



ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS) LEARNERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN ACCREDITATION AND EQUIVALENCY PROGRAM: BASIS FOR INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the lived experiences of learners enrolled in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Program, with the aim of designing interventions for the academic year 2025–2026. Employing a qualitative approach through phenomenology, the study engaged ten participants from the Schools District of Banate who had direct experience with the A&E program. Prior to data collection, formal approval was secured from the adviser, the Graduate School Dean, school administrators, and the learners themselves. The findings highlighted that ALS learners' experiences revolved around continuing and completing their education, overcoming life challenges, and securing employment opportunities. However, they also encountered difficulties such as inconsistent attendance, peer-related bullying, and limited family support. Based on these insights, the study proposed targeted interventions to address the identified challenges and enhance learner outcomes.

Keywords: *Alternative Learning System Lived Experiences, Learners, Intervention Program*

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INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has long recognized that formal schooling is not the only pathway to functional literacy and personal development. Although the conventional school system continues to serve as the main avenue for education, many children, youth, and adults remain excluded due to factors such as poverty, early involvement in work, and living in remote areas. To address this educational gap, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) was created as a complementary pathway, offering disadvantaged Filipinos another opportunity to finish their basic education. This initiative is anchored in RA 11510 or the Alternative Learning System Act.

The Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Program is considered as the cornerstone of the ALS. The A&E program is designed for those with some literacy skills but who have not finished elementary or high school. By passing the A&E Test, learners earn a certification corresponding to a traditional school diploma. This credential is vital, as it serves as a gateway to higher education, technical-vocational training, and better employment opportunities (Department of Education, 2019).

As a result, since its beginning in 1999, the Philippine government has been implementing ALS nationwide through the Department of Education (DepEd) for over 27 years. However, only a few succeeded in meeting the required competencies for accreditation and were granted equivalent rights to students who completed the elementary and secondary education levels in this informal educational system (Pinca, 2025).

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By educating and fostering the next generation of leaders, thinkers, and citizens, alternative mobile instructors play a critical role in influencing society's future. Through teaching, individuals can help learners to become well-rounded, knowledgeable, and responsible members of society (Chunling, 2021).

Additionally, by allowing students to finish their basic education in a way that suits their unique requirements and circumstances, the ALS program offers a useful substitute for the current formal education system. Because of this program's flexibility, students can learn whenever and wherever it is most convenient for them. After completing the ALS program, students are considered secondary-level graduates and are eligible to continue on to senior high school. ALS is among DepEd's prominent initiatives to address the educational challenges faced by out-of-school Filipinos (Francisco, 2024).

On the other hand, ALS students frequently experience significant trials, such as financial hardships, inadequate resources, and low self-confidence. However, they demonstrate immense resilience, determination, and strong coping mechanisms to achieve their employment and upward mobility goals, though they frequently face academic gaps and potential discrimination in higher education. Their journey highlights the need for better alignment between the curriculum and formal schooling, and for a more supportive system to bridge technological and academic divides (Magsayo & Galibo, 2025).

The researcher observed that ALS learners experienced discrimination due to misunderstanding about their educational background, with many viewed as dropouts or

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failures of the formal system. This bias often results in limited employment opportunities and social exclusion.

With these gaps, the proponent proposed an in-depth exploration of the ALS students' lived experiences in the A&E program in the schools of the District of Banate within the school year 2025-2026.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the study's research methodology. It details the chosen design, the participants involved, the instruments utilized, the procedures for data collection, and the methods applied in analyzing the gathered information.

Research Method

In order to investigate and comprehend the depth and complexity of human experiences, behaviors, and social events, this study employed a qualitative research methodology. It places a strong emphasis on gathering non-numerical data in order to obtain comprehensive understanding of the contexts, meanings, and interpretations that influence the research topics. The collection and analysis of textual or visual data, including observations, focus groups, interviews, documents, and artifacts, is the main emphasis of qualitative research methodologies. Researchers used a variety of techniques to interpret and make sense of this data, uncovering patterns, themes, and narratives that deepen understanding of the research topic (Creswell, as cited by Norman, 2021).

