-managed, with proper utilization of funds for learning materials and assessments, effective leadership, and technical training for teachers. Furthermore, the study suggested intensifying teaching approaches, including the provision of internship programs, most especially to ALS learners enrolled at the elementary level.

Sumawag et.al (2021) conducted a study on the lived experiences of ALS teachers in the Schools Division of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. The result revealed that participants find difficulty in finding a conducive community learning center. As a response, ALS teachers sought the support of the community and local stakeholders. This research concluded that teachers in ALS should be flexible, approachable, patient, courageous, passionate, dedicated, and compassionate. The study highlighted the importance of following policy guidelines and maintaining high standards despite external challenges.

Aque and Benavides (2020) studied the lived experiences of 18 ALS teachers from the 2nd congressional district of Sorsogon. The results revealed that participants are faced with challenging working conditions by travelling long distances to reach remote learners and sometimes face risks due to difficult terrain or weather. They also lack instructional materials. As coping strategies, many rely on personal motivation, peer support, and community engagement to overcome daily hurdles. Emotional support from families and local stakeholders plays a critical role in sustaining teacher morale.

As claimed by the study of Mwakalinga (2024), alternative education is different from traditional, mainstream education because it included a variety of learning methods intended to accommodate students

who might not be able to learn in typical settings or who need more individualized, flexible, or context-specific learning opportunities. Utilizing interviews and questionnaires for data-gathering, the results demonstrated the need for alternative education in enhancing academic content because it is insufficient to help students build transferable skills, entrepreneurial abilities, and real-world situational knowledge. This approach fosters individualized instruction tailored to learners' needs and contexts, promoting sustainable development and lifelong learning.

Papaioannou and Gravani (2018) investigated what mechanisms vulnerable adults are empowered by a second-chance education program in Cyprus. Using a hybrid methodological design combining hermeneutic phenomenology and critical discourse, the study came up with the following scheme: empowerment through participation as a self-value, empowerment through the reconstruction of past experiences, empowerment through strengthening social capital, and empowerment through literacy skills. This supports that second-chance education is an essential tool to empower people.

Konteksty (2021) conducted a study on the challenges and barriers faced by teachers in second-chance education in the Slovak Republic. This highlights that teachers in second-chance education often work with marginalized and socially excluded adult learners without having received specific training for this role. Consequently, they rely heavily on improvisation and trial-and-error methods. The study emphasized that these teachers face discomfort and challenges related to the different educational environment, which requires a reevaluation of their competences, combining both pedagogical and andragogical skills. Similarly, ALS teachers who were trained and educated to teach regular classrooms found it hard to adjust to the different work environment in a second-hand education setting. Lack of specialized training and preparation caught them off guard on how to handle a seemingly challenging task.

A study of Meo and Tarabini (2020) explored how teachers define their roles and organize their pedagogical practices in second-chance education schools. It revealed that teachers often see themselves as facilitators of social inclusion and personal development rather than just academic instructors. They adapt their teaching to meet diverse learners' needs, focusing on building trust and motivation. This research underscores the identity challenges teachers face as they navigate between institutional demands and the individualized support required in second-chance education.

Mendoza (2024) examined the experiential accounts of ALS teachers and graduates and the relationship between their experiences in the 1st District of Ilocos Sur. Using transcendental phenomenological research, the findings showed that the relationship between a teacher and learner is crucial to the program's success. The equal efforts of both parties have resulted in the empowerment of individuals who have not been able to complete their basic education through traditional means. It is important to recognize the role of teachers in the lives of graduates and provide them with the necessary support and resources to continue their work. In this way, Alternative Learning System programs can continue to make a positive impact on the lives of those seeking to improve their lives through education.

The research of Retuya (2025) explored the role of ALS teachers as catalysts for community development and agents of change in underserved areas. It examined how ALS teachers contribute to the empowerment and transformation of marginalized communities by providing accessible, flexible, and relevant educational opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults who face barriers to traditional schooling. It employed a phenomenological design to illuminate the subjective experiences of participants through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The study highlighted the emotional and social complexities of teaching marginalized learners. It underscored the importance of lifelong learning and reflection for ALS teachers. Educators must continue to reflect on their practice, adapt to new challenges, and engage

in ongoing professional development to ensure they are meeting the evolving needs of their learners and communities.

Campilla and Lopez (2019) examined the challenges in implementing the Alternative Learning System using a descriptive research method with 7 ALS teachers and 175 ALS learners as respondents. The findings showed that the challenges encountered by the teachers were the following: learners' absenteeism, inability to deliver lessons, unpredictable content of the examination, and unavailability of state-of-the-art equipment. On the other hand, learners experienced challenges such as teachers giving too many memory works and distractions in the learning environment. The results demonstrate the need for interventions to address these challenges experienced by both the teachers and learners.

By using qualitative research through interviews with ALS teachers and learners, the study of Paez (2025) revealed that critical barriers include limited face-to-face interaction, ineffective communication among teachers, difficulties understanding modules, and heavy teacher workloads. It noted curriculum mismatches and a lack of targeted ALS pedagogy training for teachers. Recommendations included increasing direct student-teacher interaction, developing better learning materials, establishing dedicated ALS facilities, and creating a separate ALS curriculum with clear assessment policies.

UNESCO (2023) initiated a study that explored community-based ALS programs in various countries, focusing on how grassroots initiatives provide literacy and continuing education to out-of-school youth and adults. It highlighted challenges such as limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and the need for teacher training in learner-centered and andragogical approaches. The study also stresses the critical role of community involvement and flexible learning modalities in overcoming barriers. These findings affirm how teachers globally navigate resource limitations and community dynamics to deliver second-chance education, emphasizing the importance of teacher adaptability and community support.

Research by Espinoza et.al. (2022) in Chile explored the background and training of teachers working in Chile's second-chance schools for secondary school dropouts. It found that teachers' instructional methods were influenced more by their in-service training than by student characteristics. The schools offer intensive instruction, small classes, and flexible schedules. However, teachers with more years of experience tended to be less optimistic about student graduation rates. The study highlights the importance of tailored teacher training to adapt teaching practices to marginalized learners' needs.

Martins et.al. (2020) explored the reasons for disengagement of young school leavers. Utilizing qualitative methods including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus groups, the study examines the diverse motivations, experiences, and consequences of early school leaving and re-engagement, alongside the role of educational policies and school factors. Findings highlight that mainstream schools often represent failure and conflict for these youths, leading to disengagement and social marginalization. However, participation in Second-Chance Education (SCE) projects fosters renewed commitment to education, personal and skill development, behavioral adjustment, and life goal setting. The individualized, socio-pedagogical, and community-based approaches of SCE are particularly effective in addressing these young people's needs and promoting social inclusion.

Determining the competencies of Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates towards the K to 12 Basic Education exists, which are (a) Higher Education, (b) Employment, (c) Entrepreneurship, and (d) Middle-Level Skills, was explored by the research of Brotamante (2020). 46 ALS graduates from the Municipality of Camalig served as respondents. The percentage technique, frequency method, weighted mean, and chi-square test were used as statistical tools. The findings revealed that most of the respondents chose higher education and employment as their preferred exits, followed by middle-level skills, and entrepreneurship

as the least preferred option. This study shows how ALS helps shape the choices and dispositions of learners toward their futures.

Egcas and Garganera (2019) investigated the impact of the Alternative Learning System on the out-of-school-youths, kasambahay, Indigenous Peoples, and children in conflict with the law. The study claimed that ALS programs and projects made a significant contribution to the improvement of ALS learners in terms of their educational attainment, family monthly income, employment status, and nature of work. With the peculiar situations of marginalized learners, particularly those from special groups, the program serves as a viable option for them to enjoy the inherent right to learn.

Delmo and Yazon (2020) probed the status of ALS program implementation in the City Schools Division of Cabuyao. It was revealed that teaching methods, instructional materials, facilities, and community support were implemented at a moderate level across the division, while teachers were rated highly competent in the program delivery. Moreover, significant gains were achieved by the learners, such as improvement in life skills and values development. The study recommended strengthening the competence of ALS teachers to ensure effective program management. Modules to be developed should also be skills-based, values-laden, localized, and contextualized to better address learners' needs.

The study of Ocampo (2021) determined the acquisition of functional literacy among ALS learners in Sipocot North and South Districts for SY 2020-2021. The key findings revealed that learners generally showed low attainment of the required functional literacy skills, indicating incomplete preparation to face the challenges of a globalized world. Among the domains, they scored the lowest in Digital Citizenship, highlighting a critical area for improvement. The demographic profile of learners, such as age, gender, civil status, and employment, significantly influenced the acquisition of functional literacy skills.

Tindowen (2017) assessed the acquired 21st-century skills of ALS learners that include critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation, self-direction, global and local connections, and ICT skills. From the descriptive survey method used among the 150 learner-respondents, it was found that the overall level of 21st-century skills acquisition is low, indicating that they are generally not prepared to face the challenges of a globalized world. Among the different skills assessed, local connections scored the highest, suggesting that learners' engagement with their immediate communities and environment strongly influences their learning and social awareness.

However, skills such as creativity and innovation, ICT, global connections, collaboration, and communication were notably low. The study found that sex, age, and employment status have a significant impact on skills acquisition. Moreover, the findings underscored the need for localized instructional materials and teaching strategies that reflect learners' cultural and community contexts. Furthermore, it recommended policy interventions and program improvement to better equip learners with essential 21st-century competencies to cope with globalization.

Ruiz et.al. (2019) evaluated Alternative Learning System Programs in Village Looc and Village Opao, Mandaue City, Cebu. This was participated in by student-teachers and supported by faculty and stakeholders, and evaluated scientifically through a descriptive–qualitative study. Findings revealed that: (1) The student-teachers and volunteers were involved in the mapping of potential ALS learners, learning sessions, and culminating activities. (2) The ALS program had touched lives across different socio-economic backgrounds. (3) Absence of learners in some of the learning sessions was noted. (4) It becomes difficult for learners facing various family and financial challenges to pursue their studies. (5) The perception of the learners with the ALS Program is positive. (6) Learners are eager to finish the program to support their families and achieve their dreams. As recommendations, the learning environment should

be improved, and the partnership between the government and the academe should be continued for the support and sustainability of the program. The testimonies of the learners have underscored that the ALS program is a beacon of hope for them.

Arpilleda and Jondy (2018) conducted a qualitative and quantitative research design that probed the problems encountered by the ALS teachers in Tandag City Division. This study described the participants' socio-demographic and professional profiles. It was found out that teachers need training and seminars on pedagogy and ALS-related topics. Along with teaching performance, all teachers have satisfactory ratings in personal attributes, instructional competence, and professional development. Problems encountered in the implementation of the program are a lack of instructional materials, delayed release of allowances, absence of permanent community learning centers and other facilities, and irregular attendance of ALS students. Lack of support from local officials and a large number of target learners were also mentioned as challenges.

In a research undertaking, Flores (2022) explored the common problems encountered by ALS teachers in Cotabato Province using a quantitative-qualitative method of research. The results revealed that the ALS teachers have been experiencing problems like a lack of learning facilities and materials, difficulty in the integration of learning competencies within and across learning strands, absenteeism of learners, difficulty in the use of differentiated instruction to address the multi-level group of learners, unstable peace and order, and minimal support from local stakeholders. Suffice it to say, most of the challenges stem from the professional skills of the teachers to navigate their unique roles. The challenges are also multi-faceted that requiring careful analysis at the macro level of governance.

The study of Alvarez (2024) aimed to deeply understand the reasons behind students' dropping out of formal school. Interestingly, the results of this study revealed that ALS learners left the formal education system due to problems with family, personal conflicts, financial concerns, and accessibility issues. Notably, there are various factors why learners are out of the educational mainstream. Inability to pursue schooling makes them marginalized; however, their inclusion in the ALS paves the way for the completion of basic education.

A qualitative study of Mahinay and Manla (2025) explored the implementation of the Alternative Learning System in the country through a reflective and thematic analysis. Results found that there are certain aspects of ALS conveyed that are much appreciated because of the flexibility and inclusivity they offer. On the other hand, substantial challenges lie in the slow policy implementation, proper resources, and equal opportunity towards technology access. Reflecting on the results, there are still lots of serious issues and challenges in ALS that need to be addressed by the institution and the different governance levels in the agency.

A case study conducted by Caingcoy (2021) evaluated the effectiveness of an informal education project aimed at enhancing the teaching capacity of ALS teachers, particularly focusing on the acquisition and transfer of life skills. ALS teachers, who typically come from formal education backgrounds but lack specific training in life skills instruction, participated in a series of training sessions designed to improve their competencies. The results concluded that the project made a significant positive difference in the professional and personal lives of ALS teachers. It demonstrated that targeted capacity-building initiatives can empower ALS educators to deliver more holistic and impactful second-chance education, ultimately benefiting marginalized learners and their communities.

Research Gaps

This study bridged the gap between previous research on the lived experiences of the target participants

in implementing the Alternative Learning System. Although there were numerous studies conducted, there were no studies that correlate ALS teachers' experiences and challenges in handling marginalized learners. While previous studies have extensively explored the multifaceted realities of ALS as a component of the educational system, no research was conducted focusing on the same purpose and direction.

There are no studies undertaken that delved into a deep understanding and analysis of ALS teachers' perspectives on their critical role in providing second-chance education to marginalized learners. Through the lens of direct service providers, this research undertaking will also examine the systemic and institutional practices and policies that influence ALS teachers' performance and their impact on the implementation of the program as a whole. Moreover, there is no qualitative study conducted yet in the target locale and participants. The insights that are drawn served as valuable inputs and bases for improving the ALS program in the identified setting.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This study employed a phenomenological research design that explored and understood the lived experiences of Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers as they fulfill their vital role in delivering second-chance education to marginalized learners. Given that the primary objective is to capture personal, in-depth accounts of these educators' experiences, often shaped by complex emotional, social, and institutional factors, phenomenology is the most suitable and logical methodological approach.

Research Design

Phenomenology, as a qualitative research methodology, is concerned with exploring how individuals perceive, interpret, and make meaning of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than seeking generalizations or statistical patterns, this design emphasizes the essence of human experience, focusing on how individuals understand the phenomena they encounter in their personal and professional lives (Moustakas, 1994). In this context, phenomenology will enable the researcher to uncover the subjective realities of ALS teachers, illuminating both the rewards and challenges they encounter in their roles. A non-structured and conversational approach in gathering data fostered a more honest and spontaneous sharing of experiences and insights. Hence, it captured the depth and breadth of experiences and detailed narratives of the participants that will pave the way for a profound analysis and understanding of the findings.

Participants

The essence of the study lies heavily on the participants. To obtain the best results, a purposive sampling strategy was utilized in selecting participants from the ninety-six (96) teachers in the Schools Division of Albay. Four ALS teachers were taken from each of the five areas for a total of twenty. The participants should have at least five years of experience in the ALS program to ensure that they are deeply immersed in this context.

The experiences of the participants in handling learners in diverse geographical settings were also considered, such as those assigned in rural communities, coastal areas, and urban milieus. Similarly, exposures and engagements with different types of learners, such as Indigenous Peoples (IPs), Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), rebel returnees, Persons with Disability (PWDs), substance abuse survivors, children in special cases, disadvantaged girls and women, farmers, fisherfolk, and other special groups, were also considered. It drew an enriching and genuine testimony of how ALS teachers navigated the hardships, successes, and failures of providing second-chance education to marginalized learners by

giving them hope and strength to rise above their present plights. It also revealed how teachers perceive the success of marginalized learners in the context of a second-chance education.

Table 1: Participants

ALS Area	n
Area 1- Libon East, Libon West, Polangui North, and Oas North	4
Area 2- Oas South, Pioduran East, Pioduran West, and Guinobatan West	4
Area 3- Jovellar, Camalig North, Daraga North, and Daraga South	4
Area 4- Manito, Sto. Domingo, Bacacay East, and Bacacay South	4
Area 5- Malinao, Tiwi, Rapu-Rapu East, and Rapu-Rapu West	4
Total	20

Focus Group discussions and interviews were used as valuable tools for capturing the collective narratives, challenges, coping strategies, and insights of ALS teachers. These facilitated active interaction, exchange of ideas, and sharing of reflections on common practices and insights. It also unlocked personal perspectives on how they gauge the institutional policies and support of the agency in the success and failure of the program. The spontaneity of the discussion served as an opportunity to reflect on the similarities and differences of their accounts concerning their roles. Similarly, it allowed both individual and collective reflections that served as valuable foundations in coming up with a dynamic framework to strengthen the program.

Data Collection and Procedures

Appropriate protocols and procedures were observed before the data-gathering took place. It was operated on a clear ethical standard that did not compromise the participants, the agency, the researcher, or other entities. Before coordinating with the target participants, the researcher obtained approval and consent from the school division superintendent and other officials. This emphasized the commitment to transparency and due respect to authorities. Upon identifying the participants, they were oriented on their participation in the data gathering and the successful completion of the study. This involved discussing the study's objectives, research methodology, data gathering procedures, and the scope of their involvement.

The focus group discussion and interviews were conducted with the participants, taking into consideration the schedule and venue that were amenable to them. To ensure full participation, trust, confidentiality, and respect were emphasized throughout the process. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were carefully protected by using codes instead of real names. Aside from asking the key questions in the FGD, other follow-up questions were also used to substantiate and enrich the discussion. Thus, it also enlivened the interaction and the process of resonating with the feelings and personal accounts of the participants.

Furthermore, all data collected were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher to prevent any unauthorized disclosure. These were only used for this particular study and were not divulged to any institution or individual. Furthermore, the well-being of all participants was prioritized by minimizing any potential risks associated with their participation. The significant contribution of each participant was affirmed as a crucial factor in the success of the study.

Qualitative Analysis

The analysis of the data collected from ALS teachers was executed with strict adherence to ethical research standards, ensuring impartiality and respect for each of the participants' lived experiences. Given the qualitative nature of the study, the analysis aims to uncover deep, meaningful insights into the challenges, strategies, and emotional journeys of ALS teachers as they provide second-chance education to marginalized ALS learners. To achieve this, the study employed data and thematic analyses, which are widely accepted methods for interpreting qualitative data that allow researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the data.

The thematic analysis began with coding, which involved labeling significant statements, ideas, or expressions found in the participants' narratives. This process helped in breaking down broad and abstract concepts into more specific and manageable units, facilitating a more focused and detailed examination of the data. In this study, in vivo coding was used during the initial coding phase. Vivo coding refers to the practice of using the exact words or phrases spoken by participants as codes. This approach was particularly valuable in capturing the authentic voices of ALS teachers, preserving the emotional tone, cultural context, and personal significance embedded in their language. By grounding the analysis in the participants' own words, the study ensured that their perspectives remain central, unfiltered, and authentic.

Once the data was coded, the next step was theming, where related codes were grouped to form overarching themes. These themes represent recurring patterns, shared experiences, and critical issues that align with the research questions. Theming allowed the researcher to synthesize individual responses into broader insights, revealing the collective narrative of ALS teachers and the systemic barriers they navigate. These themes served as the foundation for interpreting the data and drawing conclusions about the realities of second-chance education.

To further enrich the analysis, the study incorporated narrative inquiry interpretation, a qualitative approach that focused on the stories participants tell and how they construct meaning through those stories. Narrative inquiry goes beyond identifying themes by exploring the temporal, emotional, and relational dimensions of participants' experiences. It considers how ALS teachers make sense of their roles, the impact of their work, and the transformations they witness in their learners. This interpretive lens allows the researcher to understand not just what ALS teachers experience, but how they experience it, and why those experiences matter.

Thematic analysis, in vivo coding, and narrative inquiry provided a comprehensive and ethically grounded framework for analyzing the data. This multi-layered approach ensured that the findings are both analytically rigorous and deeply reflective of the participants' lived realities, ultimately giving voice to the educators who play a vital role in breaking educational barriers for marginalized learners.

Confidentiality of Information

In this research, maintaining the confidentiality of information is essential to protect the identities and personal experiences of ALS teachers and the marginalized learners they serve. Given the sensitive nature of second-chance education, all data collected through interviews and focus group discussions were securely stored and accessed only by authorized personnel. Identifiable information such as names, school affiliations, or specific learner details was excluded from published findings. This promoted participants' confidence to share their experiences openly without fear of exposure or professional repercussions.

Informed Consent

Before participation, identified ALS teacher-participants were provided with a clear and comprehensive informed consent form. This document outlined the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection,

the expected duration of participation, and any potential risks or benefits. It also emphasized that participation is entirely voluntary and that individuals may withdraw at any time without penalty. By securing informed consent, the research respects the autonomy of participants and ensures that they are fully aware of their rights and the scope of their involvement.

Anonymity

To further protect participants, anonymity was strictly observed throughout the research process. Any data presented in the final report or publications were stripped of identifying details. Pseudonyms were used to represent participants, and contextual information was generalized to prevent indirect identification. Anonymity is particularly important in this study, as ALS teachers shared personal reflections or challenges that could be sensitive or critical of institutional practices. Thus, ensuring anonymity encouraged honest and open dialogue while safeguarding participants from potential consequences.

Ethics of Research

The research was guided by core ethical principles, including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect for persons involves honoring the dignity, values, and choices of ALS teachers, especially as they navigate complex roles in teaching marginalized learners. Beneficence requires that the study aims to benefit participants and the broader educational community by highlighting challenges and proposing improvements. Justice ensured that the research did not exploit participants and that its findings contribute to equitable educational opportunities. Ethical approval was sought from a recognized institutional review board to validate the study's adherence to these principles and to reinforce its commitment to responsible research conduct.

Research Questions

Research questions were carefully designed and aligned with the objectives of the study. These are fundamental inquiries that shaped and determined the results and findings. These established the scope, limitations, and direction of the research and provided guidance to the investigation to address the research problems.

1. What challenges do ALS teachers encounter in delivering second-chance education to marginalized learners, and how do they navigate these obstacles?

Guide Questions:

- What are the most common difficulties you face in teaching marginalized learners, and how do these impact their learning?
- How do you adapt your teaching approaches to address the diverse needs of second-chance learners?
- Can you share specific strategies or experiences where you successfully overcame barriers in education?
- In what ways do community dynamics and socio-economic factors affect your ability to provide learning opportunities?
- What forms of support (institutional, community, personal) help you navigate these challenges?

2. How do ALS teachers perceive the impact of alternative learning on the personal and professional growth of their learners?

Guide Questions:

- How have you observed learners transforming – both academically and personally – through the ALS program?
- What skills or qualities do ALS learners develop that contribute to their overall growth?
- How do alternative learning pathways influence learners' career prospects and life aspirations?

- Can you share any success stories that highlight the transformative impact of ALS education?
- What aspect of ALS education does learners find most empowering, and why?

3. What instructional strategies do ALS teachers find most effective in fostering engagement and retention among marginalized learners?

- What teaching methods have proven most effective in keeping learners motivated and engaged?
- How do you incorporate experiential or contextual learning to make lessons more meaningful?
- What challenges do you face in sustaining learner retention, and how do you address them?
- How do you personalize instruction to cater to varying learning abilities and backgrounds?

4. How do ALS teachers define success in the context of second-chance education, and what factors contribute to positive learning outcomes?

- What indicators do you use to determine whether a learner has succeeded in ALS education?
- How do you measure progress beyond traditional academic achievements?
- What external factors (e.g., family support, livelihood opportunities) play a role in learner success?
- How do ALS teachers support learners in setting and achieving long-term educational goals?
- What institutional or community-driven initiatives enhance the success of ALS learners?

5. In what ways do institutional support and policy frameworks influence ALS teachers' ability to provide inclusive and transformative learning experiences?

- How do national and local policies shape your approach to ALS education?
- What forms of institutional support (e.g., resources, training, funding) most impact your teaching effectiveness?
- What policy-related challenges do you encounter in delivering ALS programs?
- How can policy reforms better support ALS educators and learners?
- What collaborative efforts between government, non-government organizations, communities, and local stakeholders improve ALS implementation?

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered through the chosen qualitative approach. The participants' responses were carefully examined and organized into themes encapsulating their unique experiences and shared meanings. Nonetheless, verbatim quotations are presented to ensure that the participants' voices remain authentic, giving depth and credibility to the findings.

I CHALLENGES IN SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION

I. 1 Common Difficulties Encountered by ALS Teachers

Teaching marginalized learners in the Alternative Learning System is both transformative and challenging. While this program provides a "second chance" at education, teachers confront various difficulties that hinder instructional delivery and learner success. These challenges are not isolated but rather systemic, rooted in poverty, resource scarcity, diverse learner backgrounds, and psychosocial struggles.

The following themes synthesized participants' responses, highlighting the most common difficulties faced in teaching marginalized learners and their impact on the provision of learning intervention, and the overall success of the program.

I.1.a Irregular Attendance

Many participants emphasized learners' inconsistent attendance as a recurring difficulty they are facing.

Learners often prioritize livelihood, household duties, family responsibilities, or survival needs over attending ALS sessions, which are testified in the following responses.

Participant 1 expressed that *"absenteeism due to family and work responsibilities hinders consistent learning and leads to low program completion rates."* The same sentiment is echoed by Participant 5, saying, *"irregular attendance, limited resources, and varied learning needs require more preparation and creative strategies."* Furthermore, Participant 6 reiterated that *"inconsistent attendance prevents providing need-based learning, thus hindering the desired academic progress."*

The narrative of Participant 13 highlighted how *"irregular attendance due to work and family responsibilities requires constant adjustment in teaching methods and learning modality."* Moreover, Participant 15 conveyed that the most difficult part of being an ALS teacher is the *"irregular attendance of learners due to work and obligations at home."* Participant 18 likewise added that *"poor attendance due to learners' preoccupation at work and family responsibilities impacts both teaching quality and learner retention."*

Similarly, Participant 19 stressed that "*infrequent face-to-face sessions and reliance on modular learning reduce opportunities for interaction."* This is corroborated by the admission of Participant 20 that *"irregular attendance is common among ALS learners because some are working, which significantly hinders learners' progress and instructional delivery."*

I.1.b Lack of Resources and Facilities

ALS teachers consistently reported the absence of learning materials, ICT equipment and tools, and proper facilities as obstacles to quality instruction. This is a major issue that derails the attainment of educational goals in the context of second-chance education.

Participant 2 pointed out the "*unavailability of conducive learning spaces, lack of computers, and learners' economic priorities."* This account is corroborated by Participant 3, who explained that *"the absence of teaching materials adds to the workload."* In addition to this, Participant 7 stressed that *"the lack of digital equipment makes it difficult to teach learning strands like Digital Citizenship effectively*."

The observation of Participant 8 revealed that *"limited access to learning equipment and resources negatively affects both teaching strategies and learner engagement."*

Conversely, Participant 9 speculated that *"most learners lack gadgets and internet access, making it hard to teach digital skills."* The elaboration of Participant 12 surmised that *"economic struggles and lack of access to educational resources and a conducive learning environment affect learning."* Additionally, Participant 16 concluded that "*the lack of school supplies and ICT tools limits learners' engagement and restricts acquiring ICT skills."*

I.1.c Learners' Low Self-Esteem and Psychological Barriers

Another major challenge is addressing learners' emotional and psychological struggles, including shame, hopelessness, and low self-worth. This factor affects the success of their inclusion in the program and limits their capacity to maximize their potential and sense of becoming. This is common among ALS learners because of a bombarding feeling of insecurity and inferiority, considering their situations.

Participant 2 noted that *"some learners feel ashamed to be in ALS, which affects their motivation to learn."* This feeling of shame is rooted in the mindset that ALS is regarded as a second-rate quality of education. Hence, enrolling in the program would mean acquiring lower-quality learning. Meanwhile, Participant 4 explained that *"learners' deeply ingrained mindset of hopelessness and low self-worth requires the teacher to act not just as an educator but as a motivator."*

It was acknowledged by Participant 10 that "*handling diverse learners with varying personalities and needs is difficult, but it inspires the teacher to provide more personalized support*." This was supported by Participant 14, emphasizing that "*learners need to be treated with utmost care, attention, and patience to sustain their attendance."* On the other hand, Participant 17 gave a broader perspective by sharing that *"language barriers, trauma, and mental health issues require the teacher to adapt lessons and create safe, supportive, and inclusive spaces."*

I.1.d Diverse Learning Needs and Teacher Expertise

Participants highlighted the difficulty of teaching highly diverse learners with varying literacy levels, ages, needs, and learning styles. This posed a great challenge for teachers on how they can effectively respond to the individual educational needs of learners. This perpetuating dilemma is reflected in the highly conversant narratives of participants.

