

Navigating New Realms: A Phenomenological Comparison of Novice and Veteran Filipino Migrant Teachers

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Abstract: This phenomenological study investigated the experiences of Filipino migrant teachers in American classrooms with two primary objectives: documenting the lived experiences of both novice and veteran Filipino teachers in the U.S. educational system and developing a community support platform tailored to their unique needs. Using a qualitative approach, the study engaged seven Filipino teachers through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, revealing significant challenges in cultural adaptation, classroom management, and professional development, with results demonstrating considerable cultural dissonance in classroom dynamics and student behavior management between novice teachers who struggled with immediate culture shock and veteran teachers who exhibited developed coping strategies. The findings emphasized how cultural discrepancies significantly impact workplace adjustment, leading to the development of a comprehensive Community Support Platform for Filipino Educators that provides assistance in four key areas: logistical support, cultural adaptation, professional development, and personal support.

Keywords: *Filipino Migrant Teachers, Cultural Adaptation, Phenomenological Study, Teacher Experiences, Community Support Platform.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Filipino teachers' increasing presence in American schools has gained much attention as these educators strive to adapt to a different system of education while at the same time preserving their cultural identity and methods of teaching [1][2]. This paper aims to contribute to the literature on the experiences of new Filipino teachers by exploring how they manage their feelings of isolation and stress as they begin their teaching career in a new country [3][4]. The adjustment process entails combating homesickness, cultural and linguistic barriers, as well as peculiar student behaviors and approaches to education [5][1]. However, it is the experienced Filipino teachers who have gained much practice and may have the ways and means to assist their fellow teachers, especially the new ones, which will be beneficial for the establishment of cooperation and mentoring [2][4]. Nonetheless, there is little understanding of the phenomenological account shared by these two groups of teachers, and therefore, it is interesting to consider how their relationships might help to create a

supportive environment for Filipino teachers in American schools [3][5].

Moreover, Filipino educators in the United States experienced an absence of organized support systems while confronting issues such as cultural adaptation, divergent educational expectations, and professional isolation [6]. However, while professional development programs existed, they often did not address the experiences of Filipino educators or help novice teachers develop meaningful relationships with veteran teachers [7][8][9]. This gap in understanding and support could negatively impact teacher retention and student outcomes [6].

Previous research has focused on the experiences of immigrant educators in the United States and has identified challenges such as cultural dislocation, insufficient professional support, and the importance of mentorship. Dempsey (2024) stressed the importance of culturally relevant mentorship techniques adapted to Filipino educators' unique

backgrounds. Alendajao et al. (2024) stated the sociolinguistic differences and teaching problems that Filipino teachers experience in American classrooms, stressing the necessity for individualized help. However, few studies explored the differences between new and experienced Filipino teachers, especially in American classrooms [6].

Despite the growing body of research on immigrant educators [10][6], there was a notable absence of comparative studies focusing on novice and veteran Filipino teachers in American classrooms. This gap was critical because, while both groups contributed to education, their experiences and perspectives differed significantly [11]. Furthermore, existing literature often overlooked the potential for collaborative support networks between novice and veteran teachers, which could have enhanced professional growth and retention [9][7].

The development and implementation of a support platform tailored to the unique needs of Filipino educators has also received little attention. This lack of focus on structured mentorship and community-building efforts left a void in understanding how Filipino teachers could address their challenges and thrive in American classrooms [1].

The research addressed these gaps by documenting novice and veteran Filipino teachers' experiences in American classrooms. The research investigated methods to establish a community support system fostering collaborative relationships and mentoring opportunities. The research used the phenomenological experiences of these educators to provide practical insights into their challenges and needs [11] [1].

The research results produced important findings that educational stakeholders should consider, including policymakers, school administrators, and teacher preparation programs.

Thus, the study helped develop culturally sensitive support systems to address the problems of teacher retention and professional growth and, therefore, student outcomes [4] [6]. In addition, it highlighted the necessity of promoting

inclusive and culturally relevant teaching strategies, which would create a more diverse and equitable educational setting [12].

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research investigated how Filipino teachers who are new to teaching and those with extensive experience handle their experiences in American classrooms. The research used phenomenology to achieve its objectives, which included (1) documenting the phenomenological experiences and challenges of novice and veteran Filipino teachers through focus group discussions and interviews, (2) developing a community support platform that addresses the specific needs of Filipino educators to enhance their collaboration, mentorship, and professional growth.

The study satisfied its objectives by uncovering important details regarding the lives of Filipino teachers. The study helped build support systems that are sensitive to different cultures, which makes it easier for Filipino teachers to fit in and do well in the American school system.

