

Voices from Alternative Education: The Lived Experiences of ALS Facilitators and Learners

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Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	<p><i>The Alternative Learning System (ALS) plays a critical role in advancing inclusive and equitable education for individuals unable to complete formal schooling. This study explored the lived experiences of ALS facilitators and learners to uncover the essential meaning embedded in their shared realities. Employing a qualitative phenomenological design, the study involved ten participants, composed of five facilitators and five learners, from public ALS centers in the Schools Division Offices of Muntinlupa, Parañaque, and Las Piñas during School Year 2022–2023.</i></p> <p><i>Data were gathered through in-depth interviews guided by a researcher-developed interview protocol, which was validated by qualitative research experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. The data were analyzed using thematic and existential phenomenological procedures to identify recurring meanings and shared essences across participants' testimonies.</i></p> <p><i>Findings revealed that ALS functions as a human-centered and transformative learning space, sustained by facilitators' passion, patience, and moral commitment, and learners' determination, self-directed learning, and resilience. Learning was experienced not as a linear or isolated process, but as one shaped through networks of interaction among facilitators, peers, families, communities, and digital resources. Anchored in Connectivism, the study highlights how learning in ALS emerges through connection, adaptability, and shared responsibility, particularly within flexible, modular, and blended learning environments.</i></p> <p><i>Despite persistent challenges such as learner diversity, limited resources, and societal misconceptions about ALS, both facilitators and learners demonstrated strong coping mechanisms rooted in social support and purpose-driven engagement. The study concludes that ALS meaningfully contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 4 by restoring dignity, promoting lifelong learning, and expanding access to education for marginalized populations. Implications emphasize the need for strengthened policy support, professional development, and community collaboration to sustain ALS as a vital pathway for inclusive education.</i></p>
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Introduction

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) provides a critical avenue for realizing the principle of *education for all* by offering an alternative mode of learning for individuals who are unable to access formal schooling due to economic, social, geographic, or personal constraints. Through flexible learning modalities—primarily modular instruction

complemented by optional face-to-face sessions—ALS enables learners to acquire foundational competencies equivalent to those expected of secondary education completers. Despite its vital role in promoting inclusive education, ALS remains largely underprioritized, seldom discussed in mainstream educational discourse, and

inadequately funded. Globally, less than one percent of public basic education expenditure is allocated to alternative education programs, a condition that significantly limits the system's capacity to respond to the growing number of out-of-school youth (Tinga, 2020).

Data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS, 2021) indicate that by the end of School Year 2018, approximately 258 million children and youth worldwide were out of school, with a substantial proportion belonging to the upper secondary age group. In the Philippines, the magnitude of this issue is equally concerning. Based on Philippine Statistics Authority data, about 9 percent or 3.53 million of the estimated 39.2 million Filipinos aged 6 to 24 years were identified as out-of-school youth (Philippine News Agency, 2021). These figures underscore the urgency of strengthening alternative education initiatives that address educational exclusion.

In response to this challenge, the Department of Education, through the Bureau of Alternative Education, implements the ALS as a national strategy to uphold the constitutional right to education (Department of Education, 2021). ALS is designed to be learner-centered and flexible, allowing instruction to occur based on learners' availability and circumstances. Both the Basic Literacy Program and the Continuing Education Program rely heavily on modular learning, while face-to-face sessions are conducted based on agreements between learners and learning facilitators.

This study is anchored on George Siemens' theory of connectivism, which views learning as a process that occurs through networks, connections, and interactions with information sources, people, and technology. Connectivism is particularly relevant to the Alternative Learning System, where learning is largely self-directed, modular, and facilitated through flexible modalities rather than traditional classroom structures (Robinos et al. 2020). In ALS, learners are expected to independently access learning materials, seek knowledge using available resources, and establish connections with facilitators and peers, while learning facilitators provide guidance, monitoring, and support. Within this learning environment, both facilitators and learners encounter distinct challenges, develop coping mechanisms, and engage in meaningful interactions that shape their educational experiences. By grounding the study in connectivism, this research situates the lived experiences of ALS facilitators and learners within the context of networked learning, autonomy, and relational engagement, thereby providing a coherent lens for understanding the meanings and themes emerging from their shared realities.

