

“Beyond Borders”: The Lived Experiences of Filipino Teachers Teaching Abroad

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Abstract— This qualitative study employed a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of beginning Filipino teachers currently working abroad. Focusing on those who had voluntarily chosen to teach abroad and had between one to five years of international teaching experience, the study aimed to understand their motivations, challenges, personal transformations, and professional growth. Eight (8) participants were selected through purposive-snowball Key motivations included economic, professional, experiential, and values-based reasons. sampling. Thematic analysis revealed rich insights across several domains. Key motivations included economic, professional, experiential, and values-based reasons. Participants encountered significant challenges in cultural adaptation, pedagogical shifts, classroom management, and professional expectations. They navigated linguistic, professional, and psychosocial complexities as they integrated into their host countries. Filipino values such as relational warmth, moral integrity, and adaptability were central to their teaching practices. Participants relied on social, institutional, and internal support systems to cope with emotional and professional demands. Comparisons between teaching in the Philippines and abroad highlighted differences in instructional resources, pedagogical approaches, classroom dynamics, compensation, and emotional experience. The impact on their professional trajectories was marked by enhanced pedagogical skills, global competence, and expanded career pathways. Finally, the study identified key curricular insights related to culturally responsive pedagogy, teacher development, and student well-being. The findings culminated in the development of an emerging framework that may inform education policy, improve teacher preparation programs, and support Filipino educators in global contexts.

Keywords— migration, phenomenology, adaptation, motivation, challenges, transformation, pedagogy, globalization.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is widely regarded as a noble profession, foundational to the development of other fields and professions (Darling-Hammond, 2017; UNESCO, 2016). Teachers undergo rigorous training and assume responsibilities that extend beyond classroom instruction, influencing both their students’ holistic development and their own personal lives (Loughran, 2019; Day & Gu, 2010). Despite its revered status, teaching is marked by challenges such as heavy workloads, limited resources, and high societal expectations (OECD, 2020).

In the Philippines, these challenges are compounded by systemic issues including low salaries, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate resources (David et al., 2019; Estrellado & Bardon, 2019). Public school teachers earn standardized salaries under the Salary Standardization Law, yet compensation remains modest compared to international opportunities. Private school teachers often face even lower pay, with many earning less than half of

public-school counterparts (Philstar.com, 2023; Inquirer.net, 2023). This disparity has fueled teacher migration, as educators seek financial stability and professional growth abroad (Manik, 2016; Guerrero & Tarrayo, 2020).

Globalization and international recruitment programs have accelerated this trend. Initiatives such as Japan's JET Programme, South Korea's EPIK, and the U.S. Fulbright FLTA Program actively attract foreign educators, including Filipinos (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023; EPIK, 2023; U.S. Department of State, 2023). Filipino teachers are particularly sought after for their English proficiency and adaptability, filling critical shortages in subjects like science, math, and special education in countries such as the United States (Daily Tribune, 2025; ResearchGate, 2024). While migration offers improved compensation and career advancement, it also raises concerns about "brain drain" and the sustainability of the Philippine education system (Alburo & Abella, 2021; Angelita & Perbawani, 2024).

The lived experiences of Filipino teachers abroad reveal both opportunities and challenges. Many have claimed satisfaction from cultural immersion, professional growth, and financial stability (Real & Flordeliz, 2024; Aperocho et al., 2023). Yet they also face cultural adjustment, language barriers, and separation from families (Macapagong et al., 2023; Pozon, 2024). These experiences highlight the resilience and adaptability of Filipino educators, but also underscore the need for support systems to ease integration and reintegration.

Existing literature has largely focused on quantitative aspects of teacher migration—numbers, destinations, and remittances (Alburo & Abella, 2002). Less attention has been given to qualitative dimensions such as emotional, psychological, and sociocultural adjustments. Recent studies suggest that transnational teaching experiences significantly shape professional identity and pedagogical practices (Sumalinog, 2020), yet comprehensive exploration of these lived realities remains limited.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the personal and professional journeys of Filipino teachers abroad. Through a qualitative lens, it seeks to capture their narratives of sacrifice, adaptation, and growth, while situating these within broader debates on global labor migration and educational sustainability.

Process Framework

This study employed a process framework designed to capture the lived experiences of Filipino teachers abroad. The framework integrates key inputs, methodological processes.

Inputs. The inputs to the framework encompass the core dimensions shaping Filipino teachers' overseas journeys. Motivations arise from economic and professional "push" factors at and "pull" factors abroad. Upon migration, teachers face challenges including linguistic, pedagogical, and socio-cultural adjustments. These are mediated by cultural values and support systems. Through adaptive mechanisms, teachers develop cultural competence, communication skills, and coping strategies. Ultimately, these experiences yield realizations about identity, cultural heritage, and their role as educators and cultural ambassadors.