III. FRAMEWORK

This study examined how independent variables influence the development of a community support platform for Filipino migrant teachers in the U.S. educational system. The framework is grounded in three theoretical perspectives: Border Crossing Theory, Resilience Theory, and Acculturation Theory, which collectively guide the understanding of teachers' experiences and inform the platform development.

The independent variables in this study encompass two primary categories that shape the development of the community support platform. The first category, Teacher Classification, distinguishes between novice teachers (1-3 years of U.S. teaching experience) and veteran teachers (5+ years of experience). This classification is essential because it shows the different adaptation and professional growth levels

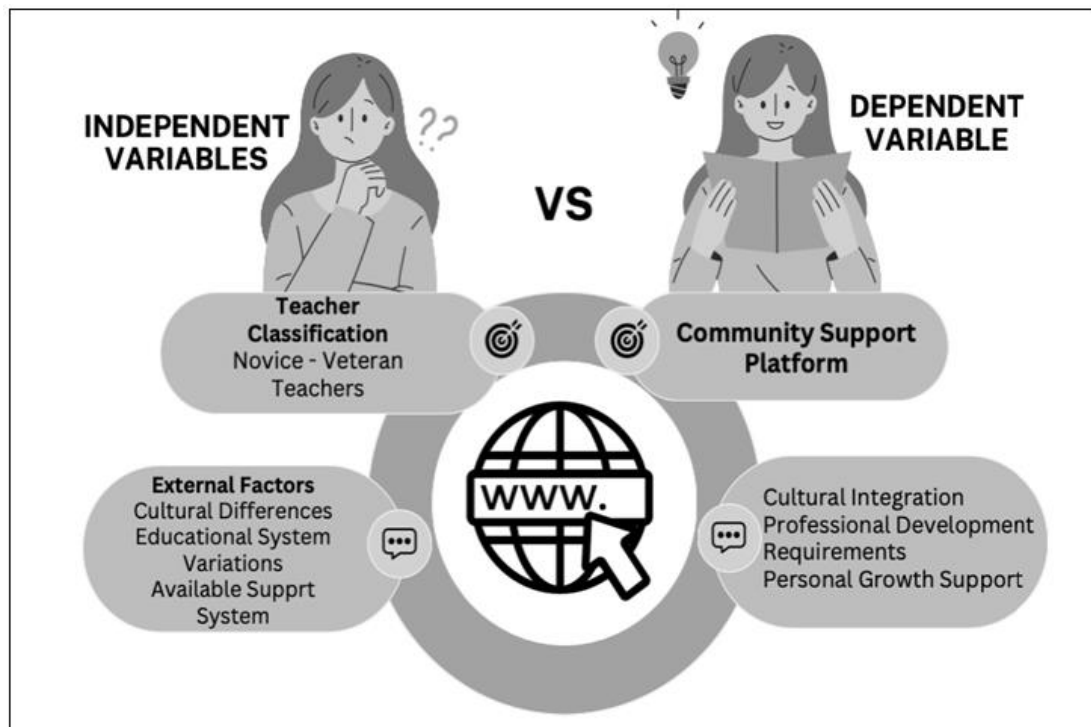


Fig 1 Conceptual Framework
(Mindset Graph, Canva. May 2025)

[7][13]. The second category comprises External Factors, which include cultural differences, educational system variations, and available support systems. Border Crossing Theory explains that these external factors make transitioning to the U.S. school system hard for Filipino teachers while providing them with fresh opportunities [14].

Teacher Classification qualifies as an independent variable because it represents a pre-existing, non-manipulated characteristic that fundamentally shapes how teachers experience and navigate their professional environment. Research indicates that beginning teachers demonstrate markedly different levels of effectiveness and decision-making capabilities compared to their more experienced counterparts. This classification provides a natural framework for understanding how experience levels influence teachers' adaptation processes, with veteran teachers typically showing more sophisticated cognitive tools for problem-solving and enhanced decision-making capabilities in classroom situations [7][13].

External Factors constitute the second independent variable category because they represent the contextual conditions under which migration and adaptation occur. These factors, including cultural differences and support systems, are recognized as crucial determinants in migration studies. Research shows that cultural similarities together with support systems play a major role in shaping migration patterns and adjustment processes. The classification of outside elements matches the Border Crossing Theory [14].