However, the flexible nature of ALS implementation has also surfaced persistent challenges that affect both facilitators and learners. These include limited access to

learning and teaching materials, inadequate administrative and institutional support, lack of suitable learning spaces, and insufficient funding. Such constraints have contributed to declining learner outcomes and program effectiveness. The World Bank (2018) reported that only about 30 percent of ALS examinees passed the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test between 2014 and 2016. Moreover, existing studies reveal that many ALS learners demonstrate limited readiness in skills necessary for higher education and employment, further compounding their educational disadvantage (Tindowen et al., 2017).

These conditions prompted the need to examine ALS beyond statistics and performance indicators and to focus instead on the human experiences embedded within its implementation. What do ALS learning facilitators and learners experience as they navigate this alternative educational space? How do they make sense of the challenges, interactions, and realities they encounter? If these lived experiences remain unexplored, systemic issues within ALS may persist or worsen.

Thus, this study was undertaken to uncover the essence of the lived experiences of selected ALS learning facilitators and learners in the Schools Division Offices of Muntinlupa, Parañaque, and Las Piñas (MUNTIPARLAS) during School Year 2022–2023. By examining their narratives, this phenomenological inquiry seeks to generate meaningful insights that may inform a contextualized framework for improving the implementation of the Philippine Alternative Learning System in ways that are responsive to both learners' and facilitators' realities.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of Alternative Learning System (ALS) facilitators and learners. Qualitative research seeks to understand social or human problems by constructing a holistic picture through words, narratives, and detailed participant perspectives within their natural settings (Creswell, 2018; Tubig et al. 2025). It is particularly suited to studies that aim to capture beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences rather than quantify variables (Anas & Ishaq, 2022).

More specifically, this study adopted a phenomenological approach, which focuses on describing and interpreting individuals' conscious experiences of a particular phenomenon (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). Phenomenology is appropriate when the goal of the research is to uncover the essence and meaning of shared experiences among participants. In this study, phenomenology enabled the researcher to examine how

ALS facilitators and learners made sense of their teaching–learning realities during School Year 2022–2023

Participants and Sampling

The participants of the study consisted of ten (10) respondents, composed of five (5) ALS learners and five (5) ALS learning facilitators officially affiliated with ALS centers in the Schools Division Offices of Muntinlupa, Parañaque, and Las Piñas (MUNTIPARLAS) during SY 2022–2023.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research wherein participants are chosen based on their relevance to the phenomenon being studied and their ability to provide rich, meaningful data (Palinkas et al., 2015; Crossman, 2020). Purposive sampling is particularly appropriate in phenomenological studies, where depth of experience is prioritized over representativeness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample size aligns with methodological recommendations for phenomenological research, which suggest a range of 5–15 participants to allow for in-depth analysis while maintaining analytical rigor (Guest, Namey, & Saldaña, 2014).

Criteria for Selection

ALS Learners included in the study were:

- Officially enrolled in selected ALS centers in MUNTIPARLAS during SY 2022–2023
- Aged 25 years old and above
- Either single, married, or living with a partner, with none or at least one child
- Working or managing a small business while studying

ALS Facilitators included in the study were:

- Officially employed as ALS mobile teachers, learning facilitators, or instructional managers in MUNTIPARLAS during SY 2022–2023
- With three (3) to five (5) years of ALS teaching experience
- Handling full or near-full teaching loads
- Aged 25 years old and above

Five (5) ALS centers participated in the study: two (2) from Muntinlupa City, one (1) from Parañaque City, and two (2) from Las Piñas City. Codes were assigned to participants and centers to ensure confidentiality and anonymity (Creswell, 2018).

Research Instrument and Validation

Data were gathered using a researcher-made Interview Schedule consisting of seven (7) open-ended questions. Open-ended interviews are effective in phenomenological research because they allow participants to express their experiences freely and in their own words (Seidman, 2019). The first item focused on participant profiling, while the succeeding questions explored significant experiences, challenges, and meanings related to ALS participation.

The Interview schedule underwent content validation by qualitative research experts, including the research adviser and panel members. Instrument validation in qualitative research ensures that questions are clear, relevant, and aligned with the study's objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Suggestions from validators were incorporated to improve clarity, sequencing, and alignment with phenomenological inquiry. During the interviews, questions were clarified or rephrased when necessary to facilitate deeper understanding.

Data Collection Procedure

Formal permission was obtained through written requests addressed to the Schools Division Superintendents of Muntinlupa, Parañaque, and Las Piñas. After approval, informed consent was secured from all participants prior to data collection.

