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ALS SHS teachers living beyond the syllabus: Lived experiences of alternative learning system senior high school teachers

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Abstract

The implementation of the Alternative Learning System Senior High School (ALS SHS) in the Philippines provides non-traditional learners with access to education, yet little is known about the lived experiences of the teachers who make this possible. This qualitative phenomenological study explores the experiences of five ALS SHS teachers in the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas. The research seeks to understand how these teachers navigate instructional, structural, and emotional challenges as they adapt to the program's unique demands.

Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, supplemented by document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed five major themes: diversity and unique learner profiles; instructional challenges and pedagogical adjustments; emotional investment and teacher-learner bonds; transformative experiences; and personal and professional growth. Teachers described navigating complex teaching contexts with adult learners from diverse life circumstances while demonstrating high levels of empathy, adaptability, and dedication.

Findings highlight the need for contextualized teaching strategies, curriculum adjustments, and robust support systems for both learners and teachers. Despite resource and institutional limitations, ALS SHS teachers find fulfillment and growth in their roles. The study underscores the necessity for targeted training, curriculum refinement, and institutional support to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the ALS SHS program.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on inclusive education and offers valuable insights for policymakers, school leaders, and educators aiming to enhance the ALS SHS implementation across the division and beyond.

Keywords: Alternative Learning System; ALS SHS; Teacher Experiences; Inclusive Education; Adult Learners

1. Introduction

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) is a parallel learning system in the Philippines designed to cater to out-of-school youth and adult (OSYA) learners by equipping them with fundamental and functional literacy skills. As emphasized by the Department of Education (DepEd), the implementation of ALS is essential in addressing the educational disparities experienced by many Filipinos who, due to various circumstances such as economic hardship, geographic isolation, or other constraints, are unable to access formal basic education [1]. In response to this need, the Republic Act No. 9155, also known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, institutionalized the ALS to provide inclusive and equitable access to basic education for all, regardless of their life situations or special learning needs.

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In 2019, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 13, series of 2019, entitled “Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of the Enhanced Alternative Learning System 2.0,” which formally integrated the Senior High School (SHS) level into the ALS Program. This enhancement aimed to better prepare learners for various post-secondary pathways, including employment, entrepreneurship, middle-level skills development, and higher education [2].

Despite the considerable challenges associated with its pilot implementation and the unprecedented difficulties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the first cohort of ALS SHS learners successfully graduated in 2021. In Dasmariñas City, the pioneering batch of ALS SHS graduates completed the program at Paliparan III Senior High School (P3SHS) in May 2024. Since then, additional public secondary schools in the city have implemented the program, including Dasmariñas Integrated High School-Senior High School (DIHS-SHS) and Dr. Jose P. Rizal Senior High School (DJPRSHS) during School Year 2023–2024. Most recently, New Era Senior High School (NESHHS) began offering the ALS SHS Program in School Year 2024–2025, thereby broadening the reach of alternative education among out-of-school youth and adult learners in the city.

Given the relatively recent implementation of the ALS Senior High School Program—nationally in 2019 and in Dasmariñas City in 2022—there is a noticeable gap in the scholarly literature on the perspectives and lived experiences of teachers within this educational framework. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore and document the lived experiences of ALS SHS teachers in Dasmariñas City, with particular emphasis on how these educators navigate the program's unique demands and challenges, as well as the andragogical adjustments required to address the diverse needs of their learners.

1.1. Potential of the Alternative Learning System

Results of the study showed a positive relationship between the level of ALS implementation and the effectiveness of 21st-century life skills among ALS learners [3]. As a result, the data gathered could serve as a basis for creating guidelines for specialization, hiring, and deployment – important factors to consider in establishing ALS Senior High School.

1.2. Relationship of Teacher Readiness and Performance

A recent study revealed a positive correlation between teacher readiness and teacher performance, as indicated by mean ratings of 3.34 and 3.57 for personal and professional growth, respectively, reflecting high teacher readiness and outstanding performance [4]. As a result, 95% of ALS learners passed the A&E test in the chosen school.

1.3. Addressing ALS Teachers’ Concern

A study on teachers’ intervention in ALS learning identified common challenges faced by ALS Teachers, including resource constraints, economic challenges, accessibility challenges, and challenges in enhancing employability [5]. To address these concerns, respondents of the study suggested engagement and collaboration, improving network engagement, employing quantitative assessment, and promoting integrative learning.