Participant 3 narrated the challenge of *"teaching outside one's specialization/expertise" while meeting learners' needs*. The limited professional capability of teachers hinders them from teaching, especially those difficult competencies. In addition, Participant 5 described how "*varied learning needs slow down lessons, but ultimately make teaching more fulfilling,"* showing the resilience and optimism of teachers to navigate a difficult teaching journey.

In the same manner, Participant 11 shared that *"teaching in ALS requires constant adjustment due to irregular attendance, low literacy, diverse learning needs, and a lack of support."* This is agreed by Participant 13, who commented that "*low literacy levels and limited access to resources require teachers to constantly adjust the lesson and methods."* Participant 18 observed that "*diverse learner backgrounds, age, and learning abilities hinder the provision of quality learning."*

I.2 Teaching Approaches to Address Diverse Learners

In a second-chance education setting, teaching requires approaches that are flexible, inclusive, and learner-centered due to the heterogeneity of learners' backgrounds, learning levels, and life situations. The participants' responses reveal diverse strategies employed to adapt teaching approaches in ALS, ranging from differentiated and flexible instruction to value formation and real-life contextualization.

I.2.a Differentiated and Learner-Centered Approaches

Several participants highlighted differentiated instruction and learner-centered strategies as essential to meeting the varying needs of ALS learners. They found these effective in achieving the desired learning outcomes for multi-level learners.

Participant 1 echoed that *"the use of explicit teaching, differentiated instruction, and andragogy through the 4As approach, explaining that knowing learners' backgrounds and prior learning, and interviews help in selecting and planning the lesson based on the essential competencies they need*." Participant 7 pointed out the same strategy, emphasizing that *"adapting differentiated instruction to match the varying levels and learning needs of ALS learners is working in my CLC."* Participant 9 mentioned grouping learners according to their learning needs and comprehension, noting: *"I navigate teaching by initially knowing each learner better and grouping them accordingly to suit their learning needs, level, and comprehension."*

A learner-centered approach was reiterated by Participant 12 with this note: *"I adopt flexible instruction with modular and contextualized materials, integrating life skills, and adjusting lessons based on each learner's ability and learning style."* Participant 14 also underscored this practice, "*teaching in ALS starts by getting to know the learners' background, learning levels, goals, and personal circumstances. It also includes assessing learning gaps through the Functional Literacy Test and interviews*."

I.2.b Flexibility in Learning Modalities

Based on their lived experiences, many participants underscored that flexibility in modalities and schedules of learning sessions is vital to accommodate learners' responsibilities, such as work and family roles. This is consistent with the principle in ALS that learning can happen anytime, anywhere, depending on the availability of the learners. The flexibility of learning modalities makes the program more attractive, especially to working learners, who still have high hopes of finishing basic education.

Participant 2 verbalized: *"Modular learning is offered first, then shifts to face-to-face once learners are ready,"* highlighting gradual adaptation. Meanwhile, Participant 6 elaborated on *"offering a flexible learning schedule and modality that suits the situation of every learner, utilizing individualized instruction and varying teaching methods*." Similarly, Participant 10 shared *"by using simple and flexible methods, aligned with learners' interests, abilities, and learning pace, to ensure engagement and understanding."* The adjustment of Participant 15 emphasized "*modular and self-paced learning to accommodate those who cannot attend face-to-face classes*." Participant 16 supported this, saying: *"I address the diverse needs of second-chance learners through modular and blended learning modalities because these allow flexibility and accessibility."* On the other hand, Participant 18 even extended flexibility to scheduling: *"I provide online classes and individual tutorials based on learners' available schedules, including weekends."*

I.2.c Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

ALS teachers emphasized the importance of psychological safety, trust, and respect in engaging learners who often carry feelings of shame or failure from past schooling, or disappointment of having to quit school before due to challenging situations. Thus, establishing a supportive learning environment where every learner feels warmth and a sense of belonging fosters motivation and eagerness to learn is a supportive mechanism.

The personal account of Participant 3 highlighted that the *"integration of value formation and creating a non-judgmental learning space to build learners' trust and motivate them to engage in learning is crucial in ensuring active engagement*." Participant 4 also described applying supportive strategies: *"I connect lessons to real-life contexts, adjust pace, and foster a supportive environment that builds learners' confidence."*

Participant 5 similarly shared: *"I build the confidence of learners through positive feedback, starting from giving simple instructions. Creating a safe and supportive learning environment is also important, where they feel respected, heard, and motivated."* Participant 17 echoed this by saying: *"I use flexible and learner-centered strategies that involve creating a supportive learning environment that respects personal background, builds confidence, and encourages active participation."*

I.2.d Contextualization and Real-Life Application

ALS Teachers frequently contextualized lessons to make them relevant to learners' daily experiences. It should be deeply rooted in learners' life experiences and translate these into meaningful actions addressing their real-life struggles and concerns. Contextualizing the lesson also boosts their motivation and determination to participate.

Participant 8 mentioned: *"I start by assessing learners' prior knowledge and gaps, contextualize the lessons, and encourage diverse ways for learners to show understanding. Lessons are also related to real-life situations and practical skills.* Participant 11 invested in *"non-traditional strategies like reflective teaching, portfolios, and project-based learning that allow learners to demonstrate their acquired skills."*

The experience of Participant 13 told that: *"Younger learners actively engage through visuals and game-based instruction, while older ones prefer real-life discussions and cooperative learning."* Moreover, Participant 19 emphasized: *"I recognize the relevance of adapting the lesson to the day-to-day life of the learners, making them more relatable and easier to understand."* Meanwhile, Participant 20 fostered meaningful learning experiences by *"adopting a multi-strategy approach, including conceptual integration, flexible scheduling, individualized plans, interactive teaching, and positive reinforcement."*

I.3 Strategies to Overcome Barriers to Education

Teachers play a critical role in overcoming barriers to education by employing innovative, flexible, and responsive strategies. Understanding the lived experiences of the ALS teachers sheds light on how educational equity can be achieved in challenging situations, particularly in the context of marginalized learners. This section examines participants' responses to the question: *"Can you share specific strategies or experiences where you successfully overcame barriers in education?"* Thus, reckoning from the participants' narratives, four themes emerged.

I.3.a Learner-Centered and Contextualized Instruction

A dominant theme is the teachers' use of individualized, context-driven strategies to meet learners' unique educational needs. This is a widely utilized teaching strategy in ALS because of the diversity of learning levels, backgrounds, and prior learning.

The account of Participant 1 highlighted the *"conduct of one-on-one interviews and home visitations to understand learners' behavior and absenteeism, allowing for tailored interventions."* The same approach is adopted by Participant 4, who emphasized *"understanding learners' backgrounds and integrating real-life applications, such as budgeting and small business management, which helped learners see education's relevance."*

Participant 9 said: *"I adapted differentiated instruction, created contextualized reading materials, and offered flexible deadlines while maintaining regular communications with my learners through phones and messenger".* Participant 10 strategized by *"using hands-on activities, peer teaching, and empathy to address individual learning barriers."* A strategic approach was adopted by Participant 11 by *"separating Basic Literacy learners from Elementary and Junior High School learners to provide more focused instruction to each learning group."*

Another effective approach was confessed by Participant 12, who noted that *"simplifying the curriculum makes lessons more relatable, resulting in 100% attendance and improved academic performance."* Participant 15 addressed *"multi-level learning by grouping learners according to ability and designing differentiated activities*." On the other hand, Participant 17 used *"real-life contexts, practical skills, modular learning, and one-on-one mentoring to enhance participation and performance."*

I.3.b Flexible Modalities and Accessibility

Another strong theme was the adoption of flexible learning modalities to overcome barriers of distance, time, and resources. ALS learners thrive and sustain their participation in the program when the learning modality is adjusted to their situations. This is an issue of access, which makes the ALS program a viable option for marginalized learners who cannot cope with the time demands in formal school. Breaking this barrier sustains learners' engagement in the program.

As commented by Participant 5, *"implementing flexible schedules and modular learning significantly reduces education barriers".* Participant 6 *"resorted to modular and online learning for flexibility, suiting the available time of learners."* Alongside this, Participant 7 offered *"blended learning and regularly conducts home visits to keep learners engaged."*

To overcome barriers in education because of distance and the limited resources of learners on transportation expenses, Participant 16 *established a community learning center in a remote area where most of the learners reside."* This is literally bringing education closer to where the learners are. Another genuine show of service was confessed by Participant 18, who said: *"I used tutorial and radio-based instruction to teach a blind learner, who later became a BSED graduate".*

I.3.c Family and Community Engagement

A strong determining factor for learners' success is the active engagement of the family and community as support systems. When both of these support systems are available, overcoming barriers becomes easy and possible. Accordingly, the teacher-participants highlighted the importance of involving families, communities, and stakeholders in paving the way for sustained participation of learners and eventually achieving their educational goals.

Participant 3 confessed, *"I conducted home visits, created safe environments, and encouraged open communication with my learners*". The home visit is an avenue for the teacher to understand more deeply the plight of each learner while soliciting support from family members. Participant 5 *"engaged families and community leaders to reduce barriers and change community mindsets about education."* The lack of resources is also addressed by Participant 8 by *"establishing a strong partnership with the LGU through the passing of a municipal ordinance ensuring consistent funding for ALS every school year."* Participant 20 strategically *"advocated the ALS program by mobilizing the community in conducting literacy mapping and recruitment of learners, involving them in ALS graduation ceremonies, and other activities."*

I.3.d Psychosocial Support and Empowerment

Low self-esteem and negative self-concept undermine the capacity of learners to perform better and achieve greater things in life through a second-chance education. This is a glaring barrier that engulfs their mindset, resulting in demotivation and apathy. Addressing this block will lead to increased determination and capacity to succeed. Working with marginalized learners, ALS teachers face the challenge of helping learners transition to better and more positive life perspectives.

The creativity of Participant 2 is helpful by using *"personal storytelling to inspire persistence, faith, and hard work among the learners."* On the other hand, Participant 13 *"emphasized non-judgmental listening, positive reinforcement, and celebrating small wins to rebuild learners' self-esteem."* This barrier is also addressed by Participant 14 by *"eliminating the stigma in second-chance education by producing successful ALS graduates, including a 60-year-old JHS completer."* This example is a strong indication that learning encompasses age and any situation in life. Meanwhile, Participant 19 conveyed that, *"I focused on shifting learners' mindset towards persistence and valuing education.*"

I.4 Community Dynamics and Socio-Economic Factors

The provision of second-chance education through the ALS in the country is shaped not only by the pedagogical strategies of teachers but also by broader community dynamics and socio-economic realities. Factors such as poverty, unemployment, geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, cultural norms, and family obligations strongly affect learners' access, attendance, and persistence. Teachers play a critical role in mediating these barriers, but their efforts are often contingent on the level of support they receive from stakeholders, families, and communities. Understanding how community and socio-economic conditions influence ALS delivery provides valuable insight into how grassroots educational programs can be sustained in marginalized areas.

I.4.a Poverty and Economic Constraints

A recurring theme across participant narratives is the overwhelming effect of poverty on learners' ability

to participate in ALS. Notably, most of the learners are impoverished, which is why they did not pursue their studies in a formal school. Most of the time, learners will prioritize economic survival rather than education, which limits the teachers' capacity to provide a more effective learning intervention.

Participant 2 explained: *"Learners prioritize work due to financial needs and job prospects after completing the ALS program."* The same dilemma is lamented by Participant 3, who said that *"poverty causes learners to prioritize livelihood over attending ALS classes. Community support varies; some are supportive of the ALS program, while others are less receptive."*

"In low-income communities, learners deal with hunger, unstable homes, and child labor. Early marriage and pregnancy are common", surmised Participant 4. It was also pointed out by Participant 7 that, *"many learners miss classes due to their financial status, impacting attendance and learning continuity."* Participant 11 shared, "*Poverty and family problems make it difficult for learners to attend classes and stay focused on lessons."* Participant 15 stressed, *"In low-income households, education takes a backseat because of prioritizing economic activities and family obligations."*

I.4.b Community and Stakeholder Support

The narratives also highlighted the vital role of Local Government Units (LGUs), communities, stakeholders, and other development players in sustaining ALS delivery. The level of support of various program partners inevitably impacts the program's effectiveness. With minimal financial support from the institution, ALS implementers and teachers would heighten collaboration with stakeholders to generate resources.

Participant 8 asserted, "Support *from stakeholders such as the barangay LGUs is important to the success of the program. They provide available infrastructure in the community that will serve as learning centers".* However, the participant added that "*limited financial support, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of access to technology hinder the provision of quality learning*." In addition, Participant 9 divulged that *"supportive barangays provide venues, school supplies, and technology, enhancing learning delivery."*

Participant 10 shared a positive experience: *"I am not being affected because of the sustained strong support from stakeholders, and I am personally prepared to overcome whatever obstacles."* Participant 15 quipped, "u*nsupportive local leaders limit program success, while engaged communities boost learner motivation and program sustainability."* Lastly, Participant 18 testified that "*ALS relies heavily on stakeholder support. Community motivation, parental involvement, and inclusive education backing enable more meaningful and successful ALS implementation."*

I.4.c Socio-Cultural Norms Affecting Learner Participation

The influence of social and cultural dynamics on the second-chance learning opportunity for marginalized learners cannot be underestimated. Some negative notions on education immensely affect the learners' determination to participate. There are also hindering beliefs that exist within the learners' families and communities that weaken their enthusiasm. This claim is strongly supported by the lived experiences of the participants, which are stated below.

Participant 2 observed that "e*arly marriage, poverty, and family obligations prevent women from attending classes."* Gender inequality still exists in some communities, limiting women's opportunities to grow and maximize their potential. With this, Participant 4 added: *"Early marriage and pregnancy are common, hindering girls and women from finishing studies". Furthermore,* Participant 13 confessed that *"geographic barriers, lack of electricity, and a negative mindset on education, especially for women,*

affect participation. Families and local leaders are not supportive of the program, which weakens the motivation of learners."

The insight of Participant 14 revealed that "l*ack of moral support from the family and negative community perception discourages learners. And even with flexible modes, learners prioritize earning a living over education due to financial needs."*

I.4.d Geographic and Infrastructural Challenges in Education Access

Geographical barrier is a perennial issue in accessing education, both in ALS and in the formal school system. Moreover, infrastructure is also a major concern affecting the quality of education. Notably, several participants raised geographic isolation and poor infrastructure as perpetuating barriers.

Participant 6 explained that "t*here are communities that cannot provide a learning center that is conducive to learning. They also lack access to technology."* Adding to this, Participant 12 exclaimed that "*the lack of resources, learning supplies, technology, and funds for additional developmental activities for learners results in reduced learning outcomes. Low parental engagement affects motivation."* Moreover, Participant 20 emphasized *that "geographic isolation, especially in far-flung barangays and coastal areas, presents travel and weather challenges and risks among teachers and learners."* These narratives reveal how physical distance, lack of infrastructure, and technological gaps reinforce educational inequities.

I.4.e Teacher Resilience and Adaptation Amidst Structural Constraints

Despite the systemic barriers, teachers remain innovative and resilient in sustaining the program. They face myriad challenges that continually test their perseverance, commitment, and passion to uplift the lives of marginalized learners through an empowering education. Amidst these struggles, teachers capitalize on their resourcefulness and partnership-building skills to address some inadequacies in the system.

Participant 1 highlighted the standing of ALS in DepEd by saying that "t*he absence of MOOE funding for ALS leads to full reliance on Municipal Local Government Units, Barangay LGUs, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and private stakeholders. In unsupportive barangays, I initiate Income Generating Projects (IGPs) to fund ALS activities and projects, and operations. Distance, fare, and food issues affect learners' attendance and consequently cause learning delays.*" This long narrative speaks volume about the overwhelming issues affecting the implementation of the program.

Deterring socio-economic dynamics is also addressed by Participant 4 through "*enhancing active parental involvement and community collaboration*." On a positive note, Participant 13 affirmed that "*despite all the obstacles, they remain steadfast in serving as mentors and advocates, fostering hope and perseverance.*"

I.5 Forms of Support that Help Teachers Navigate Challenges

Institutional support from the agency should primarily lead the implementation. However, aside from this, the success of the ALS program is also determined by the synergy of community involvement, professional collaboration, and local government participation. However, given the systemic challenges, such as resource constraints, limited institutional recognition, and the socioeconomic realities of learners, ALS teachers rely heavily on multilayered support systems. Sometimes, the expected support from various players is scarce. Thus, the responses of participants to the question *"What forms of support (institutional, community, professional) help you navigate these challenges?"* reveal a nuanced picture of how diverse factors contribute to sustaining ALS.

I.5.a Institutional Support for Program Implementation and Teacher Development

Institutional support primarily involved the provision of professional development, learning modules and

supplies, technical assistance, capacity-building activities, training, monitoring, and mentorship**.** This support is essential in ensuring program continuity and teacher competence.

Participant 2 stated that *"institutional support through learning modules, travel allowances, and training."* Additionally, Participant 3 mentioned the *"provision of learning modules and transportation allowances for ALS teachers."* Similarly, Participant 8 emphasized that *"institutional provisions such as modules, capability-building activities, and technical assistance."* Moreover, Participant 9 verbalized that they were *"provided with modules, training, and capacity-building activities."*

In the same manner, Participant 14 narrated that *"institutional support, such as modules, monitoring tools, technical assistance, LAC sessions, mentoring, and feedback*." It was also shared by Participant 15 that *"support is in the form of training, technical assistance, and monitoring visits."* Meanwhile, Participant 16 underscored that *"continuous capacity-building activities conducted, such as training, LAC sessions, and mentoring."* It was also affirmed by Participant 18 that *"institutional support such as modules, materials, training, and monitoring."*

Similarly, it was mentioned by Participant 20 that *"capacity-building activities, INSET, LAC sessions, and technical assistance are very helpful*." Lastly, both Participants 12 and 13 underscored that *"mentorship, guidance, and emotional support from the institution."*

I.5.b Stakeholders' Support and Involvement

Community and LGU involvement centered on financial support, provision of learning spaces, awareness campaigns, supplies, and advocacy for ALS learners**.** These supports reflect grassroots recognition of education as a communal responsibility. It also conveys the growing awareness of the relevance of the ALS program.

The participants have generously shared numerous assistances being extended by the community and stakeholders in the absence of institutional support. This was confirmed by Participant 1, who confirmed that *"strong support from the community and stakeholders, while institutional support remains limited."* The narrative account of Participant 2 mentioned *"community mapping of learners and provision of learning spaces as the assistance provided by the community."* Moreover, Participants 3 and 18 shared, *"LGUs extended financial support for supplies, barangay ordinances supporting ALS, involvement in ALS activities, and community-led advocacy campaigns."*

Another tangible contribution by the community leaders is their *"incessant campaign to encourage prospective learners to enroll*", as emphasized by Participant 4, which was also agreed upon by Participant 6. In addition, Participant 5 cited, *"barangay allocation of specific funds for ALS learners."* Participants 7 and 10 shared the same perspective that *"municipal and barangay LGUs consistently extend financial, teaching materials, and financial aid for the program and the learners.*" Similarly, Participants 14, 17, and 19 enumerated support such as *"financial assistance, materials, and transportation assistance from LGUs and Sangguniang Kabataan (SKs). LGU partners also give financial incentives and food assistance for learners."*

Seemingly, the LGUs and the community are indeed the most active partners of ALS. They make the program thriving and sustainable. The account of Participant 11 cited, *"The LGU is very supportive of our goal to reach out to OSYs in the locality. Also, an NGO (World Vision) assists in terms of supplies and livelihood training for learners".* Another testament of Participant 20 affirmed that *"close collaboration with stakeholders resulted in generating support for financial aid, transportation, and food assistance."*

I.5.c Professional Collaboration and Peer Mentorship

Professional support revolved around peer mentoring, emotional and moral support, and collaboration

among ALS teachers. The program has established a strong network that mutually supports one another in addressing common issues and concerns. Sharing good practices is also developed, which helps them navigate the complexities of their task.

Significant assistance from educational leaders and heads is affirmed by Participants 9, 13, and 16. They mentioned that *"institutional support is exemplified through mentorship, technical assistance, moral support, and collaborative problem-solving*." They further stressed that *"regular meetings immediately address emerging issues and needs."*

On the other hand, "professional collaboration from peers and colleagues is manifested through the sharing of good practices, emotional encouragement, sharing of resources, and exchange of effective teaching strategies", as affirmed by Participants 4, 12, and 20.

II IMPACT OF ALS ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF LEARNERS

II.1 Learners' Transformation through the ALS Program

ALS, as the other side of basic education, is a vital program that provides opportunities for learners who were once out of school to pursue academic success and personal growth. It is a parallel program with the formal school system, aimed at developing the same competencies and skills in the learners. The narratives of the participants significantly reveal that ALS has been instrumental in reshaping lives, offering not only literacy and numeracy skills but also regained dignity, confidence, and a sense of purpose.

II.1.a Academic Advancement and Career Pathways

Academically, ALS serves as a bridge that enables learners to transition from educational discontinuity to further academic pursuits and meaningful careers. This is supported by the insights shared by the participants.

Participant 1 witnessed that *"the ALS transformed learners' lives, from JHS completers to SHS graduates, college graduates, and eventually being employed*." Similarly, Participant 4 declared that *"learners' mindset toward education changed; they progressed to SHS, college, landed stable jobs, and achieved their dreams for themselves and their families*." As the participant narrated, *"In my 8 years in ALS, I have witnessed the personal growth of a number of my passers and program completers".*

Meanwhile, Participant 5 mentioned that *"learners who were once struggling with basic literacy, reading, writing, and numeracy, have gained competence and confidence; passed the A&E Test, and could access higher education or vocational training*." Likewise, Participant 12 elaborated on *"academic improvement in language proficiency (English) and communication skills, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking, while personal growth includes proper attitude, good manners, adaptability, and resilience."*

Finally, Participant 15 revealed the *"growth of learners from struggling with basic reading, writing, and numeracy to passing the A&E Test; personal transformation includes overcoming low self-esteem, trauma from dropping out, and regaining belief in themselves."*

II.1.b Personal Growth and Emotional Resilience

Beyond academics, ALS nurtures self-worth, confidence, and resilience among learners who once felt excluded from the educational system. These learners also rose above the mindset of being inferior and the feeling of insecurity because of their lack of education.

Participant 7 reflected that *"learners become confident, better problem-solvers, and more capable of informed decision-making."* Similarly, Participant 8 noted that *"academic gains include confidence, skills, and passing portfolio assessments, while personal growth includes self-worth, self-discipline, and perseverance despite obstacles."*

Additionally, Participant 9 testified that *"from low confidence to active participation, learners were able to complete the program, pursue further education, regain self-worth, and find life purpose*." Nonetheless, Participant 14 testified that *"formerly shy learners gained confidence, deeper self-awareness, and appreciated second-chance education, and many progressed to ALS SHS after passing the A&E Test*." Lastly, Participant 16 underscored the significant personal changes in learners; *"they become more confident, responsible, and eager to learn, and become active members of their communities."*

II.1.c Development of Positive Attitudes and Life Perspectives

ALS also reshapes learners' perspectives and attitudes toward education, instilling optimism, discipline, and purpose. Engagement in the program is a significant milestone in the learners' lives.

Participant 2 shared the significant positive changes in learners' attitude and life perspectives, willingness to learn, and motivation to build a career. Nevertheless, Participant 6 affirmed that *"attending ALS classes fostered learners' positive views on education*." Notably, Participant 10 emphasized that *"all learners have improved their lives, become productive, and have been able to help their families*." This is supported by Participant 11, who claimed that "*learners gained greater confidence, better learning opportunities, and bigger dreams, especially for those enrolled in the SHS".*

Interestingly, Participant 18 verbalized that *"initially, learners were motivated to enroll because of the benefits they would get from the 4Ps Program, but eventually, they became dream-driven and participative*." Lastly, Participant 19 commented that "*transformation is seen in their eagerness to pursue greater knowledge and education."*

II.1.d Active Participation in the Community

ALS learners often extend their growth beyond themselves, becoming advocates of education and contributors to their communities. Many learners have metamorphosed from dissonant to proactive community members, leading productive activities.

Evidently, Participant 3 revealed that *"the program changed the life direction of the learners*." Participant 13 witnessed the *"deep and meaningful transformation of learners beyond academic progress; they regained self-worth and purpose and became advocates of education in the community*." Also, Participant 17 disclosed *"learners' improved literacy, numeracy, and life purpose. They pursued education or employment and became motivated community members."* Finally, Participant 20 highlighted that *"ALS brings not only academic gains but also hope, dignity, and direction to learners' lives."*

II.2 Holistic Development for Lifelong Growth

The careful analysis of the participants' responses reveals that the ALS program holistically nurtures learners, equipping them with academic competencies, socio-emotional resilience, life skills, and values that prepare them for lifelong learning and active participation in society.

II.2.a Academic Competence and Work Readiness

Several participants highlighted the acquisition of literacy, numeracy, and functional academic skills as a foundation for higher education and future careers. For example, Participant 1 stated that ALS learners gained *"readiness for higher education, work readiness, and having a clear career goal."* Similarly, Participant 5 emphasized the importance of *"literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, and problem-solving,"* while Participant 16 added that *"learners developed communication and numeracy skills."* Participant 18 underscored the transformative effect of ALS in cultivating *"functional literacy, academic skills, and a goal-driven mindset."*

II.2.b Personal Development and Self-Management

A recurring theme in the responses is the cultivation of self-discipline, perseverance, and independence. Participant 1 noted that learners demonstrated *"hard work, commitment, consistent effort, and focus."* Participant 4 expanded on this by saying they developed *"resilience, determination, self-discipline, time management, and adaptability."* Participant 13 observed that learners also showed *"self-discipline, accountability, and responsibility."* Moreover, Participant 10 emphasized the *"transformation of mindset as learners embraced self-discovery of skills and abilities, confidence, and stepping out of comfort zones."* Confidence, self-esteem, and positive mindset were frequently mentioned as outcomes of engagement in the ALS program. Participant 2 reported that learners developed *"self-confidence, self-discipline, and responsibility."* Participant 8 shared that they gained *"confidence, self-esteem, and practical skills."* Similarly, Participant 11 stated that learners developed self-confidence and life skills, while Participant 18 stressed *"self-worth and confidence."*

II.2.c Life Skills and Values Formation

Echoed from the participants' voices, it was revealed that one of the most profound contributions of ALS is the development of life skills and values among its learners. These skills go beyond the traditional focus on literacy and numeracy and extend into resilience, adaptability, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and values-driven behavior. Learners not only acquire competencies for survival and employment but also cultivate personal character and social responsibility.

Participants repeatedly underscored resilience and adaptability as defining outcomes of ALS. Participant 4 emphasized that *"learners gained resilience, determination, self-discipline, time management, communication, social skills, adaptability, and independence,"* while Participant 9 observed similar growth in *"resilience, perseverance, literacy, and life skills."* For Participant 14, this transformation was expressed in the cultivation of *"patience, resiliency, and understanding."* Alongside resilience, learners also develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Participant 5 explicitly stated that "*ALS instills critical thinking and problem-solving,"* while Participant 8 added that "*learners learned critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability."* Participant 13 affirmed that "*these skills extend to informed decision-making and accountability,"* reinforcing how ALS enables learners to approach challenges analytically and responsibly.

Equally important is the role of communication and collaboration, which emerged consistently from the participants' accounts. Participant 6 emphasized the straightforward yet powerful acquisition of *"communication skills,"* while Participant 12 shared that *"ALS learners developed communication, collaboration, adaptability, and self-reflection."* Participant 17 echoed this, noting that "*learners became self-confident, adaptable, and acquired communication and collaboration skills."*

Beyond academic and practical skills, ALS nurtures values formation and civic responsibility. Participant 20 emphasized *"that learners developed values formation and survival skills, and meaningful contribution to family and community,"* while Participant 19 stressed the "*emergence of a sense of community, responsibility, and contribution to community development."* Such reflections demonstrate that ALS learners do not merely acquire individual competencies but also grow into socially responsive citizens who recognize their role within their families and communities.