Process. Data collection relied on structured interviews, using standardized open-ended questions aligned with the framework's key areas. Conducted via online platforms, interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. The guide was validated by qualitative experts. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) six-phase thematic analysis: familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. Member checking ensured confirmability and reduced bias.

Output. The resulting framework illustrates teacher migration as a cycle: aspiration → adaptation → empowerment. It highlights how motivations, challenges, cultural values, support systems, adaptive mechanisms, professional development, and realizations interconnect to shape teachers' overseas journeys.

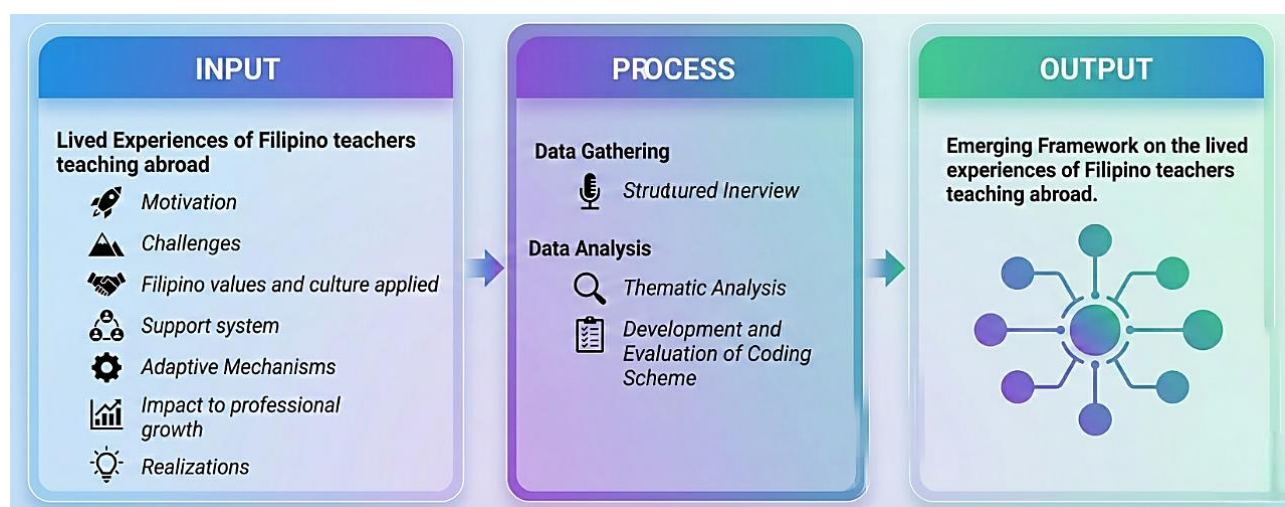


Figure 1. A Process Framework toward Emerging Framework on the Lived Experiences of Filipino Teachers Abroad

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the multifaceted experiences of Filipino teachers working abroad, examining their motivations, challenges, cultural adaptations, professional growth, and the potential implications of their experiences for the Philippine education system.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What motivates the participants to pursue teaching opportunities abroad?
2. What are the challenges of the participants in adapting to foreign educational systems?
3. How do the participants abroad navigate linguistic, professional, and cultural differences in their host country?
4. What Filipino values and culture do the participants apply/ incorporate in their teaching while teaching abroad?
5. What support systems do the participants utilize to cope with the challenges of working abroad?
6. How would the participants compare their teaching experience in the Philippines and their host country?

7. How does teaching abroad impact the professional growth and career trajectories of the participants?
8. What insights and lessons can be drawn from the experiences of the participants abroad to inform educators and curriculum developers in the Philippines?

Scope and Delimitation

This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of beginning Filipino teachers abroad, focusing on motivations, challenges, cultural values, support systems, adaptive mechanisms, professional growth, and realizations. The scope was limited to teachers with at least one year but fewer than five years of international teaching experience, ensuring attention to the formative stage of their careers. Only those who voluntarily chose to teach overseas were included, highlighting self-driven decisions rather than government deployment. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted primarily online, with written responses accepted when live participation was not feasible.