The dependent variable in this study is the community support platform, which will be developed based on the analysis of teachers' experiences. The platform's features and functionalities will be determined by three key areas: Cultural

Integration Needs, Professional Development Requirements, and Personal Growth Support. These components are designed to address the challenges identified through the study of the independent variables, as supported by the Acculturation Theory [15][7] and Resilience Theory's emphasis on positive adaptation under stress [16][14].

The relationship between variables is dynamic and purposeful. The independent variables (Teacher Classification and External Factors) will inform the design and development of the community support platform. For example, understanding how veteran teachers have developed coping mechanisms will help create platform features that can support novice teachers [13].

Additionally, knowledge about external factors will help create unique platform region that account for differences in culture and system setup. Using this structure, the study aims to record and examine the experiences of Filipino teachers in order to create a community support system that meets their specific challenges and needs in the U.S. school system.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employed purposeful sampling to select participants who could provide rich, detailed accounts of their experiences as Filipino teachers in American classrooms [17]. The specific parameters for sampling were carefully chosen based on theory and real-world needs. The study put the participants into two categories based on how long they had been teaching in the US. For novice teachers (1-3 years of experience), this timeframe was established based on the Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition [18], which identifies the initial three years as crucial for developing basic teaching competencies and professional identity. Research indicates that

teachers typically experience the most significant challenges in cultural adaptation and professional integration during their first three years [19], corresponding to the initial stages of Border Crossing Theory, where teachers actively navigate cultural and institutional boundaries. For veteran teachers (5+ years of experience), this selection was justified by studies showing that teachers typically achieve professional stability and develop robust coping strategies after five years of experience [20], allowing them to progress through the stages of acculturation and develop resilience in their new educational context. Research also indicates that teachers with 5+ years of experience have typically developed mentorship capabilities and can provide insights into successful long-term adaptation strategies [21].

This purposive sampling method led to the choice of seven participants: three novice teachers and four veteran teachers. This gave a balanced view of experiences while allowing for the depth needed for phenomenological research.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Five major themes emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions with Filipino migrant teachers in American classrooms. The first theme of Cultural Navigation and Adaptation described how participants learned to adapt to American classroom culture through their experiences with different communication approaches and student-teacher bond dynamics. The second theme, Classroom Management and Pedagogical Approaches, showed how teachers modified their teaching methods to handle different American classroom environments. The third theme, Support Systems and Community Building, demonstrated the vital role of mentorship, professional networks and cultural groups in the success of educators. The fourth theme, Professional Development and Growth, described the ongoing educational development of Filipino educators who improved their teaching methods. The fifth theme, Personal Resilience and Well-being, included the emotional challenges faced by teachers and the strategies they used to cope.

Table 1: Themes from the Novice and Veteran Filipino Migrant Teachers' Lived Experiences

Themes	Filipino Migrant Teachers	
	Novice	Veteran
Cultural Navigation and Adaptation	Struggled with informal communication styles of students.	Developed strategies to bridge cultural gaps over time.
	Initial cultural shock in classroom dynamics.	Emphasized gradual adaptation and understanding of diverse backgrounds.
Classroom Management and Pedagogical Approaches	Difficulty in applying traditional discipline methods.	Utilized experience to implement effective management strategies.
	Sought new techniques suitable for American classrooms.	Mentorship played a key role in refining management skills.
	Adjusting to new curricula and teaching standards.	Developed a flexible teaching style to meet diverse needs.
	Focused on interactive and technology-driven lesson plans.	Continuous learning and adaptation highlighted as essential.
Support Systems and Community Building	Relied heavily on mentorship from experienced colleagues.	Valued professional networks and teacher associations for ongoing support.
	Community of Filipino educators provided emotional and practical support.	Professional development programs were crucial for skill enhancement.
Professional Development and Growth	Expressed optimism about growth opportunities in the U.S.	Reflected on significant growth through diverse educational experiences.
	Interested in further education and training, especially in technology.	Emphasized the importance of exposure to different educational environments.
Personal Resilience and Well-being	Dealing with isolation and homesickness	Managing cultural adjustment stress
	Building initial coping strategies	Mental and emotional stability

➤ Integration of Findings

Integrating the findings from the individual interviews and the focus group discussion provides a unified understanding of the perspectives of Filipino migrant teachers in American schools. Both sources of data consistently stress the importance of cultural adaptation, classroom management, and support systems, showing that these are important issues for teachers at all stages of their careers.