In-depth interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on participants' availability. In-depth interviewing is a widely used qualitative data collection method designed to explore participants' lived experiences, emotions, and perspectives beyond surface-level responses (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Mack et al., 2005). All interviews were audio-recorded with consent to ensure accuracy and completeness of data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an existential phenomenological approach, which aims to identify meanings embedded in participants' lived experiences (Churchill, 2021). Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and Filipino responses were translated into English to ensure inclusivity and accuracy. Analysis proceeded in two phases:

Phase 1: Focusing on Moments within the Whole

The researcher conducted a part-to-whole analysis by repeatedly reading the transcripts to identify significant statements, phrases, and meanings relevant to the research questions. This iterative process is consistent with phenomenological analysis, where understanding emerges through continuous engagement with the data (van Manen, 2016). With the assistance of qualitative research experts,

initial codes and themes were collaboratively identified to enhance credibility.

Phase 2: Comprehensive Synthesis

Emerging themes across participants were synthesized into thematic structures representing shared meanings. Participant validation (member checking) was conducted to ensure that interpretations accurately reflected their experiences, a strategy recommended to enhance trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Birt et al., 2016). The final thematic structure served as the basis for the narrative presentation and discussion of findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was secured, and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Codes were used instead of real names, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. Ethical practices such as secure data storage, accurate reporting, and respect for participants' rights were upheld to ensure research integrity and participant protection (Bhandari, 2021; Creswell, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Lived Accounts of the Most Significant Experiences of ALS Facilitators and Learners

Theme 1 (Facilitators): Teaching as Purposeful Service Amidst Complexity and Sacrifice

ALS facilitators described their experiences as emotionally demanding and complex, shaped by learners' varied life circumstances, limited resources, and the need for constant adjustment. Teaching in ALS required not only instructional competence but also emotional labor, flexibility, and personal sacrifice—especially during the pandemic and in modular or blended learning contexts.

Carolyn captured the emotional toll of teaching in constrained conditions:

“Sa totoo lang nakakadepress kasi paano mo ituturo online tapos hindi naman sila nakakapasok.” (“To be honest, it is depressing because how can you teach online when they cannot even connect?”)

She further explained the need to adjust to learners' realities:

“Marami sa kanila may work, may pamilya na kailangan nilang buhayin... kaya kailangan mag-adjust.” (“Many of them have work and families to feed, so I really need to adjust.”)

Roselle emphasized the physical and emotional risks of ALS work:

“Kung stress si teacher, ano maibibigay namin sa mga OSY? Stress din.” (“If the teacher is stressed, what can we give the OSY? Stress as well.”)

These narratives reflect phenomenology's emphasis on intentionality and lived burden, where teaching is experienced as an act of service rather than a purely professional task (van Manen, 2016; Neubauer et al., 2019; and Robinos et al. 2022).

Theme 2 (Facilitators): Fulfillment Through Learner Transformation and Shared Growth

Despite the difficulties, ALS facilitators consistently expressed deep fulfillment derived from learners' growth, appreciation, and life achievements. Seeing learners graduate, regain confidence, or succeed beyond ALS validated their sacrifices and sustained their commitment.

Carolyn described her relational bond with learners:

“Anak ko na talaga sila... kahit hindi ka na nila teacher, maaalala ka pa rin nila.” (“They are really like my children... even if you're no longer their teacher, they still remember you.”)

Roselle articulated her sense of fulfillment:

“Ako ay isang satisfied teacher, fulfilled teacher... kasi alam ko kung ano ang kayang ibigay ng ALS.” (“I am a satisfied and fulfilled teacher because I know what ALS can truly offer.”)

Kristine highlighted the meaning she found in helping adult learners:

“Iba kasi yung nakakatulong ka sa ‘the least, the lost, and the last’.” (“It is different when you are helping the ‘least, the lost, and the last.’”)

These accounts illustrate how mutual growth and shared success form the essence of ALS teaching experiences, aligning with phenomenological notions of meaning-making through relational engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Theme 3 (Learners): ALS as a Second Chance to Reclaim Dignity, Confidence, and Hope

ALS learners described their most significant experiences as a reclaiming of self-worth after earlier educational exclusion caused by bullying, poverty, pregnancy, or family conflict. ALS was experienced as a safe and

inclusive space where learners could start again without judgment.

Mark shared how ALS helped rebuild his confidence:

"Parang mas confident na po ako... hindi na po ako nahihiya." ("I became more confident and I'm no longer shy.")

Evelyn reflected on the absence of discrimination in ALS:

"Hindi ako naka-experience ng discrimination dito... kaya bumalik yung loob ko sa pag-aaral." ("I didn't experience discrimination here... that's why I regained my confidence in studying.")