The study is delimited to Filipino teachers in the United States and Bahrain, chosen for accessibility. While online and written interviews enabled broad participation, they limited observation of non-verbal cues and emotional nuances, and technical issues occasionally disrupted dialogue. These constraints may have affected the depth of data, restricting generalizability to other international contexts. Nonetheless, the combined methods provided valuable insights into the complex realities of Filipino teachers navigating the early stages of their overseas careers.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological approach; a qualitative design rooted in Husserl's philosophy that seeks to uncover the essence of lived experiences by suspending researcher assumptions through epoché. This design was chosen to explore the lived experiences of beginning Filipino teachers working abroad. By using in-depth interviews, the study captured authentic first-person accounts and distilled their essential structures. The approach is particularly appropriate as it prioritizes participants' subjective perspectives, ensuring fidelity to their realities while generating insights that can inform teacher preparation, policy, and support for transnational educators.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The study involved eight beginning Filipino teachers working abroad, defined as those with less than five years of overseas teaching experience. These participants were chosen because their recent transition provided valuable insights into the early stages of professional development, including motivations, challenges, and cultural adjustments. All had prior teaching experience in the Philippines and consciously pursued careers abroad, making their perspectives particularly relevant to understanding teacher migration and adaptation.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, guided by criteria such as nationality, teaching experience, and voluntary migration, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives. Snowball sampling

complemented this process, as initial participants referred colleagues within their networks, helping access a small and specific population. A total of eight teachers were interviewed, a sample size consistent with phenomenological research standards. Data saturation determined the final number, ensuring that the collected narratives captured the essential structures of their lived experiences.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a semi-structured interview guide, an instrument well-suited for phenomenological research as it balances flexibility with focus on core questions. Researcher-made, open-ended items were validated for clarity and relevance, enabling participants to narrate their motivations, challenges, and reflections on teaching abroad in their own words. This format allowed probing for deeper insights while ensuring authentic accounts, thereby capturing both the common and unique aspects of their lived experiences.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide, an instrument well-suited for phenomenological research as it balances flexibility with focus on core questions. Researcher-made, open-ended questions were validated for clarity and relevance, enabling participants to narrate their motivations, challenges, and reflections on teaching abroad in their own words. This format ensured rich, authentic accounts aligned with the study's objectives.

Ethical protocols guided the process: participants were recruited through purposive and referral methods, provided informed consent, and assured confidentiality through pseudonyms and secure data handling. Interviews were conducted via video conferencing platforms, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed intelligent verbatim using Turboscribe, followed by accuracy checks. Transcripts were systematically coded for thematic analysis, and in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all recordings and transcripts will be securely destroyed three years after the study.

Data Analysis

The study employed phenomenological bracketing to set aside researcher biases and focus on participants' perspectives. Transcribed interviews were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework, which involved familiarization with the data, systematic coding, theme construction, and refinement. Themes were clearly defined, supported by illustrative quotes, and organized to capture the essence of Filipino teachers lived experiences abroad. This process ensured a rich, nuanced understanding of their motivations, challenges, and professional transformations.

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, the researcher had maintained reflexivity and employed strategies such as member checking, where participants validated the themes, and peer debriefing, which included inter-rater reliability checks by independent educators with international teaching experience. High agreement among raters reinforced the validity of the coding process. Additionally, rich descriptions and contextual details were provided

to enhance credibility and transferability, allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar contexts.

FINDINGS

Motivations of Filipino Teachers Abroad

Thematic analysis revealed that Filipino teachers' motivations to pursue teaching overseas clustered into four broad categories: economic and practical, professional and career-related, personal and experiential, and values-based/internal.

Economic and practical motivations were dominant, with participants consistently citing financial aspirations and better working conditions as primary drivers. Higher salaries, improved benefits, and reduced workloads were viewed as solutions to the financial strain and heavy demands of teaching in the Philippines. Closely tied to this was familial responsibility, as many teachers emphasized the desire to support their families and secure a better future for them. Beyond financial concerns, teachers highlighted professional growth and development, seeking new challenges, skill enhancement, and opportunities unavailable at home. Some viewed teaching abroad as a way to overcome stagnation and achieve career advancement, while others expressed motivations rooted in global recognition and national pride, aspiring to showcase Filipino educators' competence and dedication on an international stage.

Personal aspirations also emerged, with participants motivated by travel and cultural enrichment, desiring exposure to new environments and experiences. Finally, a values-based theme surfaced in the form of spiritual or purpose-driven calling, where teaching abroad was seen as a response to inner conviction or divine guidance.