Other common challenges faced by ALS Teachers include adapting to the work environment, transportation, a shortage of ALS teachers, and budget allocation. Respondents also emphasized that to address these challenges, some helpful methods could be teachers’ resourcefulness and strengthening learners’ sense of commitment and satisfaction [4].

2. Literature Review

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines is an initiative aimed at providing a second chance for Filipinos to complete basic education in ways that suit their unique life situations [6]. Access to basic education has historically been challenging for many Filipinos [7]. ALS has emerged as a valuable solution for many marginalized groups, individuals with early family responsibilities, and adult learners with disabilities [8].

Republic Act No. 9155, known as the *Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001*, mandated the implementation of the ALS program. To promote lifelong learning for ALS learners, the Department of Education issued Order No. 13, s. 2019, establishing guidelines for the Enhanced Alternative Learning System 2.0 and the implementation of the ALS K to 12 Curriculum. This program is overseen by the Bureau of Alternative Education, formerly the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS). The policy includes two major programs: the Basic Literacy Program, which focuses on foundational literacy skills, and the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Program, which certifies learners who acquire knowledge and skills through ALS intervention. As the ALS SHS Curriculum is still under development, the adaptation of the SHS curriculum for ALS will continue. The ALS Act also addresses the professional development of ALS teachers

through training to enhance their skills and knowledge in teaching ALS learners. Understanding the ALS program and its objectives highlights the Department of Education's commitment to inclusive and accessible education for all Filipinos [6].

The Alternative Learning System Senior High School (ALS SHS) program in the Philippines has demonstrated promising results in educating out-of-school youth and adults. ALS SHS has contributed to improved literacy rates and academic achievement [2], making significant progress in reaching those who need it most. Its effectiveness is reflected in increased teacher readiness, expanded access to education, positive learning outcomes, and strong support from both the government and the community.

2.1. Challenges and Gaps

2.1.1. Teaching and Learning Challenges

Teaching adult learners presents unique and multifaceted challenges, requiring a specialized approach that considers their characteristics, needs, and circumstances. These include diverse learning styles, varying levels of literacy, and differences in educational backgrounds. Teachers must also address learners' diverse motivations and goals. Managing classroom dynamics and fostering inclusive learning environments are also critical. The **andragogy theory**, which focuses on adult learning, serves as a valuable framework for addressing these needs [9,10].

Teachers must also consider learners' personal and emotional challenges, such as balancing work, family, and education, managing stress and anxiety, and addressing time constraints. Additionally, teachers must bridge learning gaps and support learners with special needs or disabilities.

2.1.2. Curriculum and Learning Delivery Challenges

ALS SHS teachers contextualize the curriculum to meet adult learners' needs by designing relevant materials, assessing prior knowledge, and providing feedback. However, delivering immediate feedback remains a challenge, particularly in modular distance learning.

For instructional design, **Equivalency Theory** emphasizes achieving comparable learning outcomes across different delivery modes [11,12]. ALS SHS follows the K-12 curriculum, requiring teachers to manage both face-to-face and distance learning modalities, which adds complexity to instruction.

2.1.3. Personal and Professional Challenges

ALS SHS teachers face challenges in building rapport, establishing authority, and effectively communicating with diverse adult learners [13]. They also experience burnout, highlighting the need for self-care and support systems [14]. Teachers must maintain professional boundaries while managing personal assumptions.

Program implementation challenges include limited training, insufficient resources, inadequate infrastructure, and administrative workload. Compliance with school reports and systems such as the Learner Information System (LIS) further increases their responsibilities.

2.1.4. Best Practices and Recommendations

To address these challenges, teachers must adopt innovative, learner-centered approaches that emphasize flexibility, empathy, and creativity [15,16,10]. These strategies support inclusive learning environments and acknowledge adult learners as reflective and practical individuals [17].

Policymakers and stakeholders should support ALS SHS teachers through professional development, training, and resource allocation. Strengthening collaboration, securing funding, and integrating technology are also essential. Additionally, attention must be given to teachers' mental health, community engagement, and partnerships.

2.2. Research Questions

This study explores the lived experiences of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Senior High School (SHS) teachers within the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas, aiming to guide the creation of division-wide guidelines for ALS SHS implementation.

The research specifically addresses the following questions:

- What are the experiences of ALS SHS teachers in the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas?
- How do ALS SHS teachers adapt to the program's requirements?
- What support systems do ALS SHS teachers need for effective implementation?