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Research Design

In order to provide a foundation for intervention, this study's qualitative research design seeks to investigate and comprehend the lived experiences, viewpoints, and circumstances of ALS learners. A phenomenological and an interpretative research design are the two methods employed in this design.

To comprehend the lived experiences of students using the Alternative Learning System, a phenomenological research design was utilized. This makes it possible to examine individuals' perceptions, feelings, and interpretations of their experiences in great detail. Phenomenological research design requires the researcher to bracket any a priori assumptions about the experience or phenomenon (Ayton, 2025).

The participants were interviewed in-depth. It was used to collect information about their actual experiences managing accreditation and equivalency as well as recommendations for ALS students assigned to the Banate Schools District in Banate, Iloilo.

As a foundation for an intervention program, the findings of the thorough interview were used in a thematic analysis to identify the elements that influence the lived experiences of ALS learners in A&E.

This research approach is most appropriate for the current study since it was carried out to gain a better knowledge of learners' experiences, views, and situations in order to aid in the creation of an intervention.

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Participants of the Study

Ten (10) ALS students from the Banate, Iloilo, Schools District who were chosen for the 2025–2026 academic year are the study's participants.

The researcher was able to examine and contrast the actual experiences of regular learners in accreditation and equivalency programs by choosing a varied set of key informants from various schools.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was the sampling strategy utilized in this study to gather data.

According to Nikolopoulou (2022), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling procedure in which units are selected based on traits the researcher requires in the sample. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, this sampling strategy depends on the researcher's ability to determine and select people, situations, or events that will provide the most information.

Research Instrument

Data on the lived experiences of ALS learners in accreditation and equivalency programs was gathered through the in-depth interview. An organized, open-ended discussion between a researcher and a participant is conducted during an in-depth interview, a type of qualitative research approach. It sought to compile thorough, in-depth data about participants' experiences, viewpoints, convictions, and emotions with respect to a certain research topic. These interviews were typically one-on-one and could be conducted face-to-face, by phone, or via video conferencing (Briggs, 2020).

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Validity of the Research Instrument

One of the most crucial aspects of test quality is validity. The appropriateness, significance, accuracy, and utility of the conclusions a researcher draws from the data he gathers are all considered aspects of validity. In content-related validity, the content and format must be consistent with the definition of the variables and the sample of subjects to be measured, and this is also helpful in validating the questionnaire items (Fraenkel and Wallen, as cited by Biddix, 2020).

Two (2) interview questions were created by the researcher. It was sent to a panel of specialists for face and content validation in addition to the thesis supervisor for approval. Each item was examined by the panel of experts for appropriateness, relevance, linguistic clarity, and sentence correctness. Before the study was carried out, the final draft of the instrument included the revisions, changes, and recommendations made to the questionnaire's content.

Data Gathering Procedures

Because this study was qualitative, a thorough interview was done.

Participants completed an interview questionnaire created by the researcher, which provided the data for this study. The lived experiences that guided the intervention were informed by the baseline data obtained from the interviews.

Pre-interview, interview, and post-interview are the three phases of the data collection process. The research adviser will oversee every step.

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In order to interview ALS students about their experiences in the accreditation and equivalency program as study participants, the researcher obtained permission from the Graduate School Dean, the Thesis adviser, school administrators, and the Public Schools District Supervisor of the Schools District of Banate.

The study participants were chosen through the use of purposive sampling.

ALS students were chosen to participate in the interview. A consent form for the interview was given by the researcher.

Participants were allotted sufficient time to respond openly, allowing them to comfortably share their perspectives, insights, personal experiences, and life challenges—all of which are vital to the study.

Using a video recorder, the researcher captured the exchange for data transcription.

The collected information was examined and evaluated. To find, examine, and present patterns (themes) in the data, the researcher employed thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Through in-depth interviews with a number of people who had encountered a particular phenomena, the researcher carried out a phenomenological investigation to determine the fundamental structure of that phenomenon. From each participant's account of the phenomenon, the research took the comments it deemed pertinent and grouped them into themes. He or she then integrated these themes into a narrative description of the phenomenon (Biddix, 2020).

