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**TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHING  
ENGLISH TO ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS)  
LEARNERS: BASES FOR POLICY  
RECOMMENDATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study determined the experiences and challenges of teachers teaching English to ALS learners as bases for policy recommendation in the First Congressional District of the Division of Iloilo for schoolyear 2023-2024. The participants in the study were the fourteen (14) ALS teachers teaching English to ALS learners. An in-depth interview guide duly validated was used by expert jurors to gather data. Thematic analysis was used to gather data. The results revealed the following teachers' experiences: Most learners were able to read, write, and spell words correctly; learners were helped to find good jobs, learners were able to communicate well in English, and learners passed the Accreditation and Equivalency(A&E) test. The challenges included poor vocabulary and reading comprehension, lack of instructional materials, frequent absences, lack of planning and time management skills, lack of training, and lack of clear-cut policies in ALS. Policy recommendations were proposed as a result of the study.

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**Keywords:** *Alternative Learning System (ALS), Experiences, Challenges, Policy Recommendation, Teachers, Learners*

## INTRODUCTION

Through the Alternative Learning System (ALS), a parallel educational system, out-of-school youth and adult (OSYA) learners in the Philippines have access to comparable pathways to finish their basic education as well as the chance to build both foundational and functional reading abilities.

Because it incorporates both informal and non-formal sources of knowledge and skills, ALS is a potent substitute for the current formal education system. Giving OSYA students the flexibility to study whenever, however, and however best suits their needs and preferences is the goal of this second-chance education program. It also seeks to help people reach their objectives of raising their level of living and contributing positively to society.

Most Alternative Learning System learners are school drop-outs, teenage mothers, out-of-school youths and adults who stopped schooling because of different reasons that challenge their educational status. Most of the ALS learners find it hard to speak and write in English especially when there is educational gap on them and they are not native speakers.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has created policy guidelines to guarantee that the ALS program is implemented consistently and that ALS learners acquire the required

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knowledge and 21st century skills. The Department's commitment to expanding and improving ALS is reaffirmed in the policy

Through the Curriculum and Teaching Strand and the new Matatag Curriculum, the DepEd provides Communication Skills under Learning Strand 1 (English) to ALS learners in order to bridge the gap and overcome the difficulties they face when learning the language.

Learning Strand 1's Communication Skills enable students to comprehend and interact in English. In order to support economic and community development and enable out-of-school youth and adults to participate as members of their families, communities, and countries, Learning Strand (LS)1, (English), Communication Skills, aims to improve their capacity to access, assess, and apply information from a range of media.

Purposive and critical listening, clear and appropriate speech, critical understanding in viewing and social media interpretation, to analyze and evaluate data from a variety of written sources as well as other media through reading and writing clearly and effectively are the five macro skills that are part of learning Strand 1.

The researcher, an ALS teacher for eight years, has observed that there are lots of experiences and challenges encountered by teachers teaching English to ALS Learners. Hence, the researcher is interested in the experiences and challenges encountered by teachers teaching English to Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners as bases for policy recommendation.

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## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants in the study, research instrument, data-gathering procedures, and data analyses.

### Research Method

The research method used in the study was descriptive-qualitative research method using an in-depth interview guide to gather data. It was to gain deeper understanding on the experiences and challenges encountered by ALS teachers teaching English to ALS learners as bases for Policy Recommendation.

Finding variables, formulating a hypothesis, and carrying out tests are all part of quantitative research, which yields numerical data suitable for statistical analysis (Creswell, 2003). On the other hand, qualitative research is the conventional approach to gaining a profound comprehension of human nature or society. "The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 2003). Because this study focused on the answers of the participants to the interview guide, qualitative research method fitted best.

### Research Design

The study used in-depth interviews and observation as part of a phenomenological research design. An open-ended, discovery-oriented technique for getting in-depth information from a participant about a subject is an in-depth interview.

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Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

### Participants of the Study

The selection of the participants in the study was based on a strategy referred to as "purposeful selection" (Maxwell, 2005). It is a "selection strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be gotten from other choices". The participants in the study were the fourteen (14) selected ALS teachers of Central Schools in the First Congressional District of the Province of Iloilo.

### Sampling Design

Convenient sampling was used in the study in choosing the participants. Convenience sampling, sometimes referred to as grab sampling, incidental sampling, or opportunity sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher selects a sample from the population segment that is easiest for them to access or contact. Additionally, sampling is a mathematical function that provides the likelihood that a certain sample will be drawn (Raymo, 2018).

The fourteen (14) ALS teachers were purposely selected because they were involved in the ALS program in the schools of the First Congressional District of Iloilo. They were selected from nine (9) schools in the First Congressional District. They were purposely chosen on the basis of the goals of the study which were: (1) They were ALS teachers teaching

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English, (2) they were teaching ALS learners in central schools of the First Congressional District, and (3) they were actually handling ALS classes.

## Research Instrument

The research instrument used in the study was an In-depth Interview Guide.

The interview guide was a three-item questionnaire focusing on the objectives of the study. Part I was on profile of the participants asking for their name (optional), school, civil status, sex, teaching experience as ALS English teacher, educational qualifications and major or concentration. Part II was the questionnaire proper that focused on the teacher's experiences and challenges. It also included the proposed policy recommendation as a result of the study.

