ETHICS ON MOBILE TEACHING: REFLECTIONS AND DISPOSITION OF ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS) TEACHERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore and document the role of Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers as catalysts for community development and agents of social change in underserved areas. Specifically, this study aims to examine how ALS teachers contribute to the empowerment and transformation of marginalized communities by providing accessible, flexible, and relevant educational opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults who face barriers to traditional schooling. In this study, we will employ a phenomenological design to illuminate the subjective experiences and interpretations of ALS teachers regarding their involvement in community development initiatives. A total of fourteen (14) participants are considered in this study who will join the in-depth interview and focused group discussion respectively. Seven (7) of them will join the in-depth interview (IDI) while the remaining participants will be subjected to the focus group discussion (FGD). The success of ALS programs is not solely the responsibility of the teacher but of the entire community. Encouraging a culture of shared responsibility where teachers, students, and community members work together towards common goals can foster a sense of ownership and accountability, ensuring the sustainability of ALS initiatives. Through aligning these future directions with their respective roles, DepEd, school principals, and ALS teachers can collectively contribute to a more sustainable, effective, and impactful ALS program that empowers marginalized communities and ensures lifelong learning opportunities for all.

KEYWORDS- *Ethics on Mobile Teaching, Reflections, Disposition of Alternative Learning System (Als) Teachers, In Community Development*

INTRODUCTION

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental pillar for individual growth, societal progress, and national development. However, traditional education systems often fail to reach everyone, leaving behind marginalized communities, including those in remote areas, impoverished regions, and those with limited access to formal schooling.

The ALS is a parallel learning system in the Philippines designed to provide a viable alternative to formal education, catering to out-of-school youth (OSY) and adult learners who have not completed their basic education. Through flexible delivery modes such as modular learning, distance education, and community-based classes, ALS aims to make education accessible to all, regardless of age, background, or socio-economic status. At the heart of this transformative system are ALS teachers, who play a pivotal role in driving community development through education empowerment.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform policies, practices, and interventions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of ALS programs. By recognizing and amplifying the role of ALS teachers as agents of change, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders can collaborate more effectively to address the educational needs of marginalized populations and foster inclusive development at the grassroots level.

As a result, state education cannot and does not serve the needs of all students, and alternative education has emerged from a recognition of this need. The history of alternative education has therefore mirrored and run parallel to mass education but has been less subject to change due to its philosophical and Alternative learning systems (ALS) in the USA offer a variety of educational options to cater to different needs, learning styles, and pedagogical approaches. These options include School Choice, Charter Schools, Magnet Schools, Private Schools, Independent Schools, Home-Based Education (Homeschooling), and Self-Directed Education. These systems offer flexibility, personalized learning, and focus on specific interests. However, they also have potential drawbacks such as quality variation, resource dependence, and limited socialization opportunities. Research and evaluation are crucial to ensure programs meet academic standards and offer qualified instructors. As technology advances, online or blended learning programs may emerge, combining traditional classroom settings with independent study opportunities. Despite these challenges, ALS options provide valuable choices for families seeking educational experiences beyond traditional classrooms (Mushfig, 2023).

Also, Freire (2020) work in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, emphasizes education as a powerful tool for empowerment, liberation, and social transformation. He argued that traditional education, or what he called the "banking model," treats students as passive recipients of knowledge. This approach often reinforces social hierarchies and maintains the status quo. In contrast, Freire advocated for a more participatory, dialogical form of education, where students and teachers engage in critical reflection and collaboration to challenge and transform their social realities. In the context of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, Freire's ideas are highly relevant. ALS teachers often work in marginalized communities where many students face social, economic, and educational barriers.

On the other hand, Reyes (2019) Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers play a vital role in breaking the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by providing literacy skills to adults and youth. These teachers reduce illiteracy rates, enhance employability, and contribute to economic empowerment. They also help individuals understand their economic rights and responsibilities, leading to increased participation in the workforce and better decision-making. Higher literacy rates attract more investment and economic opportunities, contributing to a prosperous community environment. ALS programs also teach vocational skills and entrepreneurial knowledge, empowering individuals to explore new income-generating opportunities. This investment in ALS teachers contributes to a more educated and prosperous future generation.

