



# FROM ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM TO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: NARRATIVES, GROWTH, AND OPPORTUNITY

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## ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of learners who transitioned from the Alternative Learning System (ALS) to Senior High School (SHS) at Rizal Special Education Learning Center, Inc. (RSEL) in Davao City. While ALS provides second-chance education for marginalized learners, limited research exists on how these individuals adapt to formal senior high school settings, particularly in private institutions supported by the SHS Voucher Program.

Ten participants were selected through purposive sampling and interviewed using semi-structured guides in English, Filipino, or Binisaya. Colaizzi's method was used to analyze the data. Seven themes emerged: Interrupted Pathways, ALS as a Lifeline, Transitioning to Senior High School, Juggling Responsibilities, Personal and Academic Transformation, Graduation as Redemption and Renewal, and Life After SHS. A sub-theme, Finding Voice, Identity, and Purpose, captured participants' internal growth as they redefined their sense of self and future direction.

Findings revealed that ALS served as a crucial bridge for learners who had previously left formal education due to poverty, early responsibilities, or personal struggles. The transition to SHS involved significant adjustment, but with institutional support, learners experienced growth in confidence, competence, and ambition. Graduation marked not just academic achievement, but personal healing and transformation.

**KEYWORDS-** *Alternative Learning System, Second-Chance Education, Senior High School, Educational Transition, Transformative Learning, Davao City*

## INTRODUCTION

Article XIV, Section 1 of the Philippine Constitution provides that the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. This constitutional mandate affirms that education is not merely a public service but a fundamental right of every Filipino. Yet, despite this provision, significant disparities persist in access to quality education—particularly among out-of-school youth, adult learners, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and residents of geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. In addressing these disparities, alternative education programs have emerged globally and locally as critical interventions to ensure that no learner is left behind.

Across the world, several countries have adopted innovative models of alternative learning. In India, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) delivers flexible and modular equivalency education to working youth and rural learners. As of 2021, NIOS had over 2.7 million enrollees, making it the largest open schooling system globally (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning [UIL], 2022). Indonesia's Paket A, B, and C programs, implemented in community learning centers (PKBMs), have helped reduce illiteracy and strengthen community involvement in education (UNESCO Bangkok, 2022). In Thailand, the Non-Formal and Informal Education (NFE) system integrates lifelong learning with digital technology, achieving over 90% literacy among adults by 2020 (Yamashita, 2020). Brazil's *Educação de Jovens e Adultos* (EJA) program empowers marginalized learners through inclusive, humanistic instruction, boosting social and political participation (Gomes et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Cuba's 1961 National Literacy Campaign mobilized over 250,000 volunteers to reduce illiteracy by over 20% in one year, cultivating a national culture of education (Velázquez Cobiella, 2021).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has institutionalized the Alternative Learning System (ALS) to provide second-chance education to out-of-school youth and other marginalized sectors. The ALS includes Basic Literacy and Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Programs aligned with the K to 12 curriculum. Instruction is offered through flexible modes—modular learning, group sessions, and digital tools—often delivered by mobile teachers and instructional managers in remote or conflict-affected areas. However, ALS faces systemic challenges, including limited funding, insufficient teacher training, and low recognition of its certifications (UNICEF, 2021; UNESCO, DepEd, & KOICA, 2023).

In Iloilo's 4th Congressional District, strong LGU support and structured delivery mechanisms led to high completion and transition rates (Libo-on & Catunao, 2024). In contrast, in Bagong Silang, Caloocan City, where learners face poverty and displacement, only 30% passed the A&E exam, despite the program outperforming national averages (van den Broek et al., 2021).



The implementation of ALS in Davao City reflects similar contrasts. The Alternative Street Education Program (ASEP), run by the City Social Services and Development Office and University of Mindanao, has succeeded by integrating academic instruction with values formation and legal awareness. Learners report high satisfaction and positive social growth (Santillas et al., 2015). Conversely, in Barangay 76-A Bucana, learners face persistent barriers: limited access to digital tools, scarce materials, and a lack of LGU support. Completion rates remain low, especially among Indigenous and displaced youth (Catyong et al., 2023). These cases emphasize the need for localized, adequately resourced, and context-sensitive strategies in ALS implementation.