## Validity of the Research Instrument

The validity of the measuring instrument refers whether or not it measures what it is supposed to measure (Britannica, 2008). The researcher-made in-depth interview guide was submitted to the adviser for review and revision. After the corrections were considered and acted upon, the prepared interview guide was forwarded to a panel of experts for content-and-face validation. The guide was considered valid after it was checked by the panel of experts. Revisions were made after validation by the panel of experts and all their suggestions and corrections were incorporated. The final draft was submitted again to the panel for approval. The final interview guide was encoded and printed for use during the interview.

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## Data Gathering Procedures

After the questionnaire was found valid, it was encoded. The researcher then asked permission from the Schools Division of Iloilo Superintendent, District Supervisors of the First Congressional District, Education Program Supervisor, and the ALS Education Program Specialists in charge of ALS to conduct the study.

Fourteen (14) ALS teachers were interviewed during the period.

After the interview, the information from the interviews was analyzed by means of thematic analyses to determine the emerging themes which were patterns of ideas, actions, and meanings that occurred in the participants' responses.

## Data Analyses

The data gathered were analyzed using thematic approach. Emergent themes were identified and discussed comprehensively.

Finding patterns or themes in qualitative data is known as thematic analysis. Finding themes—that is, noteworthy or fascinating patterns in the data—and using them to address the topic or make a statement about the issue is the aim of thematic analysis, according to Maguire and Delahunt (2017). To make meaning of the gathered data, this entails gathering, analyzing, and interpreting it.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the study was to find out the teachers' experiences and challenges in teaching English to Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) learners as bases for policy recommendation in the First Congressional District of Iloilo Province for Schoolyear 2023-2024.

The participants in the study were the fourteen ALS teachers teaching English to ALS in the First Congressional District, Province of Iloilo. They were chosen through purposive sampling.

An In-depth Interview Guide served as the study's instrument for collecting participant responses.

The instrument was found by the validators valid and appropriate to use was subjected to face-and content validation.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze and interpret collected data.

The following were the findings of the study:

The experiences of the fourteen ALS teachers teaching English from the 9 central schools of the First Congressional District of Iloilo included: (1) Most learners were able to read, write, and spell words correctly, (2) learners were helped to find jobs, (3) Learners were able to communicate well in English, and (4) Passed the A & E Test.

The challenges encountered by ALS teachers teaching English to ALS learners are as follows:(1) Poor vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, (2),Lack of instructional

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materials,(3) Frequent absenteeism, (4)lack of planning and time management skills, (5)Lack of training, and(6) Lack of clear-cut policies.

Based on the findings of the study, the following insights were drawn:

Through the efforts of ALS teachers in the First Congressional District, Province of Iloilo who are all equipped with necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to implement the ALS program despite their varying age, social status, experiences, and area of concentration, therefore it is concluded that the ALS program achieved the goals set by the Department of Education through the patience and expert guidance of the ALS teachers.

ALS, as an alternative track parallel to the formal school system, offers fulfilling and satisfying experiences for the teachers and learners.

These gave the learners rich insights into the world where they live and gave them pride and be known at par with the graduates of the formal school system. On the other hand, the ALS teachers are also proud and honored because they have gained the respects and accolade of their partners in the formal school. They feel that they are admired for their performance of having graduated in the elementary and high school these learners who were once losing hope for their personal and professional development because they have quit school and become average for their grade level. Giving hope to these learners to pursue college, then graduate and become professionals earning big income to support their family was indeed elating. Being part of the success of these learners is exhilarating on the part of the ALS teacher.

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The challenges encountered did not affect the performance of the ALS teachers because they made use of these challenge as cornerstones for a greater purpose. They were able to reverse these challenges by focusing on more concerted efforts to retrain themselves, plan strategically, and relentlessly pursue their commitment to ALS and all learners in their area. They shared their best practices and, at the same time, learned from the best practices of their co-teachers during school-based learning action cells and other forms.

The ALS program always need revitalization and modification. ALS gains in terms of number of ALS passers and completers need to be strengthened.

A recommendation was proposed on the basis of the result of the study.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the insights generated from the study, the following recommendations are advanced:

The development vocabulary and reading comprehension skills of ALS learners should be intensified, instructional materials should be provided, absenteeism should be eradicated, there should be strategic planning and time management, training on Teaching Strategies should be conducted, and there should be clear-cut implementation of ALS policies and guidelines.

The community learning center and the home should work cooperatively to enrich the reading comprehension and vocabulary of the ALS learners. Reading materials or instructional materials should be provided not only in community learning centers but also at home.

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Learners should be encouraged to use their spare time for reading and minimize absenteeism so they would be able to learn more.

Parents or guardians must increase the parental support or time they spend with learners in reading and practicing in English. The community learning center should guide parents or guardians on how to do it for effective parental or guardian support especially in the improvement of the learner's reading and communicating in English.

Parents or guardians should monitor the reading performance of the learner and attendance every quarter to further monitor the learners' reading progress. The community learning center should discuss during meetings with the parents or guardians how to assess learners' reading performance and find means so the learners would minimize absenteeism.

The community learning center must maintain a good teacher-parent or guardian relationship to further enhance parental/guardian support. The community learning center should coordinate with the district reading coordinator to provide symposia and discuss several topics during the Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA) conference regarding parent's or guardians' roles and responsibilities to the learners.

The proposed policy recommendations formulated on the basis of the result of the study should be widely implemented not only to the community learning centers but also to the district as well as the division as a whole.

Further research should be conducted using more policy recommendations.

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The use of teaching English methods to improve the instruction of teachers in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and to better understand the English language learners as part of their learning strand should be the subject of more research.

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