The collective sentiment reflected the desire to grow and evolve alongside the shifting world of education. A number of emotional well-being issues and the importance of community support were the common topics, which proved that teachers

require a good support system to be able to deal with their problems. The results of the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions gave us some very important information about their experiences in American schools. There were clear problems with cultural change and classroom management, which showed that these teachers had a hard time getting used to the new school system. The focus on professional development and support systems made it seem like they needed more structured tools and mentorship to help them make the change and improve the way they teach. It was also important that these teachers took care of their emotional health, which meant that they needed to get help for their mental health at school.

Despite the many obstacles that they faced, the teachers who participated in this research all presented narratives that were consistent in their portrayal of resiliency and determination. The findings agreed with the academic research on the factors that motivate migrant teachers. A significant number of the individuals who took part in this study had a strong desire to excel and to have a good impact on the education of their students. For instance, research has shown that migrant teachers were able to improve their students' learning experience through the use of different talents and ideas in the classroom.

From the focus group discussions, community and belonging were observed to play a crucial role in the teachers' experiences. Research has found that teachers' social support networks were very important to their health and happiness at work, as strong professional relationships and collegial networks serve as natural resources for stress support and can mitigate job-related stress and burnout. The results also matched what other research had indicated about culturally responsive teaching and how it could help bridge the gap between students and teachers through the integration of cultural knowledge and prior experiences into the learning process [22].

Studies have shown that cultural adaptation is one of the main things that affects how well migrant teachers do in schools they aren't used to. When they started their roles in American schools, most of the participants had trouble communicating and adjusting to American society. Research has indicated that mentorship and peer support are essential for the professional development of teachers, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, as mentoring has been identified as a crucial support mechanism for immigrant teachers navigating the challenges of adapting to new educational environments [23]. The findings from the interviews and focus group discussions indicated a necessity for structured mentorship programs designed to assist Filipino migrant teachers in their professional development. In addition, the feeling of isolation among the teachers had been mentioned and supported by numerous studies. Research has shown that teacher well-being is significantly associated with better student outcomes and lower psychological difficulties [24]. Although the research is limited, these studies as a whole supported the importance of cultural adaptation, the development of support systems, and the improvement of emotional well-being to create a better environment for migrant educators.

Through one-on-one interviews and focus group talks, Filipino migrant teachers in American classrooms shared their unique experiences that showed their complicated journey. Their stories not only showed how hard it can be to adapt to new cultures and change the way you teach, but they also showed how important it is for professionals to have formal support systems. These results went beyond individual experiences to show what it means for international teachers to be successful in American schools. They showed that cultural competence, flexible teaching methods, and strong support networks are important for long-term professional integration. Through their voices, this study helps us learn

more about how international teachers can successfully bridge educational cultures while still staying true to their professional identities and promoting academic excellence in American classrooms that are becoming more diverse.

➤ *Development of the Community Support Platform for Filipino Educators*

The development of the community support platform for Filipino educators followed a systematic process to ensure it was tailored to the unique needs of Filipino migrant teachers, as identified in the findings from interviews and focus group discussions. The platform was designed to address challenges related to cultural adaptation, professional development, emotional support, and community building.

The first step in the development process was the needs assessment, which involved reviewing the thematic analysis of the qualitative data. The findings identified major challenges that Filipino teachers encountered, for instance, cultural dissonance, challenges in classroom management, gaps in professional development, emotional issues and the need for strong support systems. The most pressing needs were identified as cultural adaptation, mentorship, emotional support, professional growth, and the creation of community. These themes formed the basis of the platform's features and objectives.

The proposed community support platform will be a blog or website that is specifically for Filipino educators and is interactive. It will focus on four major areas of support: personal, professional, cultural, and logistical support. The Personal and Household Assistance section focuses on helping Filipino teachers navigate daily life challenges in the United States through multiple resources. It features home assistance blog posts and tutorials providing step-by-step guides with videos on using common household appliances that may be unfamiliar to newcomers. The section also includes detailed articles about housing decisions, covering topics from renting versus buying to finding safe neighborhoods and understanding leases. Additionally, it connects teachers with real estate professionals and provides access to first-time homebuyer seminars. Financial education is another crucial component, offering detailed tutorials on essential financial skills like using checkbooks, understanding credit scores, and creating budgets. The platform provides comprehensive financial literacy resources covering taxes, banking, and saving strategies, along with access to vetted financial advisors who can guide teachers through the U.S. financial system. Mental health and emotional support are also prioritized, with dedicated resources for managing homesickness and cultural adjustment, plus information about accessing local counseling services and mental health organizations.

