



**TEACHERS TEACHING EXPERIENCES IN THE PHILIPPINES AND
ABROAD: BASES FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the lived teaching experiences of Filipino teachers in local and international contexts through in-depth interviews. Findings revealed that teachers in the Philippines experience professional growth and skill development, positive teacher-student relationships, community and parental involvement, but also face job dissatisfaction and educational inequalities. Specifically, challenges include limited resources and teacher out-of-pocket expenses, large class sizes, heavy workloads, and low salary. Conversely, teachers teaching abroad benefit from advanced use of technology, inclusive, individualized, and differentiated instruction, manageable workloads, and better compensation; however, they encounter difficulties related to curriculum adjustments, classroom management and student behavior, language and communication barriers, and lack of adequate technological skills. Policy recommendations were developed to address the challenges and support teachers' effectiveness, well-being, and career satisfaction locally and abroad.

Keywords: *Teachers Teaching Experiences, Philippines, Abroad, Policy Recommendations*

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher mobility and the internationalization of the teaching profession have become increasingly prominent in global education discourse. Educators often seek opportunities beyond their home countries, or engage with globalized curricula while remaining in local systems. For the Philippines, which has a long history of teacher migration and overseas employment, understanding the experiences of teachers both domestically and abroad is essential. Domestic teaching contexts present unique challenges, while international assignments introduce distinct professional and personal dynamics that influence teacher identity, pedagogy, and career trajectory (Dela Cruz, 2021; Garcia & Tan, 2022).

Within the Philippine education system, teachers frequently contend with institutional, socio-cultural, and resource-related constraints. Large class sizes, limited instructional materials, and heavy administrative workloads are commonly reported challenges (Santos, 2020). Moreover, teacher shortages in certain regions exacerbate the problem. For instance, the Department of Education in Central Visayas reported that 779 teachers left for overseas employment between 2021 and 2024, creating gaps in local schools (Philippine Star, 2025). These conditions function as “push” factors, motivating teachers to seek employment abroad or in alternative teaching arrangements.

Conversely, Filipino teachers working abroad gain professional growth but also face cultural and adaptation challenges. They often encounter language barriers, curriculum differences, homesickness, and the need to adjust to new school environments (Reyes, 2023). Higher salaries, better career opportunities, and improved working conditions attract them to

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international positions (Garcia & Tan, 2022). Despite these challenges, their experiences enhance pedagogical skills, cultural competence, and exposure to innovative practices, benefiting the Philippine education system when they return (Villanueva, 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature, several research gaps remain. Most studies focus exclusively on either domestic or international teaching experiences, without exploring the intersection and transferability of lessons between the two contexts (Dela Cruz, 2021; Reyes, 2023). Additionally, while teacher migration and overseas teaching experiences have been documented, fewer studies connect these experiences directly to policy implications, such as teacher preparation, professional development, retention strategies, and resource allocation (Villanueva, 2021; IJFMR, 2025). Understanding these experiences in a holistic manner is crucial for developing evidence-based policies that support teachers across contexts.

The dual experience of teaching in the Philippines and abroad creates opportunities for mutual learning and system improvement. Teachers with international exposure can bring innovative practices, global perspectives, and cross-cultural skills to local classrooms. Meanwhile, improving local conditions—such as better pay, reduced workload, and more professional development—can reduce attrition and strengthen retention (Santos, 2020; Philippine Star, 2025). These factors support policy efforts to enhance teacher welfare and professional growth.

Given this context, this study sought to examine Filipino teachers' experiences teaching in both the Philippines and abroad. It aimed to identify the challenges, benefits, and

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professional outcomes associated with each context and derive actionable policy recommendations. By documenting these experiences, the study hoped to inform strategies that enhance teacher retention, support professional development, and strengthen the international competitiveness of the Philippine education workforce.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants of the study, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis used in this study. The purpose of this study was to determine the challenges encountered by teachers teaching in the Philippines and abroad during the school year 2024-2025.

Research Method

The research method utilized in this study was qualitative research design using in-depth interview. The interviewer during the interview was allowed to ask a series of questions about certain issues encountered by teachers teaching in the Philippines and abroad. Demirci (2023) emphasizes the importance of conducting better qualitative interviews by focusing on participant comfort, interviewer flexibility, and methodological rigor, which aligns with the exploratory and open-ended nature of Fraenkel and Wallen’s approach.