While much attention has focused on public ALS efforts, private schools also play an emerging role in supporting ALS graduates. Rizal Special Education Learning Center, Inc. (RSELC) in Davao City, operated by Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc., began admitting ALS completers into its Senior High School (SHS) program in 2021. Over 200 ALS graduates enrolled, many as recipients of the Senior High School Voucher Program (SHS VP). RSELC implemented flexible, blended learning models during the pandemic, offering weekend classes and accommodating working students.

Despite these innovations, little research exists on how this trajectory—from ALS to SHS in a private setting— influences learners' long-term outcomes. This study seeks to fill that gap.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Education systems worldwide have embraced alternative learning models to address the persistent challenges of access, equity, and quality in education. These models—ranging from technology-driven platforms to non-formal, community-based programs—have emerged as practical solutions for out-of-school youth, adult learners, displaced individuals, and other marginalized populations. International research conducted between 2019 and 2025 has revealed various strategies for delivering flexible, inclusive, and innovative learning experiences. This section reviews global literature on alternative learning systems, organized into thematic categories: technological innovations, policy initiatives, support for marginalized learners, homeschooling trends, artificial intelligence in education, and comprehensive country-based models. Each theme presents contextually grounded practices that contribute to a broader understanding of how alternative education can support diverse learners worldwide.

### *Technological Innovations in Alternative Learning*

The integration of technology into alternative learning systems has proven instrumental in expanding educational access and improving instructional quality. In Afghanistan, mobile learning platforms have been utilized to bridge learning gaps caused by infrastructural and socio-political challenges, offering flexible education delivery in conflict-affected regions (Dawodi et al., 2023). Similarly, the Community College of Qatar adopted hybrid learning models enhanced with technology-rich instructional tools, resulting in improved student engagement and outcomes (Shehab et al., 2021). In China, the use of an AI-based adaptive learning system demonstrated that students using the platform outperformed those in traditional classrooms, highlighting AI's potential in personalized education (Cui et al., 2019). Complementing these findings, a study in Thailand examined the ClassStart online learning platform, identifying performance expectancy, social influence, and system quality as key factors influencing learner acceptance (Thongsri et al., 2019).

These studies demonstrate how technology, when appropriately applied, can enhance the delivery of alternative learning systems. From mobile devices to AI-powered platforms, technology enables education to transcend physical, economic, and political boundaries, especially for learners in unstable or underserved environments.

### *National Initiatives and Policy Innovations*

National governments and policy institutions have increasingly embraced alternative education as a strategic response to evolving educational needs. Estonia's AI Leap 2025 program aims to equip students and teachers with AI tools, positioning the country at the forefront of technology-integrated education (The Guardian, 2025). In Europe, the European Journal of Alternative Education Studies (OAPUB, 2025) has chronicled diverse pedagogical innovations that deviate from traditional schooling models, emphasizing learner-centeredness and inclusivity. In India, alternative education continues to emerge as a flexible and context-responsive approach, highlighting the importance of learner adaptability and curriculum innovation (Indrani, 2024). Meanwhile, the OECD's Trends Shaping Education 2025 report provides a macro-level analysis of social, technological, economic, environmental, and political trends transforming education globally, reinforcing the need for future-ready and inclusive systems (OECD, 2025).

These policy-driven initiatives show how countries are positioning alternative learning as a central pillar in future-proofing education. The integration of AI, flexible curriculum frameworks, and learner-centered methodologies reflect a global shift toward inclusive, dynamic, and responsive educational ecosystems.

### *Alternative Education for Marginalized Populations*

Alternative learning systems play a critical role in expanding educational opportunities for marginalized and underserved populations. In the Philippines, joint efforts by UNESCO, DepEd, and KOICA have sought to enhance ALS by improving access and quality for out-of-school youth (UNESCO, 2019). In Zambia, ALS programs have been particularly impactful in offering second-chance education to youth and adults excluded from formal schooling



(Mwansa, 2025). Similarly, the Amala Education Program provides refugee youth with access to secondary education and life skills through its “Changemaker” curriculum and Global Secondary Diploma (Financial Times, 2024). Further extending access, the University of the People offers tuition-free, online, accredited education to over 137,000 students worldwide, including refugees and displaced individuals, through asynchronous and peer-based learning (AP News, 2023).

These programs highlight the significance of equity-focused alternative learning systems. Whether serving youth in war-torn countries or adults in rural areas, these models demonstrate that inclusive, adaptable, and humanitarian-oriented education initiatives are both viable and impactful.

