



THE PLIGHT OF TEACHERS GOING OVERSEAS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the plight of the teachers who opted to work overseas. Specifically, the study sought to answer questions such as the key driving factors that lead teachers to consider relocating to foreign countries for employment; the personal and professional goals that the teachers want to achieve by working overseas; how teachers deal with professional transitions like adopting to new teaching approaches and cultural contexts; the challenges encountered by the teachers from the moment they leave their work from their home country until their current set-up; and the recommendations for possible research topics and or agenda for future researchers. The qualitative research design was used. Fifteen participants were included in the study, and snowballs were utilized to find the other teachers teaching overseas. Thematic analysis was employed to identify common patterns and themes.

Keywords: *plight, teachers, overseas, phenomenological study*

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INTRODUCTION

Today, an increasing number of educators are pursuing careers abroad, impacting educational institutions, the global workforce, and their own lives. Understanding why teachers migrate, their challenges, and professional transitions is crucial for policymakers and educational institutions.

Professionals, including educators, are moving globally due to social, economic, and political factors (Kerr et al., 2016). Teachers often seek overseas opportunities for personal growth, cultural immersion, and better career prospects, driven by economic incentives like higher salaries (Smith et al., 2020). Social motivations, such as cultural exchange, also play a significant role (Johnson and Lee, 2019).

Migrating teachers face challenges like adapting to new educational contexts, language barriers, and establishing support networks (Martinez and Ramirez, 2021). Transitioning to a new educational environment requires planning and support, including navigating unfamiliar teaching methodologies (Garcia et al., 2019).

This study aims to explore these dynamics, investigating motivations, challenges, and transitions of migrating educators. It seeks to inform effective educational policies and support systems for teachers in an interconnected world. Understanding why teachers prefer to work abroad and addressing their challenges is crucial for policymakers aiming to create supportive environments for educators globally.

Review of Literature and Studies

This literature review explores the motivations, challenges, and professional transitions of teachers migrating abroad. Reports highlight significant trends, such as the recruitment of Filipino teachers under special visas in the US, driven by economic opportunities and dissatisfaction with local teaching conditions (ABS-CBN News, 2023; Manila Bulletin, 2024).

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Studies underscore financial incentives, professional growth, and cultural exchange as primary motivators for migration (Partlow, 2023; Santos, 2023; Mendoza, 2022).

Challenges include adapting to new educational systems, language barriers, and the impact on teaching quality in home countries (Levin, 2017; Guballa, 2023). Research suggests that while migration offers personal and professional benefits, it also poses social integration challenges and affects teacher identity (Wilson, 2015; Celik & Yildiz, 2017).

Overall, this review aims to inform policy and support systems that enhance teacher retention and educational quality amid global mobility trends (UNESCO, 2019; OECD, 2021). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies that address the needs of migrating teachers and improve global educational outcomes.

Framework

The study uses Everett S. Lee's push-pull theory of migration to explore how economic hardships, political instability (push factors), and better job prospects, improved living conditions (pull factors), and intervening obstacles shape migration patterns. It focuses on teacher migration's impact on professional transitions, curriculum changes, brain drain effects on home countries' education systems, and support mechanisms like legislative support and professional networks. The research investigates factors influencing teachers' decisions to stay in host countries permanently, return home, or relocate, emphasizing cultural factors and demographic characteristics.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to determine the plight of the teachers who opted to work overseas.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following objectives:

1. To find the key driving factors that lead teachers to consider relocating to foreign countries for employment

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2. To determine the personal and professional goals that the teachers want to achieve by working overseas
3. To assess how the teachers deal with professional transitions like adopting to new teaching approaches and cultural contexts
4. To consider the challenges encountered by the teachers the moment they leave their work in their home country until they reach their current set-up?
5. Based on the study's findings, what recommendations and possible research topics/agendas should be addressed to address the emerging problem of teachers going overseas?