2.2.1. Scope of the Study

This research focused on the real-life experiences of formal school teachers instructing ALS SHS Grade 11 and 12 learners in non-formal education within the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas. The targeted participants include five (5) Grade 11 or 12 subject teachers from ALS SHS classes at Paliparan III Senior High School (P3SHS), Dasmariñas Integrated High School-Senior High School (DIHS-SHS), Dr. Jose P. Rizal Senior High School (DJPRSHS), and New Era Senior High School (NESHHS). These teachers participated in semi-structured interviews to share insights about their experiences in handling ALS SHS classes. Data collection was conducted in the first semester of School Year 2024-2025.

This study excluded private schools in Dasmariñas City that implement the DepEd ALS SHS program this school year, focusing solely on public schools within the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas during the specified timeframe.

For this research, participants are limited to subject teachers of ALS SHS Grade 11 or 12, with one (1) teacher representing each strand per school. For instance, P3SHS offers strand in Cookery, Bread and Pastry Production, and Food and Beverage Services (CBF), so one (1) subject teacher participated. DJPRSHS offers two (2) strands—CBF and HUMSS—so two (2) subject teachers are included.

3. Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research method, employing in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to explore participants' experiences [16]. This approach is well-suited for examining participants' thoughts, feelings, and motivations, providing a rich, contextual understanding of the research problem.

Qualitative research is ideal for exploring experiences through non-numerical data collection and analysis. In-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted in person. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share their insights, experiences, and emotions, allowing for a detailed and contextualized understanding of their lived experiences.

Thematic analysis was applied using coding techniques to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within the data. This phenomenological study also incorporated a triangulated approach, combining interviews, document analysis, and observation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of participants' lived experiences [18]. This method is particularly appropriate for examining the complexities of teachers' experiences in the ALS SHS program in the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas.

3.1. Sampling

The participants in this study were five (5) ALS SHS teachers from Paliparan III Senior High School, Dasmariñas Integrated High School–Senior High School, Dr. Jose P. Rizal Senior High School, and New Era Senior High School. These participants were selected as subject teachers handling ALS SHS classes.

The sample size is consistent with recommendations for phenomenological research, which typically involves 5–25 participants [19]. Participants were selected through purposive convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique used to identify individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research problem [20].

3.2. Data Collection

To gather detailed qualitative data, the study conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ALS SHS teachers. This method combines structured questioning with flexibility, allowing participants to share personal narratives and experiences [21].

The interview instrument was validated prior to data collection. Necessary documents, including informed consent forms, letters of intent, research instruments, and a memorandum of agreement, were prepared and submitted to the City Schools Division Office of Dasmariñas. Upon approval, interviews were conducted, and all data collected were treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for research purposes.

3.3. Ethical Issues

The researcher ensured that the study adhered to ethical standards and principles throughout the research process:

- Ethical Standards – Ethical protocols were observed by securing approval from the appropriate authorities and obtaining informed consent from all participants prior to data collection.
- Validity – Scientific standards were followed to ensure the credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of the research instruments and findings.
- Confidentiality Measures – Participants' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms or numerical codes (e.g., ALS Teacher 1 to ALS Teacher 5).
- Equitability – Fairness and integrity were maintained by minimizing bias, avoiding conflicts of interest, and ensuring respect and equal treatment for all participants.

3.4. Data Analysis

Interview data were transcribed into digital format [18]. The data were analyzed using thematic coding, a qualitative method that identifies and organizes patterns within the dataset [22,23]. This approach groups similar data segments into themes, allowing for deeper insights into participants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations related to the research topic.

4. Discussion of Results

4.1. Experience of ALS SHS teachers

The implementation of the ALS SHS program has introduced a unique teaching landscape that differs significantly from the traditional classroom setting. ALS SHS teachers are tasked not only with delivering academic instruction but also with responding to the diverse and complex realities of their learners. Their lived experiences reflect the multifaceted nature of this role, shaped by five key themes that emerged from their narratives.

4.1.1. THEME 1: Diversity and Unique Learner Profiles

It highlights the wide-ranging backgrounds of ALS learners, including adult and non-traditional learners, individuals with complex life situations, and those facing personal and socio-economic challenges.