II.2.d Community Engagement

The findings reveal that this second-chance education not only fosters individual growth but also nurtures learners' sense of responsibility and contribution to their families and communities. Several participants

emphasized that learners become active contributors to social and economic development after acquiring education through ALS.

Participant 19 articulated this transformation clearly, stating that "*learners developed a sense of community, responsibility, and contribution to community development.*" This response highlights the social dimension of ALS, where education extends beyond self and fosters commitment to collective well-being. In a similar vein, Participant 20 affirmed *"that learners were able to make meaningful contributions to family and community,"* pointing to the tangible impact that ALS graduates have on their immediate social environments. Meanwhile, Participant 7 underscored ALS as a pathway to broader opportunities, noting that *"it provides access to opportunities such as further education, technical-vocational skills, employment, or entrepreneurship."*

II.3 Influence of ALS on Learners' Career Prospects and Aspirations

The articulate narratives of the participants reveal profound transformations that extend beyond academic achievement, encompassing renewed aspirations, employability, empowerment, and contributions to family and society. The ALS teachers underscored how the program rekindled dreams, enhanced self-confidence, expanded career prospects, broke cycles of poverty, and offered transformative second chances for personal and social growth.

II.3.a Building Employability and Career Pathways

Remarkably, participants highlighted that ALS equips learners with the credentials and competencies needed to access employment or pursue further studies. Participant 2 affirmed: *"Many learners enrolled in ALS to finish Grade 10 and gain skills in TESDA to work overseas, pursue college, or be employed for a better living."* Participant 13 further elaborated: *"The program expands learners' career prospects by equipping them with basic education, life skills, and the eligibility to pursue higher education or vocational training."*

II.3.b Enhancing Self-Confidence and Self-Worth

Another key outcome observed is the growth of self-confidence and personal empowerment among ALS learners. Participant 7 asserted: *"ALS improves learners' self-esteem and self-worth by recognizing their potentials and capabilities."* Likewise, Participant 5 emphasized: *"By offering second chances, ALS helps dropouts complete education, gain credentials, build confidence, boost self-esteem, and set higher goals."*

II.3.c Breaking Cycles of Poverty and Marginalization

Several participants highlighted the program's significant role in addressing systemic barriers and breaking cycles of poverty. Participant 15 reflected: *"Completing ALS allows access to senior high school, college, TESDA courses, better jobs, and breaking cycles of poverty."* Similarly, Participant 9 shared that, *"ALS opens doors for learners who were left behind by formal education by overcoming personal and economic barriers. It builds essential skills, rebuilds confidence, and broadens aspirations for employment and to contribute positively to the community."*

II.3.d Second-Chance Education as a Transformative Pathway

The program not only gives a second chance in education, but also a renewed hope and inspiration to dream again. Participants consistently expressed how ALS rekindled learners' hope and belief in their potential to achieve long-lost aspirations. Participant 3 noted: *"Learners start believing in their ability to reach dreams, even those who were once considered dropouts or hopeless."* Similarly, Participant 14 emphasized: *"ALS reignites learners' dreams to continue studies, with hope for diplomas, certificates, and more opportunities."*

They describe ALS as a significant milestone that reshaped learners' lives and futures. Participant 20 summarized this impact: *"ALS creates new beginnings and aspirations, enabling higher education, decent jobs, scholarships, vocational training, self-belief, and brighter futures."* Participant 18, who is a former ALS learner, shared that, *"ALS renewed purpose and aspirations, not only for personal gain but also to serve others."*

II.4 Success Stories in ALS

The transformative impact of ALS as an alternative learning pathway is vividly illustrated through the diverse success stories of its learners. Participants shared narratives of individuals who overcame poverty, early parenthood, incarceration, and other life challenges through the program. These stories reflect not only academic progression but also personal empowerment, employability, and social mobility.

II.4.a Empowerment of Marginalized Groups

By providing flexible, inclusive, and learner-centered opportunities, ALS enables underserved and deprived individuals and groups to overcome barriers, pursue education, and achieve meaningful personal and professional growth. The participants' accounts highlight how education through ALS not only uplifts individuals but also creates ripple effects in families and communities, proving its role as a catalyst for empowerment and social mobility.

Several participants shared stories of ALS learners from vulnerable backgrounds, mothers, Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), housewives, and Guest Relation Officers (GROs), who transformed their lives through education. Participant 1 recounted, *"Seven years ago, four out of six mothers graduated from ALS JHS, took TESDA, became domestic helpers in the Middle East, and now support their children's education*." Meanwhile, Participant 3 shared a story of *"a PDL learner who eventually earned a BS in Management and runs her own business; a former GRO used her A&E certification to work in the Middle East*." Moreover, Participant 17 highlighted, *"A housewife and farmer with six children enrolled in ALS, became a professional teacher, and now serves in DepEd as an ALS teacher."*

II.4.b Pathways to Higher Education and Professional Success

Many learners progressed to higher education and became professionals, including teachers, business owners, and civil servants. This is affirmed by the narratives of some participants.

Participant 6 proudly shared of "*an ALS passer who is now a licensed teacher*." The same experience was divulged by Participant 14, who said that "*a 2019 ALS passer is now a Bachelor of Elementary Education graduate*." Similarly, Participant 19 shared that, *"an ALS learner who is now a Licensed Professional Teacher*." Interestingly, Participant 20 narrated, *"A 14-year-old who dropped out of school, enrolled in ALS at 49, graduated in college at 53 with BEED, worked as a volunteer ALS teacher in an IP community, and now landed a decent job in the city."*

II.4.c Economic Mobility and Overseas Opportunities

Another recurring theme is economic upliftment by securing employment abroad or local livelihood opportunities. The program serves as a vehicle that opens lots of life-changing opportunities for learners. Participant 2 narrated of *"a learner who passed the A&E Test, took a Cookery course in TESDA, and is now working as a chef on a ship overseas and provides well for his family."* Participant 9 also testified to *"a learner who dropped out due to poverty, enrolled in ALS, and through hard work, secured a job abroad, and restored her dignity and self-worth*." Participant 10 affirmed that *"many learners became professionals, overseas workers, and employees in private companies, improving their families' lives and contributing to the country."*

II.4.d Breaking Barriers of Age and Circumstance

Another interesting aspect of ALS success stories is the resilience of learners regardless of age or life challenges. The program has no age requirement; thus, anyone can enroll and continue to learn. Participant 8 expressed of *"a married learner, despite her age, enrolled in ALS and is now a college student aiming to achieve his dreams for his family*." Participant 13 narrated, *"Two senior citizens, ages 73 and 75, graduated from ALS despite age and limitations, inspiring Out-of-School Youths (OSYs) and adults in the community to pursue education."*

II.4.e Lifelong Transformation and Community Impact

Some participants shared stories of learners who not only transformed their own lives but also gave back to their communities as teachers and role models.

Participant 18 recounted, *"I was a school dropout due to poverty, enrolled in ALS, became a professional teacher, college instructor, guidance director, and now an ALS teacher."* The participant herself is a proud product of ALS who is now serving the program as an ALS teacher. Participant 5 also narrated of *"a dropout involved in online gambling, encouraged to enroll in ALS while working, and is now a member of the Philippine Air Force."*

Participant 11 confirmed that *"some ALS learners finished college with honors, like cum laude, showing ALS' transformative impact*." Similarly, Participant 15 remarked that *"several ALS graduates are now in senior high school, college, TESDA NC II courses, or working as heavy equipment operators, hotel staff, cooks, or business owners*."

II.5 Perception of Empowerment in ALS Education

As a second-chance education, ALS empowers learners by restoring their dignity, nurturing their aspirations, and equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary for personal and social advancement. When exploring with the participants what aspects of ALS education they find most empowering, participants highlighted multiple dimensions: flexibility, inclusivity, personal growth, social support, restored dignity, and opportunities for lifelong learning.

II.5.a Flexibility and Learner-Centered

The most dominant theme across participants is the flexibility of ALS, which allows learners to study at their own pace and balance education with life responsibilities. A common voice strongly suggests that flexibility in teaching approaches is empowering.

Participant 1 underscored that *"with flexibility and personalized learning, learners can study on their own schedule, making learning more comfortable and suited to their situations."* The same point of view is asserted by Participant 4, who said that *"flexibility, inclusivity, real-life relevance, life skills, and a respectful, non-judgmental environment empower learners to see education as meaningful and achievable*." This was positively affirmed by Participant 5, who observed that *"a flexible learning schedule, control over pace and timing, makes balancing work, family, and study possible."*

Moreover, Participant 9 believed that *"flexibility allows learners to manage studies alongside responsibilities, reducing the pressure of traditional schooling and rebuilding confidence*." Participant 13 corroborated that *"flexibility and a learner-centered approach help learners study without sacrificing responsibilities, relate lessons to real life, and restore dignity and purpose."* Participant 16 also insisted, *"A Flexible schedule enables learners to continue education without giving up work or family responsibilities."*

Furthermore, Participant 17 highlighted that *"flexibility, regardless of age or background, restores hope and dignity, proving education is for all.*" Meanwhile, Participant 18 verbalized that "*ALS gives hope for a second chance through a flexible learning approach*." Lastly, Participant 20 believes that *"the sense of hope ALS brings is empowering, it respects the learning pace of each learner and the belief that each learner is capable of achieving."*

II.5.b Restoration of Hope, Self-Worth, and Dignity

The insightful sharing of participants also highlights empowerment in how ALS restores confidence, dignity, and hope in the learners' determination to succeed. Aside from providing education, the program is also a restorative instrument that helps learners regain their self-belief.

Participant 2 spoke of *"a learner who found fulfillment in finishing studies through ALS."* Vehemently, Participant 3 claimed that *"ALS restores hope and self-worth, where learners regain confidence to pursue higher education and employment*." Participant 10 observed that *"the program develops interpersonal skills, builds confidence, and opens doors to further studies, jobs, and improved quality of life that break the cycles of poverty*." The personal testimony of Participant 11 shows that *"learners find the program as a second chance to pursue studies and reach their dreams*." Moreover, Participant 12 underscored, *"academic success, pride in identity and culture, community leadership, and becoming role models empower learners to value education."*

Another empowering factor is the tangible outcomes of ALS education, earning diplomas, gaining employable skills, and pursuing lifelong learning. This is supported by the narration of Participant 6, which says that *"improved communication skills are an empowering result of ALS education."* Moreover, Participant 19 underscored that *"earning a diploma empowers learners to pursue further studies and professional success."*

II.5.c Social Support and Encouragement

Another aspect of empowerment comes from interpersonal support, particularly from families, teachers, and peers. Strong support is vital in helping learners sustain their active participation and engagement in the program. This is corroborated by *Participant 7,* who stated that, *"support from family encourages and motivates learners to continue attending ALS."* Another remark from Participant 8 stressed that, *"self-confidence, flexibility, and support from teachers and peers empower learners to reach their goals and develop abilities."*

II.5.d Inclusivity and Opportunities for Marginalized Groups

It was highlighted that ALS empowers learners by being inclusive and accessible to diverse groups, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), senior citizens, adults, out-of-school youth, and other marginalized sectors.

Participant 14 affirmed the *"access to education through ALS by catering to diverse learners, including seniors and PWD. ALS gives marginalized groups a chance to shine and develop.*" Participant 15 highlighted *"inclusivity, as it welcomes PWDs, PDLs, adults, out-of-school youth, and others, ensuring that no one is left behind and conveys the message that everyone deserves education."*

III INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE RETENTION

III.1 Teaching Methods that Engage ALS Learners

Teaching methods play a pivotal role in shaping the learning experiences of ALS learners, who often come from diverse backgrounds with unique educational, socio-economic, and personal challenges. Unlike traditional classrooms, ALS settings require approaches that go beyond cognitive development to also

address learners' affective, social, and contextual needs. Effective teaching strategies in this context must therefore be flexible, learner-centered, and responsive, ensuring that instruction is meaningful and relevant to learners' real-life situations.

III.1.a Real-Life and Contextualized Learning

A dominant theme that echoed across the participants' responses is the importance of relating lessons to learners' daily lives. Participants emphasized that relevance enhances interest and persistence in learning. It can be gleaned from their narratives that ALS clients learn well when lessons are highly contextualized and relatable.

Participant 3 narrated that *"practical, daily life–relevant lessons suit adult self-paced learners.*" The same account is experienced by Participant 4: *"real-life examples, flexible pacing, learner participation in goal-setting, praise, recognition, and a safe, non-judgmental environment maintain engagement and motivation."* Another insight is shared by Participant 7, who suggested that "*collaborative learning and real-world applications effectively keep learners motivated."*

The narrative of Participant 10 highlighted "*fun activities, real-life lessons, and praise to maintain learner interest and motivation*." Meanwhile, Participant 14 emphasized that *"practical, life-related activities, group work, peer learning, positive reinforcement, and celebrating small successes build interest and confidence*." In relation to this, Participant 16 uttered *that "interactive, contextualized teaching makes learning meaningful and responsive to daily experiences*." Lastly, Participant 19 believes that "*methods that respect learners' realities, build confidence, and connect lessons to life experiences are most effective."*

III.1.b Experiential and Collaborative Approaches

Another strong theme is experiential learning coupled with collaboration. Learners thrive when actively involved in hands-on and participatory activities. Learners learn from one another as they collectively construct new knowledge through discussion and sharing of ideas. The diversity of learners' ideas makes the learning journey even more meaningful to them.

Participant 1 has clearly verbalized *"that discussions, group activities, experiential learning, technology use, and fostering belongingness keep learners engaged and help them thrive*." Adding to this, Participants 6 and 7 underscored that *"experiential and collaborative strategies work best for the learners in the ALS setting."*

"Employing a story-based approach, interactive discussions, reflective journaling, and emphasizing practical relevance to sustain engagement are the most effective strategies, as claimed by Participant 12. Meanwhile, Participant 18 insisted that p*roject-based, personalized, gamified, collaborative, real-world connected, technology-integrated, and active learning methods are effective."*

III.1.c Recognition and Learners' Sense of Belongingness

Based on the narratives, recognition of learners' progress and fostering a supportive atmosphere emerged as crucial motivational strategies. When learners feel accepted and valued in the learning space, they are motivated to sustain their interest despite the personal barriers they are facing in attending learning sessions.

Participant 2 affirmed that "*recognition and celebrating progress and small wins encourage learners*." Subsequently, Participant 4 resonated that *"praise, recognition, and a safe, non-judgmental environment maintain engagement and motivation*." According to Participant 10, "*giving positive feedback and praise boosts learner interest and motivation*." Participant 14 agreed by commenting that *"positive reinforcement and celebrating small successes continually build interest and confidence."*

III.1.d Flexibility and Adaptability of Strategies

Several participants stressed that no single teaching method fits all learners; rather, teachers must adapt to varied needs, schedules, and learning paces. With this, teachers adopt an eclectic approach, adjusting the strategy depending on the type of learners. Flexibility in teaching strategies is responsive to the individual capacity and strengths of the learners.

Participant 9 has clearly stated that *"a flexible combination of strategies tailored to learners' needs ensures mastery of competencies."* This was supported by Participant 17 in insisting that "*there is no single method that works for all; adapting to diverse learner situations and schedules keeps them engaged*." Furthermore, Participant 20 adamantly affirmed *that "a combination of strategies makes the teaching-learning process interesting."*

III.1.e Face-to-Face Sessions and Personalized Support

Despite the increasing emphasis on digital tools, participants highlighted the importance of personal interaction and one-on-one support in motivating learners. They believe that the traditional physical interaction remains effective in the teaching and learning process.

Convincingly, Participant 5 revealed that *"face-to-face instruction remains effective in motivating learners. The transition of knowledge and tracking of learning progress can easily be determined.*" This is corroborated by Participant 15, by emphasizing that *"face-to-face and one-on-one tutorials provide needed support and motivation."*

III.2 Experiential and Contextual Learning

Experiential and contextual learning are recognized as vital approaches in an alternative learning pathway where learners often come from disadvantaged backgrounds with diverse life experiences. Unlike formal education that frequently relies on standardized curricula, ALS must adapt to learners' realities, integrating their lived experiences into instructional practices.

III.2.a Integration of Learners' Experiences and Prior Knowledge

Several participants emphasized that building on learners' personal experiences and prior knowledge makes lessons more meaningful and effective. ALS teachers prioritize lessons based on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Forms completed by each learner. In these assessment forms, learners are encouraged to write their acquired knowledge and skills drawn from previous schooling, work experiences, training attended, and other informal sources. They also consider the results of the Assessment of Basic Literacy (ABL) and Functional Literacy Test (FLT) in designing a more appropriate and tailored intervention for each learner.

Participant 1 revealed that *"incorporating learners' own experiences, designing contextualized materials, and building from prior knowledge to introduce new concepts is essential.*" Participant 2 conveyed that *"contextualized lessons encourage learners to share experiences, analyze, and learn better."*

The gist of the personal account of Participant 6 emphasized that "*learners learn more effectively through their own experiences*." Additionally, Participant 14 emphasized that "*learners become highly engaged when asked about personal experiences at lesson start, middle, and end, linking them to the topic."*

III.2.b Application of Real-Life and Localized Materials

Many participants shared that they link lesson relevance to real-life, localized situations that learners could directly relate to. When they apply this strategy, learners show greater eagerness to learn and interact.

Convincingly, Participant 3 stressed that *"experiential and contextual learning is engaging and fits adult learners who have gained skills through life experiences."* Participant 7 added that *"using real-life*

situations and localized examples helps learners connect and understand lessons better." This belief is corroborated by Participants 8, 9, and 16, with their narratives that *"integrating lessons into real-life situations simplifies understanding, develops critical thinking, and makes learning meaningful and practical*." This was expounded by Participants 11 and 17 with their responses that the "*use of real-life examples and familiar situations enhances understanding and derives greater relevance and impact."*

III.2.c Hands-on, Interactive, and Project-Based Approaches

Hands-on and interactive activities, as essential to experiential learning, are repeatedly mentioned. They confirmed that when learners are passive listeners to the teacher's lecture and a one-way teaching style, learners are less likely to learn. However, when they engage learners in hands-on learning, they respond eagerly.

Interestingly, Participant 4 commented that *"learners learn better when they connect lessons to real-life experiences, environment, and needs through examples, role-playing, simulations, and projects, building knowledge and life skills*." Participant 5 explained the *"importance of using real-life examples and problem-based learning to foster critical thinking and active participation*." Meanwhile, Participant 10 believed that "*lively and interactive learning interventions make lessons easy to master."*

Inspired by the teaching principle of Confucius, Participant 12 adopted a "*learning-by-doing strategy, capitalizing on learners' own experiences, and emphasizing real-world situations and relevance*." This was supported by Participant 15 explained that *"utilizing the 4As approach, hands-on methods, contextualization, and localization make lessons relevant, engaging, and practical*." Participant 18 was keen on "*designing lessons that are practical, real-life based*, *and with hands-on activities*." Similarly, Participant 19 "*made use of hands-on activities, real-world applications, problem-solving exercises, service-learning projects, and reflective practices."*

III.2.d Contextualization through Community and Daily Life Activities

Some participants stressed embedding lessons into learners' daily responsibilities and community life as a way of making learning functional and empowering. Learners, especially adults, appreciate the lesson if it responds to a problem or situation they are experiencing, or helps improve their daily living.

The key strategy employed by Participant 13 was *"integrating daily life and responsibilities into lessons, health practices, functional literacy tasks, and community activities, making* education *practical and empowering*." Moreover, Participant 20 said, "*I connected lessons to real experiences through actual scenarios, community-based activities, role-playing, simulations, and local culture integration.*"

III.2.e Fostering Critical Thinking, Relevance, and Empowerment

Lastly, participants emphasized that contextual and experiential learning should foster critical thinking and empower learners to apply knowledge in practical ways.

Participant 5 emphasized that "*problem-based learning fosters critical thinking and active participation*." Furthermore, Participant 8 underscored that *"integrating lessons into real-life situations simplifies understanding, develops critical thinking, and makes learning meaningful."* Participant 19 added that "*problem-solving exercises, community projects, and reflective practices are valuable teaching strategies."*

III.3 Challenges in Sustaining Learner Retention

Learner retention remains one of the most critical and perennial challenges in the ALS program. Unlike traditional classrooms, ALS learners face unique barriers, including poverty, family responsibilities, unstable employment, psychosocial struggles, and a lack of support systems. Retention is not only

influenced by academic factors but also by socio-economic realities, personal motivation, and the capacity of teachers to sustain engagement.

III.3.a Socio-Economic and Work-Related Barriers

A common barrier cited by participants was the conflict between education and learners' financial or family responsibilities. Teachers observed that work, poverty, and family duties often caused absenteeism and dropouts. Despite these, ALS teachers are employing appropriate strategies to address the obstacles. Participant 2 lamented that *"working/employed learners make retention difficult but* efficiently addressed by reviewing previous lessons." Some issues noted by Participant 5 were: *"irregular attendance, economic hardship, and limited support impede retention; these were addressed through flexible scheduling, building strong relationships with learners, and regular communication*." Participants 9 and 11 underscored the following barriers: *"Work/family duties, financial struggles, and loss of motivation. These were mitigated through open communication, flexible schedules, encouragement, recognition of achievements, and home visits."*

Conversely, Participant 12 addressed "*financial constraints by fostering hope and recognizing each learner's unique situation*." Moreover, Participant 17 expressed that "*financial hardship, lack of family support, and work duties affect retention; addressed these with flexible schedules, home visits, and emotional support and encouragement*." The same challenge was felt by Participant 20 by stressed that "*economic pressures and lack of support were addressed through flexible schedules, online/modular learning, community orientations, and home visits."*

III.3.b Irregular Attendance and Absenteeism

Many participants identified irregular attendance as a persistent challenge, often rooted in economic or family issues, and addressed it through home visitation, family dialogue, and consistent communication. As testified by Participant 3, *"the retention issue due to irregular attendance was addressed through home visits, family dialogues, and creating a safe space where ideas are respected*." The same concern was resolved by Participant 5 through "*flexible scheduling, establishing strong relationships, and regular communication."*

In the same manner, absenteeism was addressed by Participant 6 through "*follow-ups and home visits to learners"*, while Participant 13 conveyed that *"irregular attendance, poverty, and low self-esteem were addressed through flexible schedules, home visits, motivational start of lessons, and establishing a safe, encouraging learning environment."*

III.3.c Low Motivation and Confidence

Several participants observed that learners often lose interest due to low motivation, lack of confidence, or short attention spans. Teachers addressed this with engaging strategies, recognition of small wins, and supportive environments.

As surmised by Participant 1, "*lack of interest is addressed by identifying learning styles and interests, using strategies like competency-based instruction to sustain retention."* On the other hand, Participant 8 suggested that *"the lack of engagement was addressed through multimedia, gamification, hands-on activities, and regular practice opportunities."*

Based on the actual experiences of ALS teachers, *"unpredictable personal/economic issues, lack of motivation, and low confidence are addressed with flexible methods, a supportive environment, and fostering motivation by celebrating small achievements*", as conveyed by Participant 4. Seemingly, Participant 14 observed that *"retention is affected by short attention spans; addressed by infusing mini-games, group presentations, flexible schedules, and modular/online learning."*

Participant 15 commented that *"unstable life situations, low motivation, and lack of support were addressed with a flexible, learner-centered approach, make-up/modular learning, and community-based learning sessions*." Moreover, Participant 19 stated that *"retention was affected by diverse learning styles, addressed through active engagement, relevance of lessons, feedback, and support."*

III.3.d Flexible and Learner-Centered Modalities

A recurring response from teachers was the need for flexibility in schedules, instructional strategies, and learning modalities to accommodate learners' unstable circumstances. Imposing a single learning modality for varied types of learners is not feasible in a second-chance education set-up.

Participant 7 strongly suggested that *"sustaining retention is achieved by allowing learners to learn at their own pace, using peer teaching, and hands-on activities for engagement*." Nonetheless, Participant 10 ensured "*retention by reviewing past lessons, following assessments for goals, and encouraging note-taking*." The same concern was resolved by Participant 15 with *"a flexible, learner-centered approach, schedule adjustments, make-up/modular learning, and community-based learning sessions."*

"The various work and family responsibilities were also addressed with flexibility, and a constant reminder of their learning goals" by Participant 16. In addition, "*retention was addressed by adjusting the learning intervention to learners' schedules, issues, and needs*" by Participant 18.

III.3.e Supportive Relationships, Home Visitation, and Recognition of Progress

Another theme was recurrently identified, which highlighted the significance of relational and emotional support, including communication with families, establishing safe environments, and celebrating learner progress.

This was evidently practiced by Participant 3 through "*creating a safe space for everyone where ideas are respected*." The same approach is adopted by Participant 17 by "*providing emotional support and encouragement to learners*." Meanwhile, Participant 13 echoed that *"a motivational start to lessons and establishing a safe and encouraging learning environment is vital".* Participant 4 invested in "*celebrating small achievements to sustain motivation*." Participant 9 chose to have "*open communication with learners, conduct home visits, offer flexible learning schedules, encourage, and constantly recognize small wins."*

III.4 Contextualized Instruction to cater to Varying Learning Abilities

In the ALS context, learners come from diverse socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, often carrying different learning abilities, prior knowledge, and lived experiences. This diversity requires teachers to design instruction that is not only flexible but also contextualized, ensuring relevance and inclusivity.

III.4.a Cultural and Community Relevance

Several participants contextualized lessons by embedding cultural identity, community realities, and everyday experiences into learning. They affirmed that contextualizing the lesson to their community life is the main strategy for navigating the effectiveness of their instruction.

Participant 1 emphasized "*designing lessons that are based on learners' experiences*, *ensuring they are relatable, age-appropriate, and culturally relevant*." Similarly, Participant 2 echoed this by "*adapting lessons to "learners' situations and communities with examples visible and familiar to them*." Participant 6 noted more details, such as the "*importance of utilizing locally available materials to connect school lessons with the surrounding community."*

"The integration of local culture, language, and community context into instruction" was highlighted by Participant 15. Another strategy is stressed by Participant 17 by *"using local examples, mother tongue, and real-life tasks, to align with learners' lives, and therefore generate active participation."*

III.4.b Differentiated Instruction

Many participants emphasized adjusting lesson content, difficulty levels, and teaching methods to fit learners' diverse abilities. The instruction is deeply anchored in each learner's capacity, learning styles, and multiple intelligences.

Participant 4 adapted instruction by "*using group activities, storytelling, role-playing, and hands-on tasks, while differentiating based on needs*." This was agreed by Participant 5 through "*assessing first learners' needs, using simple and clear language, and differentiated instruction."* Furthermore, Participant 7 *"adjusted the lesson's level of difficulty according to learners' capabilities and strengths."*

"Employing differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning needs, styles, and abilities" was adopted by Participant 8. Meanwhile, Participant 14 *"allowed learners to choose activities (e.g., singing, dancing, engaging multiple intelligences) to accommodate varied learning styles."* Participant 19 described "*applying differentiated instruction, culturally responsive teaching, UDL, learning profiles, and real-world connections."*

III.4.c Assessment-Based Instruction

Several participants stressed the role of initial and ongoing assessments to tailor lessons according to learners' levels, skills, and prior experiences. The use of various ALS assessment forms guides the teachers in prioritizing lessons, choosing the most workable strategies, and assessing learning progress.

Participant 9 noted that *"assessing learners' backgrounds, needs, and levels through interviews, FLT, and observations, and adapting lessons to be relevant to their needs is an effective strategy."* The same practice is employed by Participant 13 by "*conducting assessments (FLT, RPL) to understand skills, interests, prior learning, and experiences before planning instruction."*

Similarly, Participant 18 also used *"Functional Literacy Test (FLT) and Basic Literacy Test* (ABL) *results for learner profiling"* and grouped learners accordingly. Participant 20 also *"started with the FLT to determine learning levels and used differentiated instruction aligned with learning styles and individual learning goals."*

III.4.d Flexible and Inclusive Pedagogies

Participants highlighted flexibility in instruction delivery, language use, and activity design as key in catering to learner diversity. Also, the inclusive nature of teaching approaches in ALS encompasses learners' needs based on age, ability, and background.