Table 1. Motivations of Filipino Teachers to Pursue Teaching Opportunities Abroad

Categories	Themes
Economic and Practical Motivations	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Motivation/ Economic Aspiration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better Working Conditions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familial Responsibility and Sacrifice
Professional and Career-Related Motivations	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Growth and Development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change of Environment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Recognition and National Pride
Personal and experiential Aspirations	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel and Personal Enrichment
Values-Based and Internal Motivations	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spiritual and Purpose-Driven Calling

Challenges in Adapting to Foreign Educational Systems and Cultures

Analysis revealed four major categories of challenges faced by Filipino teachers abroad: cultural adjustment, instructional and pedagogical shifts, classroom management, and professional expectations.

Cultural adjustment was a recurring difficulty, with participants reporting culture shock, differences in student behavior, and struggles with respect norms compared to the Philippines. Teachers noted that what appeared as rudeness often reflected cultural differences emphasizing independence and autonomy. They also faced communication barriers and perceived a lack of student motivation, which compounded adjustment challenges.

Instructional and pedagogical shifts posed another set of obstacles. Teachers had to adapt to different curricula, assessment styles, and teaching methods, often requiring them to unlearn and relearn established practices. Misalignment between assigned courses and local education systems, coupled with the need to master new technologies and digital platforms, added to the complexity of adaptation.

Classroom management emerged as a critical challenge, as Filipino strategies often proved ineffective in foreign contexts. Teachers highlighted the need for structured routines, differentiated instruction, and inclusive practices to address diverse student populations, including gifted learners and those with special needs. Structural differences in promotion and credit systems further complicated classroom dynamics.

Finally, professional expectations—particularly around parental engagement and accountability—were described as daunting. Teachers expressed anxiety over high-stakes communication with parents and the pressure to meet unfamiliar professional standards. Collectively, these findings underscore the multifaceted challenges Filipino teachers encounter in navigating cultural, pedagogical, and institutional differences abroad.

Table 2. Challenges of the Filipino Teachers in Adapting to Foreign Educational Systems and Cultures

Categories	Themes
Cultural and Behavioral Adaptation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived Lack of Student Motivation and Value for Education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Barriers
Instructional and Pedagogical Shifts	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in Educational Structure and Curriculum
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to Unlearn and Relearn
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mismatch Between Teachers' Courses and Host Country's Educational Guidelines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology and Software Adaptation

Classroom and Student Management	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom Management and Challenges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated Students Populations and Inclusive Education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural Differences in Grade Level Promotion and Credit System
Professional and Parental Expectations	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressure and Accountability in Parent Communication

Linguistic, Professional, and Cultural Navigation

Filipino teachers abroad reported navigating challenges across four dimensions: linguistic adjustment, professional identity and growth, cultural integration, and psychosocial adaptation.

Linguistic navigation involved adapting to differences between Filipino and local English usage, conversational styles, and colloquialisms. While most were proficient in English, participants emphasized the need for communication flexibility, noting that language barriers sometimes led to social withdrawal or professional vulnerability.

Professionally, teachers benefited from structured development programs such as professional learning communities and training sessions, which enhanced their pedagogical practices and confidence. At the same time, they balanced cultural adjustment and pedagogical autonomy, asserting their teaching identities while adapting to new norms. Experiences of equal treatment and inclusion were common, though some reported discrimination or subtle racism, which they countered with passion, purpose, and commitment to their craft.

Cultural adaptation extended beyond classrooms, requiring religious sensitivity, awareness of liberal ideologies, and negotiation of stereotypes. Teachers described integration as a gradual process of observing, listening, and blending into host cultures while maintaining Filipino values.

Finally, psychosocial adaptation highlighted the importance of emotional resilience and peer support networks. Teachers coped with anxiety, homesickness, and self-doubt through self-reflection, peer bonding, and informal mentorship. Everyday challenges such as daily living adjustments and transportation barriers further tested their independence, but strong support systems and a sense of purpose enabled them to persist.

Table 3. Filipino Teachers' Navigation to Linguistic, Professional, and Cultural Differences in their Host Country

Categories	Themes
Linguistic Navigation and Communication	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language Adjustment and Communication Flexibility

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language-based Bias and Professional Vulnerability
Professional and Identity Adjustment	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Growth Through Structured Development Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Adjustment and Pedagogical Autonomy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Professional Treatment and Inclusion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, Self-doubt, and Identity Challenges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion, Purpose, and Commitment to the Craft
Cultural Adaptation and Social Integration	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Sensitivity and Interfaith Awareness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigating Taboos and Liberal Ideologies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Misinterpretation and Stereotyping
Psychosocial and Daily Life Navigation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Resilience and Self-support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Collaboration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility

Filipino Values and Culture in Teaching Abroad

Filipino teachers abroad carried with them a set of cultural values that shaped their pedagogy and relationships, categorized into interpersonal and relational values, inner disposition and moral character, and cultural strengths and professional adaptation.