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Finding recurrent patterns or themes in qualitative data is identified as thematic analysis. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2020), a thematic analysis aims to identify the themes, such as patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. This entails making sense of the collected data by summarizing, evaluating, and interpreting it.

Moreover, thematic analysis is a method used to interpret qualitative data. It is commonly applied to sets of texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher closely examined the data to identify common topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that recur (Braun & Clark, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study was conducted to determine the ALS students' lived experiences in the A&E program as a foundation for intervention in the Schools District of Banate within the academic year 2025-2026.

The study used a phenomenological research design under a qualitative method. In order to obtain detailed descriptions, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with participants who had taught inclusive education implementation. These descriptions were then examined for recurring themes and meanings.

Ten (10) ALS students with accreditation and equivalency experience from the Banate Schools District were chosen to participate in the study.

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This study used a phenomenological research design and a qualitative approach that included in-depth interviews.

A researcher-made interview schedule with a primary focus on the study's objectives served as the research tool used in this investigation. A semi-structured interview guide with questions inside a predefined topic framework served as the research tool.

Two (2) interview questions were created by the researcher. It was sent to a panel of specialists for face and content validation in addition to the thesis supervisor for approval. Each item was examined by the panel of experts for appropriateness, relevance, linguistic clarity, and sentence correctness. Before the study was carried out, the final draft of the instrument included the revisions, changes, and recommendations made to the questionnaire's content.

With the consent of the participants, voice and video recorders were employed to document and collect data. Alongside these, field notes taken during the interviews were also used as part of the analysis process.

The researcher received permission to perform the study from the adviser, the Graduate School Dean, school administrators, and, most importantly, each individual participant. To conduct the in-person interview, the researcher personally traveled to the neighborhood, school, or other location that was convenient for the participants.

Following the interview, the investigator combined all the information gathered following a number of interviews.

A thematic approach was used to analyze the collected data.

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The study's results served as the basis for interventions for ALS learners.

The following were the findings of the study:

It was found that the lived experiences of ALS learners in A&E programs included educational continuation and completion, overcoming adversity, and employment purposes.

For ALS learners, challenges in the A&E program of Alternative Learning Systems were irregular attendance, bullying from peers, and a lack of family support.

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) offers non-traditional learners a unique path to academic and personal growth, helping them overcome educational barriers and realize their potential. However, ALS learners faced hurdles, including the transition to the next educational ladder. While some ALS students are quiet and committed, others are boisterous and enthusiastic; each can contribute in their own unique manner. Additionally, through flexible and free learning, ALS gives them an essential second chance to finish their basic education.

Due to the geographical limitations of living in tiny, isolated places, ALS learners represent a distinct group that frequently faces educational isolation. Teachers play a vital role in ensuring that ALS learners receive a diverse and well-rounded education. They help prepare students to thrive in a globalized society while maintaining strong connections to their local communities and cultural heritage.

The Department of Education's program, which offers specialized courses like Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), aims to assist out-of-school kids or dropout learners as one potential development. These are intended

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to enhance students' access to additional education or entrepreneurship while assisting them in developing skills that are relevant to the workplace. The shift from education to employment is still uneven, though.

CONCLUSION

The Alternative Learning System of the school, in relation to the A&E program, shall aid as the gateway to knowledge acquisition for school heads, ALS teachers, and learners, highlighting various Department of Education activities.

The ALS learners' lived experiences shall increase knowledge and awareness of the causes and consequences of dropping out of school.

Learners shall create personalized schedules or form study groups and prioritize A&E classes, focusing more on reading and comprehension, as these often impact performance across all learning strands.

Consistent attendance is strongly linked to higher A&E test scores.

The Department of Education shall provide financial assistance for their allowance to support their stay in ALS.

The A&E program of the Department of Education shall serve as a safeguard and protection to ALS learners who have religiously attended the program.

A similar study with a larger sample size and a broader focus will be carried out by future researchers in other school districts within the Iloilo 4th Congressional District.

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