### ***Home Schooling and Alternative Education Trends***

The global rise in homeschooling and alternative K-12 schools reflects a broader demand for personalized, flexible learning pathways. In the United States, the National Home Education Research Institute (2023) reports that homeschooled students perform significantly better on standardized assessments than their public school counterparts, with 78% of studies supporting this trend. Likewise, the Freedomia Group (2024) highlights increased interest in alternative schooling models driven by parental concerns about safety, learning quality, and individualization. In the United Kingdom, homeschooling continues to grow, particularly among families dissatisfied with mainstream education—especially those supporting children with special educational needs or mental health challenges (Financial Times, 2024).

These trends signify a growing global acceptance of non-traditional learning pathways. Parents and learners alike are increasingly turning to homeschooling and alternative private education as legitimate and, in many cases, superior alternatives to conventional systems.

### ***Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Education***

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being explored as a transformative force in education. Owoc et al. (2021) identify a range of benefits and challenges in AI implementation, calling for strategic planning and ethical consideration. In alignment with this perspective, Ahmad et al. (2023) promote Education 5.0, a digital, human-centered approach that addresses cognitive development and learner well-being. Adaptive cloud-based systems have also been proposed by Marienko et al. (2020) as tools to personalize learning while supporting sustainability and professional development. Moreover, Aliabadi et al. (2023) advocate for transdisciplinary AI education, emphasizing its integration across disciplines and relevance to real-world community needs.

These studies reinforce the potential of AI to revolutionize alternative learning by tailoring content to individual needs, enhancing learner autonomy, and promoting long-term educational sustainability when implemented ethically and inclusively.

### ***Global Models of Alternative Education***

Across the world, countries have developed context-specific models of alternative education to address exclusion and meet diverse learner needs. In India, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) serves over 2.7 million enrollees, offering modular programs for working youth and adults (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022). Indonesia’s Paket A, B, and C programs, delivered through Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (PKBM) centers, provide literacy and vocational training to underserved communities (UNESCO Bangkok, 2022). Thailand’s Non-Formal Education (NFE) system integrates civic education and digital literacy, contributing to a national adult literacy rate exceeding 90% (Yamashita, 2020).

In Latin America, Brazil’s Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA) offers evening classes for rural and Indigenous adults, promoting critical thinking and civic participation (Gomes et al., 2021). Cuba’s 1961 National Literacy Campaign remains a global benchmark, having dramatically reduced illiteracy through mass volunteerism (Velázquez Cobiella, 2021). The Amala Education Program, designed for displaced youth, delivers mobile, resilience-focused curricula worldwide (Financial Times, 2024). In conflict zones like Afghanistan, mobile platforms have provided continued access to education despite the lack of infrastructure (Dawodi et al., 2023). Estonia, meanwhile, leads in AI-based personalization in classrooms (The Guardian, 2025).

In Africa and Oceania, Zambia blends literacy and skills training in its ALS programs for rural youth, while New Zealand’s Alternative Education Units (AEUs) offer trauma-informed, culturally responsive learning for disengaged students (Education Review Office, 2023).

These varied approaches highlight the flexibility of alternative education in promoting lifelong learning, inclusion, and social transformation across different global contexts.

### ***Studies conducted in the Philippines***

In the Philippines, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) serves as a pivotal mechanism to provide educational opportunities to out-of-school youth (OSY), adults, and other marginalized groups who are unable to access formal education. Recent studies from 2019 to 2025 have examined various facets of ALS, including policy implementation, technological integration, learner competencies, and challenges faced by both learners and educators. This section synthesizes 20 Philippine-based studies, grouped into thematic categories: Policy and



Program Implementation, Technological Innovations in ALS, Learner Competencies and Outcomes, Challenges and Barriers in ALS Delivery, and Inclusive Education Initiatives. Each theme is discussed with an introductory overview, followed by summaries of pertinent studies, and concluded with a sub-summary paragraph to encapsulate key insights.

### ***Policy and Program Implementation***

The Philippine government has undertaken significant efforts to institutionalize and enhance the ALS program to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

Albert et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive process evaluation of the Department of Education's ALS, highlighting its vital role in providing second-chance education to OSY and adults. The study identified institutional strengths such as teacher dedication and program adaptability but also pointed out severe resource constraints, noting that ALS serves only 0.8% of basic education learners while receiving merely 0.1% of the Department's budget.

Cagang (2024) evaluated the implementation of ALS and the 21st-century life skills of senior high school students in Region XII. The study found a significant positive relationship between the level of ALS implementation and the effectiveness in honing 21st-century life skills, suggesting that high implementation levels significantly affect learners' skill development.