Interpersonal values were expressed through *malasakit* (compassion), *pakikipagkapwa* and *bayanihan* (shared humanity and community spirit), *paggalang* (respect), and *pandamdamin* (affective connection). These values fostered warmth, inclusivity, and respect in classrooms, often positioning teachers as second parents and community builders who emphasized empathy and relational care.

Inner disposition and moral character were reflected in *pagpapasensya* (patience), *pananampalataya* (faith), *sipag at tiyaga* (diligence and perseverance), and *tungkulin* at *pananagutan* (responsibility and accountability). These virtues guided teachers in navigating diverse learners, sustaining resilience, and instilling responsibility and leadership among students.

Finally, cultural strengths were evident in *pagkabagay* (adaptability and versatility), highlighting teachers' ability to adjust to foreign systems while preserving Filipino identity. Collectively, these values not only enriched their teaching practices but also reinforced their resilience and cultural pride in international contexts.

Table 4. Applied Filipino Values and Culture in Teaching Abroad

Categories	Themes
Interpersonal and Relational Values	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malasakit (Compassion)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pakikipagkapwa (Shared Humanity and Relationality)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paggaglang (Respect)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pandamdamin (Affective Connection)
Inner Disposition and Moral Character	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pagpapasensya (Patience)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pananampalataya (Faith)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sipag at Tiyaga (Diligence and Perseverance)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tungkulin at Pananagutan (Responsibility and Accountability)
Cultural Strengths and Professional Adaptation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pagkagabay (Adaptability and Versatility)

Support Systems of Filipino Teachers Abroad

Filipino teachers abroad relied on diverse support systems to cope with professional and cultural challenges, which clustered into three categories: social and relational support, institutional and structural support, and internal coping mechanisms.

Social and relational supports were central, with participants highlighting the importance of peer and community networks, including Filipino group chats, gatherings, and shared living arrangements that fostered solidarity and practical aid. Frequent communication with family back home and participation in online Filipino communities further provided emotional anchors and resource hubs.

Institutional supports included mentorship programs, professional learning communities, and district initiatives that offered technical guidance, classroom strategies, and confidence-building. External organizations, such as visa sponsors and cultural exchange programs, also provided structured care and mental health support.

Finally, internal coping mechanisms emphasized faith and spirituality, personal wellness practices, and reflection and goal-setting. Teachers drew strength from prayer, church communities, rest, journaling, and reaffirming their purpose, which helped sustain resilience and focus amid transitions. Collectively, these support systems enabled Filipino teachers to navigate the complexities of teaching abroad while maintaining cultural identity and professional commitment.

Table 5. Support Systems of Filipino Teachers Teaching Abroad

Categories	Themes
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Social and Relational Support Systems	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer and Community Support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and Emotional Anchor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Filipino Communities as Resource Hubs
Institutional and Structural Support	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Mentorship and Professional Guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Organizational Support
Internal and Personal Coping Mechanisms	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith and Spiritual Support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-care and Personal Wellness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Reflection and Goal Setting

Comparing Teaching in the Philippines and Abroad

Participants highlighted five major areas of contrast between teaching in the Philippines and in their host countries: resources and workload, pedagogical approaches, classroom dynamics, professional growth and compensation, and emotional and cultural experiences.

Teachers consistently emphasized the abundance of resources abroad, including technology, materials, and facilities, which contrasted sharply with shortages in the Philippines. Workloads were also lighter and more focused overseas, with fewer classes, structured breaks, and reduced non-teaching tasks. Pedagogically, they observed a shift from content-heavy, structured teaching in the Philippines to student-centered, skill-based, and data-driven approaches abroad, supported by diagnostic assessments and modern strategies.

Classroom dynamics revealed challenges in student behavior and discipline overseas, requiring teachers to establish authority and adapt to new cultural expectations. In contrast, Filipino classrooms were described as more respectful, though resource-constrained. Professional growth and compensation were markedly better abroad, with significantly higher salaries, stipends for extra work, and clearer professional boundaries.

Despite these advantages, participants expressed a strong emotional connection to teaching in the Philippines, describing it as more fulfilling and rooted in “infinite heart” despite limited resources. Teaching abroad, however, offered broader cultural exposure and opportunities to learn from diverse perspectives, enriching their professional and personal growth.