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a qualitative research design using Steiner Kvale's phenomenological and hermeneutical approach (1983), focusing on understanding the lived experiences of teachers working overseas. This approach seeks to explore the meanings teachers attach to their experiences in a foreign context. The study includes a literature review on teachers leaving their home country to identify reasons, goals, motivations, and aspirations. It aims to analyze these factors influencing teachers' decisions despite having permanent positions in their home country's Department of Education.

Research Locale

This research examined Filipino teachers in seven countries: China, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Canada, the USA, and Norway. These countries span Southeast Asia, Eastern Asia, North America, and Northern Europe. Each location offers unique geographical and cultural contexts influencing teacher migration patterns.

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Research Respondents/Participants

The study employed snowball sampling to investigate Filipino teachers who have migrated abroad. It involved 14 participants teaching in various countries, identified through referrals. Demographic profiles, including age, gender, marital status, education level, years of teaching experience, and pre-migration positions, were gathered via telephone interviews. Teachers were located across Japan, China, Canada, Norway, Thailand, Vietnam, and the USA, reflecting diverse professional backgrounds and personal contexts.

Research Instrument

A research-made questionnaire was used to get the profile of the respondents/participants and transform it into Google Forms. It is composed of four parts. Part I seeks to bring the profile of the participants in terms of age, gender, civil status, current location (country overseas), and number of years of teaching experience in the home country. The highest education attainment is

Each part is composed of five questions relative to the research questions. Part I asked why teachers leave their work; Part II looked for the personal and professional goals the teachers would like to achieve in working overseas. Part III asked about the challenges encountered by the teachers from the moment they left their work until their current set-up.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Saint Joseph Institute of Technology, facilitated by the research adviser, to commence the study. Initial connections were established with Filipino teachers residing in Norway, who then provided referrals for potential participants. Using a snowball sampling approach, names and email addresses were sought from these referrals.

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Each prospective participant received an email requesting consent to participate in the study, allowing them to choose convenient interview times. Data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews via Zoom from October 2023 to June 2024. Interviews were conducted in Filipino and English, with notes taken during the sessions. A survey questionnaire via Google Forms complemented the interviews.

To illustrate: Participants like Teacher 1 (Science major) were initially contacted and provided referrals, leading to subsequent contacts and referrals among Teachers 2, 3, 4, and so forth, expanding the participant pool through the snowball effect.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, including informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of respondents' information. Respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Participation was entirely voluntary. The participants were made to understand that they were free to decline to participate for any reason at any time or refuse to answer any question, even if they had already signed the consent form.

The anonymity of the information collected from the participants was also considered. This means that either the research collects identifying information of individual persons or the research will not link individual responses with participants' identities.

The researcher assured the participants that the study was carried out in complete confidence and that the participants would not suffer any harm in any form. Priority was given to respecting the dignity of the participants, and their privacy was guaranteed and maintained. For verification, the researcher provided the school with a secure link https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-3aPC_hTOxBEzrF1IOyjVpNX-61xB1Sx?usp=drive_link to access the recordings, ensuring the interviews were conducted as stated and link Survey Questionnaire on Teacher's Migration - Google Forms to access the

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data collected through the survey questionnaire. This step confirmed the authenticity of the data collection while maintaining confidentiality and ethical standards.

Treatment of Data

To analyze and interpret the gathered data and information, thematic analysis was used following the steps by Creswell (2024): organizing and preparing the data for analysis, reading all the data, coding the data, generating themes, forming the qualitative narrative of the study, and providing conclusions and interpretations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1: Why Are Teachers Leaving Their Work?

Online interviews revealed key reasons for teachers relocating overseas:

1. Better Salary Opportunities: 86.6% seek higher wages.
2. Desire for International Experience: 80% wish to gain global exposure.
3. Better Work-Life Balance: 73.3% aim for improved work-life harmony.
4. Improved Career Prospects: 46.6% look for better career opportunities.
5. Issues in Local Educational Setting: 100% cite low salary, 73.3% mention challenging work conditions, 66.6% face limited advancement, and 60% lack resources.