The descriptive research method focuses on systematically describing a phenomenon as it exists in its natural setting, without manipulating variables. According to Elliott (2025), it aims to provide an accurate portrayal of current conditions, practices, or relationships within

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educational settings, enabling researchers to understand trends, patterns, and implications for practice. This approach is particularly useful in educational studies that seek to document and analyze real-world events, behaviors, or perceptions without altering the environment in which they occur (Elliott, 2025).

During the interview, the interviewer and interviewee engaged in a discussion via video application platform, addressing a series of questions related to a specific issue. The aim is to get the main or the necessary views of the participants in a certain issue in a social context through the responses of the participants to the questions.

Research Design

The study used phenomenological research design. Phenomenology can be considered a philosophical approach to undertaking qualitative research. The goal of phenomenology is to understand how others view the world, and how this view may vary from commonly held views by focusing on a person's subjective interpretations of what he or she experiences. Phenomenology is done by interviewing subjects to learn their impressions, and is frequently used in such fields as psychology, sociology, and social work.

Phenomenology, as a qualitative research approach, emphasizes the exploration of lived experiences from the perspective of individuals, aiming to uncover the essence of phenomena as they are consciously perceived. Recent scholars highlight that phenomenology seeks to describe human experiences without imposing external theories or unexamined assumptions, instead focusing on the meanings participants attribute to their realities (Williams, 2021; McLeod, 2024; ResearchMethod.net, 2025).

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In the study, such approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges encountered by teachers teaching in the Philippines and abroad.

Participants of the Study

The participants in the study were ten (10) teachers who had teaching experience both in the Philippines and abroad. The criteria for participant selection were as follows: (1) former employment as a teacher within the DepEd system in the Philippines, (2) resignation from DepEd to pursue teaching opportunities overseas, and (3) willingness to share their experiences and insights through in-depth interviews.

Sampling Design

Snowball sampling was used in the study. Snowball sampling is a widely recognized non-probability sampling technique commonly employed in qualitative research, particularly when investigating hard-to-reach or specialized populations. This approach begins with a small number of initial participants who meet the established criteria of the study and who subsequently refer other potential participants from their social or professional networks. Through this referral process, the sample gradually expands until the desired number of participants is reached, allowing the researcher to access participants who may otherwise be difficult to identify (Taherdoost, 2021).

The researcher gained some insights into the world of his or her participants who could provide rich, detailed accounts of their experiences and challenges encountered teaching in the Philippines and abroad in the school year 2024-2025

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Research Instrument

The researcher used a researcher-made interview guide for the in-depth interview to gather information about the experiences and challenges encountered by teachers teaching in the Philippines and abroad.

The interview guide has six main questions focusing on the purpose of the study.

Video and audio recorders were used for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The researcher-made interview schedule was reviewed, modified, and approved by the research adviser, upon approval for face and content validity by five jurors who were chosen on the basis of their expertise in research and instrumentation. Each item was assessed by the jurors as revise, reject, and retain, using the Eight-Point Criteria by Good and Scates for validation purposes. The panel of jurors was composed of experts in the fields of research, test and measurements, and evaluation.

Data Gathering Procedures

In order to gather data that would answer the problems, the researcher wrote a letter and asked permission to administer the research study from the Dean of the Graduate School.

Permits from the individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the in-depth interview. Prior to the conduct of the interview, the researcher personally communicated and asked for the convenient time to conduct the interview.

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During the interview, the researcher used a voice and video recording device upon the permission of the participant to completely capture the whole process of the interview. The participants use the video messenger, skype or google meet application with the researcher to get the responses to the questions. The objective was to get the participant's view about the study. The researcher consolidated all the collected data after series of interviews.

Data Analyses

The data collected through the interview schedule were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method designed to identify, interpret, and report recurring patterns or themes within narrative data. This approach enables the researcher to uncover meaningful insights into the challenges and coping strategies of teachers teaching in the Philippines and abroad.

Each written response was carefully examined to extract emerging themes related to behavior, communication, decision-making, motivation, and support of teachers.

According to Braun and Clarke (2021), thematic analysis provides a flexible yet rigorous framework for analyzing qualitative data, allowing researchers to identify both explicit and implicit meanings across participants' narratives. It is particularly suitable for educational research that seeks to understand complex social and organizational dynamics. Nowell et al. (2021) further emphasized that thematic analysis enhances transparency and credibility in qualitative studies by ensuring systematic coding and interpretation of data.

Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis are essentially a step-by-step guide for making sense of qualitative data. First phase was Familiarization with Data-Reading and

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re-reading interview schedules; it was an essential step in the data analysis process. The repeated engagement with the responses of Teachers-in-Charge allowed the researcher to become fully familiar with their experiences, uncover subtle patterns such as role conflict and administrative overload and ensure that emerging themes were firmly grounded in the participants' actual words. This process strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Second, generating initial codes; in this study, generating initial codes was an important step in organizing the qualitative data collected from teachers. After familiarization with the interview schedules, meaningful segments of the participants' responses were highlighted and labeled with concise codes that captured the essence of their experiences. By systematically coding the data, the researcher was able to reduce complexity and prepare the foundation for identifying broader themes that represent the realities of Teachers-in-Charge in their dual roles. Third, searching for themes; in this study, searching for themes involves clustering the initial codes from Teachers into broader patterns that captured the essence of their experiences. Fourth phase is Reviewing themes- checking if themes are truly present in the data and refining them. Fifth phase is Defining and Naming Themes-writing clear definitions and giving concise names. And last is Producing the report, in this study it involves weaving the defined themes into a coherent narrative that directly addressed the research questions. This final phase transformed the coded data into meaningful insights, highlighting the systemic challenges and coping strategies of teachers in fulfilling their roles.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to determine teachers' experiences teaching in the Philippines and abroad as basis for policy recommendation in the Schools District of Ajuy-Cluster 1 during the school year 2024-2025.

In the study, an in-depth interview under the qualitative research design was utilized.

The study used a phenomenological approach. This approach was appropriate because the researcher wanted to study a group of people to gain a larger understanding of their experiences teaching in the Philippines and abroad.

The participants of the study were ten (10) DepEd teachers in the Philippines who had resigned from their positions and embarked on teaching careers abroad.

The research instrument was first submitted to the adviser for correction and improvement then forwarded to panel of experts for validation. The researcher considered all comments and suggestions relative to the validation of the tool. The interview was scheduled during the teachers' vacant time. Formal letters were delivered via email to the teachers.

The interviewer during the interview was allowed to communicate via video call and they were asked individually. The aim was to get the main necessary views of the participants' view about the study. The researcher consolidated all the collected data after series of interviews.

The information gathered was analyzed using thematic approach.

The following were the findings of the study:

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Based on the responses gathered from the in-depth interviews, teachers in the Philippines and abroad have diverse teaching experiences that may serve as a basis for policy recommendations aimed at encouraging educators to remain in the country. Teachers in the Philippines experienced professional growth and skill development, strong teacher–student relationships, community and parental involvement, job dissatisfaction, and educational inequalities. In contrast, teachers abroad experienced the advanced use of technology, inclusive and individualized instruction, work–life balance, professional growth and skill enhancement, and better compensation.

During the conduct of the in-depth interviews, it was found that the challenges encountered by teachers in the Philippines included limited resources and teachers’ out-of-pocket spending, large class sizes and overcrowded classrooms, heavy workload and administrative burden, and low salary and financial strain. On the other hand, the challenges encountered by teachers abroad included curriculum adjustment, classroom management and student behavior, managing diverse learners, language and communication barriers, cultural adjustment, and lack of technological skills.

The coping strategies of teachers in the Philippines, based on the results of the in-depth interviews, included resourcefulness and creativity, classroom management and peer collaboration, collaboration with colleagues, proper time management, and proper financial management. Meanwhile, the coping strategies of teachers abroad included adaptive flexibility, understanding cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, relationship-building and social

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support, self-capacitation through studying and attending trainings and seminars, and prioritizing self-care and emotional well-being.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following points are given for future consideration:

Policies should ensure the equitable distribution of teaching materials, technology, and facilities across schools, particularly in under served areas. Adequate resources will support effective teaching practices and enhance learning outcomes for all students.

School administrators and education authorities should streamline administrative processes and assign clerical tasks to support staff whenever possible. This will allow teachers to focus more on classroom instruction and student engagement, thereby improving both teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction.

Education policymakers should review and enhance teacher compensation packages. Providing competitive salaries, benefits, and incentives will help reduce financial stress, increase teacher motivation, and encourage retention, ultimately improving instructional quality.

The Department of Education and teacher training institutions should provide continuous professional development programs, including workshops on inclusive instruction, technology integration, classroom management, and global best practices. Sustained training will strengthen teachers' competencies and adaptability in diverse educational environments.

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Schools should establish stronger support systems, such as mentoring programs, peer collaboration networks, and mental health resources. These support mechanisms will enhance teachers' emotional well-being, resilience, and ability to maintain high instructional quality in both local and global teaching contexts.

Further research is also recommended to explore other variables not included in the present study.



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