These studies underscore the importance of robust policy frameworks and adequate resource allocation in the successful implementation of ALS programs. While institutional strengths are evident, addressing resource limitations remains crucial for the program's sustainability and effectiveness.

### ***Technological Innovations in ALS***

The integration of technology into ALS has been pivotal in enhancing educational accessibility and quality, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift towards digital learning.

Moldez et al. (2024) explored the incorporation of gamification in the University of the Philippines Open University's Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). The study concluded that gamification elements such as badges and leaderboards enhanced learner motivation, participation, and overall satisfaction, suggesting its potential in ALS settings.

Lucero et al. (2022) assessed the e-learning readiness of faculty members and students in Philippine higher education institutions. The findings indicated varying levels of readiness, highlighting the need for targeted training and infrastructure development to support effective e-learning implementation.

Technological innovations, including gamification and e-learning platforms, offer promising avenues to enhance ALS delivery. However, ensuring technological readiness among educators and learners is essential to maximize these tools' effectiveness.

### ***Learner Competencies and Outcomes***

Understanding the competencies and learning outcomes of ALS learners is critical in tailoring programs to meet their specific needs and in evaluating the program's effectiveness.

Del Rosario (2025) examined the English communication competencies of ALS learners in Ilocos Norte. The study found that while learners demonstrated proficiency in listening and speaking, they faced challenges in writing and providing active feedback during discussions, indicating areas for targeted intervention.

These studies highlight the varying competencies among ALS learners, emphasizing the need for continuous assessment and curriculum development to address specific skill gaps and enhance overall learning outcomes.

### ***Challenges and Barriers in ALS Delivery***

Despite its successes, the ALS program faces several challenges that hinder its full potential, including resource limitations, accessibility issues, and learner-specific barriers.

The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) (2024) identified significant operational challenges in ALS, notably the disproportionate allocation of resources relative to the number of learners served, which hampers program effectiveness.

A study in Bulacan (2025) investigated the critical challenges faced in implementing ALS, including inadequate learning materials, lack of trained facilitators, and limited community support, all of which adversely affect learner engagement and success.

Addressing the systemic challenges in ALS delivery, such as resource constraints and infrastructural deficiencies, is imperative to enhance program effectiveness and ensure equitable access to education for all learners.



### ***Inclusive Education Initiatives***

ALS has been instrumental in promoting inclusive education by reaching out to marginalized groups, including out-of-school girls, persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), and learners in remote areas.

UNESCO, in collaboration with DepEd and KOICA, has implemented programs aimed at empowering out-of-school girls by providing them with life skills and educational opportunities, thereby addressing gender disparities in education. A study exploring the experiences of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) enrolled in ALS highlighted the program's role in rehabilitation and reintegration, emphasizing the transformative impact of education within correctional facilities (Salvador et al., 2023).

ALS's inclusive initiatives demonstrate its capacity to adapt to diverse learner needs and contexts, reinforcing its role as a vital component in achieving equitable and inclusive education in the Philippines.

### ***Related Studies conducted in Davao City***

The implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in Davao City reflects both the unique challenges and promising practices associated with delivering inclusive, flexible education in urban and rural contexts. Davao City, as a regional hub in Mindanao, has served as a testing ground for various ALS models—including mobile teaching, community-based programs, and blended learning approaches tailored to the needs of marginalized populations. From the perspectives of mobile teachers and district coordinators to tracer studies on ALS graduates, local research provides valuable insights into how ALS operates on the ground. This section reviews ten Davao-based studies, thematically grouped into Teaching Quality, Program Implementation, Learner Challenges and Outcomes, and Inclusive Education Models.

### ***Teaching Quality and Educator Experiences***

The effectiveness of ALS in Davao City strongly hinges on the dedication and capabilities of mobile and volunteer educators. Musico (2024) evaluated the teaching performance of ALS mobile teachers in Davao City, revealing that success in ALS delivery largely depends on teachers' creativity, flexibility, and continued community engagement. Similarly, a study in Davao de Oro examined the lived experiences of 14 ALS volunteer teachers, uncovering their motivations, resilience, and coping strategies despite limited resources and institutional support (Alviso & Tacadena, 2023). These educators often serve as the frontline bridge between marginalized learners and the education system.

These studies demonstrate the crucial role of ALS teachers in sustaining learner engagement and program success. Investing in their training, well-being, and recognition is vital for improving the delivery of ALS in the region.