Adult and Non-Traditional Learners

- Teacher 1: "Our oldest learner is 72 years old and is very participative...", "They are pastors, businesswomen, managers, and persons deprived of liberty."
- Teacher 2: "...they are diverse, especially considering their interests."
- Teacher 3: "I was surprised to see the older learners."
- Teacher 4: "I even handled people from Smokey Mountain."
- Teachers 5: "Some are working already, some are at home cooking."

Learners with Complex Life Circumstances

- Teacher 1: "Some are in the youth detention center."
- Teacher 4: "Some have chronic illness. One gets pregnant yearly... Some are struggling with anxiety and can't attend regular classes."

4.1.2. THEME 2: Instructional Challenges and Pedagogical Adjustments

This reveals how teachers adapt their strategies to meet learners' varying needs, learning levels, and life contexts.

Attendance and Access

- Teacher 1: "Learners can't leave work on Saturdays."
- Teacher 4: "We only meet once a week."
- Teacher 5: "It's hard to meet the ALS learners face-to-face... modular mode."

Contextualization of Lessons

- *Teacher 2: "We modify activities to be simpler."*
- *Teacher 3: "Challenge is to make the lesson easier to understand... many adjustments."*
- *Teacher 5: "I tailor examples to their work or strand."*

Communication and Assessment

- *Teacher 3: "We follow up with learners... we look for them when they're absent."*
- *Teacher 5: "We sometimes think learners didn't submit, but it was just delayed."*

4.1.3. THEME 3: Emotional Investment and Learner-Teacher Bond

It underscores the deep empathy, patience, and personal connections that develop between teachers and learners.

Genuine Relationships

- *Teacher 3: "The adviser encouraged a dropout to return to school."*
- *Teacher 4: "We must motivate them because they start out hopeless."*
- *Teacher 5: "Their approach is very genuine... like a parent or older sibling."*
- *Teachers' Dedication and Compassion*
- *Teacher 1: "We do all the measures we can so they won't drop out."*
- *Teacher 4: "I need to lower my pride for ALS learners... I was motivated by my past DSWD work to help the less fortunate."*

4.1.4. THEME 4: Memorable and Transformative Experiences

This captures the impactful and inspiring moments that reinforce teachers' commitment and purpose.

Learner Growth and Milestones

- *Teacher 3: "A learner who was naughty before has now matured and is a parent."*
- *Teacher 4: "From sad and hopeless, they are now clean, happy, and winning contests."*

Unexpected Joys and Insights

- *Teacher 3: "I tasted the fish they cooked. It was delicious, like a restaurant dish."*
- *Teacher 5: "Simple stories of life—these are what learners remember."*

4.1.5. THEME 5: Teacher Growth and Reflections

It illustrates how teaching in ALS SHS contributes to educators' professional development and personal transformation.

Professional Development through ALS

- *Teacher 1: "At first, I didn't know what to do as a coordinator. Now we have a graduating class."*
- *Teacher 2: "I became more patient. I realized I can modify my strategies."*

Personal Fulfillment

- *Teacher 3: "It's fulfilling when they learn. It's an achievement."*
- *Teacher 4: "I want to see change. That's why I'm here."*

4.2. Teachers' adaptation in the ALS SHS program

The ALS SHS program presents a distinct educational setting that requires teachers to go beyond traditional methods and embrace adaptive, learner-centered approaches. As the program caters to diverse, often marginalized learners, teachers are challenged to continually adjust their practices, mindsets, and roles. Their adaptation is reflected across five key thematic areas.

4.2.1. THEME 1: Teaching Strategies and Contextualization

Highlights how educators tailor their instructional methods to make learning relevant and responsive to learners' real-life experiences.

Simplification and Relevance

- *Teacher 1: "We still follow the competencies from MELC, but with fewer tasks and more on performance."*
- *Teacher 3: "We simplify the questions. I need to connect it to their experiences."*
- *Teacher 5: "My strategy is to always go back to their strand... contextualization when it comes to their career."*

Integration and Flexibility

- *Teacher 2: "We have an integrative assessment... hitting two birds with one stone."*
- *Teacher 4: "I'm not just focusing on what's in the book. I expand it, make it more applicable."*

Use of Modular and Video Lessons

- *Teacher 1: "All of our modes are blended. When it comes to examinations and activities, we also give a soft copy of the module or printed ones, even the module book. We provide all of the materials we have here."*
- *Teacher 2: "If they can answer the modules at work or home, it's okay, even if it's an exam, they can answer there. We are giving them a chance."*
- *Teacher 5: "I was inspired to develop materials... that reduce the need for face-to-face. "I always send a 20-minute video lesson weekly."*

4.2.2. THEME 2: Learner Diversity and Needs

Emphasizes the importance of differentiated instruction and sensitivity to learners' varying backgrounds, abilities, and circumstances.