Table 6. Comparison of Filipino Teachers to their Teaching Experience in their Home and Host Country

Categories	Themes
Teaching Environment and Resources	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of Teaching Resources and Facilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Load and Workload
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grading and Administrative Tasks
Pedagogical And Instructional Approaches	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Vs. Student-centered Learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Preparedness and Assessment System
Classroom Dynamics and Students Behavior	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students Behavior and Discipline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Adjustment and Higher Expectations
Professional Growth and Compensation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair Compensation and Benefits for Extra Duties
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Growth and Adaptation
Emotional and Cultural Experience	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Fulfillment and Sense of Purpose
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to Diversity and Cultural Learning

Impact of Teaching Abroad on Professional Growth and Career Trajectories

Three major categories emerged from the data: professional development and pedagogical growth, global orientation and career mobility, and cultural exchange and integration.

Professional development was marked by access to abundant resources and technology, exposure to innovative student-centered strategies, and opportunities for training and career advancement. Participants reported recognition for excellence and, in some cases, advancement into leadership or specialist roles—positions often unattainable in the Philippines.

Global orientation highlighted the expansion of teachers' career horizons and competitiveness, with many noting that international experience opened doors to opportunities in other countries. This was accompanied by economic empowerment, lifestyle improvements, and personal growth, including enhanced patience, adaptability, and resilience. Teachers also described a rediscovery of purpose and identity, seeing themselves as changemakers with renewed commitment to their profession.

Finally, cultural exchange underscored the dual role of Filipino teachers as educators and cultural ambassadors. They emphasized the importance of sharing Filipino values while integrating into host cultures, navigating diversity with adaptability. High performance expectations abroad reinforced the need for competence and accountability, further shaping their professional identity. Collectively, these findings reveal how teaching abroad profoundly transforms Filipino teachers' careers, outlooks, and sense of purpose.

Table 7. Impact of Teaching Abroad on Professional Growth and trajectories

Categories	Themes
Professional Development and Pedagogical Growth	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Better Educational Resources and Technology
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to Innovative and Student-centered Teaching Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for Professional Development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Advancement and Recognition for Excellence
Global Orientation and Career Mobility	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Mindset and Expanded Career Horizons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of Filipino Teachers as a Global Export
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Empowerment and Lifestyle Change
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Growth and Emotional Resilience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rediscovery of Purpose and Teacher Identity
Cultural Exchange and Integration	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Exchange and Purposeful Teaching Identity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Performance Expectation

Curricular Insights and Lessons from Filipino Teachers Abroad

The experiences of Filipino teachers overseas yielded four major categories of insights: pedagogical approaches and curriculum design, teacher development and professional support, cultural and values-based education, and student development and well-being.

Pedagogically, participants emphasized the importance of student autonomy, skill-building, and functional literacy, contrasting the content-heavy approach in the Philippines with skill-based, student-centered learning abroad. They advocated for curricula that prioritize quality over quantity, integrate real-world applications, and allow teachers flexibility in unpacking essential standards. Concerns were also raised about mass promotion, with calls for reforms in early education.

Teacher development insights highlighted the need to invest in teachers through training, resources, and professional autonomy. Participants stressed that teachers should not be left to compensate for systemic shortages, but instead be supported with adequate materials, manageable class sizes, and opportunities for growth. Effective assessment systems to identify diverse learner needs were also recommended.

Cultural and values-based education underscored the importance of retaining Filipino values in teaching, such as compassion, respect, and community-rooted pedagogy. Teachers abroad noted that values integration is often missing in foreign systems, and emphasized that the Filipino heart-led approach remains powerful and relevant.

Finally, student development and well-being were seen as central, with participants calling for classrooms that nurture the whole child—academically, emotionally, and morally. They argued that education should cultivate value systems alongside knowledge, ensuring compassion and character remain integral to learning.

Table 8. Insights and Lessons Drawn from the Experiences of Filipino Teachers Abroad

Categories	Themes
Pedagogical Approaches and Curriculum Design	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Autonomy and Skill-building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional Literacy and Real-world Application
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Design and Standards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from Quantity to Quality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass Promotion and Concerns
Teacher Development and Professional Support	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Growth and Support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological and Behavioral Support
Cultural and Values-based Education	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values Integration in Teaching
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength of Filipino Pedagogy
Student Development and Well-being	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Value System

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted experiences of Filipino teachers abroad, revealing motivations, challenges, cultural navigation, values integration, support systems, comparative insights, and impacts on professional growth. Collectively, these themes underscore the transformative nature of international teaching and its implications for Philippine education.