### ***Program Implementation and Policy Support***

Effective ALS delivery depends not only on pedagogy but also on well-structured program implementation. Fernandez (2023) explored the lived experiences of district ALS coordinators in Davao City and found recurring challenges such as logistical difficulties, a shortage of modules, and irregular training. Reinforcing this, the Davao City government issued Executive Order No. 46, s. 2021, establishing an ALS Unit to institutionalize local governance support for ALS implementation and technical-vocational integration (City Government of Davao, 2021). In Tagum City, Davao del Norte, a related study emphasized the need for additional teaching staff and contextually relevant learning materials to support ALS Senior High School programs (Villaber, 2023).

Local studies show that Davao's efforts to formalize and fund ALS programs through policy instruments like executive orders are essential steps in institutionalizing alternative education. However, consistent logistical support and resource provision remain pressing needs.

### ***Learner Challenges and Outcomes***

ALS learners in Davao face a range of challenges that affect their literacy and post-graduation trajectories. Antipuesto et al. (2023) conducted a phenomenological study on ALS students' reading comprehension, identifying limited vocabulary, irregular attendance, and minimal exposure to reading materials as primary hurdles. Barbado (2022) assessed the status of ALS secondary graduates and noted high unemployment and low post-program engagement. These findings point to the need for enhanced literacy interventions, career alignment strategies, and post-program support services to better equip learners for life beyond ALS.

These studies highlight the importance of developing literacy, employability, and transition programs to support ALS learners in navigating life after graduation. Focused interventions and job alignment programs can help bridge the post-ALS gap.

### ***Inclusive and Community-Based Models***

Davao City has piloted several inclusive ALS models designed to reach highly marginalized populations. A notable example is the Alternative Street Education Program (ASEP), launched by the City Social Services and Development Office (CSSDO), which integrates literacy, health, and psychosocial support to assist street children and out-of-school youth. Programs like ASEP highlight the value of community-based and holistic approaches in promoting learner reintegration into the formal education system.



In upland areas such as Marilog District, ALS implementers have collaborated with tribal leaders to adapt instruction for Indigenous learners. Malanyaon et al. (2020) documented improved literacy, cultural pride, and civic participation among graduates who later served their communities as health workers or education aides.

Despite these inclusive efforts, disparities remain. In Barangay 76-A Bucana—a densely populated coastal barangay—Catyong et al. (2023) reported low digital access, poor attendance, and only 40% participation in the A&E exam. These challenges are primarily attributed to limited resources and weak institutional coordination, which continue to hinder the success of ALS learners in disadvantaged areas.

### **Synthesis**

The body of literature reviewed from international, national, and Davao City contexts collectively underscores the critical role of alternative learning systems in addressing educational exclusion, particularly for marginalized populations. Globally, alternative models—ranging from open schooling systems to mobile and AI-based learning platforms—demonstrate how countries adapt flexible, context-sensitive approaches to expand access to education. These innovations highlight the transformative potential of technology, inclusive policy frameworks, and community-based delivery mechanisms in meeting diverse learner needs.

At the national level, Philippine studies reveal important insights into the implementation, challenges, and outcomes of ALS. Key themes emerging from this body of work include the effectiveness of ALS in delivering second-chance education, its alignment with 21st-century skills, and the persistent issues of underfunding, uneven access to digital infrastructure, and the need for curriculum improvement. Despite these challenges, studies affirm ALS's value as a legitimate pathway toward education and empowerment, especially for out-of-school youth, adult learners, and disadvantaged groups.

Meanwhile, local studies conducted in Davao City and its neighboring provinces further contextualize the realities of ALS implementation at the grassroots level. Research in this area emphasizes the experiences of mobile and volunteer teachers, the logistical and administrative hurdles in program management, and the personal, social, and economic barriers faced by learners. Local initiatives, such as the Alternative Street Education Program and the establishment of the ALS-EST Unit through Executive Order No. 46, illustrate promising efforts to institutionalize ALS and tailor it to the specific needs of Davaoño learners.

Across these bodies of literature, four overarching themes emerge: (1) the impact of technological innovations in alternative learning delivery, (2) the significance of strong policy support and program management, (3) the centrality of addressing learner challenges and competencies, and (4) the importance of inclusive, community-based approaches. These themes not only affirm the relevance of ALS but also identify areas where deeper understanding is needed—particularly in the transition of ALS graduates into the formal Senior High School program.