Moreover, Tan and Pulido (2019) highlights ALS as a vital intervention in bridging educational gaps, as it provides second-chance opportunities to those who may otherwise remain underserved. ALS learners are able to complete basic education or acquire vocational skills that enhance their employment prospects, thereby breaking cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement. This aligns with the Philippines' commitment to inclusive education, as ALS contributes to reducing educational inequality and promoting lifelong learning in disadvantaged communities. Through its alternative approach, ALS empowers learners to improve their socioeconomic conditions and fosters a sense of community belonging and self-worth, ultimately supporting broader goals of social equity and national development.

Rogers (2019) delves into the concept of nonformal education as a flexible and participatory alternative to traditional schooling, emphasizing how it adapts to the diverse needs of learners often excluded from formal education systems. His work outlines how nonformal education moves away from rigid curricula and structures, instead prioritizing approaches that are learner-centered, contextually relevant, and responsive to community needs. By embracing flexibility, nonformal education can reach underserved populations, offering them opportunities to gain knowledge and skills essential for personal and community development. In essence, Rogers' exploration of nonformal education underscores the transformative potential of flexible, inclusive, and participatory learning environments like ALS. This form of education not only fills the gap left by traditional schooling but also cultivates empowered, self-directed individuals who are better equipped to address personal and communal challenges, ultimately supporting broader societal progress.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) faces challenges in providing quality basic education due to limited infrastructure, teacher shortages, and socio-economic factors. Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) can help address these issues by offering flexible and accessible educational pathways. ALS programs can provide second chances for young adults, second language acquisition, and vocational training, enhancing their employability, skills, and confidence. By investing in ALS in BARMM, it not only addresses educational gaps but also contributes to the region's socio-economic development. By providing accessible, quality ALS programs, BARMM can empower its citizens with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute to a prosperous future (Takiko, et.al 2019).

The emergence of Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) has indeed provided an essential pathway for those marginalized by conventional education systems, offering second-chance opportunities that go beyond academics. ALS has become a lifeline for out-of-school youth, adult learners, and other underserved individuals, addressing not only their educational needs but also their broader social and economic aspirations. Through tailored programs that adapt to the unique challenges and strengths of learners, ALS opens doors to personal growth, community engagement, and economic participation, which can have far-reaching impacts on individuals and communities alike.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines is a program that provides education to marginalized populations, including out-of-school youth and adult learners. It offers flexible learning modalities like modular learning, distance education, and community-based classes, making education accessible to all. ALS aims to reach learners who cannot access formal education due to poverty, geographical isolation, or personal circumstances. It empowers learners by providing opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies. It fosters community engagement by establishing learning centers and involving local stakeholders. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating learning. Despite challenges, ALS offers a second chance at education and contributes to inclusive development and social transformation (Unesco, 2023)

According to Caingcoy et. al. (2021), the effectiveness of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Informal Education Project in enhancing the knowledge and skills of ALS teachers. It suggests that the project positively impacts their professional development, improving their teaching competencies and effectiveness in delivering education to marginalized learners. The study also examines the transfer of life skills gained through the project, revealing improved communication skills, critical thinking abilities, adaptability, and empathy. The findings may offer recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of ALS programs, particularly in terms of teacher training and professional development.

Another study highlights the transformative role ALS plays in these communities, not just as an educational program but as a catalyst for broader social development. ALS teachers, as central figures in this process, are essential in connecting education to real-world issues faced by their learners. By tailoring lessons to the specific needs, interests, and contexts of community members, ALS teachers facilitate an inclusive, participatory form of education that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-empowerment. The study points out that ALS teachers are often at the forefront of addressing local issues, whether by facilitating access to government services, helping learners improve their economic prospects through skill development, or encouraging community projects. In this way, ALS becomes a vehicle for both personal and collective empowerment, improving not only the lives of individuals but also contributing to the overall well-being and development of entire communities, (Rosales and Mercado, 2016).