The section on Professional Development and Mentorship is designed to help Filipino teachers start their jobs in the United States. It has a strong mentoring program that pairs new teachers with Filipino teachers who have been teaching for a while and can help them. The platform has a lot of teaching tools and tutorials, as well as downloadable templates for managing the classroom, planning lessons, and

giving different students different levels of help. It also gives a lot of information about U.S. curriculum guidelines and good ways to teach in classrooms with a variety of students. Professional development opportunities are regularly updated with announcements about workshops, conferences, and seminars, along with access to online training portals and continuing education programs.

Cultural Adjustment and Networking features focus on helping teachers integrate into their new environments while maintaining their cultural identity. Through cultural adaptation blog posts, the platform addresses challenges like understanding U.S. cultural norms, parent-teacher dynamics, and classroom communication. Through community forums, teachers can exchange stories with colleagues while asking for guidance and building relationships with educators who encounter comparable difficulties. The platform enables users to find Filipino associations, church groups, and cultural organizations through its map-based feature, which shows nearby Filipino communities and events.

The relocation guide provides essential logistical information to help new residents settle in the U.S. The guide provides help with basic requirements such as Social Security Number acquisition, driver's license procurement, and health insurance enrollment. The transportation resources include both public transit and car ownership information, and district-specific resources deliver detailed information about local support services. The platform also offers vital visa and immigration assistance, including guidance on visa applications, renewals, and pathways to permanent residency.

Teacher-to-Teacher Collaboration promotes community building through various interactive features. Veteran teachers can share their expertise through blog posts and a "Teacher Spotlight" feature, while a resource-sharing hub enables educators to exchange lesson plans and teaching materials. Regular virtual meetups and webinars facilitate networking and professional growth opportunities across the country.

VI. CONCLUSION

The primary problem of both novice and veteran Filipino teachers in the United States was caused by cultural discrepancies that influenced their workplace and interpersonal adjustment. This cultural dissonance stemmed from the profound differences in educational practices, student-teacher dynamics, and societal norms between the Philippines and the United States. These educators, who were from a collectivist and hierarchical culture, had to shift to an individualist and informal educational system in the United States. The new teachers, for instance, Participant 7, who had only one year of teaching experience in the United States, did not understand the behavior that was often seen in classrooms, while the experienced teachers, Participant 2, who had been teaching for 19 years in the United States still had some cultural differences to deal with.

Furthermore, systemic failures in the form of lacking support structures only added to these issues, especially for new teachers who had no access to quality mentorship programs and culturally sensitive training. Any available mentorship and professional development programs were usually generic and did not meet the special needs of Filipino educators. The emotional consequences, such as homesickness, loneliness, and stress, were also intensified by the absence of a good support system and mental health services.

Therefore, it can be seen that the cultural dissonance experienced by Filipino teachers in the United States was a result of systemic gaps and inadequate support systems that do not meet the cultural and professional needs of Filipino teachers.

RECOMMENDATION

A digital support platform for Filipino educators emerged from the challenges faced by migrant teachers, especially in community integration, professional practice, emotional well-being, and cultural adaptation. The platform was developed based on findings from focus group discussions and interviews that revealed cultural friction, lack of mentorship, depression, and the need for professional growth and integration. The four interconnected support domains of the platform address these challenges: logistical, cultural, professional, and personal. The personal domain contains family life management resources, housing guidance, financial literacy materials, mental health support services, counseling services, and homesickness management strategies. Professional development is enhanced through structured mentorship programs that pair novice teachers with experienced Filipino educators, classroom management tools, and targeted online training courses. Interactive community forums, Filipino cultural organization connections, and informative blog posts about parent-teacher relationships and U.S. cultural norms help with cultural adjustment. The logistical domain offers district-specific resources together with immigration assistance and complete relocation guides. The platform enables collaboration through webinars and meetings and a shared lesson plan repository. Mobile-responsive design, multilingual capabilities, and an intuitive search interface guarantee technical accessibility, and content is regularly updated based on user feedback and Filipino education specialists. This pioneering platform is more than a digital resource; it is a transformative initiative to strengthen and unite the Filipino teaching community across America. The platform utilizes comprehensive support across personal, professional, cultural, and logistical domains to build on Filipino teachers' demonstrated resilience by providing the structured support system they need. This initiative strengthens Filipino educators professionally while enriching American classrooms with diverse perspectives and teaching approaches by establishing a strong community of practice and culturally responsive resources. Research shows that Filipino teachers who receive proper support make significant contributions to their school communities and transform their journey from struggle to success into a story of empowerment, belonging, and a lasting impact on

American education. This platform preserves and shares valuable institutional knowledge and creates a sustainable ecosystem that bridges Filipino educational excellence with American classroom needs.

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