Varied Backgrounds and Ages

- *Teacher 1: "We have learners in the youth detention center. There are pastors, businesswomen, and persons deprived of liberty."*
- *Teacher 2: "We have senior citizens as learners."*

Life Responsibilities and Work

- *Teacher 1: "Working learners tend to stop when there's a schedule conflict."*
- *Teacher 5: "They are parents... already working... so I don't give too much input."*

Special Cases and Challenges

- *Teacher 1: "We have learners who are inside the youth detention center... There are a lot of learners who bring their children along here in school."*
- *Teacher 4: "One learner had anxiety so bad her whole body was shaking. One learner has an illness... but we didn't isolate him."*

4.2.3. THEME 3: Program Structure and Management

Explores how teachers navigate the unique systems and operational aspects of the ALS SHS program.

Saturday-only Classes / Limited Time

- *Teacher 1: "Their face-to-face classes are only four in a month."*
- *Teacher 4: "It's only once a week... ten subjects, few meetings."*

Modified Curriculum and Assessment

- *Teacher 1: "All subject teachers modified their modules. It's not as much as the regular. We still follow the competencies from MELC, but with fewer tasks and more on performance."*
- *Teacher 2: "We reduce the tasks... performance tasks are shared across subjects."*
- *Teacher 3: "In the teaching strategies, I modify them based on the different capacities of the learner."*

Communication and Class Management

- *Teacher 4: "If you get angry, they won't come back. You need to explain your side."*
- *Teacher 5: "I always pin announcements. Chat time is 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. only."*

4.2.4. THEME 4: Emotional Impact and Teacher Reflections

Captures the emotional labour involved in teaching, along with the personal insights and growth that arise from the experience.

Fulfillment and Breakthroughs

- *Teacher 2: "When I see them pass the exam, I consider that a breakthrough."*
- *Teacher 4: "Seeing them graduate despite everything—they still go on."*
- *Teacher 5: "Their respect for me—simple things like a story of life—they remember."*

Teacher Growth and Insights

- *Teacher 2: "I became more patient... I need to modify my strategies."*
- *Teacher 5: "ALS changed my direction. I was curious how I could improve distance learning."*

4.2.5. THEME 5: Positive Outcomes of ALS SHS

Showcases the program's meaningful impact on both learners and teachers, affirming the value of their shared efforts.

Access and Second Chances

- *Teacher 1: "ALS SHS is effective. Learners now have a new avenue to finish their studies."*
- *Teacher 4: "They look more professional... I saw that they were working hard."*

Community and Support

- *Teacher 1: "They participate in school events... HIV screening, cooking contests, outreach."*
- *Teacher 5: "They form friendships... there's nothing to be ashamed of."*

4.3 Support systems needed by the ALS SHS teachers

The success of the ALS SHS program relies not only on its curriculum and implementation but also on the well-being, preparedness, and sustained motivation of its teachers. As educators navigate the unique demands of this alternative learning environment, strong and responsive support systems are essential. Insights from their experiences point to several key areas where support is most needed.

4.3.1. THEME 1: Professional Development Needs

This highlights the importance of training tailored to the challenges of ALS SHS.

Training and Exposure to Best Practices

- *Teacher 1: "It's good to give our teachers the chance to see the training in the region."*
- *Teacher 3: "We really need training to fix the curriculum because it's messy."*
- *Teacher 5: "I want to experience a training where we'll level how heavy the course requirements are."*

Curriculum Improvement

- *Teacher 4: "We need to give more emphasis on the curriculum for the learners of ALS... don't rush the lessons."*
- *Teacher 4: "We need to see if we can make the topic more effective so we can deliver it more easily."*

Clarity in Instructional Load

- *Teacher 1: "As of now, our ALS teachers are volunteers. This is not included in their teaching loads... We were given a service credit from a Saturday work."*
- *Teacher 5: "I want to know the appropriate number of activities that should be given."*

4.3.2. THEME 2: Support Systems and Program Management

Focuses on the need for structured guidance, adequate resources, and clear communication from administrators and implementing agencies.