To capture interest and sustain participation, Participant 3 opted to utilize "*meaningful life quotes integrated into discussions*." Participant 10 claimed the "*use differentiation, culturally relevant materials, real-life experiences, and UDL principles to make lessons inclusive*." On the other hand, Participant 11 invested in "*using simple language, real-life examples, and activities that match learners' experiences."* *"Capitalizing on listening to learners' stories and experiences and incorporating these into lesson delivery*", was the creative strategy used by Participant 12. Furthermore, Participant 16 relied on "*real-life examples and hands-on activities related to learners' daily lives."*

IV INDICATORS OF SUCCESS IN A SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION

IV.1 Academic Achievement as a Form of Success

The measurement of learner success in the ALS requires a broader perspective beyond academic achieve-

ment. In contexts where marginalized learners face socio-economic, cultural, and personal barriers, indicators of success must be multi-dimensional, spanning literacy acquisition, life skills application, employability, community engagement, and personal transformation. Success in ALS thus reflects not only educational milestones, such as completing the program or passing the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test, but also behavioral changes, empowerment, and the ability to apply learning in everyday life.

IV.1.a Academic Achievement and Certification

As an alternative learning program parallel to the formal school system, several participants emphasized academic outcomes as tangible indicators of success. It is focused on acquiring certifications and a diploma as proof of completing a particular educational level. This also connotes the mastery of expected competencies in the grade level completed.

For Participant 6, *"the most tangible indicator is the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test result*." This claim was agreed by Participant 5, who highlighted *"the passing of the A&E Test as a concrete outcome, aside from learners' application of acquired skills in daily life."* Participant 15 reiterated indicators such as "*mastery of basic literacy and numeracy, completing modules, and passing the A&E Test, which certifies a learner's competence equivalent to formal education*." Moreover, Participant 17 stressed "*improved literacy and numeracy and passing the A&E Test*." The same notion is shared by Participant 16, who linked "*success with learning progress, and especially passing the A&E Test."*

IV.1.b Application of Learning in Daily Life

Many participants stressed that success in ALS education should not be confined to academic outputs but should be evident in real-life applications and respond to their daily needs. These are tangible outcomes beyond a completion certificate or diploma. It is manifested in the positive outcomes of learning by translating it into meaningful applications.

Participant 1 clearly stated that "*success is when learners apply academic learning and develop values to improve their lives*." Similar emphasis was stressed by Participant 4 that *"the daily life application of learning, and enthusiasm for continuous learning are intangible indicators*." Suffice it to say, Participant 7 also stated the "*application of learned skills as proof of success in alternative education*." Moreover, Participant 8 clarified that "*demonstrated knowledge and daily life application of skills are measures of success*." Participant 14 underscored that "*success is not just about obtaining a diploma or certificate*, but *applying learned values and skills in work and life*." Furthermore, Participant 16 associated success with the "*application of learning and achievement of personal goals."*

IV.1.c Progression to Higher Education, Employment, and Community Participation

Some participants stressed that success is evident when learners move forward to further life opportunities. Their engagement in the program has broadened their horizons and perspectives. From passive spectators of what lies ahead, they become more courageous to chase every chance for a better future. This is evident in the personal narratives of the ALS teachers.

Participant 3 verbalized that *"tracking learners after the program, some are already employed, while others continue higher education."* Participant 9 noted that *"indicators include pursuing further education, employment, and active community involvement*." Participant 10 witnessed how learners become globally competitive and valued in their own communities, as against their plight before enrolling in the program. Similarly, Participant 19 emphasized *"achievement of competencies, improved literacy, and progression to further education or employment*." Participant 20 insisted that "*indicators of success*

include growth beyond grades, overcoming struggles, and building a better future for themselves and their families."

IV.1.d Behavioral Change, Self-Esteem, and Lifelong Learning

Affective and behavioral changes as viewed as signs of success. Above and beyond the curriculum standards set in evaluating learners' progress, the measurement is also observable in personal development and the acquisition of life skills.

Participant 2 stressed "*remarkable positive life changes in the learner as indicators of success*." Participant 11 emphasized the "*ability to read, write, solve problems independently, and aim for continuous learning.*" The other indicator is the learners' "*ability to communicate properly and integrate into the community*", as affirmed by Participant 12. Participant 13 witnessed the *"improvement of functional literacy, behavioral transformation, and goal attainment, or personal milestones*."

IV.2 Measurement of Progress Beyond Academic Achievements

Measuring progress beyond traditional academic achievements in the ALS context highlights the multidimensional nature of education. Unlike formal schooling that often equates success with test scores and academic milestones, ALS educators and learners recognize progress in terms of personal development, behavioral change, social participation, and life skills acquisition.

IV.2.a Application of Learning in Real-Life Contexts

Many participants emphasized that progress should be measured by learners' ability to apply their learning in everyday situations. The practical translation of these learning into valuable actions improving personal, family, and community life is beyond measure. The participants have witnessed how the classroom discussions are brought into actual applications.

As evidently witnessed by Participant 1, "*learners' progress is observed in the effective application of knowledge in daily living, growth, and maturity in making life decisions*." Participant 8 also noted the "*acquired life and survival skills of learners and how they apply these in facing everyday challenges*." Similarly, Participant 11 stressed the "*real-life application of learning."*

It was highlighted by Participant 14 that "*real-life achievements and problem-solving abilities matter more than academic honors*." Meanwhile, Participant 20 reinforced this by noting "*learners' acquired life skills applied and tested in real situations*."

IV.2.b Personal Growth and Self-Confidence

A strong pattern in the responses highlighted personal transformation, confidence building, and motivation as markers of progress. These are determinants of improvement attributed to learners' inclusion in the ALS program. Values formation and personal development are deliberately integrated into the learning interventions.

Because of learners' engagement in the program, Participant 2 noted "*improved self-confidence, increased motivation, and active participation in ALS classes*." Participant 4 expounded this as "*personal, social, and behavioral growth, improved self-confidence, communication skills, participation, and responsibility*." Another account, as confessed by Participant 5, emphasized "*personal development, social, and emotional growth*."

Moreover, Participant 16 described growth as "*enhanced confidence, life skills, and responsibility beyond test results*." Likewise, Participant 18 articulated the observed "*personal growth and increasing self-confidence*." Participant 17 also divulged the "*increased confidence, active community participation, and informed decision-making among learners."*

IV.2.c Socio-Emotional and Behavioral Development

Another cluster of responses pointed to socio-emotional maturity, teamwork, and improved relationships as key indicators. Indeed, the learning is translated and beneficial to the learners' disposition in relating to the bigger social network. It expands beyond personal and family life.

Participant 4 noted that "*learners developed respect, teamwork in the workplace, and communication skills*." Meanwhile, Participant 7 emphasized "*improved peer and adult relationships, community involvement, problem-solving skills, and stress and emotional management."* It was also shared by Participant 10 that "*learners have enhanced their critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, positive well-being, and socio-emotional development*." Furthermore, Participant 19 identified "*soft skills development, personal growth, and social responsibility."*

IV.2.d Community Involvement and Social Responsibility

Another significant measure of progress in ALS goes beyond individual gains and extends to learners' active role in the community. These attributes have impacted them as fully functioning individuals and members of the community where they belong.

Participant 9 recognized "*learners' active participation in the community. Some have also manifested leadership and more involvement in community activities*." The same observation was confessed by Participant 17, highlighting "*learners' active community participation. Participant 15 linked progress and success to becoming a productive citizen."*

IV.2.e Career Readiness and Life Stability

The last theme highlights how learners' acquisition of practical and career-oriented skills translates into stability and opportunities. Since many learners are working or engaged in economic activities while studying, the program also includes the development of practical and soft skills in the curriculum, hence the adoption and integration of the ALS Life Skills Curriculum.

Participant 3 noted that "*progress is seen through an improved life situation*." Meanwhile, Participant 15 emphasized "*practical skills, financial stability, self-sufficiency, and contentment*." Finally, Participant 19 pointed to "*career readiness and acquiring employment soft skills as parts of progress.*"

IV.3 External Factors Influencing Learner Success

The success of learners does not solely depend on instructional strategies or individual determination. It is also heavily influenced by external factors such as family support, livelihood opportunities, and stakeholder involvement. These external conditions provide the socio-emotional, financial, and material foundation necessary for learners to persist, complete the program, and transition successfully to higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning.

IV.3.a Family Support in Sustaining Learner Motivation

Understandably, family support emerged as the most dominant factor across participants' responses. It is the underlying anchor that propels learners' determination, resilience, and inspiration. It is expected to be the learners' strongest support system that determines their sustained efforts and success.

Aligning with this, Participant 2 said that *"family support is a major factor in learner success."* This was corroborated by Participant 3, who stated that "*strong family support matters."* The same perspective was shared by Participant 6, who emphasized that "*the family plays a big role in the learning journey."*

Participant 12 has elaborated that "*family assistance, care, love, and inspiration make learners' lives and engagement in the ALS program more meaningful*." In addition, Participant 14 asserted that "*while external factors matter, family support is the main reason learners persevere*."

IV.3.b Livelihood Opportunities as Catalysts for Educational Persistence

Many participants emphasized that access to livelihood opportunities reduces financial stress and sustains learners' commitment to the program. Because of economic burden, many learners eventually disengage, affecting their non-completion of the program. It also impedes their opportunity to achieve better lives because of limited education.

Participant 1 insisted that *"opportunities to earn income while learning sustain participation*." Consequently, Participant 5 explained that "*livelihood opportunities reduce financial stress while attending ALS classes and allow consistent class attendance*." Moreover, Participant 7 reflected that *"livelihood opportunities impact success by affirming decisions and keeping learners motivated."*

The observation of Participant 11 resonated with the preceding narratives by mentioning that the "*availability of job opportunities helps learners stay in the community learning centers and succeed*." Likewise, Participant 15 confirmed that "*external factors, such as offering job opportunities, contribute to success."*

IV.3.c Stakeholder and Community Support

Beyond family and economic support, the active involvement of stakeholders, such as municipal and barangay local government units (LGUs), non-government organizations (NGOs), private institutions, and other government agencies, plays a crucial role in providing resources, safe environments, and encouragement.

Participant 4 highlighted that "*monetary and material assistance from stakeholders (municipality, barangay, NGOs, businesses) boosts learners' motivation*." The gist of the sharing of Participant 8 underscored that "*assistance coming from community leaders, LGUs, and NGOs paved the way for greater learner success. "*

In addition, Participant 9 verbalized "*stakeholders' help (barangay, private groups) through resources and the provision of a supportive learning environment*." Agreeably, Participant 13 expressed that "*stakeholders' (barangay, NGOs) assistance makes learners feel supported and valued*." This claim was strengthened by Participant 17, who affirmed that "*stakeholder assistance, a safe environment, and access to basic needs boost success."*

IV.3.d Interconnected External Factors Shaping Holistic Success

Several participants underscored that success is not determined by one factor alone but by the convergence of family, livelihood, and stakeholder support. Hence, the impact of collaboration and sharing of resources strengthens program implementation and ultimately results in greater learner success.

Participant 10 articulated a positive insight along this aspect by saying that "*collaboration among external factors (family, stakeholders, livelihood) influences learner success by promoting progress and holistic growth*." Convincingly, Participant 16 observed that "*family support and resources from stakeholders help keep learners motivated*." Participant 18 also added that *"family moral support and acceptance, livelihood opportunities, and stakeholder financial aid are crucial for learners to finish ALS.*

Participant 19 broadened the discussion with the following statement: *"socio-economic status of the family, community resources, cultural background, and technology access affect success".* Moreover, Participant 20 reiterated the "*interconnecting influence of family, community, and stakeholders as vital for learners to achieve their goals."*

IV.4 Teacher's Support in Setting and Achieving Long-Term Educational Goals

Providing a second chance at education for marginalized populations who, for various socio-economic,

cultural, and personal reasons, were unable to complete formal schooling, is giving a second chance in life. The role of teachers extends far beyond content delivery; they act as motivators, mentors, counselors, and facilitators who help learners set and achieve their long-term educational and life goals.

IV.4.a Consistent Monitoring, Guidance, and Motivation

Several participants emphasized the importance of monitoring learners' progress and providing consistent encouragement to sustain motivation. Participant 1 narrated, *"consistent monitoring of learners' attendance and progress, and constant motivation are important."* Similarly, Participant 2 shared, *"I helped learners set their goals and encouraged them to pursue these goals."* Participant 6 also pointed out that *"regular guidance and counseling"* are essential, while Participant 10 highlighted *"consistent guidance, motivation, and fostering a growth mindset."*

Participant 3 inspired learners by "*sharing successful stories of previous ALS passers despite the many challenges they met along the way*." Moreover, Participant 7 added that *"guidance and mentorship sustained their motivation and determination to pursue despite the obstacles."* Similarly, Participant 20 "*motivates learners to dream, set SMART goals, and work toward a successful life."*

Some participants emphasized emotional and psychosocial support. Participant 12 simply stated, *"I provided emotional support."* Participant 13 elaborated, *"I listened to learners' dreams, and helped break them into achievable steps; helped them to stay focused and resilient even when challenges arise; affirmed their small wins and achievements."*

IV.4.b Goal-Setting through Individualized Plans

Many participants highlighted structured goal setting through individualized plans. Participant 4 explained: *"I guided learners in setting short-term targets leading to bigger goals; provided mentoring, encouragement, values formation, and development of life skills. I also coordinated with families, stakeholders, and the community for scholarships or employment.* Participant 5 similarly shared, *"I provided encouragement and motivation, an individualized learning plan, and helped learners set short-term and long-term goals."*

Participant 8 detailed the process: *"I conducted individualized assessments; supported learners in setting short-term and long-term educational goals; provided guidance and mentorship; regularly monitored progress, and made referrals to stakeholders."* Participants 16, 17, and 19 also affirmed the "*use of goal-setting exercises, realistic plans, and Individual Learning Agreements."*

IV.4.c Integration of Life Skills and Linkages with Stakeholders

Another prominent theme was the integration of life skills and establishing external linkages. Participant 9 explained, *"I helped learners clarify their aspirations and align them with the lessons in the ALS Life Skills Curriculum."* Participant 14 added, *"I taught the ALS Life Skills modules in the first two weeks to help learners understand themselves better, set goals, finish their studies, and become employed."*

Participant 18 highlighted a comprehensive approach: *"I guided learners in setting realistic Individual Learning Agreements, provided counseling, connected learning to real life, tracked progress, gave exposure, and continued guidance even after learners had completed the program."* Similarly, Participants 4, 16, and 19 mentioned "*coordinating with stakeholders, communities, and families for scholarships, training, and employment opportunities."*

IV.5 Institutional and Community-Driven Initiatives Supporting Learner Success

The program thrives on the collaborative efforts of institutions, communities, and partner organizations. These initiatives not only bridge gaps in access to education but also sustain learners' motivation, improve

employability, and integrate marginalized groups into society.

IV.5.a Advocacy and Awareness through Social Mobilization

Community awareness of the ALS program and its benefits is crucial for engaging prospective learners and even stakeholders. Without public understanding and acceptance, potential learners may remain excluded or hesitant to participate. Advocacy, literacy mapping, and social mobilization ensure that ALS is visible, credible, and responsive to community needs.

Participant 1 reflected that "*advocacy and social mobilization (AdSocMob), literacy mapping, and ALS community activities promoted awareness and understanding of the ALS program and eventually led to encouragement of potential learners*." This was substantiated by Participant 4, who said that "*active support of the community and inclusion of learners in various activities boost their morale."*

Participant 13 enunciated that *"the unwavering support of the partner-barangays by extending financial and moral support to learners, providing venues, learning resources, and encouragement; local groups donate supplies, and families celebrate learners' progress, making education a community effort*." A similar account is revealed by Participant 14, who remarked that "*barangay LGU offers financial and moral support to locate, encourage, and enroll OSY/OSA*."

IV.5.b Institutional Support from DepEd

The success of ALS learners is anchored on institutional backing from DepEd, LGUs, and other government agencies. These institutions provide legal, logistical, and policy frameworks that sustain ALS delivery, ensuring its long-term stability and legitimacy.

Participant 5 stated that "*the provisions in the ALS Law (RA 11510) supported learners' success*." Moreover, "*the DepEd's provision of modules, teacher training, and the conduct of the A&E Test contributed to learners' success*", as enumerated by Participant 9. A similar articulation was conveyed by Participant 15 that "*DepEd provided teachers' training, learning materials, and the A&E Test."*

IV.5.c Technical-Vocational Skills Development

Beyond literacy, ALS must prepare learners for livelihood and employment opportunities. Aside from sustaining their regular attendance, the infusion of skills training gave them a broader chance for better employment prospects. Hence, partnerships with TESDA provide ALS learners with vocational skills and certifications that enhance their employability.

Anchoring from the experience of Participant 2, he firmly believes that "*a partnership with TESDA for technical-vocational training helps learners secure better jobs*." This was corroborated by Participants 15 and 17 in saying that "*TESDA offers skills training and certifications that pave the way for better employment opportunities*." In addition, Participant 20 stressed that "*TESDA's offering of free skills training and certification gives learners employable skills even before finishing their basic education."*

IV.5.d Support from LGUs and Stakeholders

Financial hardship is one of the primary barriers ALS learners face. Support mechanisms such as cash transfers, scholarships, school supplies, and food distribution directly affect learners' ability to sustain engagement.

Based on the narrative of Participant 4, *"financial support and school supplies from LGUs enhanced motivation and reduced drop-out"*. This was supported by Participant 16, who firmly believes that "*the support of LGUs through the provision of learning supplies and conducive learning venues keeps learners motivated and successful*." The same argument was divulged by Participant 8, who emphasized "*financial assistance, teaching supplies from Barangay LGU/SK, and Municipal LGU budget allocation as valuable contributions that sustain the ALS program."*

Another government agency, *DSWD, through the 4Ps Program, has provided financial assistance that promoted learners' success*, as affirmed by Participant 3. Furthermore, Participant 17 expressed that "*LGUs provided venues, financial/logistical support, and promulgated local ordinances promoting ALS*." Indeed, "*Municipal and Barangay LGUs have consistently extended financial and in-kind assistance to program implementation*", as confirmed by Participant 18.

Conversely, Participant 7 highlighted that "*partner NGOs provided livelihood training and employment opportunities*." This was supported by Participant 10, who underscored the *"financial support, job and business opportunities, and scholarships extended by some NGOs*." Moreover, Participant 17 concluded that "*NGOs also donated learning kits, equipment, and supplies."*

Lastly, Participant 19 underscored that "*active partnerships with local organizations, community-based programs, scholarships, and mentorship promote a learner's success*." It was further stressed that the collaboration of support from various stakeholders is more meaningful and impactful.

V INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND POLICY INFLUENCE ON ALS IMPLEMENTATION

V.1 Policy Influence on ALS Implementation

National and local policies play a crucial role in shaping the implementation, direction, and sustainability of the ALS program. These policies serve as guiding frameworks that regulate curriculum content, program standards, teacher development, funding allocation, and community partnerships. As an alternative learning pathway that caters to marginalized learners, ALS relies heavily on policy frameworks to ensure access, equity, quality, and relevance.

V.I.a Policies as Foundations of ALS Curriculum, Standards, and Instruction

Policies that lay down the foundations for curriculum development, instructional standards, and program implementation are important. They serve as guiding frameworks that ensure alignment with national education goals, promote equity and access, and allow flexibility to respond to the diverse needs of marginalized learners. Through policies, DepEd defines curriculum content, competencies, and assessment standards while supporting resource allocation and community partnerships.

As enunciated by Participant 1, *"Policies greatly influenced ALS program implementation, including resource allocation and curriculum planning that determine program success."* This was supported by Participant 5, who said that *"DepEd policies set curriculum content, competencies, and assessment standards, guiding lesson design to meet learning goals and the needs of marginalized learners*." Participant 6 added that *"DepEd provided policies on the ALS framework to address the educational needs of OSYs and OSAs."*

The same argument was expressed by Participant 7, *"The presence of DepEd policies ensures quality curriculum and standards."* Likewise, Participant 11 commented that *"national policies guide what and how to teach and provide appropriate learner support*." *This was expounded by Participant 13, who stressed that "national policies for curriculum implementation ensure quality while allowing flexibility to meet learners' unique needs and situations*." The articulation of Participant 14 revealed that "*policies ensure alignment to quality education delivery, offering flexible options allowing learners to learn at their own pace (modular, online, special needs inclusion)."*

Along with instruction, Participant 16 underscored that "*policies guide lesson planning and delivery, aligning teaching with learner needs and available support*." Similarly, Participant 17 shared that *"policies guide curriculum standards, promote access and equity, encourage learner-centered strategies, and promote partnership with local stakeholders."*

Participant 19 equated policies with "*setting standards for the provision of funds, promotion of equity and access, community involvement, and program development*." This was corroborated by the statement of Participant 20, that "*policies serve as the foundation and framework for planning, implementing, and improving ALS to align with national education goals and respond to community needs."*

V.1.b Local Policies and Community-Based Support for ALS Implementation

Local policies and community-based initiatives are supportive in strengthening the implementation of ALS. These localized efforts, often anchored on RA 11510 and complementary ordinances, provide essential resources such as learning spaces, instructional materials, financial aid, and livelihood opportunities. Beyond material support, community partnerships extend the program's reach, sustain learner participation, and ensure that education is accessible to marginalized groups.

Participants underscored how local government units (LGUs), various stakeholders, and the community influence resource allocation and program delivery, thereby making ALS more responsive and inclusive at the grassroots level. "*Promulgation of local ordinances supporting ALS is vital in program implementation*", as stressed by Participant 3. Furthermore, Participant 4 stated that "*local policies offered learning spaces, supplies and materials, financial aid, and livelihood activities. Moreover, community support also included assistance in reaching out to learners and helping sustain their participation."*

Similarly, Participant 7 observed that "*local policies influence funding and resource allocation for ALS program implementation and/or improvement*." This was agreed by Participant 9, who commented that "*local policies support spaces, mapping, and partnerships to expand reach and program impact*." Finally, Participant 13 affirmed that "*local ordinances and LGU support bring education closer to marginalized communities and clients."*

V.1.c Policies on Teacher Development and Professional Support

Teacher development and professional support are central to sustaining the quality of the Alternative Learning System (ALS). National and local policies provide clear frameworks for teacher training, delivery standards, and curriculum enhancement, ensuring that ALS implementers are equipped to meet diverse learner needs.

It was highlighted that such policies and training opportunities enhance teachers' performance, guide instructional practices, and empower them as frontliners in delivering accessible, equitable, and quality education in the field. Participant 2 narrated that "*participation in a national training helped perform the duties and responsibilities better*." Meanwhile, Participant 8 explained that "*national policies shaped the approach in ALS education: delivery standards and guidelines; professional development for teachers; and curriculum development/enhancement*."

More specifically, Participant 12 reiterated that "*the Education for All (EFA) of 2015 shaped the teaching principles and values, and a teacher who advocated for educational transformation*." Participant 15 also clarified that "*national and local policies are foundations for implementing ALS, with teachers directly implementing it in the field."*

V.1.d Gaps and Areas for Policy Improvement

While existing national and local policies have guided the program's implementation, participants highlighted that these policies do not always fully address the diverse needs of ALS learners. They noted both strengths and limitations, emphasizing the need for continuous review, alignment, and enhancement to ensure policies remain responsive, inclusive, and supportive of learners and teachers alike.

Candidly, Participant 10 confessed that "*policies should be improved to fit every ALS learner's needs*." The same sentiment was expressed by Participant 15, who uttered that "*approaches need to be aligned to*

the real context of learners." Furthermore, Participant 18 reiterated that, *"National and local policies have both positive and negative impacts on ALS approaches and program delivery, which should be revisited. The possible refinement will improve program implementation."*

V.2 Institutional Support and Its Impact on ALS Teaching Effectiveness

The effectiveness of teaching in ALS largely depends not only on the pedagogical competence of teachers but also on the extent of institutional support they receive. Given the unique contexts of the learners, ALS educators face multiple challenges, including limited resources, a lack of learning spaces, and diverse learner needs. Institutional support in the form of resources, continuous professional training, technical assistance, mentoring, coaching, and funding thus plays a pivotal role in enabling teachers to provide inclusive, responsive, and effective education.

V.2.a Provision of Funds and Adequate Learning Resources

During the discussion, it was revealed that the availability of resources and financial support is a cornerstone of effective ALS teaching. Without any share received from the MOOE, teachers are dependent on other sources to implement the program.

Participant 1 emphasized that "*support for adequate resources matters a lot*." Participant 4 echoed that "*access to quality materials reinforces a sustained learner engagement*." Similarly, Participant 15 insisted on "*prioritizing funds for learner resources and ongoing teacher training to ensure program effectiveness*." Moreover, Participant 18 underscored that "*the most needed support is funding for ALS activities, provision of community learning centers, and IT equipment."*

It was underscored by Participant 9 that "*adequate funding for learning materials, lesson delivery, and learner assessment are factors that support teaching effectiveness*." Additionally, Participant 20 verbalized that "*financial support improves teaching, meets learner needs, and sustains their active engagement."*

V.2.b Continuous Training and Professional Development

Another strong theme that surfaced from participants' responses is the importance of ongoing training for ALS teachers. As the heart of the instruction, teachers' capacity to carry out the different aspects of program implementation is essential.

Participant 2 divulged that "*the conduct of Learning Action Cell (LAC) Sessions is a huge professional help*." In addition, Participant 5 stressed that "*training and professional development, and technical assistance, directly impact the teaching quality*." Moreover, Participant 11 affirmed that "*training from the national and local levels supports teaching*." Another response from Participant 19 revealed that "*professional development through training, workshops, and conferences enhances teaching skills."*

V.2.c Technical Assistance, Mentoring, and Coaching

Several participants stressed the value of guidance and support from mentors, educational leaders, and technical experts. Based on the experiences of the participants, aside from the formal training, mentoring and coaching are the readily available assistance that help them navigate complex tasks.

From the personal point of view of Participant 3, *"mentoring and coaching activities should be strengthened*." Admittedly, Participant 6 confessed that *"ALS teachers need technical assistance and supervision to thrive despite the challenges*." Participant 7 resonated with this perspective, who stressed that "*technical assistance and mentoring enhance teaching by improving skills and resource mobilization*." Certainly, Participant 13 articulated that *"continuous training, mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance empower effective and creative teaching*." Lastly, Participant 12 mentioned that

"*adequate funding, training, and coaching from knowledgeable mentors help build teaching skills, motivation, and resilience.*"

V.3 Policy-Related Challenges in ALS Program Implementation

The delivery of the program is highly dependent not only on teachers' dedication but also on the policy environment within which they operate. While ALS seeks to provide accessible and inclusive education to marginalized and out-of-school learners, teachers often confront policy-related challenges that limit its implementation and impact. Understanding these issues through the lived experiences of ALS implementers provides valuable insights for strengthening educational governance, ensuring teacher empowerment, and promoting learner equity.

V.3.a Inadequate and Delayed Funding

Sustainable funding is vital for the successful implementation of the program. However, participants consistently identified inadequate and delayed financial support as a major barrier to effective program delivery. Insufficient funds, lack of timely provision of resources, and delays in teacher allowances and learning materials undermine the system's capacity to meet its objectives.

It was clearly elaborated by Participant 1 that "*limited funds, lack of learning facilities and training, and some leaders' lack of mastery in guiding the teachers are factors affecting their performance*." Participant 5 enunciated that "*limited funding and resource allocation (no MOOE), inadequate teacher training and support are some of the challenges.*" Participant 6 expressed the same dilemma that "*limited fund for ALS is a big factor that affects the implementation*." In addition, Participant 7 disclosed that "*limited funding, resources, and community engagement*, *plus insufficient teacher training and support, derail the program delivery*." Participant 15 also lamented that "*the lack of funding for essential supplies vis-à-vis the high learner target, which is 75 enrollees per teacher per school year, calls for a need for DepEd to review the policy*."