While these studies provide foundational knowledge about ALS implementation and outcomes, there remains a notable research gap concerning the lived experiences of ALS learners as they navigate the transition from non-formal to formal education. Specifically, there is limited research that explores how ALS completers adjust academically, socially, and emotionally within private SHS settings, such as those offered at Rizal Special Education Learning Center, Inc. This phenomenological study addresses that gap by documenting the post-ALS journeys of Senior High School graduates, thus contributing new insights into how non-formal learning pathways shape personal growth, career aspirations, and life opportunities in the Philippine context.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by questions that explore the experiences of ALS graduates as they moved from non-formal to formal education. The research aims to understand the challenges they faced, the support they received, and how these experiences shaped their growth and life after graduation.

1. How do ALS graduates describe their transition from the Alternative Learning System to the Senior High School program at Rizal Special Education Learning Center, Inc.?
2. What are the challenges faced by ALS graduates who transitioned from ALS to Senior High School that influenced the graduates' personal growth, career decisions and life aspirations after the graduation?
3. What insights can be drawn to help ALS learners enrolled in RSEL?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

To explore the personal journeys of ALS completers who moved into Senior High School, I chose a qualitative, phenomenological approach. This method allows me to go beyond surface-level experiences and delve into the meanings participants assign to their educational transitions.

Phenomenology gives me the tools to focus on what each person has lived through—not to generalize their stories, but to draw out what made them significant. It also reminds me to bracket my own assumptions, so I can listen to each perspective as openly and respectfully as possible.

Through semi-structured interviews, I aim to provide space for participants to share freely. Their accounts will help me understand how their background, challenges, and accomplishments shaped not just their schooling, but their



sense of self and future. This approach is deeply aligned with my belief that stories, when shared with trust and care, can bring to light the realities that statistics often miss.

### Research Participants

For this study, I have chosen participants who are graduates of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and who have successfully transitioned into and completed the Senior High School (SHS) program at Rizal Special Education Learning Center, Inc. (RSEL) in Davao City. I will use purposive sampling as my sampling method, which allows me to intentionally select individuals who can provide rich and relevant insights based on their unique educational journey.

Since my goal is to explore the lived experiences of ALS completers who pursued further education in a private institution, I have set the following criteria for participant selection:

1. They must have completed the ALS program (up to Grade 10) under the Department of Education.
2. They must have enrolled in and graduated from Senior High School (Grades 11–12) at RSEL.
3. They must be at least 18 years old at the time of the interview.
4. They must be willing and able to participate in an online, video-recorded interview conducted in English, Filipino, or Binisaya.
5. They must provide informed consent and voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

I will identify potential participants through available school records and referrals from administrators and former teachers who are familiar with the academic background of these graduates. My priority is to select individuals who can offer thoughtful and reflective perspectives about their experiences before, during, and after their transition from ALS to SHS.

For this research, I aim to include at least 9 to 12 participants, which aligns with the recommended range for phenomenological studies. As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, phenomenological research typically involves 5 to 25 participants, depending on the point at which thematic saturation is reached. In my case, I will continue conducting interviews until I observe that no new significant themes or insights are emerging.

I believe this sample size is sufficient to capture both shared patterns and unique individual stories. The diversity of their personal backgrounds, motivations, challenges, and post-graduation outcomes will allow me to construct a comprehensive picture of how the ALS experience shaped their educational paths and life trajectories.

Through this purposive and criterion-based approach, I am confident that the participants I select will meaningfully contribute to the understanding of the transformative role that ALS and SHS education played in their lives.

### Research Instrument

For this study, I developed a semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument. Since my goal is to understand the lived experiences of ALS graduates who transitioned to and completed Senior High School at Rizal Special Education Learning Center, Inc. (RSEL), I chose this type of instrument to allow participants to share their stories freely, while still keeping the conversation aligned with the research questions.

The interview guide contains open-ended questions that encourage participants to reflect on their journey—from their time in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), through their transition to Senior High School, and into their current life circumstances. I designed the questions to draw out personal insights and meaningful reflections, in keeping with the constructivist and transformative learning frameworks that guide this study.

Some of the questions I included are:

“Can you describe your experiences while enrolled in the ALS program?”

“What was the transition like when you entered Senior High School at RSEL?”

“How do you think the ALS and SHS experiences influenced your current life path?”

“What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?”

“What advice would you give to other ALS learners planning to pursue SHS?”