Irene challenged negative perceptions of ALS:

"Hindi po totoo na mababa ang ALS... ito po ang nag-angat sa sarili ko." ("It's not true that ALS is inferior... it helped lift me up.")

These testimonies affirm that ALS functions as a restorative educational space, allowing learners to reconstruct identity and hope—central to phenomenological understanding of lived meaning (van Manen, 2016).

Theme 4 (Learners): Persistence Amid Competing Roles and Self-Directed Struggle

Learners consistently narrated their experiences as a balancing act between education, work, parenthood, and

household responsibilities. Learning in ALS required perseverance, self-direction, and strong internal motivation, particularly in modular and online settings.

Evelyn described the difficulty of studying without discussion:

"Sa isip ko, Ma'am, wala bang lesson 'to? Wala bang discussion?" ("I was thinking, isn't there a lesson? Isn't there supposed to be a discussion?")

Herchelle emphasized personal responsibility and determination:

"Ikaw lang din tutulong sa sarili mo... ikaw ang tutupad ng pangarap mo." ("You are the only one who will help yourself... you are the one who will fulfill your dreams.")

Mariella highlighted determination as her driving force:

"Determination... kailangan kong makatapos at hindi pabayaan ang pamilya ko." ("Determination... I need to finish while still supporting my family.")

These narratives reveal that ALS learners' persistence is grounded in clear life purposes, resonating with phenomenological views that meaning arises from lived struggle and intentional action (Moran, 2019; Creswell, 2018).

Summary Table on the most significant ALS facilitators and learners experiences

Designation	Theme	Essence	Sample Verbatim Excerpt
ALS Facilitators	Teaching as Purposeful Service	Teaching involves emotional labor, flexibility, and sacrifice	<i>"Kailangan mag-adjust... may pamilya silang binubuhay"</i>
	Amidst Complexity and Sacrifice		
	Fulfillment Through Learner Transformation and Shared Growth	Fulfillment comes from learners' success and gratitude	<i>"Satisfied at fulfilled teacher ako"</i>
ALS Learners	ALS as a Second Chance to Reclaim Dignity, Confidence, and Hope	ALS restores confidence and self-worth	<i>"Hindi na po ako nahihiya"</i>
	Persistence Amid Competing Roles and Self-Directed Struggle	Learning requires perseverance despite adult responsibilities	<i>"Ikaw lang din tutulong sa sarili mo"</i>

Essential Meanings Emerging from the Testimonies of ALS Facilitators and Learners

Based on the testimonies of ALS facilitators and learners, significant concepts were identified and clustered into meaning-based categories with the assistance of three (3) qualitative research experts. For ALS facilitators, meanings emerged from attitudes, skills, challenges, issues, and

coping mechanisms. For ALS learners, meanings were drawn from strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and coping mechanisms. These meanings reveal how ALS functions not only as an educational intervention but as a human, relational, and transformative space.

Meaning 1 (Facilitators): ALS Teaching Is an Expression of Moral Commitment and Vocational Calling

The testimonies of ALS facilitators reveal that teaching in ALS is deeply rooted in commitment, dedication, and moral purpose, rather than convenience or professional gain. Facilitators remained in ALS despite emotional exhaustion, administrative risks, and personal sacrifices—suggesting that ALS teaching is experienced as a calling.

Carolyn's experience reflects this moral resolve:

“Kahit gusto ko nang sumuko, hindi ko kayang iwan kasi anak ko na sila.” (“Even when I wanted to give up, I couldn't leave because they are already like my children.”)

This aligns with Kaplan (2022), who emphasized that dedicated teachers persist because of passion and moral responsibility, not merely obligation. Similarly, Kristine's desire to retire in ALS illustrates long-term vocational commitment:

“Baka dito na ‘ko mag-retire... kasi iba yung pakiramdam na nakakatulong ka sa the least, the lost, and the last.” (“Maybe I will retire here, because the feeling of being able to help the least, the lost, and the last is truly different.”)

From a phenomenological lens, this reflects intentionality, where facilitators' consciousness is directed toward learners' well-being as the core meaning of their work (van Manen, 2016).

Meaning 2 (Facilitators): Professional Growth Emerges Through Humility, Adaptation, and Collaboration

Another meaning drawn from facilitators' testimonies is that growth in ALS teaching is forged through humility, continuous learning, and collaboration, especially in a context marked by diversity and resource constraints.