On the other hand, Participant 16 voiced out the "*delays in receiving the Special Hardship Allowance (SHA), and transportation and teaching aid allowance used for learning supplies*." Meanwhile, Participant 17 clarified that "*limited budget, delayed learning materials, insufficient teacher training, and gaps between national directives and local implementation affect the impact of the program in the field*." Ultimately, Participant 20 reasoned out that "*delayed policy implementation, unclear roles, budget issues, and a weak support system at the governance level hinder ALS's potential to be more responsive, equitable, and impactful*."

V.3.b Limited Professional Development and Inclusive Training

The effectiveness of the program greatly depends on the preparedness and continuous capacity-building of its teachers. Yet, participants highlighted recurring gaps in professional development, including insufficient training, limited coaching, and a lack of opportunities for specialized learning. In particular, the absence of inclusive training for addressing the needs of learners with disabilities, special groups, and marginalized communities hinders the program's ability to deliver equitable and responsive education. These gaps underscore the urgent need for stronger, targeted, and inclusive professional development initiatives for ALS teachers.

Participant 1 confirmed that "*the absence of adequate learning facilities and training contributes to policy-related challenges*." Similarly, Participant 7 emphasized that "*insufficient teacher training and support remain persistent barriers*." In line with this, Participant 8 highlighted "*the lack of adequate support for ALS educators, particularly in terms of training and coaching*."

Conversely, Participant 13 raised the *"lack of specialized training for learners with disabilities and special needs, and limited capacity for inclusive education."* This was corroborated by Participant 15, who highlighted "*insufficient training for learners with special needs and special groups (PDLs, substance abuse survivors, IPs)*." Lastly, Participant 17 emphasized *"insufficient teacher training"* as a persistent issue.

V.3.c Policy Inconsistencies and Implementation Gaps

While national policies provide direction for this second-chance education program, participants revealed that inconsistencies and gaps in implementation significantly hinder its effectiveness. Frequent policy changes, delays in execution, and a lack of alignment between national directives and local practices create confusion and weaken program delivery.

Arguably, Participant 3 confessed that "*untimely and ever-changing A&E test schedules and delayed release of results, a shift toward a formal education framework, undermine ALS' alternative approach for the marginalized learning populace*." In consonance with this, Participant 4 reasoned out that "*the lack of ALS policy awareness at the local level, weak stakeholder collaboration, inconsistent barangay/LGU support, and overwhelming documentation and reporting requirements are truly challenging*."

In the same manner, Participant 10 pointed out that "*issues on resource allocation, inconsistent implementation of policies from the top down to the field, pressure to accommodate struggling learners from the formal school, and unrealistic expectations for ALS teachers to produce more A&E passers*." Participant 17 also indicated the *"gaps between national directives and local implementation."* Participant 20 lamented the "*delayed policy implementation, unclear roles, budget issues, and weak support system at the governance level*."

V.3.d Excessive Administrative and Bureaucratic Demands

Participants highlighted that heavy administrative requirements and bureaucratic processes hinder the smooth delivery of the ALS program. Excessive reports and documentation, unrealistic expectations, and systemic barriers such as limited representation in decision-making bodies restrict teachers' ability to focus on instruction and learner support. These demands not only strain educators but also limit access to essential resources, underscoring the need to streamline processes and reduce bureaucratic burdens in ALS implementation.

Participant 4 pointed out the "*overwhelming documentation/reporting requirements as a burden*." Meanwhile, Participant 10 identified "*bureaucratic pressures, including unrealistic expectations*." Moreover, Participant 18 verbalized that *"the biometric system in central schools and non-representation of ALS in the Local School Board redound to limited resource access."* It was also noted by Participant 19 that "*bureaucratic processes affect the whole program*."

V.3.e Equity and Access Issues in ALS Governance

Ensuring equity and access is central to the mission of the program; ironically, participants underscored persistent gaps in governance that hinder inclusivity. Unequal support from local government units and DepEd, high learner targets despite limited resources, and rigid policy requirements create additional burdens for both teachers and learners. Challenges related to diverse learner needs, limited alternative pathways, and tensions between standardization and flexibility further highlight the need for policies that are fair, responsive, and inclusive.

Truthfully, Participant 9 lamented *"difficulty in obtaining fair and equal support from LGUs and DepEd."* On one hand, Participant 11 reflected "*the high target for each teacher per school year that is at least 75 learners to enroll and serve, despite the minimum budget and learning materials*." Participant 12 stressed

that "ALS teachers, as frontliners in transforming lives, *face challenges that are unique to alternative education, yet receive inadequate support*."

Participant 14 expressed that "*the policy requiring ALS graduates to finish Grade 12 before entering college or TESDA creates an additional burden for them*." Meanwhile, Participant 15 suggested the "*need for alternative exit programs other than passing the A&E Test*." Articulately, Participant 19 remarked on the "*standardization vs. flexibility issues, affecting access and equity for all types of learners*."

V.4 Institutional Policy Reforms for Strengthening ALS

Despite its potential, ALS continues to face structural and policy-related challenges that hinder its capacity to deliver inclusive and equitable education. Policy reforms are therefore seen as vital to ensuring not only the effective delivery of ALS programs but also the welfare of ALS teachers and the lifelong opportunities available for learners.

V.4.a Ensuring Adequate Resources and Funds

One of the strongest calls from ALS teachers concerns the urgent need for stable and adequate financial resources. Without proper funding, allowances, and materials, ALS delivery remains constrained, affecting both teachers' motivation and learners' engagement. This also derails the much-needed interventions of learners.

Participant 2 emphasized that policy reforms should provide *"funds, updated learning materials, training, transportation/allowances, and higher education or livelihood pathways."* Similarly, Participant 4 advocated for "*sufficient funding*", and Participant 11 requested to "*reduce the learner quota from 75 and provide national budget allocation for ALS*." Participant 16 underscored the "*timely release of benefits/allowances for teachers*", while Participant 20 called for "*timely and sufficient budget allocation, with reforms that are responsive, inclusive, and grounded in the realities of marginalized education."*

V.4.b Enhancing Teacher Professional Development and Career Recognition

Professional growth, continuous training, and recognition of ALS teachers' contributions are consistently highlighted as critical for sustaining the quality of the alternative learning pathway through the ALS.

Participant 5 emphasized *"enhancement training for teachers, professional development, recognition of achievements, and clear career pathways."* Meanwhile, Participant 4 also stressed the "*need for regular training and mentoring and career recognition for teachers*." Similarly, Participant 17 pointed out the "*importance of standardized training and career development for teachers*."

V.4.c Expanding Learner Pathways and Post-Completion Opportunities

ALS learners face limited opportunities beyond completing the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) test. Policy reforms can better support learners by expanding pathways to higher education, technical-vocational training, and employment. These opportunities should be responsive to the learners' distinct situations and contexts.

Participant 2 highlighted the "*need for higher education or livelihood pathways for program completers*." In line with this, Participant 4 recommended *"learner access to scholarships, livelihood programs, and post-A&E pathways."* Similarly, Participant 9 proposed to "*expand learners' access to scholarships, skills training, livelihood, and employment pathways*." Participant 15 stressed that "*reforms will respond to the needs of learners to ensure a quality, inclusive, and flexible education for all*."

V.4.d Promoting Inclusive, Grassroots-Driven, and Responsive Policy Reform

For policy reforms to be effective, they must be grounded in the lived experiences of ALS educators and learners. A top-down approach risks overlooking contextual realities and perpetuating ineffective madat-

es.

Participant 12 stressed the importance of *"listening to the teachers and studying the system carefully before introducing and implementing policies."* Hence, their active participation in planning and programming must be considered. Participant 13 recommended "*targeted inclusive training for teachers, increased funds for learning materials, building community learning centers, and promoting community-based programs responsive to needs*." Participant 14 emphasized that "*reforms should come from the grassroots level to gauge the real situations and sentiments of teachers and learners."*

V.5Collaborative Efforts in Improving ALS Implementation

ALS is a highly community-based teaching and caters to various kinds of learners, its implementation cannot rest solely on the Department of Education. It requires resource complementation and partnership among stakeholders. Against this backdrop, participants in this study shared their insights on how collaborative efforts between government, NGOs, communities, and stakeholders can improve ALS implementation.

V.5.a Strengthening Community and Local Government Engagement

Several participants highlighted the importance of LGU and community support in providing logistical, financial, and moral backing to ALS programs. Participant 1 articulated that "*strengthening ties can be done through frequent community visits, symposia, convergence events, and ALS graduation recognitions*." Participant 3 also highly recognizes the "*municipal LGUs, barangay, and private individuals' provision of resources and support for learning activities*." In addition, *Participant 13* emphasized "*strong Municipal LGU, barangay, and wider community partnership through logistical aid, learning venues, allowances, mobilization, promotion, and NGO/private donations*."

On the other hand, Participant 16 remarked that "*implementation can be improved if LGUs*, *NGOs, and community groups adequately provide resources, venues, and support*." Consequently, Participant 18 deliberated that "*a certain percentage of the SEF should be allocated for ALS, with Barangay LGUs actively supporting literacy mapping activities*."

V.5.b Resource Sharing and Holistic Support from NGOs and the Private Sector

Many participants recognized the contributions of NGOs, private organizations, and individuals in complementing government efforts. The ALS program needs a multi-sectoral approach, making it more holistic and responsive to the needs of learners.

Participant 2 emphasized the "*importance of joint literacy mapping activities*, *complementation of resources, NGO and LGU support, and effective advocacy campaigns are strong determinants of the success of the program*." Moreover, Participant 4 stressed that "*NGOs and private organizations provide scholarship grants, livelihood trainings, learning materials, and outreach programs*." Participant 5 significantly observed "*resource sharing among stakeholders, provision of funding support, community mobilization, and effective program advocacy as essential elements in the implementation*."

Meanwhile, Participant 11 conveyed that *"LGU and NGO financial and logistical support will help the implementation."* Finally, Participant 20 asserted that "*multi-sector collaboration and partnership bridges resource gaps, expands reach, and enriches learning through LGU logistics/facilities and NGO and civil society groups' livelihood and life skills programs shape program success*."

V.5.c Multi-Sectoral Collaboration for Skills Development and Learner Pathways

Some participants emphasized the need for inter-agency collaboration to create pathways for skills training, employment, and lifelong learning.

Participant 4 highlighted that "*government agencies such as DepEd, TESDA, and LGUs can work together to provide funding, training, and access to learning facilities*." This was supported by Participant 9, who stressed that "*multi-sectoral collaboration with stakeholders (government agencies, NGOs, LGUs, families, volunteers) improves learners' engagement and success rates*."

Participant 15 articulated that "*effective implementation will emanate from strong collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, and communities; LGUs provide learning spaces; NGOs give training and funding; barangays identify learners; inter-agency work with TESDA, DSWD, DOH, BJMP, and DOLE; and young professionals/volunteers provide mentoring to learners*." On the other hand, Participant 17 recommended "*joint livelihood training, resource sharing, community-based learning centers, NGO-led teacher capacity building, and advocacy campaigns*." Participant 19 proposed "*consistent funding for ALS to support community-based programs and projects for learners and their communities*."

V.5.d Sustaining Partnerships through Capacity Building and Advocacy

Other participants pointed to capacity building of teachers and continuous advocacy as essential for sustaining partnerships.

Participant 7 strongly believed that "*enhanced collaborative partnerships will impact the sustainability and continuity of the program*." In addition, Participant 8 suggested that "*collaboration through resource sharing, capacity building, and innovative solutions is also essential.*" Participant 10 proposed that "*line agencies must work together and complement resources to address ALS learner needs, ensure smaller enrollment targets, and provide consistent learning interventions*."

In line with this, Participant 12 remarked that "*consistent provision of funds and resources should be prioritized*." It was also underscored by Participant 14 that "*a unified, selfless support from all stakeholders will uplift quality basic education through the ALS learning pathway*."

A PROPOSAL TO STRENGTHEN THE POLICY FRAMEWORK AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR ALS TEACHERS TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION

Rationale

ALS teachers serve as frontline educators for marginalized and underserved populations, including out-of-school youth and adults, children in special cases, indigenous learners, persons with disabilities, and other special groups. Their work is critical in bridging educational gaps and promoting lifelong learning, especially in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. ALS teachers are not merely facilitators of learning, they are agents of social transformation who help learners reclaim opportunities for personal and community development.

Despite their vital role, ALS teachers often operate under challenging conditions. Many face limited access to professional development, inadequate teaching resources, and insufficient recognition within the broader education system. These constraints hinder their ability to design and deliver inclusive, learner-centered, and transformative learning experiences. Without robust institutional support, their potential to innovate and respond effectively to diverse learner needs remains underutilized.

Policy frameworks governing ALS remain fragmented or outdated, lacking alignment with contemporary educational priorities such as inclusive education, equity, and 21st-century skills. This results in inconsistencies in implementation, unclear career pathways for ALS teachers, and limited integration of ALS into mainstream education planning and decision-making. A comprehensive review and reform of

these policies are essential to ensure that ALS is recognized not as a peripheral intervention, but as an integral component of the national education agenda.

Strengthening institutional and policy support for ALS teachers aligns directly with the Department of Education's Quality Basic Education Delivery Plan (QBEDP), which emphasizes system-wide reforms aimed at improving equity, access, and quality in basic education. The QBEDP recognizes the importance of alternative and flexible learning modalities in reaching the last mile learners and ensuring that all Filipinos, regardless of their circumstances, are given the opportunity to complete basic education. By investing in ALS teachers, through targeted professional development, clear career pathways, digital integration, and policy coherence, the education system moves closer to realizing the QBEDP's goal of delivering responsive, inclusive, and transformative education for all.

Furthermore, this initiative contributes meaningfully to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly its targets on inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities. It also reflects the Department of Education's broader commitment to inclusive education and ensuring that no learner is left behind.

Institutional support must go beyond basic resources. It should include structured mentoring and supervision, access to digital tools, inclusion in decision-making processes, and the formal recognition of ALS teachers' professional roles. These mechanisms empower teachers to adopt transformative pedagogies, foster learner agency, and build inclusive learning environments that reflect the diverse realities of Filipino communities.

Investing in ALS teachers through coherent policy reforms and sustained institutional support is an investment in social equity and national development. It enables teachers to become catalysts for change, equipping learners with the skills, confidence, and opportunities to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. This rationale underscores the urgency of a strategic, well-aligned, and inclusive approach to policy and institutional reform in the ALS sector, one that is firmly anchored in the priorities of the QBEDP and the broader education development agenda of the country.

Objectives:

1. Assess existing institutional and policy support for ALS teachers.
2. Identify gaps and challenges in delivering inclusive and transformative learning.
3. Propose policy reforms that enhance ALS teacher capacity to improve learning outcomes.
4. Design mechanisms for sustained institutional support.

Key Components to Strengthen the Policy Framework

Professionalization of ALS Teachers

Professionalizing ALS teachers is a vital reform that acknowledges their unique role in delivering inclusive and transformative education to marginalized learners. Despite their significant contributions, ALS teachers often face systemic challenges such as unclear career trajectories, limited access to professional development, and insufficient recognition within the formal education system. Addressing these issues is essential to elevate their status and ensure they are equipped to meet the evolving demands of alternative education.

One key aspect of professionalization is the establishment of clear career pathways for ALS teachers. This involves defining competency standards tailored to the ALS context, creating structured promotion tracks, and recognizing prior learning and experience in non-formal education. By integrating ALS roles into the national teacher ranking and deployment system, educators will have a transparent and motivating

framework for career advancement, which can also help attract and retain qualified professionals in the sector.

Equally important is the inclusion of ALS teachers in national teacher development programs. Historically, ALS teachers have been excluded from many mainstream capacity-building initiatives, limiting their access to updated pedagogical strategies and innovations. Ensuring their participation in programs offered by institutions like the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) will provide them with opportunities for continuous learning, specialization, and professional growth.

This inclusion should also extend to scholarships, graduate studies, and tailored training focused on inclusive education, digital pedagogy, and community-based learning. By doing so, ALS teachers can enhance their instructional practices and better respond to the diverse needs of their learners. Moreover, participation in professional learning communities and innovation hubs can foster collaboration, peer support, and the sharing of best practices.

Professionalizing ALS teachers not only benefits the educators themselves but also strengthens the entire ALS ecosystem. It ensures that learners receive high-quality, relevant, and empowering education from well-supported professionals. This reform aligns with broader goals of equity and inclusion, reinforcing the idea that alternative education is not a second-tier option but a vital pathway for lifelong learning. The professionalization of ALS teachers is a strategic investment in human capital and educational equity. It affirms the value of ALS teachers, enhances their capacity to deliver transformative learning experiences, and contributes to the realization of national and global education goals, including those outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Equitable Resource Allocation

Equitable resource allocation is fundamental to ensuring that ALS teachers can deliver quality, inclusive, and transformative learning experiences. Unlike formal school settings, ALS programs are often conducted in makeshift venues such as barangay halls, community centers, or even open spaces, with limited access to instructional materials, technology, and basic infrastructure. This disparity in resources undermines the effectiveness of ALS delivery and perpetuates inequities in educational access and outcomes for marginalized learners.

To address this, policy reforms must prioritize the allocation of sufficient and appropriate resources tailored to the unique needs of ALS programs. This includes providing mobile learning centers, modular learning kits, and digital tools that support flexible and learner-centered instruction. ALS teachers should have access to teaching aids, multimedia equipment, and connectivity solutions that enable them to reach learners in remote and underserved areas. These resources must be standardized and distributed equitably across regions to avoid disparities in program quality.

Budgetary support should also be institutionalized and protected within national and local education plans. ALS programs must be included in the regular funding cycles of the Department of Education and local government units, with clear guidelines for resource utilization, monitoring, and accountability. This ensures sustainability and prevents the marginalization of ALS in budgetary decisions. Moreover, partnerships with NGOs, private sector entities, and international donors can be leveraged to augment resources and introduce innovative solutions.

Equitable resource allocation also involves investing in the professional development of ALS teachers. Funding should cover training programs, attendance at conferences, and access to learning platforms that enhance their competencies in inclusive education, digital pedagogy, and community engagement.

Providing these opportunities affirms the value of ALS educators and equips them to deliver high-impact learning experiences.

In addition, learners themselves must benefit from resource allocation through access to learning materials, assistive devices, and support services. This includes provisions for learners with disabilities, indigenous learners, and those in conflict-affected areas. Ensuring that all learners have the tools they need to succeed is a critical step toward achieving educational equity and social justice.

Equitable resource allocation is not merely a logistical concern; it is a moral and strategic imperative. It reflects a commitment to inclusive education and recognizes that quality learning should not be determined by geography, socioeconomic status, or mode of delivery. By investing in ALS programs and educators, the education system moves closer to fulfilling its promise of leaving no learner behind.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are essential for ensuring the effectiveness, accountability, and continuous improvement of ALS programs. Currently, many ALS initiatives operate with limited data collection and feedback mechanisms, making it difficult to assess learner progress, instructional quality, and program impact. Strengthening M&E systems will provide evidence-based insights that inform policy decisions, resource allocation, and pedagogical strategies, ultimately enhancing the quality and inclusivity of ALS delivery.

A key reform in this area involves the development of standardized tools and indicators for tracking learner outcomes, teacher performance, and program implementation. These tools should be aligned with national education standards while remaining flexible enough to accommodate the unique contexts of ALS learners. Indicators must go beyond basic literacy and numeracy to include life skills, employability, and social integration, reflecting the holistic goals of ALS education.

Digital platforms and mobile technologies can play a transformative role in modernizing ALS monitoring systems. By leveraging data management systems, ALS teachers and coordinators can efficiently record learner profiles, attendance, progress, and assessment results. These platforms should be user-friendly, accessible even in low-connectivity areas, and integrated with DepEd's central databases to ensure consistency and scalability. Real-time data can support timely interventions and adaptive teaching strategies.

Capacity building for ALS teachers and program managers is also crucial to ensure effective use of M&E tools. Training should focus on data literacy, reflective practice, and the use of evidence for instructional planning. Empowering educators to analyze and act on data fosters a culture of accountability and continuous improvement, where decisions are guided by learner needs and program performance.

Moreover, participatory monitoring approaches should be encouraged, involving learners, parents, community leaders, and local government units. This inclusive model promotes transparency, strengthens community ownership, and ensures that ALS programs remain responsive to local realities. Feedback loops must be established to translate evaluation findings into actionable reforms and innovations.

A strengthened monitoring and evaluation system is not just a technical upgrade—it is a strategic enabler of inclusive and transformative education. It ensures that ALS programs are not only implemented but are impactful, equitable, and aligned with national development goals. Through data-driven decision-making, the ALS sector can evolve into a dynamic and responsive system that truly leaves no learner behind.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement is a vital pillar in strengthening the delivery and sustainability of ALS programs. ALS thrives in diverse and often decentralized settings, making collaboration with local

communities, government units, civil society organizations, and private sector partners essential. These stakeholders not only provide logistical and financial support but also help contextualize learning experiences, promote inclusivity, and ensure that ALS programs are responsive to local needs and realities.
One of the key reforms in this area is the institutionalization of multi-sectoral partnerships. Local government units (LGUs), barangay councils, NGOs, and faith-based organizations can play a strategic role in supporting ALS implementation by providing venues, mobilizing learners, and co-funding programs. Formalizing these partnerships through memoranda of agreement and joint planning mechanisms ensures accountability, shared ownership, and long-term commitment to ALS goals.
Engaging parents, guardians, and community leaders also enhances learner retention and success. When families and communities understand the value of ALS and actively support learners, it fosters a more enabling environment for education. Community-based advocacy campaigns, orientation sessions, and feedback mechanisms can strengthen this engagement and build trust between ALS implementers and stakeholders.
Private sector involvement can further enrich ALS programs by offering technical expertise, employment pathways, and resources. Companies can support ALS through corporate social responsibility initiatives, skills training, and mentorship programs that align with local labor market needs. This not only benefits learners but also contributes to community development and economic inclusion.
Moreover, stakeholder engagement should be embedded in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of ALS programs. Participatory approaches ensure that programs are grounded in local realities and that stakeholders have a voice in shaping educational interventions. This inclusive governance model promotes transparency, responsiveness, and innovation in ALS delivery.
Community and stakeholder engagement transforms ALS from a government-led initiative into a shared societal responsibility. It reinforces the idea that education is a collective endeavor and that inclusive, transformative learning is achievable when communities, institutions, and individuals work together. Strengthening these partnerships is key to building resilient, learner-centered ALS ecosystems that leave no one behind.

Digital Infrastructure and Support

Digital infrastructure and support are increasingly indispensable in enhancing the reach, quality, and inclusivity of ALS programs. As education systems worldwide embrace digital transformation, ALS must also evolve to integrate technology into its delivery models. Many ALS learners reside in remote or underserved areas where access to digital tools is limited, and ALS teachers often lack the necessary equipment, connectivity, and training to implement tech-enabled learning. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure that ALS remains relevant and responsive in the digital age.
A key reform in this area involves the provision of digital devices and connectivity solutions for both ALS teachers and learners. This includes laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and internet access through community Wi-Fi hubs or data subsidies. These tools enable flexible learning modalities such as online modules, video-based instruction, and virtual mentoring, which are especially valuable in geographically isolated or conflict-affected areas. Equipping ALS teachers with digital tools also enhances their ability to create engaging content and manage learner progress efficiently.
In addition to hardware, the development and deployment of digital learning platforms tailored to ALS are crucial. These platforms should host interactive modules, assessment tools, and multimedia resources aligned with the ALS curriculum. They must be accessible, multilingual, and inclusive of learners with

disabilities. Integration with DepEd's Learning Management System (LMS) and other national education databases ensures coherence and scalability across regions.

Capacity building in digital literacy is another essential component. ALS teachers must be trained not only in using digital tools but also in designing tech-enabled learning experiences that are inclusive and learner-centered. Training programs should cover topics such as blended learning, digital content creation, cybersecurity, and data management. This empowers educators to innovate and adapt to changing educational landscapes. Moreover, digital infrastructure should support monitoring and evaluation processes. Real-time data collection, learner tracking, and analytics can inform instructional decisions and policy reforms. These systems also facilitate communication between ALS teachers, coordinators, and stakeholders, fostering collaboration and transparency.

Investing in digital infrastructure and support for ALS is a strategic move toward educational equity and modernization. It bridges the digital divide, enhances learning outcomes, and prepares both educators and learners for the demands of a technology-driven society. By embedding digital solutions into ALS, the system becomes more resilient, inclusive, and capable of delivering transformative education to all.

Mechanisms of Institutional Support

Institutional support mechanisms are essential to empower ALS teachers in delivering inclusive and transformative learning experiences. These mechanisms must be strategically designed to address the unique challenges faced by ALS educators, who often work in decentralized, resource-constrained environments. By providing structured support systems, the education sector can ensure that ALS teachers are not only equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge but also recognized and valued as professionals contributing to national development.

One of the most critical mechanisms is the implementation of capacity-building programs. ALS teachers should receive regular and targeted training on inclusive education, differentiated instruction, and learner-centered pedagogy. These programs must be responsive to the evolving needs of ALS learners and aligned with global best practices. Continuous professional development ensures that educators remain competent, confident, and capable of adapting to diverse learning contexts.

Complementing training efforts are mentoring and coaching systems, which provide ongoing support and guidance to ALS teachers. Establishing peer learning networks and expert-led coaching initiatives fosters collaboration, reflective practice, and professional growth. These systems create safe spaces for sharing challenges, exchanging strategies, and building a community of practice that strengthens the overall quality of ALS delivery.

To further motivate and retain ALS teachers, incentive structures must be institutionalized. Recognition programs, awards for innovation, and performance-based incentives can boost morale and affirm the value of ALS teachers' contributions. These incentives should be linked to clear performance indicators and aligned with broader teacher welfare policies to ensure fairness and sustainability.

Another vital mechanism is policy integration, which involves ensuring ALS representation in local and national education planning bodies. ALS teachers should have a voice in decision-making processes that affect curriculum development, resource allocation, and program implementation. This inclusion promotes equity, enhances policy relevance, and strengthens the institutional legitimacy of ALS within the education system.

Finally, digital infrastructure must be prioritized to support ALS teachers in delivering flexible and accessible learning. Providing access to learning management systems, mobile applications, and digital content enables educators to reach learners in remote areas and adapt to various learning modalities. These

tools also facilitate data collection, instructional planning, and communication, making ALS programs more efficient and learner centered.

Professional Development Journey for ALS Teachers Toward Equity and Inclusion

This is a targeted learning and development program grounded in the lived experiences of ALS teachers. Drawing from the results of this study, the program responds directly to the challenges, insights, and aspirations shared by ALS teachers as they strive to deliver inclusive, equitable, and transformative education to marginalized learners.

Structured around six interrelated modules, the program supports teachers in deepening their understanding of inclusive practices, enhancing policy literacy, designing learner-centered instruction, leading educational change, building community partnerships, and engaging in reflective practice. Each module is designed not only to build knowledge and skills but also to empower ALS teachers as change agents in their communities.

This journey is more than a training, it's a call to action and an opportunity for professional growth, equipping teachers with the tools and confidence to transform learning environments and advance educational equity for every ALS learner and community learning center they serve.

MODULES FOR THE CHANGE PROCESS

1. **Module 1: Understanding Inclusive and Transformative Learning**
   - Principles, practices, and global perspectives
2. **Module 2: Policy Literacy for ALS Teachers**
   - Navigating education policies and advocating for reform
3. **Module 3: Designing Inclusive Learning Experiences**
   - Differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, and learner profiling
4. **Module 4: Leadership and Change Management**
   - Leading innovations in the ALS context
5. **Module 5: Building Partnerships and Community Engagement**
   - Mobilizing support and resource complementation for ALS programs
6. **Module 6: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reflective Practice**
   - Tools and techniques for continuous improvement

Module 1: UNDERSTANDING INCLUSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Objective: To build foundational knowledge on inclusive education principles and transformative learning approaches tailored to ALS contexts.