Moreover, in the study of Sumawang et. al. (2023), revealed the training and implementation processes of ALS mobile teachers in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. All teachers were well-trained and followed guidelines outlined in DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2019. Implementation processes included ADSOCMOV, mapping, enrollment, FLT administration, and portfolio assessment. Challenges faced included the unavailability of a community learning center and absenteeism issues. Strategies employed included seeking community support and interventions. Recommendations for incoming ALS teachers include qualities like readiness, flexibility, approachability, patience, and passion.

Hall's (2021) book Learning with the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Teacher Education emphasizes the importance of community-centered teaching practices, which align closely with the mission of Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers. Hall explores how service-learning, a pedagogical approach that integrates community engagement with educational objectives, can foster meaningful relationships between educators and their communities. This model emphasizes collaboration, mutual respect, and active participation from both students and the community in the learning process. In the context of ALS, Hall's ideas are particularly relevant. ALS teachers, much like those engaged in service-learning, work closely with marginalized communities, often tailoring their lessons to address local needs, cultural contexts, and real-world challenges.

Research Questions
This study aims to provide insights into how ALS teachers can be further supported, capacitated, and integrated into broader community development initiatives.
1. What are the experiences of ALS Teachers in community development?
2. How do ALS Teachers cope with the challenges encountered in community development?
3. What insights do ALS teachers get on their role in community development?

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
In this study, we will employ a phenomenological design to illuminate the subjective experiences and interpretations of ALS teachers regarding their involvement in community development initiatives. Phenomenology offers a nuanced lens through which researchers can explore the essence of the phenomenon at hand, delving deeply into the intricate layers of ALS teachers' lived experiences. As defined by Creswell (2009), "phenomenology is a research strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants".

Research Participants
A total of fourteen (14) participants are considered in this study who will join the in-depth interview and focused group discussion respectively. Seven (7) of them will join the in-depth interview (IDI) while the remaining participants will be subjected to the focus group discussion (FGD). All data gathered during IDI and FGD will be recorded and transmuted to summarize the responses of the participants in an orderly manner.

Research Instrument
To gather comprehensive and meaningful data relevant to the deeper understanding of their experiences and contributions within the ALS context, this study employed a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument. This qualitative tool was designed to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, practices, and challenges faced by ALS teachers in upholding their commitment to their job.

Data Analysis
The collected interview data will be analyzed using phenomenological analysis techniques, which involve a systematic exploration of the lived experiences described by participants. Researchers engage in a process of bracketing, setting aside preconceptions and biases, to focus solely on the participants' accounts. Through a process of thematic coding and interpretation, researchers identify common patterns, themes, and essences that emerge from the data, capturing the shared lived experiences of stakeholders.

Creswell (2013) outlines six crucial stages in qualitative data analysis that are necessary for assessing and interpreting published research findings in the realm of education. This approach typically involves a systematic process of analyzing qualitative data, often following steps such as coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
This chapter delves into the implications of the findings from the study, particularly in the context of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and its impact on marginalized communities. It explores how the insights gained can inform educational practices, policies, and community-based initiatives, with a focus on fostering sustainable development and improving educational access for underserved populations. Additionally, this chapter discusses potential avenues for future research, offering recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and reach of ALS programs. By considering the challenges and successes identified in the study, this chapter aims to provide a roadmap for strengthening ALS's role in social change and community empowerment.

Implications

The findings from this study highlight the pivotal role of Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers in fostering community engagement, trust, and collaboration. The study's exploration of the themes and subthemes offers a multifaceted understanding of

how ALS operates and impacts marginalized communities, emphasizing the dynamic and evolving relationship between teachers, learners, and the community.