Organizational Support

- *Teacher 1: "We also have group chats for immediate response... I also provide their class schedules... Alternate teacher duty on Saturdays. We plotted the homeroom separately."*
- *Teacher 2: "Although this was taught to us in the training, we are the ones who integrate it with the lesson plan... it will reduce the stress."*
- *Teacher 3: "I always ask the adviser first... Even with regular teachers, I can get from them... We really need training and to fix the curriculum because it's messy."*

Facilities and Resources

- *Teacher 1: "There are allotted rooms for them as well, and all the facilities are accessible... We also give a soft copy of the module or printed copies of the module book. We provide all of the materials we have here."*
- *Teacher 2: "We only have one available classroom for ALS SHS... If there are available learning resources... our task will be reduced."*

Program Structure and Recognition

- *Teacher 1: "We want to add other strands like electrical and electronics... NC2 is open to all."*
- *Teacher 2: "We make it easier for the adults to follow... the way I approach the subject, the difficulty... the number of activities, that we give only once a week... We have an integrative assessment... hitting two birds with one stone."*
- *Teacher 3: "In the teaching strategies, I modify them based on the different capacities of the learner."*
- *Teacher 4: "We should expand the culminating program... organize a Festival of Talent for ALS... Why are our ALS learners not included in the culminating programs?"*

4.3.3. THEME 3: Emotional Investment and Core Values

This reflects how teachers' deep personal commitment and embracing the nature of an ALS Teacher.

Patience, Heart, and Concern

- *Teacher 1: "We will do all the measures that we can give to the learner so that he won't drop out."*
- *Teacher 2: "We consider their submissions, even if they're late. It's okay, even if they don't have grades yet."*
- *Teacher 3: "I need to be apologetic. I really need to be patient."*
- *Teacher 4: "They need a teacher with a heart... if there's no concern, they'll go astray."*

Dedication and Advocacy

- *Teacher 1: "We still accept learners who live outside Dasmariñas because... there's no nearest ALS SHS in them."*
- *Teacher 2: "Their adviser is hardworking and visited the inactive learners at home and work."*
- *Teacher 3: "I'll stay in ALS because I really like ALS."*
- *Teacher 4: "It's not because I want to stay, but I see the needs of the learners."*

4.3.4. THEME 4: Learner Challenges and Teacher Response

Underscores the need for institutional backing as teachers respond to the complex life circumstances and diverse needs of their learners.

Multiple Roles and Responsibilities of Learners

- *Teacher 1: "There are learners who bring their children... they dance with them during PE... Some can't handle work, motherhood, and being a learner."*
- *Teacher 3: "There was a learner who didn't want to study anymore because the kid seemed to choose to work in a restaurant at night. But with the effort of the adviser, she was encouraged to come back."*

Attendance and Motivation

- *Teacher 1: "They choose to work... they sacrifice their studies."*
- *Teacher 4: "They're quick to decide not to continue... if they're not supported."*

4.3.5. THEME 5: Satisfaction and Retention Factors

Explores what sustains teacher engagement, including a sense of purpose and impact.

Sense of Fulfillment

- *Teacher 1: "The ALS SHS learners' work and their perseverance influence my satisfaction."*
- *Teacher 5: "I see potential learners outside the classroom... I can extend ALS even informally."*

Collaboration and Adaptability

- *Teacher 3: "We also work together as a team... sometimes we exchange learners depending on our location and their schedule."*
- *Teacher 5: "Sometimes, I collaborate... I consider submissions in other subjects as requirements... We countercheck outputs to validate if learners really submitted."*

5. Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of Alternative Learning System Senior High School (ALS SHS) teachers in the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas. Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach, it revealed that ALS SHS teachers go beyond the traditional teaching role to address the unique challenges of non-traditional learners. Teachers serve as educators, mentors, and emotional anchors, guiding learners with diverse backgrounds, life circumstances, and educational needs.

Despite limited instructional time, limited resources, and curriculum ambiguity, ALS SHS teachers demonstrate high levels of adaptability and empathy. They contextualize lessons, simplify assessments, and use various modalities such as modular learning and video lessons to reach their learners. Their strong emotional investment and sense of fulfillment are evident in how they describe learner growth and their own professional development.

However, the study also highlights systemic gaps that hinder the program's full potential. Teachers expressed the need for more structured support, clearer curricular frameworks, appropriate training, and emotional and logistical reinforcement.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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