Key Topics:

- Concepts of Inclusion, Equity, and Access in Education
- Transformative Learning Theory and its Application in ALS
- Understanding Learner Diversity: Socio-Cultural, Economic, and Educational Backgrounds
- Barriers to Learning and Strategies to Overcome

Activities:

- Case studies of inclusive ALS practices
- Reflective journaling on teacher experiences
- Group discussions on equity challenges in local contexts

Intended Outcome: ALS teachers will articulate the principles of inclusive and transformative learning and identify strategies to apply them in their teaching practice.

Module 2: POLICY LITERACY FOR ALS TEACHERS

Objective: To enhance ALS teachers' understanding of education policies and empower them to engage in policy advocacy and implementation.

Key Topics:

- Overview of National and Local Education Policies Relevant to ALS
- Rights-Based Education and Legal Frameworks Supporting Inclusion
- Policy Gaps and Opportunities for ALS Integration
- Advocacy Tools and Strategies for Grassroots Policy Engagement

Activities:

- Policy mapping exercises
- Simulated policy dialogues and consultations
- Development of policy briefs or position papers

Intended Outcome: ALS teachers will gain confidence in navigating and influencing education policies that affect their work and learners.

Module 3: DESIGNING INCLUSIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Objective: To equip ALS teachers with practical skills in planning and delivering inclusive, learner-centered instruction.

Key Topics:

- Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Learner Profiling and Needs Assessment
- Culturally Responsive and Community-based Curriculum Design
- Inclusive and Contextualized Assessment Strategies

Activities:

- Creation of inclusive lesson plans and learning materials
- Peer review of instructional designs
- Role-playing and simulation of inclusive teaching scenarios

Intended Outcome: ALS teachers will be able to design and implement learning experiences that accommodate diverse learner needs and promote engagement.

Module 4: LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN ALS

Objective: To develop leadership competencies among ALS teachers for driving innovation and managing change in their learning environments.

Key Topics:

- Leadership Styles and Competencies in Education
- Change Management Frameworks and Tools
- Building Collaborative Teams and Networks
- Leading Community-based Education Initiatives

Activities:

- Leadership self-assessment and goal setting
- Action planning for school or community-based innovations
- Case presentations of successful ALS leadership practices

Intended Outcome: ALS teachers will demonstrate leadership in initiating and sustaining inclusive education reforms within their spheres of influence.

Module 5: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Objective: To strengthen ALS teachers' capacity to mobilize community support and build multi-sectoral partnerships for inclusive education.

Key Topics:

- Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement Strategies
- Community-based Education Models
- Partnership Development with LGUs, NGOs, and Private Sector
- Communication and Advocacy for ALS Programs

Activities:

- Development of community engagement plans
- Simulation of stakeholder meetings
- Creation of partnership proposals and MOUs

Intended Outcome: ALS teachers will be able to build and sustain partnerships that enhance program delivery and learner support.

Module 6: MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Objective: To build ALS teachers' capacity to use monitoring and evaluation tools effectively and engage in reflective practice for continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Key Topics:

- Principles and Purposes of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in ALS
- Key Performance Indicators and Learner Outcome Metrics
- Data Collection Tools and Techniques (e.g., learner profiles, progress tracking, feedback forms)
- Reflective Teaching Practices and Professional Journaling
- Using M&E Data for Instructional Planning and Program Improvement

Activities:

- Hands-on training in using digital and manual M&E tools
- Workshop on designing learner progress tracking systems
- Reflective journaling and peer sharing of teaching experiences
- Case analysis of data-informed decision-making in ALS settings

Intended Outcome: ALS teachers will be able to systematically monitor learner progress, evaluate instructional effectiveness, and apply reflective practices to enhance learning outcomes and program delivery.

Implications

The proposed reforms and institutional support mechanisms for ALS teachers carry significant implications for the education system, learners, and broader society. First and foremost, these changes will elevate the professional identity and morale of ALS teachers. By recognizing their roles through career pathways, training, and incentives, the system affirms their value and encourages excellence in teaching. This professionalization will likely lead to improved retention, greater innovation, and a stronger commitment to inclusive education among ALS practitioners.

For learners, the implications are transformative. Enhanced teacher capacity, inclusive curriculum, and equitable resources will result in more engaging, relevant, and empowering learning experiences. Marginalized groups, such as out-of-school youth, indigenous learners, persons with disabilities, and adult learners, will benefit from education that respects their contexts and equips them with life skills and

competencies for personal and economic advancement. This contributes directly to reducing educational disparities and promoting social mobility.

At the systemic level, these reforms will strengthen the integration of ALS into the national education framework. With improved monitoring and evaluation systems, data-driven decision-making will become the norm, enabling more responsive and accountable program management. Policy integration and stakeholder engagement will ensure that ALS is no longer treated as a peripheral program but as a vital component of the education system, aligned with national development goals and international commitments such as SDG 4.

The reforms also have implications for governance and inter-agency collaboration. Local government units, NGOs, and private sector partners will play more active roles in supporting ALS, fostering a multi-sectoral approach to education. This shared responsibility enhances program sustainability and ensures that ALS remains adaptable to local needs and innovations. Community involvement will also deepen, creating a more inclusive and participatory education ecosystem.

Digital transformation in ALS will further democratize access to education. With improved infrastructure and digital tools, learners in remote and underserved areas can participate in flexible, technology-enabled learning. ALS teachers will be empowered to deliver instruction that is both modern and inclusive, bridging the digital divide and preparing learners for the demands of a rapidly evolving world.

In sum, the implications of these reforms are far-reaching. They promise a more equitable, inclusive, and resilient ALS system, one that empowers teachers, uplifts learners, and contributes meaningfully to national development. By investing in ALS through policy and institutional support, the education sector takes a decisive step toward realizing the vision of education for all.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a critical interpretation and synthesis of the findings in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework, and existing body of literature. By situating the results within the broader academic context, this chapter seeks to elucidate their significance, explore underlying patterns and relationships, and offer reasoned explanations that support the scholarly analysis.

I CHALLENGES IN SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION

I.1 Common Difficulties Encountered by ALS Teachers

Marginalized learners in a second-chance education context through the Alternative Learning System are often faced with multifaceted barriers to learning. Similarly, ALS teachers are likewise beset with difficulties and challenges in how the learning intervention can best be delivered while sustaining learners' engagement and ensuring learning outcomes. Irregular attendance is one of the glaring issues. Learners frequently miss classes due to employment demands, family responsibilities, or economic hardship. Pinca (2015) was among the first to document that ALS learners, especially over-aged youth and adults, often prioritize family and livelihood obligations over formal learning due to financial constraints and social expectations. Absenteeism undermines instructional planning and learner progress.

World Bank and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2018) further confirmed that this is a major systemic issue in the ALS program. The report found that learners' opportunity costs, particularly in terms of foregone wages and childcare, are a significant deterrent to consistent participation. These absences lead to lower program completion and a diminished return on public education investment. The

narrative of Participant 18 resonates with this finding, who claimed that poor attendance impacts both quality teaching and retention.

Another key issue is the lack of instructional resources and facilities, such as printed modules, digital equipment, and safe, conducive learning environments. The study of Arpilleda (2018) reported that the burden of resource production often fell on the teachers themselves, who sometimes had to print modules or borrow equipment just to conduct a lesson, corroborates this finding. This emphasized the critical need for sustainable funding and targeted resource allocation to support ALS operations. EDCOM 2 (2024) later reaffirmed that many teachers continue to face these resource constraints. The glaring digital divide is a growing concern, especially as ALS aims to integrate digital literacy into its curriculum. The lack of gadgets, internet access, and ICT training limits the implementation of the Digital Citizenship strand and other technology-based instruction.

ALS Teachers also emphasized that learners' low self-esteem, including shame, low confidence, and mental health issues, are psychological barriers that significantly affect attendance and academic progress. Oliva and Wong (2021) conducted a systematic review on mental health help-seeking in the Filipino context and found that stigma, fear of judgment, and cultural perceptions of failure are strong deterrents to participation in both education and mental health services. These insights help explain why some ALS learners feel ashamed or inferior for being part of a non-formal education system.

Calo and Salvaña (2024) offered specific insight into ALS learners by showing that intrinsic motivation significantly predicted academic resilience and achievement. Their structural equation modeling revealed that learners with higher self-esteem and goal orientation were more likely to persist and complete the ALS program. This underscores the importance of psychosocial support within ALS instruction.

Diverse learning needs as against the teachers' expertise, which include wide variations in age, literacy levels, and prior schooling is a common concern. Teachers are often required to deliver multi-level instruction with limited training. More recently, Edulan and Fajardo (2024) explored the experiences of out-of-field science teachers in Western Mindanao. Their findings revealed that a lack of content knowledge, limited pedagogical strategies, and the absence of mentoring support made it difficult for teachers to meet learners' needs. This parallels the findings in this study, where teachers expressed difficulty in adapting lessons to accommodate learners' varied educational levels and attendance patterns.

I.2 Teaching Approaches to Address Diverse Learners

Teachers in a second-chance education setting often face the complex challenge of teaching a highly diverse group of learners. This diversity in age, educational background, learning pace, and life experience necessitates adaptive, inclusive, and flexible teaching strategies. The findings from participants align closely with global and local literature that emphasize the value of learner-centered, differentiated, and contextualized instruction as well as the importance of supportive learning environments and flexible learning modalities.

This reflects Tomlinson and Moon's (2017) assertion that differentiated instruction, which adapted content, process, and product based on learners' readiness and interests, is critical in diverse educational settings. These practices also align with Knowles' theory of andragogy, which stresses the importance of connecting learning with adults' prior experiences (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Moreover, UNESCO (2016) further supported learner-centered approaches as essential for inclusive and equitable education. Their global education monitoring report noted that marginalized learners benefit most when instruction is adapted to their context and needs. Similarly, Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2019) emphasized that culturally responsive and motivational teaching approaches are vital in adult learning programs.

Remarkably, the ALS program underscored the use of Individual Learning Agreement (ILA), allowing facilitators to customize instruction based on assessment results and learners' goals, which also mirrors participants' use of the Functional Literacy Test and interviews to assess gaps. The flexibility in learning modalities, described by participants, is offering modular, blended, or online instruction tailored to learners' schedules and responsibilities. Schuetze (2017) emphasized that adult and non-formal education programs must allow learners to study at their own pace and place to be effective. Modular and blended learning enable wider participation among working learners and parents. The use of individualized pacing and multimodal instruction was also reported as beneficial in Diokno's (2021) study on ALS implementation in urban poor communities.

It is important to establish a safe, respectful, and supportive environment, especially for learners with negative past educational experiences. Cozolino (2016) argued that emotional safety in the classroom enhances neural integration and learning, especially among adult learners. Lucio and Valerio (2018), in their study on motivation in non-formal education, concluded that psychological safety and positive teacher-learner relationships are among the strongest predictors of learner engagement and success. In the ALS context, where learners often experience stigma or previous failure, such an environment is needed to rebuild learner self-esteem and trust in education. Learners who felt respected and supported by their facilitators were more likely to persist in their studies despite life challenges.

The use of contextualized and real-life learning was a recurring strategy among participants. Bernardo and Calleja (2017) emphasized the importance of authentic learning in alternative education, which mirrors real-life situations and integrates practical life skills. According to Ong and Paloyo (2020), ALS learners are more motivated when lessons are directly related to their day-to-day realities, such as parenting, employment, or community involvement. Participants' integration of reflective teaching, project-based learning, and real-life discussions confirms this.

This strongly aligns with contemporary educational literature that advocates for differentiated, learner-centered, flexible, and context-driven approaches, especially in second-chance and non-formal learning settings. The emphasis on learner background, flexible delivery modes, psychological safety, and real-world relevance reflects global best practices in alternative education. This synergy between local practice and global research reinforces the effectiveness and importance of contextually adaptive teaching approaches in addressing the diverse needs of learners outside the formal education system.

I.3 Strategies to Overcome Barriers to Education in ALS

ALS teachers play a pivotal role in breaking down educational barriers, especially for marginalized and underserved learners. Their lived experiences offer valuable insights into how equity in education is operationalized in practice. The findings show that ALS teachers often use personalized and context-driven strategies tailored to learners' unique life circumstances, which is consistent with current pedagogical literature.

Second-chance education should be rooted in learners' realities and designed to provide both academic and life skills. Contextualized instruction also improves learner engagement and comprehension by making lessons more meaningful and applicable to everyday life. Bernardo and Calleja (2017) explored contextualized teaching and confirmed that when instruction connects to learners' daily experiences, retention and performance improve significantly. Strategies like one-on-one mentoring, differentiated instruction, and real-life integration are being practiced by some participants.

Flexibility in delivery modalities was a consistent and powerful theme among ALS teachers. This strategy is especially critical in overcoming logistical and economic barriers for learners who work, live in remote

areas, or have disabilities. Tambo and Uy (2020) emphasized the role of decentralized learning centers in improving accessibility, mirrored by a participant who initiated to establish a CLC in a remote community. Furthermore, the example of using radio-based instruction for a visually impaired learner highlights how flexible, inclusive methods can significantly broaden access. Delos Santos (2021) also found that ALS facilitators' willingness to innovate in modality design improves not just attendance, but learner completion rates, especially among high-risk youth and adult learners.

Engaging families and local communities emerged as another key strategy for overcoming educational barriers. It surfaced that home visits, collaboration with local government units and mobilization of stakeholders as instrumental in changing attitudes and securing needed resources. Epstein (2018) supported this by asserting that family and community involvement are foundational to learner success, particularly in marginalized settings. In the ALS context, Ong and Paloyo (2020) observed that collaboration with barangays and LGUs helped establish lasting support systems, such as ordinances for regular ALS funding, similar to some participants' lived experiences.

One of the most persistent and subtle barriers in ALS is learners' internalized shame, trauma, or low self-esteem, often stemming from prior educational failures. Teachers' ability to provide psychological and emotional support emerged as a transformative strategy in this study. Cozolino (2016) emphasized that emotional safety is critical to brain function and learning, especially among adults who have experienced past trauma. Similarly, positive reinforcement and celebrating small milestones significantly increase learner motivation. A certain Participant's success story of a 60-year-old ALS completer illustrates how shifting mindset and affirming learner dignity can dismantle deep-seated barriers.

I.4 Community Dynamics and Socio-Economic Factors

The delivery of ALS is not only shaped by pedagogical approaches but also by deeply embedded community dynamics and socio-economic conditions. ALS teachers navigate a multifaceted environment where poverty, cultural norms, infrastructural limitations, and stakeholder involvement either constrain or support educational outcomes. The findings in this study confirm that while these challenges persist, resilient and community-rooted responses help sustain learner participation.

Poverty was the most prominent factor affecting learners' participation, attendance, and performance in ALS, as highlighted by multiple participants. These experiences echo findings in the literature, which consistently show that economic hardship directly impacts educational access and long-term participation. Delos Reyes (2019) conducted a study in urban ALS centers in the Philippines and found that economic vulnerability was the strongest predictor of learner attrition, especially when no financial incentives or livelihood support were provided alongside education.

Stakeholder engagement is another determinant of ALS program success. The narratives show that where LGUs, NGOs, and community leaders are active, ALS is better implemented and more sustainable. This aligns with global literature advocating for multi-stakeholder collaboration in community-based education. Ong and Paloyo (2020) studied ALS programs in Central Luzon and noted that barangay support, including learning space provision and logistical aid, was directly linked to improved learner outcomes and teacher motivation. Manalang and Garcia (2021) emphasized that active partnerships with LGUs, civic groups, and families not only ease the material challenges of ALS implementation but also elevate community perceptions of education, encouraging learners to persist.

Furthermore, deeply ingrained socio-cultural beliefs, including early marriage, gender roles, and perceptions of ALS as inferior, were identified as non-material barriers to participation. These findings are echoed in the literature discussing intersectional barriers in education. GEM Report (2018) by UNESCO

stressed the role of gender norms and cultural attitudes in limiting girls' and women's access to second-chance education. These norms often intersect with poverty, placing young women at a greater disadvantage due to caregiving responsibilities or early marriage.

Alvarez and Dizon (2020) found that in rural ALS communities in the Philippines, gender stereotypes and local stigmas about non-formal education significantly lowered learner self-esteem and participation, particularly among female learners and out-of-school youth returning after a teenage pregnancy. Additionally, geographic isolation and poor infrastructure were recurrent barriers in the lived experiences of ALS teachers. Evidently, the lack of conducive learning spaces, limited access to electricity, and technology affects the program. Schweisfurth (2019) emphasized that physical access remains a key factor in educational equity, particularly in geographically isolated areas. For second-chance programs to thrive, investment in infrastructure and learning materials is essential.

Geographic disadvantage, combined with a lack of technology, widens the learning gap between rural and urban ALS learners, making support mechanisms even more critical for equitable outcomes. Despite these challenges, ALS teachers demonstrate remarkable resilience, creativity, and adaptability. Teachers not only deliver instruction but also mobilize resources, build partnerships, and advocate for their learners, often with little institutional support.

Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2019) emphasized that educators working with marginalized populations must possess cultural competence, adaptive skills, and emotional resilience. ALS teachers often exhibit these traits by designing income-generating projects (IGPs), leveraging partnerships, or creating low-cost interventions. Paredes and Mangahas (2023) further confirmed that teacher agency is a central factor in sustaining ALS in low-resource settings. The study showed that ALS teachers who exercise leadership, engage in community organizing, and advocate for equity help build more resilient learning ecosystems.

I.5 Forms of Support that Help Teachers Navigate Challenges

Institutional supports, stakeholder/community involvement, and peer/professional collaboration are crucial for sustaining ALS teachers' work amid resource constraints, limited formal recognition, and socioeconomic difficulties among learners. The literature from the Philippines in the last decade supports these as vital enablers, though also points out gaps and variability in how well these supports are provided. The provision of capability-building activities, learning modules and supplies, technical assistance, monitoring, mentorship, and feedback are essential supports from the institutional side. Casingal (2025) investigated ALS teachers' perceptions of their competencies, identified areas needing improvement, and recommended institutional provisions to address those. This aligns with some of the participants' calls for more institutional support. It was also affirmed that support from stakeholders is a strong foundation of the program. Resources from these program partners sustain the implementation, especially when institutional support is weak and not consistent.

Moreover, ALS teachers benefit a lot from peer mentoring, emotional and moral support, sharing good practices, and collaborative problem-solving from colleagues. ALS teachers serve as a support system to one another, especially in terms of addressing common challenges. Respondents in the study of Callo, E. M. E., & Ubayubay, R. M. (2024) perceived the peer coaching technique as highly effective in enhancing teacher efficacy, understanding of the teaching-learning process, decision-making, and reflective practice.

In conclusion, the ALS program, as the other side of basic education in the country, is beset with numerous challenges that hinder its capacity to provide an effective second-chance education for marginalized learners. These barriers are interconnected and caused by different factors requiring a holistic solution from the institution and stakeholders.

II IMPACT OF ALS ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF LEARNERS

II.1 Learners' Transformation through the ALS Program

The ALS program serves as a parallel track to the formal education system in the country, aimed at reaching learners who have been marginalized or excluded. The findings affirm the transformative potential of ALS, not only in imparting academic skills but also in restoring self-worth and identity. This aligns with Freire's (1970) foundational theory of education as a practice of freedom, where literacy is a tool for empowerment. In the context of ALS, literacy goes beyond functional reading and writing; it becomes a medium through which learners reengage with society and live a fuller and more productive life.

Participants in this study demonstrated a clear trajectory from literacy recovery to achieving academic advancement and clear career pathways. Buendia (2015) recognized the correlation between ALS participation and improved employability, particularly among youth who had previously dropped out due to poverty or family obligations. Participants shared insights on learners moving from basic literacy to educational achievement and stable careers. Hence, the personal transformation experienced by ALS learners extends beyond academics. Many participants highlighted growth in confidence, resilience, and self-worth, qualities that have long been recognized in the literature on alternative education. It was found that learners often undergo significant psychological change as they rediscover their capacity to learn, succeed, and participate in society.

The shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation among ALS learners illustrates the role of alternative education in reshaping values and life goals. This is supported by Deci & Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are key drivers of intrinsic motivation. Moreover, Quijano (2017) emphasized that ALS fosters a positive sense of self by promoting perseverance, goal-setting, and hope, traits echoed in the testimonies of ALS implementers. As learners develop ownership of their education, they begin to envision futures once thought impossible, validating the program's psychosocial and attitudinal impacts.

Finally, the transformation from isolated dropouts to active community members highlights ALS's ripple effect. It affirms how learners not only changed their lives but also contributed to their communities. De Guzman and Ramos (2018) observed that ALS learners in rural areas often return to their communities as advocates, educators, or role models, validating the idea that education fosters social cohesion and community resilience.

II.2 Holistic Development for Lifelong Growth

ALS fosters holistic development by addressing not only academic competencies but also learners' personal, social, and emotional growth. It was consistently underscored that ALS nurtures the whole individual, academically, emotionally, and socially, resulting in lifelong growth, resilience, and active participation in community life. These findings align with recent literature that positions ALS as a transformative second-chance education system designed to develop 21st-century skills, self-regulation, work readiness, and civic engagement among out-of-school youth and adults.

The program provides foundational academic skills, such as literacy, numeracy, communication, and critical thinking, that are instrumental for higher education and employment opportunities. These narratives resonate with findings from Albert et al. (2024), who emphasized that ALS functions as an equivalency pathway that enables learners to access further academic or vocational training, especially after passing the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test. In a similar vein, USAID and Opportunity 2.0 (2021) integrated entrepreneurship and business planning modules into the ALS curriculum to

strengthen employability and work readiness among learners. These efforts aim to make the ALS more responsive to labor market demands and learner aspirations, thereby promoting not only academic progression but also socioeconomic mobility.

However, Mamba, et.al (2021) cautioned that while many ALS graduates successfully enroll in higher education institutions, their study orientation and academic habits often lag behind those of formal school graduates. This implies that while ALS is effective in building foundational academic skills, support structures for sustained academic success in tertiary settings remain crucial. The results also highlighted the development of self-discipline, responsibility, perseverance, and independence among ALS learners. Independent learning through modular, blended, or flexible modalities demonstrated increased self-regulation and motivation. Learners developed coping strategies to navigate non-traditional schedules, contributing to improved self-management. Similarly, the USAID Work-Based Learning and Be Your Own Boss (WBL-BYOB) pilot initiative proved that ALS learners showed increased confidence, responsibility, and motivation when soft skills were integrated into learning modules (USAID, 2023).

Furthermore, a recent study by De Leon (2025) on ALS graduates found that resilience and self-efficacy were central to learners' journey toward career empowerment. These internal attributes, cultivated in the ALS setting, enabled learners to navigate social and economic obstacles more effectively and pursue long-term personal goals. Development of life skills such as resilience, critical thinking, communication, and adaptability was also underscored. The integration of life skills in the ALS curriculum, particularly under the USAID-supported Life Skills for Work Readiness and Civic Engagement modules, affirms the value of these competencies (DepEd, 2022). These modules were integrated into the curriculum delivery to strengthen learners' abilities in problem-solving, teamwork, and interpersonal communication. These align with the findings of the study by Ruzol and Resurreccion (2023), which measured 21st-century skills acquisition among ALS senior high school learners and found moderate to high levels of growth in areas such as innovation, creativity, communication, and self-direction.

Moreover, reported improvements in communication and collaboration were evident. This is further substantiated by the findings of Pascual and Salazar (2022), who concluded that ALS significantly improved learners' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, thereby preparing them for both individual and collaborative tasks. Meanwhile, the nurturing of desirable values and civic responsibility was also an ALS impact. These align with the Life Skills and Civic Engagement programs supported by UNICEF and DepEd, which aim to prepare learners not only for employment but also for ethical citizenship and family responsibilities (UNICEF, 2022). Hence, the transformation of ALS learners into active community members emerged as a central finding.

II.3 Influence of ALS on Learners' Career Prospects and Aspirations

The transformative mechanism of the program is not only for academic progression but also for the advancement of learners' career prospects and aspirations. After completing the program, learners envision themselves securing better economic opportunities. It provides learners with basic education credentials and skills necessary for employment, vocational training, or progression to higher education. It fosters employability, self-worth, resilience, and purpose.

These observations align with national data and studies on ALS outcomes. The Department of Education reported that the first batch of ALS Senior High School (SHS) graduates had completed the K–12-aligned curriculum, making them eligible for both higher education and employment. This milestone formalized ALS as a viable academic track parallel to the formal school system, particularly in preparing learners for the world of work, entrepreneurship, and further education (DepEd, 2021).

The K to 12 ALS curriculum aligns with 21st-century competencies, focusing on functional literacy, employability, and entrepreneurship. This aimed to enhance the readiness of learners for technical-vocational pathways and lifelong learning. Additionally, industry collaboration has proven effective in extending ALS's employment impact. The Megawide Foundation (2023) ALS initiative trained skilled workers who lacked formal credentials, enabling them to complete secondary education while gaining industry-relevant skills, thus improving their job prospects.

In a qualitative narrative study by Kumpa, Canda, and Rodriguez (2024), ALS learners reported a shift in self-perception, from feeling left behind to becoming hopeful and self-motivated. The study found that the process of returning to education and completing modules nurtured not only academic success but also internal transformation, characterized by increased confidence, personal growth, and a renewed sense of hope. Similarly, Robles (2023) documented testimonies of ALS completers who pursued college degrees and professional careers, including one who became a licensed teacher. These stories underscore that beyond credentials, ALS instills self-belief and helps learners redefine their life paths with confidence and purpose.

Notably, the program is instrumental in breaking intergenerational poverty by providing access to senior high school, college, TESDA programs, and gainful employment. It enables marginalized individuals to overcome personal, financial, and societal barriers that had previously limited their opportunities. Likewise, the Philippine News Agency (2022) emphasized the role of ALS in building human capital, asserting that learners from underserved communities used the program to gain qualifications that enabled them to secure better employment and improve their families' quality of life. The findings affirm that ALS is not merely an alternative route; it is a transformative one.

The study of Alvarez (2024), entitled Second Chances: Exploring the Philippine Alternative Learning System) argued that ALS plays a critical role in restoring educational opportunity and hope for learners who had been marginalized. The study found that ALS learners often experienced a renewal of purpose, leading them to set life goals that extended beyond academics, such as community involvement, livelihood, and service. Moreover, Robles (2023) reiterated the view of ALS as a stepping stone toward new beginnings. One of the learners featured in the report noted that without ALS, completing education and becoming a professional would have been impossible. These narratives resonate deeply with the participants' reflections on how ALS transformed the learners' life directions and rekindled long-dormant aspirations.

II.4 Success Stories in ALS

The success stories emerging from the ALS program vividly illustrate its transformative potential as a second-chance education program. The findings reveal a pattern of life-changing experiences marked by personal empowerment, educational advancement, and social mobility. These themes align with and are strongly supported by recent scholarly and institutional literature, affirming ALS's role in reshaping individual trajectories and contributing to inclusive development.

Notably, there is empowerment of learners from disadvantaged sectors of society, such as persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), out-of-school youth and adults, housewives, drug abuse survivors, and individuals living in poverty. This transformation is made possible by the program's learner-centered and flexible delivery, which caters to the unique needs and life contexts of these marginalized populations.

The World Bank (2018) describes ALS as a lifeline for those excluded from the formal education system, offering them a chance to regain dignity, confidence, and agency. Through flexible delivery modalities, ALS accommodates learners who have faced structural barriers such as poverty, incarceration, and early

parenthood. Similarly, Zulueta et al. (2021) found that learners participating in ALS demonstrate strong self-efficacy, which plays a crucial role in personal growth and community engagement, even when material resources are limited. These studies affirm the program's empowering capacity, suggesting that success is not solely academic but deeply personal, affecting learners' sense of worth, resilience, and roles within their families and communities.

ALS completers transition into higher education and professional fields. Many learners reportedly progress to college, vocational training, or become licensed professionals, including teachers, civil servants, and entrepreneurs. This is strongly supported by the research of the World Bank (2018) notes that ALS learners who pass the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test are more likely to pursue post-secondary education or skills training, both of which increase their employability. However, this transition is not without its challenges. Don Carlos (2025) highlighted that while many ALS graduates demonstrate academic ambition, some struggle with readiness for tertiary education, citing gaps in foundational knowledge and study habits. Nevertheless, when adequately supported, ALS graduates are capable of succeeding in higher education and integrating into professional sectors.