Because most of my participants are based in Davao City, I prepared the interview guide in both English and Binisaya to ensure they can express themselves comfortably and clearly. I believe that giving them the option to use their preferred language helps in capturing richer, more authentic responses.

Before I conduct the actual interviews, I plan to pilot test the interview guide with one or two former ALS-SHS graduates who are not part of the main study. This will help me determine whether the questions are clear, relevant, and sensitive to the participants’ experiences. Based on their feedback, I will revise the guide as needed.

To ensure that the instrument is ethically sound and appropriate, I also asked for input from colleagues and research mentors who have experience in qualitative studies. Their feedback helped me improve the structure, tone, and flow of the questions. I made sure that the interview questions respect the dignity of each participant, avoid leading responses, and focus on drawing out meaningful stories in a safe and respectful environment.



### Data Analysis

For this study, I used Colaizzi's (1978) method of phenomenological data analysis to explore and interpret the lived experiences of learners who completed the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and pursued Senior High School at Rizal Special Education Learning Center, Inc. This method offered a structured yet flexible process that allowed me to remain faithful to each participant's personal account while uncovering the shared essence of their educational journeys.

The analysis began with immersion in the data. I carefully read and re-read the transcribed interviews to gain a thorough understanding of each individual's story. This initial step helped me connect with the emotional tone and context behind their words. Once I was sufficiently familiar with the material, I identified and extracted significant statements—phrases or passages that directly captured their experiences, particularly in relation to their involvement in ALS, the shift to formal education, and life after graduation.

Next, I reflected on these key statements and formulated meanings based on their content. I made a conscious effort to interpret these insights while staying true to the original intent of the speakers. After this, I organized the meanings into clusters of themes. These thematic groupings revealed commonalities across the participants' narratives, such as motivations for returning to school, challenges faced during transition, turning points in their educational path, and perceived changes in self-confidence, identity, or future outlook.

Once the themes were finalized, I developed an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. This comprehensive narrative integrated all thematic insights to construct a rich, holistic account of what the participants had gone through. From there, I distilled the description into a concise statement that summarized the core essence of the experience—what it fundamentally meant to navigate the ALS pathway and continue through the Senior High School track.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, I conducted member checking. I shared my thematic interpretations with the participants and asked them to verify whether the results accurately represented their stories. Their feedback played a crucial role in affirming the validity of the analysis and ensuring that their voices were authentically captured.

Throughout this process, I used Taguette, an open-source tool for qualitative data analysis. This platform helped me code and organize data efficiently, while keeping direct links between participants' statements and emerging themes. Taguette also provided transparency and consistency in tracking how each interpretation was developed. Through this systematic and reflective approach, I was able to present a clear and meaningful portrayal of how ALS shaped the educational and personal trajectories of the individuals in this study.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the lived experiences of Alternative Learning System (ALS) completers who transitioned to and graduated from Senior High School at the Rizal Special Education Learning Center (RSEL) in Davao City. Through semi-structured interviews with ten participants, rich narratives were gathered to explore how the ALS and SHS experiences shaped their personal, academic, and professional lives.

Guided by Colaizzi's method of phenomenological analysis, this chapter identifies six major themes that surfaced across participant narratives, along with one sub-theme that adds further depth to the analysis. These themes are: (1) Interrupted Pathways, which highlight the life disruptions—such as poverty, early responsibilities, or pregnancy—that forced participants out of school; (2) ALS as a Lifeline, reflecting how ALS served as a second-chance mechanism for reengaging in education; (3) Transitioning to Senior High School, which explores the academic, emotional, and social adjustments involved in re-entering formal education; (4) Juggling Responsibilities, underscoring the challenge of balancing work, personal responsibilities, and schooling; (5) Personal and Academic Transformation, capturing how learners experienced self-discovery, growth in confidence, and the development of purpose as they progressed through SHS; (6) Graduation as Redemption and Renewal, which captures the emotional and symbolic importance of completing SHS and reclaiming dignity; and (7) Life After SHS, showing the diverse post-graduation opportunities and aspirations that emerged, including higher education, employment, and vocational training. Embedded within the theme of personal and academic transformation is the sub-theme Finding Voice, Identity, and Purpose, which reflects the internal shifts in self-perception and agency that occurred alongside academic advancement. Together, these themes portray a vivid portrait of resilience, transformation, and hope among ALS-SHS learners in Davao City.