A central motivation for migration was economic aspiration and better working conditions, with teachers seeking higher salaries, reduced workloads, and opportunities to support their families. These findings align with prior research that identifies improved living conditions, financial security, and professional advancement as primary drivers of teacher migration (Oca & Malaga, 2025; Dumaguin et al., 2025). Beyond economics, participants emphasized professional growth, exposure to innovative pedagogies, and global recognition, reflecting the desire to expand career horizons and avoid stagnation as described in push–pull migration analyses (Dumaguin et al., 2025).

However, teachers encountered significant challenges in cultural adjustment and pedagogical adaptation. Differences in student behavior, respect norms, and classroom management styles required unlearning and relearning established practices; this mirrors documented experiences of culture shock, communication barriers,

and the need for resilience among Filipino educators abroad (Macapagong et al., 2023; ResearchGate case study, 2025). Adapting to unfamiliar curricula, technology integration, and inclusive education systems further complicated transitions, reinforcing findings that highlight the complexity of cross-cultural pedagogy (International Journal of Social Science & Human Research, 2025).

Despite these challenges, teachers drew strength from Filipino cultural values such as *malasakit* (compassion), *pakikipagkapwa* (shared humanity), *paggalang* (respect), and *sipag* at *tiyaga* (diligence).

These values shaped their pedagogy and relationships, enabling them to foster inclusive and caring classroom environments. Such findings affirm the enduring relevance of Filipino values in global contexts, paralleling scholarship on how cultural values support resilience and community building among migrant teachers (Perales et al., 2025).

Support systems were crucial in sustaining teachers abroad. Peer networks, family communication, online communities, mentorship programs, and faith-based practices provided emotional anchors and professional guidance — reinforcing previous research that underscores the importance of social and institutional support in teacher adaptation and wellbeing (Systematic study in ScienceDirect, 2025; Perez-Amurao, 2025).

Comparisons between teaching in the Philippines and abroad revealed stark contrasts. Overseas contexts offered abundant resources, lighter workloads, and student-centered pedagogies, while Filipino classrooms were characterized by resource scarcity but stronger respect and emotional fulfillment.

This duality echoes broader educational migration literature, which discusses both opportunities and systemic constraints that push teachers to seek international employment (Oca & Malaga, 2025; Macapagong et al., 2023).

The impact of teaching abroad was profound, fostering career advancement, global competitiveness, economic empowerment, and renewed teacher identity.

Teachers described themselves as changemakers, cultural ambassadors, and resilient professionals. These insights reinforce the notion that international teaching not only transforms individual trajectories but also positions Filipino educators as significant contributors to global education (Perales et al., 2025; Dumaguin et al., 2025).

Finally, curricular lessons drawn from these experiences emphasize the need for Philippine education to adopt skill-based, student-centered approaches, invest in teacher development, and preserve values integration. Such reforms could bridge gaps between local and global standards while maintaining the cultural strengths of Filipino pedagogy — a recurrent recommendation in international teaching research (International Journal of Social Science & Human Research, 2025).

In sum, the findings illustrate that Filipino teachers abroad navigate complex challenges yet emerge with enriched professional, cultural, and personal identities.

Their experiences provide valuable insights for educational policy, curriculum design, and teacher preparation in the Philippines, ensuring that global exposure translates into local improvement.