Maria Fe openly acknowledged her limitations in Math and sought help from experts:

“Alam kong kulang ako sa Math, kaya humihingi ako ng tulong para hindi masakripisyo ang learning.” (“I know that I am lacking in Mathematics, which is why I ask for help to other ALS Facilitators so that the quality of learning will not be sacrificed.”)

This reflects professional humility and commitment to quality education, supporting findings that professional development enhances teacher effectiveness (Incompassing Education, 2022).

Cherrylyn and Roselle emphasized collaboration and harmonious relationships as survival mechanisms:

“Kapag masaya ka sa trabaho, mas nagiging magaan ang pagtuturo.” (“When you are happy in your work, teaching becomes lighter and more manageable.”) – Cherrylyn

Teacher collaboration and positive relationships have been shown to improve school climate and sustain teacher motivation (Barile, 2022; Trust, 2021).

Meaning 3 (Learners): ALS Restores Self-Worth and Rewrites Learners' Educational Identity

Learners' testimonies consistently reveal that ALS is more than an academic alternative—it is a restorative space where learners rebuild confidence, dignity, and identity after experiences of exclusion, bullying, or failure in formal education.

Mark articulated this transformation clearly:

“Hindi na po ako nahihiya... parang nag-level up na ako.” (“I'm no longer shy... it's like I leveled up.”)

This affirms research showing that self-esteem is essential for learner engagement and resilience (American Psychological Association, 2023). Evelyn's testimony further highlights the absence of discrimination in ALS:

“Dito sa ALS, walang nanalait... kaya bumalik yung loob ko sa pag-aaral.” (“In ALS, no one belittles you, which is why I found the courage to return to my studies.”)

From a phenomenological perspective, ALS becomes a space of re-authoring one's life story, where learners redefine themselves as capable and worthy (Moran, 2018).

Meaning 4 (Learners): Persistence in ALS Is Sustained by Social Support and a Clear Life Purpose

Learners' ability to persist despite competing roles—as parents, workers, and caregivers—reveals that education in ALS is sustained by both internal determination and external support systems.

Evelyn's success was strongly linked to social support:

“Kung wala yung asawa ko at si Ma'am, siguro sumuko na ako.” (“If it were not for my spouse and my teacher, I might have already given up.”)

Mai, Wu, and Huang (2021) emphasize that strong social support promotes positive coping strategies and persistence. Herchelle similarly reflected on personal agency:

“Ikaw lang din ang tutulong sa sarili mo... pero mahalaga rin yung may sumusuporta.”
 (“Ultimately, you are the one who must help yourself, but having support from others is equally important.”)

Learners' testimonies also reveal that clear goals—such as becoming role models for their children or improving employment prospects—anchor their persistence. This is consistent with findings that education significantly improves employment outcomes and life opportunities (The California State University, 2022).

Integrated Meaning (Facilitators and Learners): ALS as a Humanizing and Transformative Educational Space

Across both facilitators and learners, the overarching meaning of ALS emerges as a humanizing system of education—one that accommodates imperfection, honors lived realities, and fosters mutual growth. ALS is experienced not merely as curriculum delivery but as a shared journey of struggle, resilience, and hope.

Summary Table: Meanings Drawn from ALS Testimonies

Group	Meaning	Core Insight	Supporting Verbatim
ALS Facilitators	Teaching as Moral Calling	ALS teaching is rooted in dedication and service	<i>“Anak ko na sila...”</i>
	Growth Through Humility and Collaboration	Professional growth arises from learning and teamwork	<i>“Humihingi ako ng tulong...”</i>
	Restoration of Self-Worth	ALS rebuilds confidence and identity	<i>“Hindi na po ako nahihiya”</i>
ALS Learners	Persistence Through Support and Purpose	Success is sustained by social support and clear goals	<i>“Kung wala yung sumusuporta...”</i>

Essential Meaning of the Lived Experiences of ALS Facilitators and Learners

The lived experiences of ALS facilitators and learners collectively reveal that the Alternative Learning System (ALS) is a transformative, human-centered educational space where learning is sustained through commitment, resilience, mutual support, and hope, despite persistent personal and systemic challenges. ALS functions not merely as an alternative mode of instruction but as a shared journey of restoration and empowerment, enabling both facilitators and learners to navigate disrupted educational pathways and reimagine their futures.

To clarify this essential meaning, four interrelated sub-themes emerged from the synthesis of themes and interpreted meanings.