Main Theme 1: Deepening Community Connections and Trust in ALS
The study underscores the importance of overcoming initial barriers, such as lack of resources and skepticism from the community, to successfully implement ALS programs. For ALS to thrive, stakeholders must work together to overcome these barriers through resource sharing, community mobilization, and effective communication.
The findings demonstrate that ALS teachers build strong relationships with their students by demonstrating empathy and dedication. These personal connections are essential for fostering trust and motivating learners, and should be central to teacher training programs.
ALS's success is closely linked to active community involvement. The study shows that when communities participate in the learning process, both in terms of decision-making and providing resources, they become more invested in the outcomes. Policy makers and educational leaders should prioritize community-based approaches to ensure ALS's relevance and sustainability.

Main Theme 2: Collaborative Teamwork, Collective Success
Communication is essential to the success of any educational program. The findings highlight the need for clear and consistent communication between all stakeholders involved in ALS, including government bodies, NGOs, and local communities. Effective communication will ensure that programs are aligned with community needs and that resources are used efficiently.

ALS teachers must leverage the diverse skills and experiences of their colleagues, community leaders, and stakeholders to drive innovation and adapt to emerging challenges. Encouraging collaboration and innovation can lead to the development of new teaching methods, tools, and partnerships that enhance the learning experience for students.

The success of ALS programs is not solely the responsibility of the teacher but of the entire community. Encouraging a culture of shared responsibility where teachers, students, and community members work together towards common goals can foster a sense of ownership and accountability, ensuring the sustainability of ALS initiatives.

Acknowledging the achievements of ALS programs, whether through formal celebrations or informal recognition, is vital for motivating educators and learners. Measuring success goes beyond academic outcomes and should also include community impacts and personal growth. This can inspire continued effort and investment from all stakeholders.

Main Theme 3: A Life Script Continuously Being Written with Purpose
The impact of ALS extends far beyond the classroom. Teachers are shaping lives by providing students with essential life skills, literacy, and vocational training. As ALS continues to evolve, there should be an emphasis on continuously improving instructional practices to cater to the changing needs of learners.

The study highlights the emotional and social complexities of teaching marginalized learners. ALS teachers are not only educators but also mentors and counselors. Teacher training should address the emotional and psychological aspects of teaching, equipping educators to better support students in overcoming personal and social challenges.

ALS teachers often transition from educators to community advocates, playing a critical role in advocating for policy changes, community empowerment, and the inclusion of marginalized populations. Future research and policy should explore the potential of ALS teachers as community leaders and advocates for broader social change.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of lifelong learning and reflection for ALS teachers. Educators must continue to reflect on their practice, adapt to new challenges, and engage in ongoing professional development to ensure they are meeting the evolving needs of their students and communities.

Future Directions
Department of Education (DepEd)
DepEd should work closely with local government units, non-governmental organizations, and private sectors to form robust partnerships. These collaborations can provide essential resources, increase program sustainability, and ensure that ALS initiatives are aligned with the community's needs and priorities.

To address the challenges of limited resources and staffing, DepEd should allocate more funding to ALS programs, ensuring that teachers have access to quality materials, training, and infrastructure. This funding should also support innovative initiatives, such as the integration of technology in ALS classrooms.

School Principals
School principals should foster a culture of collaboration between ALS teachers and other educators within the school. Creating a supportive environment where knowledge and resources are shared will enhance the quality of ALS programs and ensure that all students receive holistic support.

Also, Principals should actively support the well-being of ALS teachers by ensuring manageable workloads, providing opportunities for reflection and personal growth, and advocating for their needs within the school administration. This will reduce the risk of teacher burnout and improve program sustainability.

ALS Teachers

ALS teachers should continue to prioritize community involvement in their teaching practices. By engaging community members in decision-making and utilizing local resources, teachers can ensure that their programs remain culturally relevant and sustainable.

Beyond teaching academic skills, ALS teachers should focus on providing emotional and social support to learners, addressing barriers such as poverty, family issues, and low self-esteem. Developing skills for counseling, mentoring, and offering life skills training can help empower learners to overcome these challenges.

Through aligning these future directions with their respective roles, DepEd, school principals, and ALS teachers can collectively contribute to a more sustainable, effective, and impactful ALS program that empowers marginalized communities and ensures lifelong learning opportunities for all.

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