Emerging Framework

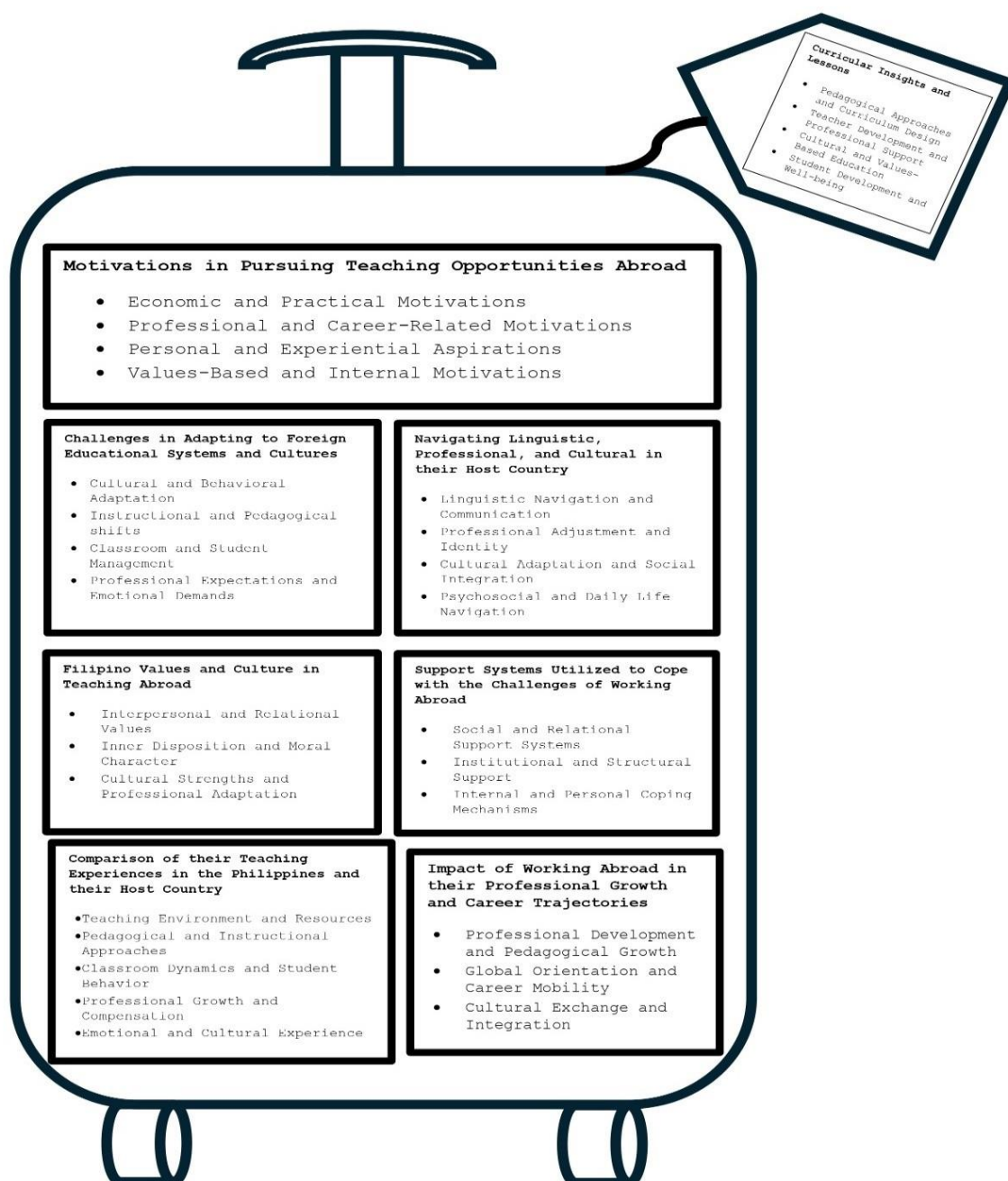


Figure 7. The Emerging Framework of the Lived Experiences of Filipino Teachers Teaching Abroad

CONCLUSION

1. Filipino teachers migrate for economic stability, career growth, family obligations, personal enrichment, and national pride. Addressing systemic issues in Philippine education may reduce migration driven by necessity.
2. Teachers face cultural, pedagogical, technological, and interpersonal adjustments, requiring resilience and flexibility. Pre-departure and ongoing support are essential.
3. Emotional displacement, identity assertion, and systemic differences create stress, yet teachers demonstrate strong commitment and adaptability.
4. Core values (malasakit, pakikipagkapwa, paggalang, sipag at tiyaga, pananampalataya) are carried abroad, shaping pedagogy and fostering inclusive, compassionate classrooms.
5. Abroad, teachers enjoy better resources, lighter workloads, and technology integration, while in the Philippines, passion and community often compensate for scarcity.
6. Overseas teaching enhances pedagogical skills, global standards exposure, leadership opportunities, and personal resilience, affirming Filipino teachers as global contributors.
7. Teachers act as educators and cultural ambassadors, rediscovering professional identity and purpose.
8. International experiences highlight the need for skill-based, student-centered learning, stronger teacher support, and preservation of Filipino values in pedagogy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish orientation, cultural training, pedagogical workshops, and mental health programs for migrant teachers.
2. Improve salaries, reduce non-teaching burdens, and provide resources to retain talent.
3. Embed compassion, respect, and community-rooted pedagogy into training for both local and overseas contexts.
4. Recognize Filipino teachers as cultural ambassadors through institutional partnerships and intercultural programs.
5. Align with global standards, emphasize student-centered learning, functional literacy, and leadership development.
6. Provide accessible mental health services and peer networks tailored to migrant teachers' needs.
7. Reintegration programs should harness returnee teachers' global insights for curriculum reform, mentoring, and policy development.
8. Expand studies to diverse contexts, employ mixed-methods, and compare experiences of current and returning teachers to deepen understanding of identity and adaptation.

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