Sub-theme 1: Education as Moral Commitment and Shared Responsibility

For ALS facilitators, teaching is experienced as a **moral and relational commitment**, rather than a purely professional role. Passion for teaching and patience serve as the foundational attitudes that allow facilitators to respond to learners' diverse realities—working learners, parents, older students, and those with prior academic struggles. This moral commitment is mirrored by learners, who assume responsibility for their own learning through determination, self-discipline, and perseverance.

This shared responsibility creates a reciprocal dynamic: facilitators guide and support, while learners actively engage and persist. Teaching and learning in ALS thus become mutually sustaining acts, reinforcing trust and accountability between both groups (Goyette, 2022; Joseph, 2020).

Sub-theme 2: Growth Through Adaptation, Skill Development, and Self-Reliance

Another essential meaning of ALS lies in its emphasis on adaptation and continuous growth. Facilitators develop and apply practical skills—such as digital literacy, mapping, and time management—to address the flexible and decentralized nature of ALS delivery. Learners, in turn, cultivate digital skills and self-directed learning strategies to cope with modular, blended, and online learning environments.

This shared adaptation underscores ALS as a space where learning extends beyond content mastery and includes the development of life skills, technological competence, and independence. Such growth enables both facilitators and learners to function effectively within and beyond the educational setting (University of Southern California, 2023; Creately, 2023).

Sub-theme 3: Resilience Amid Diversity, Constraints, and Misconceptions

ALS experiences are marked by constant exposure to diversity—of age, academic background, life roles, and learning needs. Facilitators face instructional challenges and societal misconceptions that undervalue ALS, while learners confront poverty, family responsibilities, academic difficulties, and past discrimination.

Despite these constraints, both groups demonstrate resilience by reframing challenges as opportunities for persistence and learning. The legitimacy of ALS as a pathway to recognized credentials and improved life chances reinforces their determination to continue, affirming that resilience is collectively cultivated rather than individually borne (Lisdiana et al., 2019; Tiro, 2019; World Bank Group, 2018).

Sub-theme 4: Restoration of Dignity, Confidence, and Future Orientation

Perhaps the most defining meaning of ALS is its role in restoring dignity, self-worth, and future orientation. Learners experience ALS as a non-discriminatory environment where they can rebuild confidence, redefine their identities, and pursue long-delayed goals. Facilitators find fulfillment and validation through learners' achievements, reinforcing their belief in the value of ALS.

This restorative process transforms ALS into a space of hope—where past educational failures no longer define one's potential, and where education becomes a tool for social mobility, personal healing, and empowerment (DepEd Davao, 2022; De La Salle University, 2021; Freud, 2022).

Summary Table: Essential Meaning and Sub-themes of ALS Lived Experiences

Sub-theme	Core Focus	Facilitators' Meaning	Learners' Meaning
Education as Moral Commitment and Shared Responsibility	Values and purpose in ALS	Teaching as vocation grounded in passion and patience	Learning as personal responsibility and determination
Growth Through Adaptation, Skill Development, and Self-Reliance	Skills and adaptability	Use of digital, mapping, and time management skills	Development of self-learning and digital competence
Resilience Amid Diversity, Constraints, and Misconceptions	Coping with challenges	Instructional flexibility and professional perseverance	Persistence despite poverty, work, family, and academic struggles
Restoration of Dignity, Confidence, and Future Orientation	Transformative impact	Fulfillment through learners' success	Renewed confidence, hope, and clear life goals

Conclusion

The essence of the lived experiences of Alternative Learning System (ALS) facilitators and learners reveals ALS as a relational, meaning-making educational space where learning emerges through connection, adaptability, and shared responsibility. Grounded in Connectivism, the experiences demonstrate that learning in ALS is not confined to formal instruction but unfolds through networks of interaction—among facilitators, learners, families, communities, and digital resources—enabling knowledge to be constructed, accessed, and sustained despite disrupted educational trajectories. Within this networked learning environment, facilitators embody teaching as a moral and relational vocation marked by passion and patience, while learners exercise agency through self-directed learning, resilience, and purposeful engagement.

Viewed through this lens, ALS becomes a restorative pathway that reconfigures exclusion into participation,

vulnerability into strength, and interrupted schooling into renewed possibility. These findings underscore the imperative to strengthen ALS through coherent policy support, sustained professional development, community and LGU collaboration, and expanded digital and learning infrastructures, ensuring that learners and facilitators remain meaningfully connected within and beyond the learning process. In doing so, ALS advances the aims of Sustainable Development Goal 4 by operationalizing inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning—affirming that education, when rooted in human connection and shared meaning, remains accessible and transformative for all.

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