Problem 2: Personal and Professional Goals

Teachers aim to achieve the following by working overseas:

1. Personal Development: Opportunities for social and academic growth, learning new cultures and languages, and improved economic conditions.

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2. Professional Growth: Exposure to advanced teaching methodologies, technology, better resources, and future career advancement.

Problem 3: Adapting to Professional Transitions

Teachers cope with transitions by:

1. Learning from Colleagues: Relying on peers for guidance.
2. Personal Research: Studying the local culture and educational system.
3. Seeking Mentorship: Participating in workshops and seeking advice from experienced teachers.
4. Engaging with Students: Building relationships to understand cultural nuances.

Problem 4: Challenges Faced

Teachers encounter various challenges, including:

1. Financial Constraints: High initial costs for relocation.
2. Homesickness: Difficulty being away from family.
3. Cultural Differences: Adjusting to new cultural environments.
4. Classroom Management: Handling students' varied attitudes towards learning.
5. Lack of Support: Limited administrative and parental support.
6. Insufficient ICT Skills: Struggling with advanced technological tools.

Recommendations and Future Research Addressing the reasons for teacher migration involves:

1. Improving Salaries: Enhancing financial incentives.
2. Professional Development: Providing opportunities for career advancement.
3. Work Conditions: Creating a supportive and resource-rich environment.

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4. Research Agenda: Investigating further into the emotional and practical impacts of international teaching experiences and strategies to support transitioning teachers.

Overall, the study highlights the need for systemic improvements in local educational settings and the multifaceted benefits of international teaching experiences for personal and professional development.

The following recommendations are proposed to prevent teachers from going overseas and leaving not only their present positions back home but also their families behind.

Recommendations to Address the Emerging Problems of the Teachers in Going Overseas					
Emerging Problems of Teachers	Strategies to Address Problems	Objectives	Activities	Responsible Persons	Expected Outcomes
		Increase salary of teachers to make them competitive with international standards	Advocate for increased government funding for education		Increased job satisfaction among teachers
Low Salary	Enhance teacher compensation and benefits	Improve benefit packages to include health insurance, and housing plans	Explore public-private partnership to provide additional compensation and benefits	DepEd teachers and Officials	Reduced financial pressure, leading to a decrease in the desire to work overseas
Less opportunities for career development	Foster Professional Growth Opportunities	Provide access to high-quality professional development programs and trainings	Offer tax breaks and incentives for teachers Allocate budget for teacher training and development programs Partner with other educational institutions to	DepEd teachers and Officials	Increased teacher skills and expertise Improved classroom instruction and

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participation in research and development initiatives	offer specialized courses and workshops	student learning outcome
<p>Offer opportunities for career advancement within the education system</p> <p>Decrease class size to allow for more individualized instruction</p>	<p>Implement performance-based incentives for teachers who participate in professional development</p> <p>Implement hiring initiatives to increase the number of teachers</p>	<p>A sense of career progression within the Philippine educational system.</p> <p>Reduce teacher stress and burnout</p>
<p>Provide adequate support staff, such as teacher aids and counselors</p>	<p>Partner with community organizations to provide additional support services for students</p>	<p>Improved classroom management and effectiveness</p>
<p>Heavy Workload and Inadequate working condition</p> <p>Reduce Teacher Workload and Improve Working Conditions</p>	<p>Invest in classroom infrastructure and resources</p> <p>Allocate budget for infrastructure upgrades and resource acquisition</p>	<p>More conducive learning environment for both teachers and students.</p>

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Feeling undervalued, Politics/ Favoritism.	Strengthen teacher recognition and support systems	Establish a culture of appreciation for teacher's contribution	Initiate awards and recognition programs for outstanding teachers	Increased teachers' morale and sense of belongingness
		Provide access to mentoring programs for new teachers	Create a mentorship system praising experienced teachers with new recruits	Improved teacher retention and decreased turnover rate.
		Implement mental health and wellness resources for teachers	Offer stress management workshops and access to mental health professionals.	More supportive and collaborative educational environment