Economic upliftment is a compelling thread in the ALS success narratives. Many learners reportedly used their ALS credentials to access vocational qualifications, secure stable employment, or work abroad, thus improving their socio-economic status and contributing to their families. The PIDS (2024) process evaluation affirms this pattern, revealing that over half of ALS program completers are employed, with many attributing their job attainment to the credentials and skills acquired through ALS. However, the evaluation also cautions that only around 51% of these jobs are aligned with the skills acquired, indicating that while economic mobility is achievable, underemployment and skill mismatch remains a concern.

Moreover, while anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that some ALS graduates find employment overseas, there is a notable gap in comprehensive data on long-term overseas outcomes. Still, the pathway from ALS to TESDA certifications and international employment remains a viable route for many learners, especially those in economically constrained situations, as discussed in the Bagong Silang case study (2021).

Significantly, the program's wider access provides a unique opportunity for individuals, regardless of age or life circumstances, to return to learning and rebuild their educational and professional futures. The findings underscore the experiences of older adults, working parents, and individuals who had previously disengaged from formal education but have found renewed purpose and success through ALS. Supporting this, the UNICEF (2021) study on barriers to ALS access notes that while older learners and those with familial obligations face more constraints, their motivation to succeed, when supported by flexible and empathetic program delivery, can lead to high levels of persistence and completion.

Perhaps, the most powerful insight is the lifelong transformation and community impact of ALS. Many learners not only transform their own lives but also return to their communities as educators, role models, or contributors to local development. This pay-it-forward phenomenon demonstrates that ALS nurtures not just individual success but also civic responsibility and leadership. This echoes the findings of Zulueta et al. (2021), who argued that ALS cultivates not just skills, but a learner mindset characterized by perseverance, adaptability, and purpose. This ripple effect highlights ALS as not just a second-chance education system but a transformative social investment.

II.5 Perception of Empowerment in ALS Context

Empowerment, as perceived through the lens of the ALS implementers emerges as a multidimensional

construct, one that transcends academic remediation and becomes a vehicle for dignity, inclusion, and personal transformation. Far from being a mere parallel to formal education, ALS is consistently portrayed as a venue where one's personhood is nurtured, resilience is cultivated, and hope is rekindled.

One of the most frequently cited enablers of empowerment in the program is its inherent flexibility. Unlike rigid formal schooling structures, ALS offers learners adaptable pathways, allowing them to balance education with life's competing demands, work, family duties, and other responsibilities. This flexibility is not incidental but foundational to the program's empowering potential. Mahinay and Manla's (2025) qualitative investigation on ALS implementation identifies flexible scheduling and modular learning as critical features that reduce barriers for out-of-school youth and adults. Their findings emphasize that ALS learners value being able to proceed at their own pace and through various modalities, whether home-based, online learning, community-based teaching, or face-to-face sessions. Such adaptability allows learners to reclaim education on their own terms.

Similarly, Zulueta et al. (2021), in their study *Through Pains and Gains*, find a strong correlation between flexible learning settings and increased self-efficacy among ALS learners. When learners are granted control over how and when they learn, their motivation and engagement increase significantly. Flexibility, in this regard, acts as a bridge over what might otherwise be insurmountable access friction, the tension between education and everyday survival needs.

Moreover, empowerment extends far beyond cognitive development. It encompasses the psychosocial restoration of learners who have previously experienced exclusion, academic failure, or life interruptions. This theme of restored hope and dignity resonates powerfully in the narrative notes of DepEd and UNICEF (2022), which claimed that ALS is intentionally structured to support emotional and psychosocial development, especially for learners from vulnerable backgrounds. Thus, the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) and life skills development reinforces the idea that ALS is not just about academic content but also about healing and growth that can dismantle stigma and rebuild identity.

Significantly, another aspect of empowerment is the program's capacity to generate support from the social milieu surrounding the learner. This support system, which includes the family, peers, facilitators, and community members, is integral to the learner's journey, providing both emotional and practical support. This aligns with the DepEd's ALS 2.0 initiative, which prioritizes teacher capacity-building, SEL integration, and the creation of inclusive learning spaces. These initiatives recognize that learners thrive in environments where they feel seen, respected, and supported.

A study conducted by Lalanan and Oco (2025) further confirmed that the quality of the learning environment, including teacher behavior, nurturing capacity, and emotional availability, directly correlates with affective and behavioral engagement. In this light, empowerment cannot be divorced from context: it is not only what ALS teaches, but how and with whom it is taught that shapes outcomes. Moreover, a prominent dimension of empowerment is the program's inclusivity. ALS is widely recognized for its success in reaching demographics often excluded from the formal education system, persons with disabilities, older adults, single parents, working learners, and others whose life situations render traditional schooling inaccessible.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the empowering nature of ALS is holistic. It is not confined to academic achievement or skills certification, but includes affective, relational, and existential dimensions. ALS becomes a space where learners rediscover themselves as capable, valued, and hopeful. Therefore, ALS is more than an alternative; it is a transformative space for empowerment. As the literature and

participant voices reveal, its strength lies in its capacity to meet learners where they are, and to walk with them toward where they hope to be.

III INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE RETENTION

III.1 Teaching Methods that Engage ALS Learners

Similar to other non-formal education systems in other parts of the world, the second-chance education through the ALS serves a vital role in providing accessible education to marginalized populations. The thematic findings from ALS teachers' narratives reinforce what contemporary literature suggests: that effective ALS pedagogy is flexible, contextualized, emotionally supportive, collaborative, and learner centered. These strategies not only engage learners cognitively but also address their socio-emotional and contextual realities. Teaching in ALS is not merely instructional; it is also transformative, serving as a bridge for learners to reclaim lost dreams, dignity, and opportunities for a better future.

The relevance of contextualization, integrating lessons into learners' real-life experiences and socio-economic realities cannot be underestimated. This approach resonates with Vygotsky's constructivist learning theory, as cited in Yelland (2018), which asserts that knowledge is actively constructed by learners when it is connected to their lived experiences. Learners are more engaged when lessons reflect their daily struggles and ambitions. Contextualized instruction enables learners to perceive education not as an abstract task but as a tool for empowerment and socio-economic mobility. De Guzman and Ramos (2019) further stress that when ALS facilitators design lessons that mirror learners' environments, such as livelihood activities, parenting, or community life, they bridge the gap between education and survival.

On the other hand, experiential and collaborative learning emerged as another critical theme, wherein learners actively participate in constructing knowledge through hands-on activities and peer interaction. This is consistent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (2015), which underscored learning as a cycle involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In non-formal education settings, Laguador and Dotong (2018) argued that experiential methods, such as community immersion, project-based learning, and reflective activities, foster deep learning and higher retention. Collaborative learning also builds a sense of community among learners, which is crucial in alternative education where social alienation may be a barrier. Corpuz et al. (2020) found that cooperative learning fosters inclusion and shared responsibility as key values in ALS programs. Recognition, praise, and creating a non-judgmental environment surfaced as powerful motivators. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, though dated, remains relevant: esteem and belongingness are foundational to learning. In more recent literature, Poon-McBrayer (2016) underscored that vulnerable learners are especially responsive to affirmation and recognition because these address long-standing psychological barriers to education. Bautista and Umali (2021) found that ALS learners showed improved attendance and performance when teachers regularly acknowledged progress, no matter how small.

Belongingness is also tied to learners' persistence in ALS programs. Bernardo and Esteban (2020) noted that supportive relationships within learning spaces significantly increase learners' commitment, especially among out-of-school youth. On the other hand, flexibility is central to the ALS learning. Learners have varying life commitments, work, caregiving, and health issues, requiring pedagogical agility. A successful ALS implementation demands that teachers adapt methods, schedules, and content delivery to fit learners' unique contexts.

The notion of personalized learning pathways is echoed in OECD (2019) reports, where flexible, learner-driven strategies were found to be effective in adult education systems. Meanwhile, technological

integration also supports flexibility. Soriano et al. (2022) found that combining asynchronous modules with face-to-face support enabled ALS learners to progress at their own pace, thereby reducing dropouts. Although digital education has become more prominent, the narratives emphasize that face-to-face interaction remains crucial, especially for marginalized learners with low literacy and limited digital access or support.

Furthermore, this is also substantiated by Manlangit et al. (2021), who found that blended learning modalities often fail without strong face-to-face support in marginalized communities. Furthermore, Gatchalian and Reyes (2020) suggested that one-on-one tutorials in ALS not only reinforce academic skills but also address emotional and psychological needs, often neglected in traditional education systems. The role of personalized support also aligns with the humanistic approach to education, which prioritizes the learner's holistic development over standardized outcomes.

III.2 Experiential and Contextual Learning

The effectiveness of experiential and contextual learning as teaching approaches that not only enhance learner engagement but also foster deeper understanding, critical thinking, and empowerment. These insights resonate with a growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of aligning pedagogy with learners' lived experiences, community realities, and practical needs.

Hence, it is imperative to ground instruction in learners' prior knowledge, skills, and life experiences. ALS facilitators build on what learners already know, drawn from their work, family life, and informal learning, to make new lessons meaningful. This clearly explains why ALS teachers capitalize on knowing learners' backgrounds by administering the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) form. It was found that adult learners in ALS settings showed higher engagement and retention when lessons were directly connected to their existing knowledge base, such as livelihood skills, parenting, or domestic responsibilities.

A major thread in participants' reflections is the use of localized, real-life content that learners can easily relate to. Lessons become more impactful when they are embedded in familiar contexts, rural livelihoods, household management, local markets, or community issues. This practice is grounded in contextual learning theory, which advocates for connecting academic content with the environment in which students live (Hull, 2017). Similarly, Corpuz et al. (2020) argued that localization enhances cognitive engagement and emotional resonance, especially for learners whose lives differ drastically from those in formal education environments.

Furthermore, Manlangit et al. (2021) demonstrated that ALS facilitators who contextualize their materials using local examples or culturally familiar stories help learners make stronger conceptual connections. In particular, De Guzman and Ramos (2019) noted that contextualized teaching enables ALS learners to transfer classroom knowledge into real-life decisions, especially in areas like budgeting, health practices, and child-rearing, thereby reinforcing functional literacy.

Experiential learning strategies such as role-playing, simulations, project-based learning**,** and service-learning were frequently cited as essential tools. In line with this, Laguador and Dotong (2018) found that ALS learners in rural communities were more engaged and retained more knowledge when involved in project-based activities such as community gardening, household budgeting simulations, or small business planning.

Another salient theme is the embedding of learning into the daily lives, responsibilities, and community participation of learners. This strategy makes education directly functional and transformative. This reflects the pedagogical approach of situated learning, which proposes that knowledge is best acquired in context through social interaction and real-life application (Lave & Wenger, as cited in Schunk, 2020).

Gatchalian and Reyes (2020) said that, such community-based integration promotes not only academic success but also social empowerment, as learners begin to see themselves as agents of change within their own communities.

Significantly, experiential and contextual strategies not only engage learners but also develop critical thinking and empower them to make informed decisions. This affirms that contextualization and experiential learning do more than support basic skill acquisition; they develop higher order thinking skills. Hence, learners in non-formal settings gain the most when education is aligned with real-life challenges requiring critical evaluation, creativity, and collaborative solutions. When teachers leverage learners' prior experiences, use real-life content, facilitate hands-on activities, engage the community, and cultivate critical thinking, education becomes more than content delivery, it becomes transformational. These approaches allow learners to reconnect with education as a tool for improving not only their academic standing but also their daily lives and community roles.

III.3 Challenges in Sustaining Learner Retention

Learner retention remains a formidable challenge in ALS, particularly because it serves non-traditional learners who often experience intersecting socio-economic hardships, psychosocial struggles, and complex life responsibilities. Unlike the structured setting of formal education, the program demands adaptive, flexible, and learner-centered approaches to accommodate these realities. The narratives highlight diverse, yet interrelated strategies employed to address dropout risks and sustain learner engagement.

One of the most pervasive barriers to retention is the conflict between education and socio-economic survival. As participants revealed, many ALS learners prioritize work or caregiving over education, leading to frequent absenteeism and dropout. Economic insecurity is a primary deterrent to consistent attendance in ALS. Many learners are informal workers, parents, or caregivers, making daily participation unrealistic.

Irregular attendance was consistently cited as a major challenge, often stemming from unstable work conditions, household duties, and health issues. Participants addressed this through proactive follow-ups, home visits, and creating respectful learning spaces. This strategy aligns with the OECD's (2019) which emphasized on learner engagement through personal connection and responsiveness. Home visitation, as practiced by several participants, is not only an attendance intervention but also a relational strategy that bridges the learner's home and educational environment.

Many learners drop out not because of a lack of cognitive ability but due to low self-esteem, lack of motivation, and feelings of failure, often remnants of negative experiences in formal schooling. Participants addressed this with gamified lessons, mini-games, praise, and recognition of small wins. This highlights the importance of autonomy and competence where learners' motivation increases significantly when they feel seen, capable, and supported.

Flexibility of time, place, pacing, and content was a dominant strategy used by ALS teachers to sustain learner retention. Facilitators adjusted learning plans based on learners' availability and interest, integrating modular, blended, and personalized approaches. Providing flexible learning modalities improved participation among working learners, especially when paired with regular check-ins and peer learning opportunities. Emotional and relational support emerged as a crucial factor in sustaining retention. Several teachers emphasized the importance of a safe, respectful learning environment where ideas are valued, and learners are emotionally supported. Related to this, Valdez (2023) emphasized that trust-based teacher-learner relationships and safe spaces are indispensable to sustaining engagement.

The challenges of learner retention in ALS cannot be solved with academic strategies alone. They require a multifaceted, learner-centered approach that is sensitive to socio-economic constraints, emotional well-being, and individual learning needs. The insights from ALS facilitators, grounded in flexible teaching, community involvement, and recognition of progress, align with global literature advocating for inclusive, responsive education. In second-chance learning contexts, retention is not just about keeping learners in the learning center; it is about creating conditions where they feel motivated to engage.

III.4 Contextualized Instruction to Cater to Varying Learning Abilities

Instructional effectiveness hinges on the teacher's ability to adapt to diverse learner profiles. Unlike conventional education settings, ALS learners often come from marginalized or underprivileged backgrounds, each carrying distinct experiences, educational gaps, and learning needs. In such contexts, contextualized instruction becomes essential. This involves tailoring educational content and strategies to the learners' cultural background, prior knowledge, socio-economic realities, and cognitive readiness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Through themes of cultural relevance, differentiation, assessment-based teaching, and flexible pedagogy, ALS educators make learning meaningful, accessible, and empowering.

Anchoring lessons in the learners' cultural and community context is an important aspect in a non-formal education. Participants deliberately embedded local experiences, mother tongue, familiar community practices, and local materials into their instruction to foster relevance and increase participation. These practices align with culturally responsive pedagogy, which values learners' cultural backgrounds as assets rather than barriers (Ladson-Billings, 2021). According to García and O'Donnell (2021), integrating community realities into instruction enhances functional literacy and empowers learners in marginalized spaces. By leveraging lived experiences, teachers foster a sense of ownership and validation, making learning not just academic but transformative.

ALS teachers also emphasized differentiated instruction, wherein lesson difficulty, content, and teaching methods were tailored to each learner's readiness, learning style, and interests. Some offered activity choices aligned with learners' intelligences, such as music, movement, or storytelling. Tomlinson (2022) argued that differentiated instruction bridges gaps in readiness and ability by modifying content, process, and product based on learner profiles. Likewise, Rahman et al. (2020) support that differentiation increases motivation, especially in alternative and non-traditional learning settings. These practices ensure learners are not left behind due to rigid instruction or inappropriate pacing.

Utilizing an assessment-based instruction, such as the Functional Literacy Test (FLT), Basic Literacy Test (ABL), and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), guided the lesson planning and learner groupings. This enabled instruction to start from the learners' actual proficiency level. As Castillo and Atienza (2020) explained, such diagnostic assessments prevent disengagement by ensuring that learning tasks are neither too easy nor too difficult. In a similar vein, Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) emphasized that assessments aligned with learner strengths and needs foster equity, as instruction becomes more personalized and relevant.

Flexibility was repeatedly identified as a non-negotiable in ALS. Participants cited practices such as adjusting lesson pace, simplifying language, integrating real-life experiences, and applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Teachers also valued learner stories and emotional needs, demonstrating inclusive pedagogical sensitivity. According to Al-Azawei et al. (2019), flexibility and UDL provided multiple pathways for engagement, representation, and expression, supporting the wide spectrum of learners in marginalized contexts.

Contextualization in ALS is a dynamic response to diversity. Through culturally grounded content, differentiated strategies, assessment-driven planning, and inclusive pedagogies, teachers craft meaningful and accessible learning experiences. These strategies not only elevate learner engagement but also promote empowerment and real-life application of knowledge.

IV INDICATORS OF SUCCESS IN A SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION

IV.1 Academic Achievements as a Form of Success

In the context of a second-chance education, defining success involves more than academic performance or completion statistics. ALS caters to learners from disadvantaged and non-traditional educational backgrounds, out-of-school youth, adults, working learners, single parents, and others marginalized from formal education. Consequently, success indicators must reflect academic achievement, social reintegration, economic empowerment, and personal growth. The perspectives of ALS implementers highlight a holistic understanding of success that aligns with recent educational literature.

A foundational measure of success in ALS is the completion of the ALS program and passing the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test. Several participants emphasized that seeing learners complete the program and pass the A&E Test signifies the most tangible and reportable form of success. These milestones are not only celebrated by learners but also mark their official reintegration into the formal education, employment system, or higher educational level.

This aligns with findings by the World Bank (2018), which identified the passing rate of the A&E exam as a central metric for measuring program effectiveness. However, national data also show challenges: the passing rate of ALS learners hovered around 30–40% in the years studied, highlighting a persistent gap between enrollment and measurable academic success. The low passing rate requires a comprehensive analysis of the factors affecting it.

Another key indicator of success is the ability of ALS teachers to keep learners engaged and committed over time. High retention rates and reduced dropouts are signs of effective teaching and learner motivation. This involves sustaining attendance and ensuring learners complete the required modules at their own pace. The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) process evaluation (Albert et al., 2024) supported this view, recognizing retention and consistent participation as critical for meaningful learning. However, it also noted that ALS completion rates had declined in recent years, from 66% in 2016 to below 50% in some areas by 2021, suggesting a need to improve learner support systems.

The ability to gain employment or start small livelihood activities after the program is another indicator of success. Many ALS learners come from economically vulnerable communities, and being able to secure income or pursue further education is not just desirable, but necessary. This is particularly true for older learners or those who are heads of households. These post-ALS trajectories are vital indicators of the system's relevance and long-term impact.

Beyond formal assessments, indicators such as increased self-confidence, improved behavior, social responsibility, and learners' willingness to take leadership roles in their communities were also emphasized. Teachers noted that learners who once felt marginalized began expressing themselves, initiating community projects, or assisting peers.

This aspect of success is supported by Javillonar and Elma (n.d.), who examined the experiences of ALS completers and found that learners valued not only academic knowledge but also life skills, emotional development, and empowerment. These findings suggested that indicators of success must extend to affective and psychosocial dimensions, especially in second-chance education systems. Teachers also

shared that learners who found the curriculum relevant to their lives, such as financial literacy, parenting education, or health awareness, tended to stay longer and reported higher satisfaction. Thus, relevance becomes an indirect but powerful indicator of success. Instruction that resonates with learners' life experiences appears to foster persistence and deeper engagement.

According to Albert et al. (2024), learner satisfaction with the quality of teaching in ALS is generally high, with over 90% expressing that the program met their expectations. However, this satisfaction does not always translate to immediate socio-economic gains, underscoring the complexity of defining success in this context.

Finally, some success indicators are tied not to learners themselves, but to the structural support provided by the ALS program. These include the availability of learning materials, teacher competence, class size, and the physical state of community learning centers. However, systemic constraints, such as underfunded learning centers, poor infrastructure, and insufficient teaching personnel can severely affect learners' ability to succeed, even when they are motivated. These conditions must be considered in any comprehensive discussion of ALS success.

IV.2 Measurement of Progress Beyond Academic Achievements

The learners' ability to translate classroom learning into real life is a major impact of the program. This reflects a shift from mere content mastery toward functional relevance. This is reflected in the improved life conditions of learners. Acquisition of 21st-century skills is moderately strong and correlates significantly with their sense of self-efficacy. These skills are not purely academic; many are about how learners navigate their social, economic, and personal contexts. The capability to apply knowledge in context enhances self-efficacy, which then supports retention and further growth.

Transformation in self-image where learners become more confident, motivated, participate actively, and take responsibility are also noteworthy. The findings imply how many learners gain in communication, decision-making, and personal development, beyond just academic outcomes. The study, *Academic Motivation, Resilience and Achievement of Junior High School Learners in ALS* of Calo & Salvaña (2024) found that intrinsic motivation strongly predicts resilience, which in turn relates to both academic outcomes and non-academic growth. As learners become more resilient, their confidence and engagement also improve. These affective dimensions, confidence, motivation, and voice, are often precursors or companions to academic success, but they are valuable in themselves.

Closely linked to self-confidence is socio-emotional maturity, on how learners relate to peers and adults, manage emotions, engage in teamwork, solve problems, and handle stress. The literature likewise emphasizes these soft skills. Zulueta et al. (2021) showed self-efficacy correlates with life skills and 21st-century skills among ALS learners. These socio-emotional outcomes are strong indicators that learning is internalized and transforming identity and behavior.

Progress is not just individual but relational and communal. It was highlighted that learners who begin participating in community activities, showing leadership, and contributing in social settings are showing success beyond the classroom. Thus, the benefit of the program expands beyond their personal gain and that of their own families. *Illuminating Resilience: An Exploration of ALS Graduates' Journey Towards Career Empowerment* of De Leon (2025) found that ALS graduates' self-belief and career empowerment intersect with their community roles. When learners perceive themselves as contributing, they often derive more meaning and sustain their educational engagement. This social responsibility is both an outcome and a reinforcing factor to other domains of growth.

This can be equated to the acquisition of practical and soft skills, employment, self-sufficiency, financial stability, and life decisions. ALS learners who can use their skills in work, manage daily life more competently, or feel more stable in their roles are seen by teachers as progress in significant ways. In line with this, De Leon (2025) also captured that career accomplishment is an emerging sub-theme among ALS graduates, along with self-belief and motivation. For many learners, the step into economic activity, job readiness, or vocational skills is both a sign of progress and a bridge to more sustainable outcomes.

IV.3 External Factors Influencing Learner Success

While much research has focused on pedagogical approaches and learner motivation, it is essential to understand that learner success is also strongly shaped by external influences. The narratives reveal that family support, livelihood opportunities, and stakeholder engagement serve as pivotal external factors in learner persistence, program completion, and transition to future opportunities. Accordingly, this emphasizes the importance of socio-contextual conditions in shaping educational outcomes, particularly in non-formal and marginalized settings.

The overwhelming prominence of family support in participants' responses underscores its vital role in sustaining learners' emotional well-being, motivation, and resilience. Familial encouragement provides the emotional anchor that propels their continued engagement in ALS. Some literature echoes this sentiment. According to Guglielmi et al. (2015), family emotional support significantly correlates with academic persistence, particularly among disadvantaged learners. In contexts such as ALS, where learners often face multiple social and economic barriers, supportive family dynamics can act as a buffer against dropout. Similarly, Datu (2017) emphasized that Filipino learners' academic grit and perseverance are deeply embedded in familial relationships, suggesting that motivation is socially constructed and culturally mediated.

Further, Estacio and Villar (2018) found that learners in community-based programs in the Philippines are more likely to complete their education when family members actively participate in their learning journey. These studies support the narratives of participants like Participant 2 and 14, who regard family support as the main driving force for learner perseverance.

Economic activities underscore the pragmatic challenges learners face. Income-generating opportunities reduce financial pressure and allow them to commit to their studies. This aligns with findings by Quijano and Navarro (2019), who documented how economic vulnerability remains the leading reason for dropouts among ALS learners. However, when integrated livelihood programs or cash assistance schemes are present, learners show improved attendance and retention. Likewise, Ramos and Santos (2020) argued that linking ALS with skills training and employment pathways not only addresses poverty but also enhances learner motivation through relevance and applicability.

Beyond immediate family and livelihood support, learners benefit immensely from various stakeholders. Participants credited program partners such as barangays, Non-Government Organizations, and Municipal LGUs for providing material resources, safe spaces, and a sense of inclusion. This is supported by Salazar-Clemeña and Cedillo (2020), who found that stakeholder collaboration, particularly with LGUs and civil society organizations, enhances the sustainability of ALS programs through shared ownership and accountability. Inter-agency collaboration in ALS yields better resource mobilization, teacher support, and learner outcomes.

The convergence of family, livelihood, and stakeholder support are important factors. Learners who benefit from this triad are more likely to complete ALS and transition successfully to further opportunities. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that learner development is

the product of interaction across various environmental systems. Tullao and Rivera (2022) reinforced this in their study, which concluded that learner success cannot be achieved in isolation; it requires a systemic approach where familial, economic, and community inputs are synchronized. When policies intentionally integrate these external supports, learner success metrics improve significantly.

ALS is not an isolated function of individual grit or instructional quality alone. Instead, it is deeply rooted in a matrix of external supports, familial, economic, and communal. Anchored in contemporary literature, these themes call for a holistic and integrated approach to program implementation. Strengthening policies that encourage family engagement, providing livelihood pathways, and fostering robust stakeholder networks will ensure that ALS truly lives up to its promise of inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning.

IV.4 Supporting ALS Learners Set and Achieve Long-Term Educational Goals

ALS teachers serve not only as educators but also as crucial agents of transformation for learners who have been excluded from the formal education system due to socio-economic, personal, or cultural barriers. Their roles transcend instruction, encompassing mentorship, counseling, and life coaching, essential components for helping learners set and attain long-term educational and personal goals.

Regular follow-up, emotional encouragement, and motivational strategies are essential tools in helping learners persist in their studies and aim for long-term goals. This practice resonates with the work of Guglielmi and Phinney (2015), who found that consistent academic support significantly increases learner persistence, particularly among marginalized students. Positive reinforcement and motivational strategies, including the promotion of a growth mindset, foster grit and goal attainment among Filipino learners. Encouraging learners to visualize success and maintain a hopeful outlook has also been shown to increase resilience in challenging learning environments (Duckworth & Gross, 2016).

Structured goal-setting and individualized learning plans emerged as a vital strategy used by ALS teachers. Participants described using short-term targets to build toward learners' broader aspirations. Goal-setting and planning are critical in sustaining motivation and self-regulation among non-formal learners. Likewise, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) argued that specific, attainable goals paired with feedback enhance learners' self-efficacy and engagement in long-term academic tasks. ALS policies also emphasize learner-centered planning. According to DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2019, the use of ILA is mandated to align instruction with learners' unique aspirations, current life conditions, and future opportunities. This individualized approach increases relevance and ownership of the learning process.

ALS teachers also facilitate learners' goal achievement by connecting life skills education with real-life applications and external support networks. Participants mentioned helping learners align their goals with the ALS Life Skills curriculum, offering counseling, and building linkages with families and local stakeholders for scholarships and job opportunities. When learners see the practical value of education, whether through vocational skills, employment prospects, or personal development, they are more likely to remain engaged and motivated.

Castillo et al. (2021) further emphasized that stakeholder engagement in ALS, such as through LGUs, NGOs, and private sector partners, results in improved learner outcomes by creating opportunities for career development, social support, and mentorship. These community linkages serve as critical extensions of the learning ecosystem, helping bridge education with life beyond the classroom. This underscores the multifaceted role of ALS teachers in supporting learners' long-term educational goals. Teachers act as motivators, mentors, and life coaches, providing consistent encouragement, designing personalized learning pathways, and linking learners to life skills and external opportunities. These practices are consistent with current research, which emphasizes that success in non-formal education

requires not just academic instruction, but also personalized support and integration into broader social and economic structures.