The findings of this study reveal a compelling portrait of resilience, aspiration, and transformation among ALS completers who transitioned to and graduated from Senior High School at RSEL. Through their narratives, it becomes clear that while each learner's journey was distinct, common threads wove their experiences together—threads of interrupted schooling, second chances, and the determination to persevere against odds.

From leaving school due to poverty, family obligations, or early life crises, participants found their way back through the lifeline that ALS provided. Their re-entry into formal education via Senior High School was marked by initial struggle but gradually gave way to personal growth and academic progress. The emotional labor of juggling



work, caregiving, and study underscored their commitment, while their transformative experiences inside the classroom helped them reclaim a sense of self, voice, and purpose.

Graduation, therefore, was more than ceremonial—it was a moment of healing and honor. It validated years of effort, restored dignity, and redefined personal narratives once shaped by regret. Life beyond SHS has not been without difficulty. Many continue to work to support their college education or their families, often without scholarships or formal assistance. Yet, they move forward with strengthened resolve, guided by a new sense of agency.

The thematic map of their experiences—spanning interruption, reintegration, transition, challenge, growth, affirmation, and renewal—reflects the transformative potential of inclusive, flexible, and compassionate education systems. These learners are not merely survivors of circumstance; they are co-authors of futures once thought unreachable. Their stories affirm the critical role of ALS and SHS programs in providing not just access to education, but pathways to hope and empowerment.

### Implications

The findings revealed a compelling tapestry of lived experiences among ALS completers who transitioned to and graduated from Senior High School (SHS) at RSEL. These experiences, captured through seven major themes and one sub-theme, illustrated the challenges these learners faced and the transformative potential of inclusive and flexible education. From interrupted educational journeys to newfound confidence and purposeful futures, the narratives highlight the significance of second-chance education in reshaping life trajectories. This chapter interprets these insights within the broader educational context and proposes concrete implications and directions for policy, practice, and future research.

For the **Department of Education (DepEd)** the study underscores the importance of strengthening policy alignment between ALS and SHS programs. Participants' stories revealed the gaps in preparedness when transitioning from non-formal to formal education. DepEd may consider reinforcing bridging programs or modular transition courses that prepare ALS completers for the rigors of SHS, particularly in digital literacy and academic writing. Moreover, enhancing teacher training for SHS instructors to better support former ALS learners could help address issues of learner confidence and instructional mismatch.

For **ALS Program Implementers**, ALS providers must expand beyond literacy and numeracy to include transition planning, psychosocial support, and exposure to digital tools. Participants consistently emphasized the life-changing impact of ALS but also noted that more structured career guidance and preparatory academic skills would have eased their SHS transition. Implementers may integrate soft skills, reflective journaling, and digital readiness into their modules to better prepare learners for reintegration into formal education.

For **RSEL and Private SHS Providers**, Private schools such as RSEL play a critical role in accommodating ALS graduates through the SHS Voucher Program. Findings suggest that flexible scheduling, empathetic teaching practices, and blended learning platforms like Quipper are instrumental in supporting non-traditional learners. RSEL and similar institutions can institutionalize learner support services, mentorship programs, and academic scaffolding designed specifically for ALS-SHS students to enhance their retention and performance.

For **Local Government Units (LGUs)**, LGUs can support ALS-SHS learners by offering scholarships, transportation subsidies, and digital equipment loans. Many participants in the study juggled employment and caregiving responsibilities while pursuing education, and local support can alleviate these burdens. LGUs may also collaborate with schools to create community learning hubs where ALS graduates can access Wi-Fi, tutorial services, and mental health support.

For **Future ALS Learners**, the stories shared in this study serve as both testimony and inspiration for current and future ALS learners. Despite challenges, participants demonstrated that academic success and personal transformation are achievable. The implication here is the need to embed peer-led motivational sessions and alumni talks in ALS programs, enabling current learners to envision realistic pathways beyond basic education.

### Future Directions

Future research may explore the long-term career and life outcomes of ALS-SHS graduates to evaluate the sustainability of their success. A longitudinal study tracking their progress in employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education can offer deeper insights into the effectiveness of current transition practices.

Additionally, more focused studies are needed on the role of digital platforms like Quipper in the learning journey of ALS-SHS students. How these platforms support or hinder learning, especially for students with limited tech access, remains a critical question.

Policy-wise, DepEd and CHED could explore the feasibility of creating a national tracking system for ALS graduates who transition to SHS and beyond, ensuring continued support and data-informed program adjustments.



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