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Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The teachers tended to cite multiple reasons that contributed to their decision to leave their home country and teach abroad.
2. The teachers highlighted the multifaceted nature of their aspirations. The identified personal and professional goals encompass both social and professional aspects, reflecting the desire for personal growth, improved economic conditions, and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. These goals also indicate a strong interest in embracing technological advancements, exploring diverse cultures, and staying updated with innovative teaching methodologies.
3. By engaging in several strategies, teachers cannot only more effectively adapt to professional transitions but also improve their overall teaching practices and create a more favorable environment for their students.
4. Teachers' decision to leave the country negatively impacts them. The challenges manifest in different stages, from the preparation phase in their home country to their present work environment. Additionally, teachers encounter difficulties in adapting to new teaching methods, adjusting to administrative practices, navigating cultural and social differences, managing classrooms effectively, and seeking adequate administrative support.
5. The teachers' experiences also provide challenges for personal and professional growth, cultural enrichment, and a broader understanding of education systems. With adequate support and resources, teachers can navigate these challenges and make a positive impact on their own lives and the education systems of their host countries.
6. Generally, working overseas offers teachers opportunities for professional growth and development. It is a chance for the teachers to enhance their skills, learn new teaching methodologies, gain cross-cultural competence, and broaden their perspectives through exposure to diverse educational systems and practices. However, these experiences have negative impacts on them as well. However, with adequate support and resources, the

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teachers can navigate these challenges and make positive impacts on their own lives and families and, hopefully, on the educational system of the host country.

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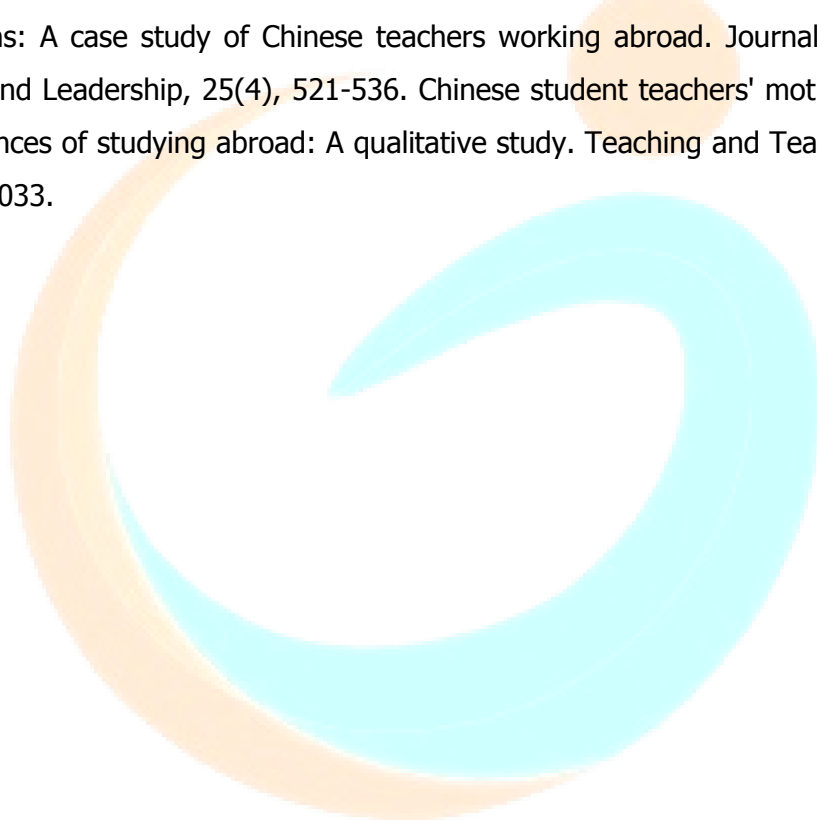
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