To further enhance ALS outcomes, policies must continue to support teacher capacity building in mentorship, provide systemic structures for individualized planning, and strengthen partnerships with stakeholders. Only through these holistic efforts can ALS fulfill its mission of providing meaningful second chances for lifelong learning.

IV.5 Institutional and Community-Driven Initiatives Supporting Learner Success

The collective effort of government institutions, local communities, and partner organizations plays a crucial role in bridging educational inequities and ensuring success for marginalized learners. These institutional and community-driven initiatives not only provide critical resources and structures for learning but also contribute to sustained learner motivation, employability, and community reintegration.

Significantly, an effective advocacy and social mobilization in raising awareness about ALS, especially in hard-to-reach or underserved communities is integral in sustaining the program. Community-based advocacy is essential for inclusive education, especially when working with populations that have historically been excluded from formal schooling. Salazar-Clemeña and Cedillo (2020) stated that effective social mobilization strategies empower communities to take ownership of education initiatives, ensuring that out-of-school youth and adults are identified, encouraged, and supported to return to learning.

Government support, especially through clear policies and adequate training for implementers, enhances the quality and consistency of ALS delivery. Additionally, Tullao and Rivera (2022) argued that institutional frameworks such as DepEd Orders and legislations serve as stabilizing mechanisms that legitimize ALS within the broader education system, thereby increasing access and retention.

ALS teachers highlighted the value of technical-vocational training in enhancing learners' future employability, even gaining employment before completing their basic education. This aligns with the findings from Ramos and Santos (2020), who showed that integrating vocational skills into ALS not only improves attendance but also gives learners a concrete path toward economic independence. Skills development in non-formal education, particularly in contexts where learners are economically disadvantaged and need immediate livelihood alternatives, is essential.

The indispensable role played by LGUs, NGOs, and community partners ensures the holistic success of ALS learners. From providing school supplies and learning venues to scholarships and livelihood training, the support system extends far beyond the classroom. These findings are strongly supported by Castillo et al. (2021), who reported that multisectoral collaborations significantly improve program implementation, learner motivation, and transition outcomes. It was further noted that coordinated partnerships among LGUs, NGOs, and educational institutions lead to stronger learner support systems and broader community engagement.

Truly, the success of ALS learners is deeply rooted in the synergy between institutions and communities. Advocacy campaigns build awareness and reduce stigma; DepEd's institutional backing ensures policy stability and quality; TESDA and other development players provide vocational pathways; and LGUs and NGOs offer tangible resources that sustain learner participation. As both the narratives and literature show, ALS thrives not in isolation but through collective action. Strengthening these community and institutional networks is essential for ensuring inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

V INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND POLICY INFLUENCE ON ALS IMPLEMENTATION

V.1 Policy Influence on ALS Implementation

Policy plays a foundational role in shaping the direction, structure, and impact of the ALS program. As a flexible education program designed to meet the needs of out-of-school youth, adults, and learners from the marginalized sector, the program heavily depends on national and local policies to ensure access, equity, quality, and relevance. These policies are not just mere documents; they are lived realities for implementers on the ground. From curriculum development and teacher training to community partnerships and learner support, policies provide the enabling environment that defines the ALS framework.

These observations are echoed in the study by Orbeta et al. (2020), which emphasized that policy frameworks such as the ALS K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum and DepEd Orders provide structural guidance and ensure accountability in ALS delivery. Similarly, Bautista and Ablanida (2019) highlighted that policies grounded in inclusive and lifelong learning principles make ALS adaptable to diverse learner contexts.

At the grassroots level, local ordinances and LGU engagement serve as catalysts for effective delivery. This aligns with Agbisit et al. (2021), who found that LGU support plays a vital role in strengthening ALS implementation, particularly in geographically isolated or disadvantaged areas. These localized efforts reflect a form of decentralized educational governance that allows ALS to be tailored to community-specific challenges.

Professional development for ALS teachers is also shaped by national policy directives. The passing of Republic Act 11510 institutionalized ALS and mandated continuous training for ALS implementers. DepEd's alignment with global commitments such as Education for All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) also influenced the values and pedagogical approaches of ALS teachers. Teachers' performance improves significantly when they receive regular capacity-building anchored on national standards. Thus, it is imperative to invest in teacher development to ensure quality education in alternative settings.

Despite the positive impacts of existing policies, some narratives divulged that certain ALS policies do not fully accommodate the realities on the ground. They called for improved alignment between policy design and the contextual needs of learners and implementers. While national policies are crucial, they must be regularly evaluated and contextualized to avoid top-down approaches that limit innovation at the local level. They emphasized participatory policy development involving ALS implementers, learners, and local stakeholders.

The implementation of ALS in the Philippines is heavily influenced by national and local policy frameworks that shape every aspect of its delivery, from curriculum and assessment to teacher development and community engagement. These policies provide structure, flexibility, and legitimacy to the program. However, the call for continuous policy enhancement, based on real learner contexts, is loud and clear. Bridging the gap between policy and practice requires a dynamic, inclusive, and evidence-based approach. As literature and field experiences show, empowering ALS implementers and aligning policies with learner needs is critical for ensuring that no Filipino is left behind in education.

V.2 Institutional Support and Its Impact on ALS Teaching Effectiveness

ALS teachers operate in unique and often under-resourced contexts, grappling with issues such as a lack of instructional materials, limited learning spaces, and the complex needs of diverse learners. As such, institutional support in the form of financial resources, continuous professional development, technical

assistance, mentoring, and coaching is fundamental to enabling ALS teachers to deliver inclusive, responsive, and high-quality education.

The availability of financial and material resources emerged as a cornerstone of effective ALS instruction. Participants consistently emphasized that without a share from the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE), they rely on alternative sources to implement the program. Teachers noted that funding is critical not only for procuring learning materials but also for maintaining community learning centers and providing access to technology. It was also recognized that Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, national and local training, and other forms of professional development are vital in enhancing instructional quality. This mirrors the findings of Castro et al. (2017), who found that ALS teachers benefit most from localized and contextualized training programs that reflect the realities of their classrooms.

The agency has acknowledged this need through initiatives such as the ALS curriculum updates. However, implementation remains inconsistent (David et al., 2019). According to Tupas and Regala (2021), professional development for ALS teachers should focus on equipping them with differentiated teaching strategies, assessment techniques, and inclusive pedagogies, a perspective aligned with Participant 19's emphasis on workshops and capacity enhancement activities as essential tools for professional growth.

Beyond structured training, great value was placed on mentorship and technical support. The data revealed that many ALS teachers, often working alone in far-flung or marginalized communities, depend on coaching and peer mentoring for professional and emotional sustenance. It aligns with the work of Espino and Manalo (2020), who found that coaching fosters reflective practice and enhances teaching competencies in non-formal education settings. Similarly, mentoring programs have been shown to mitigate teacher burnout and improve job satisfaction. For isolated ALS implementers, such psychosocial and technical support is not merely beneficial, it is essential. Emotional and instructional scaffolding provided by mentors contributes to ALS teachers' resilience and innovation.

Thus, institutional support, in the form of adequate funding, continuous professional development, and technical assistance, is indispensable to the effectiveness of ALS teachers. These forms of support do not operate in silos but intersect to form a holistic framework that empowers teachers to meet the complex demands of alternative education. The voices of the participants, anchored by current literature, call for a more intentional, structured, and well-funded support system for ALS educators, one that recognizes their critical role in achieving educational equity for all.

V.3Policy-Related Challenges in ALS Program

Designed as a flexible, second-chance education program, ALS aims to close gaps in access and promote lifelong learning. However, its implementation is deeply influenced by the broader policy environment. While the commitment of ALS teachers is unwavering, their work is often hampered by policy-related challenges, including inadequate funding, inconsistent policy execution, bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited professional development opportunities, and inequities in governance. These systemic issues affect not only program effectiveness but also the morale and capacity of teachers in the field.

The persistent issue of limited and delayed funding, which constrains all aspects of program implementation, from resource procurement to teacher allowances, is derailing the implementation. This reflects the long-standing issue of underfunding in ALS. Disparities in fund allocation are a critical barrier to achieving ALS goals. Similarly, David et al. (2019) highlighted that delays in the disbursement of teaching materials and allowances contribute to declining program performance and teacher morale. The absence of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) for ALS mirrors structural funding

inequities that call for systemic reforms in resource distribution to ensure consistency and equity across learning centers.

Professional capacity-building remains central to teacher effectiveness, yet participants repeatedly cited insufficient training, lack of coaching, and limited access to inclusive education practices. This concern aligns with the findings of Tupas and Regala (2021), who emphasized that ALS teachers need contextualized, inclusive training to handle the complexities of multi-level, diverse classrooms. The absence of targeted training for learners from special groups, such as persons deprived of liberty, indigenous peoples, and substance abuse survivors, is particularly troubling given ALS's mandate of inclusivity.

Espino and Manalo (2020) advocated for embedding mentorship and coaching in ALS professional development, arguing that such support enhances pedagogical confidence and addresses real-time instructional needs. Participant 8 calls for more coaching, aligns with this position, reinforcing the importance of field-based, needs-responsive training.

V.4Institutional Policy Reforms for Strengthening ALS

Policy misalignments between national directives and local execution were cited as a major barrier to effective ALS implementation. Decentralization without clear policy alignment results in fragmented governance and inefficiencies. Similarly, Roxas and Mateo (2023) stressed that inconsistency in policy execution erodes trust among ALS implementers and weakens accountability mechanisms.

The recurring delays in Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) test schedules also reflect governance weaknesses in assessment and credentialing, which need reform to maintain learner confidence and program credibility. Moreover, the system is overwhelmed by excessive documentation, unclear roles, and limited ALS representation in decision-making bodies. These bureaucratic burdens shift teachers' focus away from instruction and learner support toward paperwork and compliance.

The lack of institutional voice results in limited access to localized funding and policy influence, exacerbating the inequities experienced by ALS implementers. Moreover, the biometric attendance system, seen as inappropriate for mobile or community-based ALS teachers, reinforces how policies designed for formal schooling environments are often inappropriately applied to alternative education settings. Meanwhile, ensuring equity is at the heart of ALS's mission, yet participants shared that governance policies often do not reflect the program's inclusive intent.

The effectiveness and equity of the ALS program are inextricably linked to the policy environment in which it operates. The voices of ALS implementers clearly reveal that policy-related challenges, ranging from delayed funding and limited professional development to bureaucratic overload and policy misalignment, undermine the very goals ALS aims to achieve. These point to the urgent need for more coherent, inclusive, and responsive policies that empower ALS teachers and ensure that every learner, regardless of background, receives meaningful, quality education.

The foremost concern is the persistent inadequacy and delayed provision of financial resources. This concern reflects systemic gaps that undermine effective ALS delivery. According to Reyes (2016), the absence of a dedicated budget for ALS in many regions has led to dependence on external donations and unstable program implementation. Adequate funding is crucial for program continuity and teacher morale. Participants' calls for reduced learner quotas and national budget allocations align with the findings of Serrano et al. (2020), who identified overburdened teachers and unfunded mandates as major challenges to ALS effectiveness.

Teacher professional growth and recognition are key to sustaining high-quality ALS instruction. Several participants stressed the need for regular training, mentoring, and clear career pathways. Castro et al. (2017) highlighted that many ALS teachers lack access to regular, structured professional development, unlike their formal school counterparts. Moreover, Espino and Manalo (2020) observed that without standardized training and mentoring, ALS teachers struggle to adapt pedagogical strategies to diverse learner needs. A clear institutionalized career ladder and performance-based incentives tailored to ALS educators is needed.

There is also a need to broaden learners' options after completing the A&E program, such as technical-vocational trainings, employment, entrepreneurship and higher education. This aligns with the findings of Serrano et al. (2020), who stressed the importance of integrated post-A&E pathways. Without these, learners may relapse into marginalization, defeating the purpose of ALS. Meaningful learner reintegration into higher education or employment requires inter-agency policy alignment, especially with TESDA, CHED, and DOLE.

Perhaps the most powerful theme is the call for reforms driven by field-level realities. Top-down policy development often neglects the voices of ALS implementers and communities and therefore are less responsive. A sustainable policy reform in public service, including education, must embrace decentralization, consultation, and evidence-based decision-making.

V.5Collaborative Efforts in Improving ALS Implementation

Given that ALS targets diverse marginalized learners, it demands not only educational innovations but also holistic and collaborative support from various stakeholders (Reyes, 2016). With resource constraints and governance limitations persisting, collaborative partnerships among local government units, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and community stakeholders are seen as essential to improving ALS delivery, ensuring equity, and enhancing learner outcomes.

The critical role of local governments and communities in enhancing ALS program delivery is indispensable. They identified LGU engagement as crucial for logistical support, advocacy, and resource mobilization. Activities such as literacy mapping, community symposia, and barangay-level convergence events were cited as strategies to deepen grassroots participation. The program implementation thrives best in communities where LGUs take active ownership of the program through resource sharing and logistical support. Decentralizing educational delivery, particularly for marginalized learners, requires functional partnerships at the local level, including community involvement.

Meanwhile, it was deeply recognized that ALS cannot rely solely on DepEd and requires the active participation of NGOs and private entities to fill resource and capacity gaps. Scholarships, learning materials, livelihood training, and logistical support provided by external stakeholders were identified as critical. The success of ALS is contingent on resource complementation, especially in contexts where government support is limited or delayed. Furthermore, Castro et al. (2017) reported that NGOs play a vital role in enriching ALS through life skills development and psychosocial support, particularly for high-need learners such as former dropouts and displaced individuals.

Strengthening inter-agency collaboration to expand learner pathways, particularly in terms of technical-vocational training, livelihood programs, and employment opportunities is empirical. An integrated support system among stakeholders is needed to make ALS a bridge to lifelong learning, a point also raised by Roxas and Mateo (2023), who emphasized the transformative power of cross-sector partnerships in building learner resilience. Multisectoral collaboration is a cornerstone of inclusive ALS implementation.

Inter-agency linkages create meaningful transitions for learners, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by providing real-world skills training and post-program opportunities.

Sustainability of partnerships is essential. It is believed that lasting collaborations depend on mutual accountability, clear roles, and shared goals. Collaborative governance must be institutionalized through formal mechanisms of coordination and mutual trust among development players. Central to this is the *whole-of-community approach*, which emphasizes the active involvement of all stakeholders, government, civil society, private sector, families, and learners themselves, in shaping and sustaining education initiatives. Ultimately, ALS is more than just a government-led education program; it is a community development initiative that must be built on collaboration, inclusivity, and shared responsibility. Anchored in both empirical literature and the voices of ALS implementers, these collaborative strategies, underpinned by a whole-of-community approach, are not optional; they are integral to realizing the program's mandate of transformative and equitable education for all.

Theoretical Implications

The lived experiences of ALS teachers, as revealed in this study, expose the deeply embedded structural inequalities that continue to hinder equitable access to education. These experiences reinforce critical educational theories that see learning as both a socially situated and politically charged process. The multi-faceted challenges ALS teachers face, ranging from poverty, institutional fragility, to learners' emotional struggles, demonstrate that second-chance education is not merely about delivering curriculum content but navigating a complex ecosystem of marginalization.

This aligns closely with Paulo Freire's theory of critical pedagogy, which posits that education must be rooted in the lived experiences of learners and be oriented toward liberation. In the context of ALS, the act of teaching becomes an act of resistance against systemic exclusion, and the teacher transforms into a bridge, not just to knowledge, but to hope, and renewed identity**.** Moreover, the finding that ALS serves as a catalyst for empowerment and transformation supports humanistic theories of education, particularly those championed by Carl Rogers, which emphasize the development of the whole person. The learners' journeys go far beyond academic remediation; they reflect a reclamation of self-worth, identity, and purpose. This suggests that in second-chance education, the affective and existential dimensions of learning are as critical, if not more, than the cognitive outcomes.

The study further underscores the importance of contextualized, experiential, and flexible learning**,** a pedagogical approach grounded in constructivist theory, especially that of Vygotsky and Dewey. By anchoring learning in real-life experiences and personal contexts, ALS programs increase not just academic engagement but also relevance and long-term retention. The narratives suggest that when learners see education as responsive to their realities, it fosters intrinsic motivation and deeper transformation, echoing the constructivist notion that knowledge is co-constructed through meaningful interaction with the environment.

Additionally, the redefinition of success in the ALS context, extending to psycho-emotional development, employability, empowerment, and social participation, calls for a holistic theory of learning, such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which views human development as influenced by multiple interacting systems. The ALS learner's progress cannot be understood solely within the microsystem of the classroom but must be viewed in light of broader societal structures and support systems. This reframing challenges traditional education metrics and encourages policymakers and educators to adopt a multi-dimensional understanding of achievement in marginalized contexts.

Lastly, while national policy frameworks provide a scaffold for curriculum and assessment, the disconnect between policy and grassroots implementation reflects the critical importance of institutional theory. The lack of strong institutional backing reveals a form of decoupling, where policies exist in form but lack substantive execution due to weak local governance, insufficient funding, and professional isolation of ALS teachers. This implies that without institutional coherence and community-based support, even the most progressive policies will fail to materialize their transformative purpose.

Practical Implications

The study shed light on the day-to-day realities of ALS teachers and the complex circumstances of marginalized learners. These realities demand urgent, coordinated, and practical responses from all levels of the educational ecosystem, particularly if the ALS program is to fulfill its transformative potential as a vital pillar of the educational system.

The multi-faceted challenges faced by ALS teachers, such as poverty, weak institutional backing, inadequate training, and low learner self-esteem, highlight the need for targeted support systems**.** This means equipping ALS teachers not only with learning materials, but also with access to ongoing professional development, mental health support, and tools for differentiated instruction. ALS teaching demands more than subject matter expertise; it requires competence in counseling, community engagement, and adaptive pedagogy. Therefore, practical training modules on trauma-informed teaching, inclusive education strategies, and multi-level classroom management should be prioritized by.

Moreover, the study makes clear that ALS is more than an educational program, it is a lifeline to dignity, purpose, and reintegration for marginalized learners. This practical implication calls for the expansion of partnerships between DepEd, NGOs, LGUs, government-line agencies, private sector, and civil society to provide not only education, but also economic liberation, psychosocial services, and post-program support. Second-chance education should not end at the learning session; learners must be supported in their transition to employment, further education, and meaningful community involvement.

The success of contextualized and flexible learning approaches points to the need for a shift in instructional design. Teachers should be empowered and encouraged to localize content, to make lessons relevant to the learners' daily lives, cultures, and work environments. This implies providing ALS teachers with flexibility in curriculum delivery and resources for localized lesson planning**,** rather than holding them to rigid academic frameworks that often fail to resonate with their learners' realities.

Equally important is the redefinition of success in ALS. Since outcomes like self-worth, employability, emotional development, and community engagement are critical markers of transformation, assessment practices in ALS must evolve. This implies integrating authentic and formative assessments, life skills portfolios, reflective journaling, and competency-based evaluations that capture personal growth, not just academic attainment. DepEd must lead in developing alternative metrics and tools that acknowledge the unique goals and trajectories of ALS learners.

Lastly, while policy frameworks offer clear directives, their effectiveness is undermined by weak grassroots implementation. This study implies that policymakers must focus on bridging the policy-practice gap through regular monitoring, feedback loops from the field, and capacity-building at the community level. Localized implementation plans, resource allocation, and decision-making autonomy for ALS implementers must be improved to ensure that national standards translate into tangible benefits for teachers and learners.

Limitations of the Present Study

While this qualitative study provides meaningful insights into the experiences of ALS teachers in delive-

ring second-chance education to marginalized learners, certain limitations must be acknowledged to frame the findings within their proper context. The study relied primarily on focus group discussion as the data gathering tool. Although FGDs are effective in generating collective insights and identifying shared experiences, they are also subject to certain constraints. Group dynamics can influence the depth and openness of participant responses. Some teachers may have hesitates to express personal challenges or criticisms due to the presence of colleagues, leading to social desirability bias or self-censorship. As a result, some nuanced or sensitive perspectives may have been underexplored.

Moreover, the study is limited in scope and scale. Participants were selected purposively from a specific geographic area, which, while valuable for generating in-depth, context-specific data, may not fully represent the diverse realities of ALS teachers at a macro-level. Factors such as regional disparities, variations in local government support, community engagement, and access to resources may significantly affect the experiences of ALS teachers in ways not captured in this study. Additionally, the research focused exclusively on the perspectives of ALS teachers**,** providing a deep but one-sided view of the program's implementation. The absence of voices from other stakeholders, such as learners, families, community leaders, program partners, or education officials, limits the study's ability to offer a multi-dimensional understanding of the challenges and successes within the ALS context. A more comprehensive analysis might have emerged through the triangulation of perspectives from multiple stakeholders.

Furthermore, while the qualitative approach allowed for the exploration of rich, descriptive data, the findings are inherently non-generalizable. They are context-bound and are intended to inform understanding rather than predict outcomes or establish universal truths. This does not undermine the value of the study but rather emphasizes the importance of cautious application of its insights to different contexts. Lastly, the study was conducted within a specific time frame, capturing the experiences of participants at one point in time. As such, it does not account for longitudinal changes in teacher experiences, learner outcomes, or policy implementation. Future research could benefit from a longitudinal design to observe how ALS teachers' experiences and the program's impact evolve over time.

Future Research Direction

Building on the insights of this study, future research may benefit from exploring the perspectives of other key stakeholders within the ALS ecosystem, such as marginalized learners themselves, educational leaders, program partners and stakeholders. Including these voices can provide a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the challenges and impact of second-chance education.

Additionally, future studies could adopt a longitudinal approach to examine how the experiences of ALS teachers and learners evolve over time, particularly in response to policy changes, capacity-building initiatives, or shifts in community engagement. Comparative studies across different regions or contexts may also uncover how local factors influence program delivery and learner outcomes.

Finally, future research could investigate innovative instructional practices, such as the integration of entrepreneurship, technology, livelihood components, or psychosocial interventions in ALS, to assess their effectiveness in enhancing learner engagement, retention, and holistic development. Such studies can guide the continuous improvement of ALS and ensure that it remains responsive to the complex needs of marginalized learners.

Recommended Topics for Future Research

From the significant findings of this study, the following relevant topics can be explored by future researchers:

1. Pedagogical Innovations and Adaptive Teaching Strategies in Second-Chance Education
2. Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of ALS Teachers Serving Marginalized Communities
3. Social and Emotional Support for Marginalized ALS Learners
4. Stakeholders' Engagement and Collaboration in ALS Program Implementation
5. Teacher Motivation and Commitment in Challenging Educational Contexts
6. Empowerment and Self-efficacy Development among ALS learners
7. Collaborative Approaches between Teachers, Families, and Communities in Second-Chance Education
8. Inclusion and Equity in the ALS Program: Best Practices and Challenges
9. Overcoming Barriers to Learning: Psychosocial and Socio-Economic Factors Affecting ALS learners' Engagement and Retention
10. Professional Development Needs and Capacity-Building for ALS Teachers

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the concluding discussion of the study, summarizing the key findings and conclusions, drawing overarching insights, and highlighting the implications for policy, practice, and recommendations. It also outlines the significance of the study and its valuable contributions to the body of knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

1. What challenges do ALS teachers encounter in delivering second-chance education to marginalized learners, and how do they navigate these challenges?
2. How do ALS teachers perceive the impact of the Alternative Learning System on the personal and professional growth of their learners?
3. What instructional strategies do ALS teachers employ in fostering engagement and retention among marginalized learners?
4. How do ALS teachers define success in second-chance education, and what factors contribute to positive learning outcomes?
5. In what ways do institutional support and policy frameworks influence ALS teachers' ability to provide inclusive and transformative learning experiences?

Findings

1. ALS teachers experienced multi-faceted challenges in providing second-chance education to marginalized learners that include poor learning condition, weak institutional support in terms of budget and learning resources, and inadequate professional development, while ALS learners were also confronted with difficulties such as poverty and low self-esteem affecting their engagement and retention.
2. The ALS program served as a catalyst for personal empowerment and lifelong transformation that not only recover marginalized learners' educational opportunities but also their sense of self-worth and purpose. It breaks marginalization through an inclusive, flexible and holistic education that develops skills, promotes emotional healing and career readiness toward lifelong growth, gainful employment, and active participation in society.
3. Contextualized, experiential, and flexible learning deepens learners' engagement, motivation, and retention by grounding instruction in familiar contexts that bridge the gap between abstract knowledge

and daily life, making learning more relevant, functional, and meaningful.

4. Aside from academic advancement, success in the ALS program was also measured through the regained self-worth and sense of purpose of learners, emotional development, enhanced employability, personal transformation, and active participation in the community.
5. Policy frameworks set a clear direction for program implementation in terms of curriculum content, competency standards, assessment, and instructional approaches aligned with national educational goals, but lacks institutional support that hinder full and effective program implementation.

Conclusions

1. The persistent and interrelated challenges faced by ALS teachers underscore the systemic vulnerabilities of second-chance education that highlight the need to reinforce institutional support for program implementation and teacher development, while difficulties faced by ALS learners hinder their successful engagement in the program.
2. The ALS program functions more than an academic alternative, it serves as a transformative vehicle for reclaiming dignity, social reintegration, and empowerment among marginalized learners.
3. The positive impact of contextualized, experiential, and flexible learning strategies on learner engagement, retention, and holistic learning affirms the effectiveness of these approaches in the delivery of the program.
4. Success in ALS transcends conventional academic metrics, encompassing holistic growth and empowerment, employability, and social engagement.
5. National policy frameworks provide clear direction and structure for ALS implementation, but the absence of robust institutional support significantly undermines its impact in the ground.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen support systems for program implementation, including equitable budget allocation for learning resources and conducive learning environment, and continuous professional development and psychosocial care for teachers; and integrate livelihood activities and psychosocial support for learners to address economic challenges and low self-esteem.
2. Institutionalize learner-centered and holistic development framework that integrate personality development and life skills, psychosocial wellness, employability, and community engagement.
3. Prioritize contextualized, flexible, and experiential teaching strategies that promote learner engagement and enable teachers to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences tailored to the unique realities of learners.
4. Establish ALS monitoring and evaluation systems that include non-academic success indicators such as emotional resilience, personal growth, employability, and community participation.
5. Strengthen institutional support by ensuring adequate funding for program implementation and enhance the policy framework to support ALS teachers' capacity to provide inclusive and effective second-chance education.

Significance of the Present Study

This study contributes significantly to the discourse on inclusive education by illuminating the lived experiences of ALS teachers as they navigate the complexities of delivering second-chance education to marginalized learners. In highlighting the multifaceted challenges encountered by educators, ranging from

poverty, institutional constraints, and inadequate resources to the socio-emotional needs of learners, the research underscores the structural vulnerabilities embedded in the implementation of non-formal education in the Philippines.

The findings of this study are especially valuable for education policymakers and the Department of Education, as they provide grounded insights into the disjuncture between well-intentioned national policy frameworks and their actual execution at the grassroots level. By exposing the gaps in institutional support, funding allocation, and policy responsiveness, the study calls for evidence-based, context-sensitive reforms that prioritize both educational equity and teacher empowerment. For ALS implementers and educators, this research offers a platform for their voices and experiences to be heard, thereby recognizing their critical role in transforming the lives of disenfranchised learners. It affirms the value of learner-centered, flexible, and contextualized pedagogies that not only foster academic engagement but also promote personal transformation, emotional healing, and social reintegration. The study also emphasizes the importance of sustained professional development, mentorship, and psychosocial support for ALS teachers to ensure their effectiveness and resilience in challenging educational milieu.

Furthermore, for ALS program partners and stakeholders, this research reinforces the need for a collaborative and multisectoral approach to supporting ALS. It highlights the transformative potential of ALS when institutional commitment, community involvement, and learner-centered pedagogies converge to uphold the right to education for all, especially those historically left behind by the formal system.

Finally, the study is relevant to academics and researchers in the fields of education policy, non-formal education, and social equity, as it expands the existing body of knowledge on alternative learning and inclusive educational practices. It invites further inquiry into the long-term impacts of ALS on learner trajectories, as well as systemic issues such as governance, inter-agency coordination, and post-program support for both learners and teachers.

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